

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1 October 2026

Medway Youth Justice Plan 2026-2029

Report from: Dr Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People and Deputy Chief Executive

Author: Nicoleta Stangu, Head of Service Corporate Parenting and Youth Justice

Summary

The purpose of this report is to present the Medway Youth Justice Plan 2026-2029, Appendix 1, for consideration and approval. The Plan sets out strategic direction for youth justice services in Medway over the period 2026-2029 and fulfils the Council's statutory duty under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to prepare and publish a Youth Justice Plan. The Plan has been developed by the Youth Justice Partnership Board and its statutory partners, including Children's Services, Kent Police, Health, Education and Probation.

The Plan has been developed jointly with statutory and partnership agencies and responds directly to the findings of the HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection undertaken in May 2026. It outlines Medway's commitment to a Child First approach, reducing offending and reoffending, supporting victims, tackling disproportionality and strengthening the partnership response to risk and vulnerability.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the report and provide its comments on the Medway Youth Justice Plan 2026 - 2029, as set out at Appendix 1, to Cabinet.
- 1.2. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to recommend Full Council to approve the Medway Youth Justice Plan 2026 – 2029.

2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1. The recommendations are within the Council's policy and budget framework.

- 2.2. The Youth Justice Service budget is funded through existing Local Authority's resources, partner contributions and central government grants. Adoption of the Plan does not create any new revenue or capital costs and can be delivered within existing approved budgets.
- 2.3. The Youth Justice Plan remains a statutory requirement and is a condition of Youth Justice Board grant funding, which for 2026/27 is £369,532. As the costs are already budgeted within the service's existing financial envelope, there are no new un-budgeted revenue or capital implications arising directly from the adoption of this plan.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Medway Youth Justice Plan sets out the strategic direction for youth justice services in Medway over the period 2026-2029 and fulfils the Council's statutory duty under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to prepare and publish a Youth Justice Plan. The Plan has been developed by the Youth Justice Partnership Board and its statutory partners, including Children's Services, Kent Police, Health, Education and Probation.
- 3.2. The Plan is underpinned by the national Child First approach, which recognises children as children, builds upon their strengths, promotes positive outcomes and seeks to prevent future offending. The vision of the partnership is aligned with the national Youth Justice Board's ambition for a youth justice system that treats children fairly, supports them to make positive contributions to their communities and reduces the number of victims of crime.
- 3.3. The Plan has been informed by an assessment of local need and HMIP inspection report dated August 2026. Medway has a population of approximately 278,000 residents, including around 65,000 children and young people. The Youth Justice Service worked with 178 children during 2025-26, many of whom had experienced significant adversity, including trauma, family instability, educational disengagement, social disadvantage, mental health concerns and special educational needs. More than half of children supported by the Youth Justice Service have identified SEND needs and children known to the service are disproportionately affected by deprivation compared with their peers.

4. Options

- 4.1. The Medway Youth Justice Plan requires approval by Full Council in accordance with the current Constitution. Failure to secure approval of the Plan could have significant implications for the service, as submission of an approved Youth Justice Plan is a condition of the Youth Justice Board grant funding. Without approval, there is a risk that this funding could be adversely affected.

5. Advice and analysis

5.1. The plan aligns with Medway Council's priorities for supporting vulnerable children, improving educational and life outcomes, reducing inequalities and creating safer communities. It provides a clear framework for partnership working and establishes measurable actions and performance indicators that will enable the Youth Justice Partnership Board to monitor progress and hold partners to account for delivery.

5.2. The Youth Justice Partnership Board has identified four strategic priorities for the period 2026-2029:

5.2.1. Prevention of offending and reoffending - The partnership will strengthen prevention, diversion and early intervention activity to reduce the number of first-time entrants into the criminal justice system and prevent further offending. This includes improving access to services, strengthening multi-agency risk management arrangements and ensuring children receive the right support at the earliest opportunity.

5.2.2. Victim support and victim safety - The partnership is committed to delivering a personalised and responsive service for victims of youth offending. The plan seeks to strengthen victim engagement, restorative approaches, victim safety arrangements and partnership oversight, ensuring that victims' views and experiences inform intervention planning and service development.

5.2.3. Violence and harm - The Plan identifies serious youth violence, weapons-related offending and violence against women and girls as priority areas. The partnership will implement coordinated approaches to preventing violence, tackling harmful behaviours and ensuring effective safeguarding and risk management arrangements are in place for both victims and children who present risk to others.

5.2.4. Fairness, equity and inclusion - The Board recognises the continued over-representation of particular groups of children within the youth justice system, including children from minority ethnic backgrounds, children in care, children with SEND and neurodiverse children. The plan therefore includes a programme of work to better understand and address disproportionality, improve accessibility and ensure that services are fair, equitable and responsive to individual need.

5.3. The plan also recognises the importance of children's participation. Feedback from children and families demonstrates high levels of satisfaction with the service and highlights the importance of being listened to, treated with respect and involved in decisions affecting their lives. The partnership will continue to develop opportunities for co-production and participation throughout the life of the Plan.

5.4. As the Youth justice plan is a strategic document and does not itself introduce service changes, a Diversity Impact Assessment is not required at this stage.

6. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Access to Education, Training and Employment (ETE)	Children known to the Youth Justice Service continue to face barriers in accessing suitable education, training and employment, increasing the risk of poor outcomes and reoffending.	Dedicated Education Worker, partnership working with education providers, targeted support and performance oversight through the Partnership Board.	B3
Managing High Levels of Risk and Vulnerability	Increasing levels of exploitation, serious violence, trauma, mental health need and safeguarding concerns place additional pressure on services and risk management arrangements.	Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, Youth Justice Risk Panels, contextual safeguarding responses and delivery of HMIP improvement actions.	B4
Victim Services and Victim Engagement	Failure to strengthen victim engagement and victim-focused practice may reduce confidence in the youth justice system and impact delivery of HMIP improvement requirements.	Dedicated Victim Worker, implementation of HMIP recommendations, partnership working with Police and victim services, and strengthened performance oversight.	B3
Local Government Reorganisation and System Reform	Significant organisational change arising from Local Government Reorganisation, NHS restructuring and national reforms may impact governance, partnership arrangements and service delivery.	Youth Justice Partnership Board oversight, transition planning, ongoing engagement in reform programmes and regular risk monitoring.	B3
Likelihood		Impact:	
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare		1 Critical 2 Major 3 Moderate 4 Minor	

7. Consultation

- 7.1. Consultation has taken place primarily through the multi-agency Medway Youth Justice Partnership Board, which is the main forum for governance and oversight of the Youth Justice Service in Medway. The Youth Justice Partnership Board has good representation from all statutory partners and a range of non-statutory partners to the Youth Justice Service and includes the Lead Member for Children's Services.

8. Climate change implications

- 8.1. The proposals contained within this report do not have any significant direct climate change implications.
- 8.2. Where possible, partnership meetings, training and engagement activities will utilise digital technology to reduce travel and associated carbon emissions.

9. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) implications

- 9.1. Following the announcement of the pause on 7 September 2026, officers will monitor the ongoing situation and will consider any relevant impacts as they arise.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1. The Youth Justice Service's responsibilities are funded through contributions from the statutory partner agencies in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Each partner's contributions are reviewed annually.
- 10.2. Youth Justice Service's responsibilities are funded through contributions from the statutory partner agencies in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Each partner's contributions are reviewed annually.
- 10.3. There are no financial implications arising from the proposals in the plan.

11. Legal implications

- 11.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposals in the plan.

Lead officer contact:

Dr Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People and Deputy Chief Executive,
leeanne.farach@medway.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1- Youth Justice Plan 2026- 2029

Background papers

HMIP inspection report -

<https://hmiprobation.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/document/an-inspection-of-youth-justice-work-with-children-and-victims-in-medway-2026/>