Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Strategic Plan

2026/27



Nottinghamshire County Council

Welcome to our annual Youth Justice Strategic Plan

We are delighted to present our Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2026/27.

I have recently had the privilege of taking on the role of Chair of the Youth Justice Partnership Board and have seen first-hand the strong commitment across the partnership to meeting the needs of children, families, victims and communities.

This strategy reflects the breadth and quality of work delivered by the Youth Justice Service, delivered in close collaboration with partners. It outlines progress against the priorities set out in the Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Strategy 2025/26 and establishes both new and continuing priorities for the year ahead. These priorities have been shaped through meaningful engagement with children, ensuring their voices and experiences are central to our approach.

We have also listened to parents and carers, who have highlighted the importance of work to sustain progress even after our involvement ends, as well as to feedback from victims, which emphasised the need to recognise children as victims and ensure they receive appropriate support. In addition, practitioners have shared increasing concerns about exploitation, violence, and evolving patterns of harm, all of which have informed our focus.

The priorities have been developed collaboratively with members of the Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Partnership Board, ensuring strong strategic ownership and accountability. Key statutory partners include Police, Health, Probation, Children's Social Care, and Education, who have each been instrumental in shaping this plan, and will be equally as important in delivering it.

Alongside supporting the statutory functions of the Youth Justice Service, this plan contributes to the strategic objectives of the Youth Justice Board (YJB). This annual strategy is underpinned by a range of detailed service and project plans, setting out how we will deliver against the high-level priorities outlined here.

Anne Coyle
Executive Director, Children and Families



Introduction



The Youth Justice Service (YJS) in Nottinghamshire meets all the statutory requirements of a YJS as set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and includes seconded staff from Police, Probation (1 seconded member of staff), and Futures (3 Education, Training and Employment advisers and 1 Delivery Manager). The Service have access to Clinical Nursing Specialists (CNS) who sit within the wider Nursing partnership who complete health assessments for children, signpost to primary health services and, where appropriate, complete brief interventions. The Service consists of Youth Justice Service Officers (YJSOs), Case Managers and Senior Case Managers all holding a relevant Level 4 vocational qualification, including but not limited to; Social Work, Probation, Police, Teaching or Youth Work JNC qualification. The recruitment of three Early Help Case Managers is a recent welcome addition to support our early intervention work funded by the Ministry of Justice Turnaround funding.

In addition to the multi-agency teams, the partnership commissions specialist external providers to help it deliver key statutory functions, such as substance use (Change Grow Live), reparation and victim services (Remedi) and appropriate adult work (The Appropriate Adult Service). The Service works in collaboration with a wide range of partners, having established referral pathways in place with CAMHS.

The key aims of the Youth Justice Service are to:

- **Reduce the number of children entering the criminal justice system (CJS)**
- **Reduce the frequency and rate of reoffending by children who are already within the youth justice system**
- **Keep the numbers of children experiencing custody – either on remand or as a sentence of the court – to a minimum.**



When compared to the national average, Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Service consistently performs well against the three main performance indicators, having a lower number of first-time entrants, a lower reoffending rate taken over the long term and a lower number of custodial sentences and remands.

The activities of the YJS are monitored and directed by the Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Partnership Board, which is chaired by the Executive Director for Children and Families, who provides oversight and scrutiny to the board.

In addition to its statutory partners, the Partnership Board benefits from having representatives from Education and Inclusion Services, Commissioning (Accommodation), Secure Estate, the Young People's Service, Probation, the Community Safety Partnership, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and a representative from the YJB. The board reports to the Safer Nottinghamshire Board, which feeds into the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Partnership Board meets on a quarterly basis with good attendance from all key partners who are represented at a senior level. A key strength of the board is its strong advocacy for children; to support this, the voice of the child is embedded within meetings, with children's views shared at the start to help set the context for the agenda.

Strategic leads who attend the board are linked to specific Key Performance Indicators and have taken lead roles in supporting delivery against specific elements of the Strategic Plan.



Progress and priorities

Progress

Over the past year, there were four priority areas of focus, driving activity across the partnership.

1 Education to be an increasingly protective factor for children involved with the Youth Justice Service (YJS) by working with schools and settings to ensure timely, appropriate support that meets children's individual needs.

This year, significant progress has been made in strengthening partnership working between Youth Justice, education providers, and wider stakeholders to improve outcomes for children and reduce the risk of their involvement in the criminal justice system. A key achievement has been the development of stronger collaborative arrangements with the Exclusion and Reintegration Service, with regular meetings now taking place to review attendance, exclusion and reintegration data. This has improved the partnership's ability to identify emerging concerns, target support earlier, and better understand the needs of children who may be at risk of exclusion or offending.

The Youth Justice Service has also worked closely with the Educational Psychology Service to explore opportunities for increasing awareness within schools of the factors associated with offending behaviour. This work aims to support earlier identification of children who may be vulnerable and ensure that timely and appropriate interventions are available before difficulties escalate. By strengthening links with education professionals, the partnership is helping schools to play a more proactive role in prevention and early intervention.

Partnership working with Schools Early Intervention Officers (SEIOs) has also progressed. The YJS has participated in a multi-agency task and finish group alongside the Violence Reduction Partnership and other key partners to review and strengthen the SEIO model. This has resulted in a clearer referral and communication pathway, improving joint working and ensuring children receive coordinated support. Work is now underway to enhance the quality and consistency of interventions delivered by SEIOs, drawing on best practice from other areas. This includes the development of an online interventions portal, which Nottinghamshire Police are seeking to commission, to provide practitioners with greater access to evidence-based resources and support.

The partnership has also continued to prioritise education, training and employment outcomes for older children. Post-16 support has been strengthened through increased engagement with colleges and additional ETE provision. For young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), robust transition and handover arrangements are in place to ensure ongoing support from relevant services when Youth Justice involvement comes to an end. While NEET levels remain higher than desired and continue to be an area of focus, these developments have strengthened pathways into support and improved continuity of provision for vulnerable young children.



2 Increasing access to health and well-being support for children involved with the Youth Justice Service, with the aim of improving overall health outcomes *and preventing escalation of unmet needs through early identification and intervention.*

Significant progress has been made across the partnership to improve support for children's emotional wellbeing, mental health, speech, language and communication needs.

This year, specialist NHS staff have been successfully recruited to the CAMHS Head2Head team, including Occupational Therapists, a Mental Health Nurse and a Speech and Language Therapist who are beginning to support children involved with the YJS. Their expertise will strengthen the identification, assessment and treatment of children with complex needs, ensuring they receive the right support at the right time.

Recognising the high number of children in the youth justice system who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and neurodiverse needs, the partnership has continued to prioritise early identification and support. SEND remains a key focus within the Youth Justice diversity strategy, overseen by the cross-authority Diversity Subgroup and reported through the City and County Youth Justice Partnership Boards.

Work has also continued to improve workforce knowledge and understanding of neurodiversity. Ongoing training has increased staff awareness of the prevalence and impact of neurodiverse needs, helping to shape service delivery and ensure support is better tailored to individual children.

In addition, the YJS has continued to play an active role in the OPCC's Trauma-Informed Delivery Group. Through workforce development, internal training and the continued rollout of trauma-informed approaches across partner agencies, staff are better equipped to understand the impact of trauma on children's behaviour and experiences, helping to ensure interventions are supportive, responsive and effective.

Together, these developments represent a significant step forward in improving health outcomes for children involved in the youth justice system and ensuring that unmet needs are identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity.

3 Work with partners to identify and meet the needs of children in the community, reducing their vulnerability

This year, the partnership has strengthened its approach to preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB) and reducing children's vulnerability by improving joint working, early intervention and community-based support.

A significant achievement has been the contribution to the development of a new countywide ASB policy. This ensures that children involved in ASB are viewed through the lens of their needs, vulnerabilities and circumstances, encouraging support and intervention at the earliest opportunity.

Partnership working between the YJS, Police and Community Safety teams has continued to improve, supported by greater management oversight and more consistent approaches across local areas. This has strengthened responses to children involved in ASB and improved coordination between agencies.

The YJS has also worked closely with Mansfield District Council and the Violence Reduction Partnership to establish referral pathways and successfully implement Young Futures Prevention Partnership Panels in Mansfield. These panels bring agencies together to identify children at risk and coordinate early support before concerns escalate.

Further progress has been made in strengthening early prevention activity. The YJS now undertakes enhanced screening of arrests, Police Protection Notifications (PPNs) and community resolutions to identify children who may benefit from support at the earliest stage. In addition, 'Turnaround' funding from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has enabled increased targeted preventative interventions designed to divert children away from offending behaviour and reduce future risks. This funding has now been secured for a further three years, providing continued opportunities to support vulnerable children within the community.

Collectively, these developments have strengthened Nottinghamshire's ability to identify and respond to children at risk earlier, providing more coordinated support and helping to reduce vulnerability, anti-social behaviour and future involvement in the youth justice system. The YJS will continue to build on this progress through close collaboration with the Community Safety Partnership and the wider strategic partners, ensuring a coordinated approach to prevention, early intervention and support for vulnerable children.



4 Driving improvements for victims in Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Service

Through our long-standing partnership with Remedi, we have continued to strengthen our offer to victims and improve how we understand, record and respond to the needs of victims of youth crime.

This year, we have undertaken a comprehensive review of our practice against His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's (HMIP's) revised inspection standards, which place greater emphasis on outcomes for victims. These audits have helped identify strengths and areas for improvement, informing a clear development plan to enhance the quality and consistency of support offered to victims.

Training and process improvements have been implemented across the service to ensure that both Restorative Justice Practitioners and case managers consistently consider victims' views, experiences and needs throughout their work. This has strengthened our victim-centred approach and improved how support is planned, delivered and recorded. While positive progress has been made, further development in this area will continue over the coming year.

We have also improved information sharing arrangements with Nottinghamshire Police, including access to information relating to protected characteristics. This has helped ensure that the individual needs and circumstances of victims can be better understood and considered when planning support and restorative interventions.

To ensure that victims have a stronger voice in shaping services, new processes have been introduced to independently gather feedback from victims about their experiences. This will help us better understand what is working well, identify areas for improvement and ensure that future service developments are informed directly by those who have been affected by crime.

Our continued collaboration with Remedi, alongside strengthened quality assurance, improved recording practices and a greater focus on victim outcomes, has helped ensure that victims remain at the centre of our work. We have also strengthened the support that is offered to victims of serious youth violence where there are contextualised safeguarding concerns. These developments are supporting the delivery of a more responsive, coordinated and effective service for victims of youth crime across Nottinghamshire.



Voice of children and their supporters

The service recognises that strong, positive relationships are key to helping children build their resilience and fulfil their potential. The importance of this approach is reflected in feedback that is gathered across all programmes of intervention, consistently highlighting relationship building as a core strength and one that is highly valued by children and the individuals who support them.

Parents have commented that:

> He took the time to understand my son's needs and adapted his style to my son's learning style. My son likes to get up and walk around, and stuff and Worker A always gave him time to do this, continuing the work with him afterwards.

> My son has shown me more respect and has not been hanging around bad crowds, he could understand the group he was starting to mix with wasn't the best company and seems to be going on the right path now.

> I truly feel that although our son understood the issues he had become involved in he did not know how to change or get out. We also did not know how to approach things.

> He really has turned our son's life around. We have our happy teen back and he has turned his back on a world he should never have got into.



Children have commented that:

> It has made me more aware of things properly that I didn't think or see before but now I see things through the eyes of a worker rather than through the eyes of a young person.

> It helped me work through my own problems, and everything that came with that. She was a huge support for me. Couldn't thank her enough for everything.

> I got support looking at colleges for me, to promote my independence, it was really helpful.

> He is the only worker that I have had real conversations with, I gave all the others lip service but I could see after the first session that he genuinely cares and could help me.

Making amends for their offending behaviour through reparation or restorative justice is a key part of supporting children to develop empathy and a positive, pro-social identity.

Engaging with victims in a safe and supported way helps children understand the impact of their behaviour, supporting meaningful desistance. At the same time, it ensures that victims' voices are heard and their needs are addressed.

Feedback from victims highlights the positive impact of this work...

> We're both so grateful to you for your kindness, compassion and care. I wouldn't have had anyone to speak to if I hadn't have had you. You kindly held space for me and gave so much reassurance and I needed that.

> The outcome of what you did has been life changing. He now feels much more confident to go to school since the meetings you arranged and more comfortable when he sees the boys who hit him. In fact, the very next day, after the final meeting, they all said hello to each other and it was such a relief for him and I'm sure for them too.

Priorities for 2026/27

This year the partnership has chosen to focus on four priority areas of service delivery.

These are:

1. **Improve inclusion and success within education**
2. **Ensure timely access to Social Emotional Mental Health and Wellbeing (SEMHW) and SEND provision for children and young people at key points (including custody, transitions and exclusion)**
3. **Reduce exploitation, victimisation and violence**
4. **Embed families as partners in intervention and change**



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1. Improve inclusion and success within education

Education remains a critical protective factor. The Partnership will strengthen its focus on ensuring children feel safe, supported and able to succeed within education, with particular attention to those at greatest risk of exclusion or disengagement.

- Strengthen targeted support for post-16 young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), improving engagement and progression outcomes.
- Strengthen transition planning into post 16 provision, reducing disengagement at key transition points.
- Work with partners to make sure vulnerable children in the YJS get fair and supportive education.
- Work with education partners to increase attendance and reduce school exclusions for vulnerable groups.





2. Ensure timely access to Social Emotional Mental Health and Wellbeing (SEMHW) and SEND provision for children at key points (including custody, transitions and exclusion)

Children consistently report difficulties accessing the right social, emotional, mental health and wellbeing (SEMHW) and SEND support at the right time. Delays, fragmented pathways, and limited awareness of available services can exacerbate existing needs and increase the risk of poor outcomes.

For 2026/27, the Partnership will prioritise the development of a more responsive, joined-up system that ensures children receive timely and appropriate support, particularly at key points of vulnerability.

- Ensure commissioned health provision is fully integrated across the partnership, reducing unmet need.
- Embed clear, multi-agency pathways for SEMH and SEND support, including at key points of risk (e.g. arrest, exclusion, pre/post custody and transition).
- Strengthen coordination between youth justice, health and education services to improve timeliness and continuity of support.
- Increase awareness and accessibility of social, emotional, mental health and wellbeing services through clear information, engagement and peer support opportunities.
- Embed trauma-informed practice consistently across the partnership.



3. Reduce exploitation, victimisation and violence

Children have told the Partnership that they are worried about becoming victims of crime, while practitioners continue to highlight increasing concerns around exploitation, violence, and changing patterns of harm. This priority reflects a clear commitment to strengthening safeguarding responses and ensuring children are recognised and supported as victims first. A Child First approach remains central, acknowledging that many children in contact with the youth justice system are themselves experiencing significant harm.

- Work with partners from across the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership to prioritise children who are victims of exploitation and crime, ensuring a safeguarding led and child first approach.
- Identify children who are victims of crime at the earliest opportunity and provide appropriate support, including preventative interventions where there are contextual safeguarding concerns.
- Develop prevention and intervention strategies to respond to peer violence, online exploitation and changing harm patterns.
- Embed a Child First, contextual safeguarding approach across all agencies, ensuring children are treated as victims first, not offenders.





4. Embed families as partners in intervention and change

Parents and carers play a fundamental role in sustaining positive outcomes for children, both during and beyond Youth Justice involvement. Feedback indicates that while relationships between families and the service are strong, there is a need to deepen co-production and ensure families feel confident and supported to maintain progress independently. For 2026/27, the Partnership will embed families more firmly as partners in intervention and change.

- Strengthen whole family approaches across all planning and interventions.
- Strengthen co production so that parents actively shape interventions and decision making.
- Improve forward planning and exit support so families are equipped to sustain positive outcomes beyond YJS involvement.
- Expand participation work to increase meaningful involvement of parents and carers.

Looking ahead, the YJS will be working with partners to identify where shared priorities intersect, strengthening alignment and maximising collective impact. The service will also continue to explore opportunities to work more closely with the voluntary and community sector, building on progress made this year to promote wider partnership working and strengthen planning for children and families as they move on from YJS involvement.



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