

Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Strategic Plan

2023/24



Nottinghamshire
County Council

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Executive summary

As the new Chair of the Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Partnership Board, I am pleased to present this year’s plan, outlining Nottinghamshire’s strategic direction and priorities for the year ahead. Having come back to the youth justice system after several years of absence, the pace and scale of change has been significant, but it has been gratifying to see a system that is increasingly child-focused whilst still seeking to recognise the experience of victims and to seek restoration.

Our collective commitment is focused on effectively rehabilitating and supporting young individuals within the criminal justice system. Through early intervention, reoffending prevention, and the promotion of youth well-being, we aim to create a brighter future for the children and young people of Nottinghamshire. This plan highlights the challenges we face, emphasises the strength of collaboration among key stakeholders and underscores the importance of using evidence to inform practice. Together, we embark on a journey of positive change, ensuring transformative outcomes for our children and young people.

The plan has been developed by members of the Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Partnership Board with the support of the Youth Justice Service, a range of care and justice professionals and, most importantly, whilst keeping at its centre, the voices of children and young people using the service, victims, and communities. Key contributors to this plan include Police, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Violence Reduction Partnership, Health, the Youth Justice Service, Probation, District Councils, Children’s Social Care and Education. Members of the Board have stepped up to champion key areas of development and will report regularly back to the Board on our collective progress.

The plan updates on the progress made against the priorities in the plan 2020-2023 and sets out new priorities for the year ahead.

As well as supporting the Youth Justice Service to carry out its statutory functions and meet its key aims, this plan also supports the work of the Board in relation to its identified strategic objectives

Laurence Jones
Chair of the Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Partnership Board
Service Director for Commissioning and Resources Nottinghamshire County Council



Introduction

Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Service is made up of three locality teams and a county-wide interventions team which provides support to the locality teams and delivers outreach and detached youth work. Whilst most children and young people receiving preventative intervention are seen by staff based within the interventions team; all three locality teams work with children and young people accessing both voluntary and statutory interventions; including assessing and managing children and young people who have been referred for an Out of Court Disposal (OOCOD).

The service meets all the statutory requirements of a Youth Justice Service as set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and includes seconded staff from Police, Probation, Health (Youth Justice Nurse), and Futures (Education, Training and Employment advisers). In addition to the multi-agency teams, the service commissions specialist external providers to help it deliver key statutory functions, such as substance misuse (Change Grow Live), reparation and victim services (Remedi) and appropriate adult work (The Appropriate Adult Service).

There is a mixed profile of children and young people across the county, with offending centred in and around urban areas, including the Nottingham conurbations, Mansfield, Ashfield, Newark, Retford, and Worksop. However, there is a spread of communities across more rural areas which also require servicing.

The service is spread over a large geographical area which can impact on staff resource as they can spend a large proportion of time travelling across the county. Children and young people are seen in their communities; this includes visiting homes, schools or making use of community venues. The numbers of children and young people being supported by the service has gradually risen. At any one time, there are between 250 and 300 children and young people receiving intervention across a range of prevention, diversionary and statutory programmes.

The service consistently performs well against key indicators when compared to the national average, having a lower number of first-time entrants, a lower reoffending rate and a lower number of custodial sentences and remands.

Our vision

The service is committed to embedding child-first principles throughout all elements of service delivery. Our vision is to be a child first service which sees children as children and which takes a trauma informed, strengths-based approach to working with all children and young people. The service places a strong emphasis on forming positive relationships with children and young people and sees these relationships as key to helping individuals build their resilience, building on their strengths, and fulfilling their potential. It is fundamental that children and young people are treated fairly and are supported to actively engage with the service and, where possible, are diverted away from the youth justice system to encourage wider social inclusion.

Progress, performance and priorities

Progress

Over the past three years there have been five key areas of focus, driving activity across the partnership. These areas were.

- 1 To work with partners to promote a more holistic approach to meeting children's needs in the youth justice system**
The partnership took a child first approach; considering the underlying factors for children and young people at risk of offending. Work has seen the service strengthen its partnership with health, increasing its use of screening of children and young people for speech language and communication needs (SLCN) and ensuring that trauma-informed approaches were adopted across the service. The appointment of a specialist substance use worker has also improved the service's approach to working with children and young people identified as having a substance use need. Despite this activity, it is acknowledged that increasing health provision for children and young people on diversionary and preventative pathways remains as a priority and will feature as part of next year's plan.
- 2 To increase the number of children and young people accessing early intervention aimed at reducing the potential of them entering the youth justice service**
The service has improved diversion and prevention services to children and young people at risk of offending; reducing thresholds for accessing preventative intervention and increasing the range of outcomes that can be used as part of out of court disposals. The numbers of children and young people accessing early intervention, and engaging on voluntary programmes of intervention, has increased and the number of first time entrants has fallen. The service has also worked with the police and children's social care developing processes to ensure that children and young people at risk of child criminal exploitation and serious youth violence are able to be identified at the earliest opportunity and supported by the most appropriate service. Whilst there has been good progress, the partnership wants to ensure that this remains an area of priority for the coming year so will feature as part of next year's plan.
- 3 That every child and young person in Nottinghamshire youth justice service has appropriate education, training and employment provision in place**
The service has increased its offer of support in relation to education, training and employment and all children and young people on a court order or an out of court disposal are now supported by an adviser according to their individual need, promoting educational inclusion. The education, training and employment team has improved its relationships with educational providers to reduce school exclusions for children and young people known to the service; it has also supported young people who have transitioned to adult services to remain in education, training and employment and developed its links with the fair access team. Fair access works in partnership with schools, other local authority agencies and families, to secure and maintain appropriate education for a range of vulnerable pupils who are, or might otherwise, become missing from education.

- 4 To ensure that children and young people had the best support available to meet their needs when leaving custody**
The service has adopted constructive resettlement approaches and improved the experiences of children and young people transitioning back into the community, and between the youth justice and probation/other adult services. The service has developed its joint working approaches with statutory partners, improving how the service supports children and young people whilst they are in custody, improving accessibility to accommodation and improving the support that is available for those transitioning to adult services. Service level agreements have also been updated to ensure that improved working practices are sustainable.
- 5 To ensure that robust consultation processes were in place to enable children and young people and their families to have an opportunity to shape Nottinghamshire's youth justice service**
The service developed a participation strategy, demonstrating its commitment to involving children, young people, and their families in shaping the service. The launch of a new online feedback platform seeking out the views and opinions of those who have worked with the service. It has also been consulting with children and young people about service development, the recruitment of staff and the interventions which are being delivered. Feedback from families has been shared across the service; highlighting gaps in service delivery in need of development and promoting areas of good practice which can be replicated to improve the experience of children and young people and their families.

Performance

In Nottinghamshire, the service consistently performs well against key indicators when compared to the national average, having a lower number of first-time entrants, a lower reoffending rate and a lower number of custodial sentences and remands.

- ▶ Locally, the total number of children and young people remanded and sentenced to youth detention accommodation has fallen seeing a reduction from last year. There have been just two custodial sentences and four remands within the full year and rates remain at an all-time low, demonstrating a consistent level of high performance.

▶ Whilst the number of first-time entrants has fallen, the current rate is plateauing at a similar rate to the previous year. Data tells us that children and young people in Nottinghamshire are entering the criminal justice system later into their childhood than those nationally. This may be seen as a good sign and indicates that efforts to divert younger children from the criminal justice system are proving to be effective.
- ▶ Rates of re-offending and numbers of re-offences committed by re-offenders has again reduced and figures show that Nottinghamshire is performing better than the national average.



Performance measure	Nottinghamshire current performance 2022/23	Nottinghamshire's performance 2021/22	Target
First time entrants: Number per 100,000 of 10-17 population	144	149	Lower than the national average (168)
Re-offending – Binary (reported 3 months in arrears)	10.2	15.8	Lower than the national average (34.2%)
Re-offending – Frequency re-offences per offender (reported 3 months in arrears)	0.31 (Q4)	0.62 (Same Q last year)	Lower than the national average (1.25)
Re-offending – Frequency re-offences per re-offender (reported 3 months in arrears)	3.0 (Q4)	4.50 (Same Q last year)	Lower than the national average (3.65)
Custodial remands (actual numbers)	4	7	Lower than the national average (30)
Custodial sentences (actual numbers)	2	7	Lower than the national average (16)

** Dependent upon counting rules applied some statistics may vary



The Youth Justice Board (YJB) has increased the number of performance indicators that services are expected to report on and the youth justice service will now be reporting on an additional ten key performance indicators:

- KPI 1: Accommodation**
Will report on the type and suitability of children and young people’s accommodation.

KPI 2: Education, training and employment
Will monitor children and young people’s employment, training and educational status, the type of provision which is being accessed and the number of hours of education, training and employment that are being offered and attended.

KPI 3: Special education needs
Will show the number of children and young people with an identified special educational need, the number that have a formal plan in place and how many are accessing suitable educational provision.

KPI 4: Mental health and emotional wellbeing
Will measure the number of children and young people identified as having a mental health and emotional wellbeing need; and the number that have either received, or have been offered, an intervention.

- KPI 5: Substance misuse**
Monitors the number of children and young people with a screened/identified need for intervention to address substance misuse who are accessing, or have been offered, intervention.

KPI 6: Out of court disposal
Reports on the number of children and young people who have successfully completed interventions as part of an out of court disposal.

KPI 7: Wider services
Will highlight the number of children and young people within the service who are working with wider services (e.g., referred for early help intervention, on a Child Protection Plan, Child in Need, care experienced etc.).

KPI 8: Management Board attendance
Makes it mandatory for the service to report on senior and non-senior partners’ attendance at the Board.

KPI 9: Serious youth violence
Will report on the number of proven serious youth violence offences and the demographic breakdown of individuals cautioned and convicted for these offences.

KPI 10: Victims
Will monitor the number of identified victims who have been contacted by the service and engaged with a restorative justice intervention or provided with information and/or additional support.



Priorities for 2023/24

This year the partnership has chosen to focus on four primary objectives:

- ✓ **Developing a shared diversionary vision across the partnership**
- ✓ **Improving arrangements for children and young people on multiple pathways**
- ✓ **Strengthening the approach to addressing serious youth violence and exploitation**
- ✓ **Improving access to mental health and speech and language provision**

The service has consulted with children and young people regarding these areas which will form part of the planning.



1. Developing a shared diversionary vision across the partnership

The service in Nottinghamshire remains committed to working with children and young people in need of support, on a non-statutory basis. It prides itself on delivering a high-quality service in relation to youth diversion, prevention, and detached services, thus, keeping a focus on reducing the numbers of children and young people entering the service for the first time. The numbers of children and young people working with the service on non-statutory programmes of intervention has gradually increased over the past few years contributing to reduced numbers of first-time entrants.

The promotion of appropriate diversion is a core principle of child first practice. The partnership wishes to promote a collaborative focus on earlier intervention, increasing the proportion of preventative and diversionary interventions that are being used, whilst

continuing to reduce the number of children and young people who are working with the service on a statutory basis.

The partnership wants to better understand how partners can work better together to improve opportunities for providing early preventative intervention and divert children and young people from the criminal justice system. This will include ensuring that children, young people, and their families access support from a range of early help services, with the youth justice offer being available to those who need a targeted approach with elements of crime prevention.

Whilst this objective will contribute towards reducing the number of first-time entrants, success will also be measured by key performance indicator 6.

Outcome

Children and young people who are at risk of offending are identified at the earliest opportunity so that their individual needs are met.

The service will...

- ✓ Promote earlier access to services for children and young people with underlying neurodiversity needs.
- ✓ Pilot increased presence of youth justice staff in police custody suites to promote opportunities for consultation and reduce delays in children and young people accessing preventative/diversionary interventions.
- ✓ Review and agree a diversionary protocol with the police and partnership colleagues promoting consistency and use of the full range of diversionary and out of court disposals for children and young people across Nottinghamshire.
- ✓ Improve the timescales for the processing and delivery of out of court disposals to ensure that children and young people receive a timely outcome.
- ✓ Promote outcomes across the partnership for children and young people where diversionary activity has taken place, increasing the confidence, and use, of the wide range of disposals.
- ✓ Review how the partnership can support schools to identify and respond to children and young people who would benefit from targeted intervention with an element of prevention.



2. Improving arrangements for children on multiple pathways

Findings from both internal and external audits/inspections indicate that service pathways do not always complement one another. Feedback from children, young people and their parents and carers also suggests that working across services can often be a complicated and confusing experience. The partnership supports the view that pathways need to be reviewed to prevent duplication and improve families' experiences when working with multiple services.

Over the coming year, the partnership wants to build an understanding of existing pathways and the effectiveness of partnership working when children and young people are working across different services. The partnership wants to ensure that children, young people, and their families have a voice, ensuring that their feedback features as a central part of this work and any improvements that are made.

The services reporting on key performance indicators 2, 3, 4 and 5 will assist in measuring performance in relation to this objective.

Outcome

Improve the co-ordination of resources and services to prevent duplication and ensure that children and young people's experience is the best that it can be when working with multiple services.

Proposed activity

- ✓ Review the available data in relation to children on multiple pathways open to the youth justice service to gain an insight into areas of potential duplication.
- ✓ Gather child, young person and families' feedback about their experience of being open to multiple services to learn what is and what is not working.
- ✓ Implement improvements to arrangements for joint working to better meet the needs of children and young people who are working across services (e.g., youth justice and education, health, children's social care, etc.)

3. Strengthening the approach to addressing serious youth violence and exploitation

While overall performance in Nottinghamshire in relation to serious youth violence is relatively strong the service recognises that the implications of these offences have widespread consequences for individuals and communities. Performance information indicates that, with respect to first time entrants, 'violence against the person' offences including weapons possession make up nearly half of all offences.

When considering the children and young people within the youth justice service, there is a growing opinion that violent and aggressive behaviours may be more strongly related to individual factors such as experiences of trauma and developmental delay, fuelled in many cases by exposure to social media. It is these perceptions and opinions that need to be further investigated and supported with evidence which will form part of the plan for this year.

The partnership wants a better understanding of the local picture so that its able to address and prevent the harm arising from serious youth violence and exploitation of children and young people. The partnership needs to

build mechanisms for sharing relevant data to develop a common understanding of the local picture amongst partners; this will assist in strengthening its approach to effectively tackle the issues for perpetrators and victims of youth violence and exploitation.

It is known that around one in five children and young people who have ever been permanently excluded from school have been cautioned or sentenced for a serious violence offence; thus, further demonstrating that working with education and other partners plays a critical part in addressing youth violence and exploitation. As is required by the Serious Violence Duty (which came into force in January 2023), the service will be working with the Violence Reduction Partnership and partners to establish a strategic need assessment, identifying the drivers of serious violence in the local area and the cohort of people at most risk or most affected by serious violence.

Reporting data in relation to key performance indicator 6 and 9 will assist in measuring performance in relation to this objective.

Outcome

To develop a deeper understanding of SYV locally to be able to better respond.

Proposed activity

- ✓ Review and improve mechanisms for sharing relevant data across the partnership to enable us to build a local picture of serious youth violence and develop a response plan.
- ✓ Develop a children/young people's offending dashboard which can be presented to the Board on a quarterly basis.
- ✓ Population risk and offending profiles produced by the Violence Reduction Partnership to be shared with the partnership Board in order that the service can contribute to a response plan.
- ✓ Agree a partnership response to data showing a strong link between exclusion and offending.

Outcome

To ensure that policies / practice for how the partnership approaches violent/weapons offences is reflective of 'best practice'.

Proposed activity

- ✓ Review the joint police / youth justice knife crime policy ensuring that it aligns with national developments and examples of best practice.
- ✓ Review the schools' knife crime policy, clarifying roles and responsibilities with a focus on primary aged children and those with special educational needs and disabilities.
- ✓ Contribute to the implementation of neighbourhood safeguarding and disruption meetings across all seven districts.

4. Improving access to mental health and speech and language provision

Despite some focused activity over the past three years, it is acknowledged by the partnership that there remains a shortfall in health provision for children and young people who are working with the service on preventative and diversionary pathways.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Joint Local Transformation Plan for children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health aims to increase the numbers of children and young people who can access services. It also aims to develop a single point of access for all children and young people's mental health early intervention services, ensuring that the most vulnerable children and young people are able to access resources.

As a whole system, the partnership needs to respond to children and young people's experience of trauma and adverse childhood experience with a view to increasing the number of children and young people who are able to access emotional and mental health support.

National and local research has evidenced that a high percentage of children and young people in the youth justice system have speech, language and communication difficulties; this is estimated as being approximately 80 to 90%, with 60% of young males having clinically significant levels of language impairment (Snow, 2013). Local data indicates that 82% of children and young people known to the youth justice service have speech, language and communication needs.

The partnership wants to improve outcomes for children and young people with speech language and communication needs and acknowledges that increasing specialist resource is key.

Success in relation to this objective will be measured by key performance indicator 4 and 5.

4

Outcome

Improved access to early intervention support for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs, and emotional and mental health issues.

Proposed activity

- ✓ Recommission increased and improved resource to address speech, language and communication needs and emotional and mental health provision for children and young people working with the youth justice service.
- ✓ Review the pathway for neurodiversity assessment and diagnosis for children and young people known to the service, to ensure that they can access the right service at the right time.



What do children and young people think of the plan?

- The children and young people who were spoken to as part of developing the plan agreed that serious youth violence should be a priority and asked that the service also consider the impact of ‘youth culture and street culture’ on children and young people.
- Their view was that serious youth violence and drugs were very closely linked and said that delivered interventions should take this into consideration. This will be considered when constructing principles for service delivery.
- Children and young people felt strongly that early education relating to violence and offending was important and believed that services should be working in education settings with groups of children and young people on a regular basis.
- They also said that, in their experience, outreach workers were well placed to raise awareness and educate children and young people in the community and felt that these staff were important.
- In addition, they said that it was also important for children and young people to have something to do in their local communities to help them avoid being involved in gangs and offending.
- Children and young people will continue to be involved in discussions about the service priority areas and their views will feed into operational developments.

Appendix

Youth justice services in Nottinghamshire are funded from a variety of funding streams, both direct monetary payments and seconded staff.

Agency	Staffing costs	Payments in kind revenue	Total
Local Authority		857,547	857,547
Nottinghamshire Police	78,000	59,038	137,038
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner		109,000	109,000
National Probation Service	45,000*	5,000	50,000
Clinical Commissioning Group	193,000		193,000
Youth Justice Service Grant		1,193,655	1,193,655
Turnaround Grant Funding		288,000	288,000
Total	316,000	2,512,240	2,828,240

*Probation allocation is 0.6 FTE probation officer and 0.4 FTE OMPSO

The youth justice service receives additional ‘in kind’ services from the county council in terms of infrastructure (accommodation, IT support), assistance with quality and performance monitoring / administration and business support.

The funding available to the service allows it to deliver statutory services in a holistic way, with children and young people receiving specialist support with their physical and emotional health, with input from qualified youth justice and youth work staff, and dedicated resource to support them with accessing education. The service is striving to broaden this holistic offer to those children and young people being supported on a voluntary basis also.

Grant and partnership contributions, including from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, allow the delivery of a robust preventative offer through the My Future Youth Support Programme. The service uses its grant, partner contributions and available resources to deliver a broad range of services. It has recently recruited additional early help case managers, enhancing its delivery model to include a more holistic approach and expanding on early preventative offers of support to more children and young people.





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