

Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Strategic Plan

2025/26



Nottinghamshire
County Council

Welcome to our annual Youth Justice Strategy

We are delighted to present our Youth Justice Strategy for 2025/26.

This strategy builds on the progress made against the priorities identified in the Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Strategy 2024/25 and sets out new and continued priorities for the year ahead - priorities which have been developed in collaboration with members of the Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Partnership Board to ensure strategic ownership and governance of the plan. Key contributors include Police, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Violence Reduction Partnership, Health and Commissioning, the Youth Justice Service, Probation, district councils, Children's Social Care and Education.

The input of families have been a critical component in developing the plan with key contributions from children who are part of the 'Young Voices' participation group in shaping the strategic plan and focusing on the priorities for children.

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 Nottinghamshire's Youth Justice Partnership Board (YJPB) in relation to its identified strategic objectives. This annual strategy is supported by a range of service and project plans which set out more detail on the steps we will take in pursuit of the high-level actions contained in this strategy.



Introduction

The Youth Justice Service in Nottinghamshire meets all the statutory requirements of a Youth Justice Service set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and includes seconded staff from Police, Probation and Futures (Education, Training and Employment). The service also has access to Clinical Nursing Specialists (CNS) who sit within the wider Nursing partnership. CNS complete health assessments for children, signpost to primary health services and, where appropriate, complete brief interventions.

In addition to the multi-agency teams, the service commissions external providers to help it deliver key statutory functions, including substance use (Change Grow Live), reparation and victim services (Remedi) and appropriate adult work (The Appropriate Adult Service).

The key aims of the Youth Justice Service is 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 taking over the long term and a lower number of custodial sentences and remands.

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

In addition to its statutory partners, Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Partnership Board also benefits from having representatives from Education and Inclusion Services, Commissioning (Accommodation), Secure Estate, the Young People's Service, the Community Safety Partnership, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and a representative from the Youth Justice Board. The Partnership Board meets on a quarterly basis with good attendance from all key partners who are represented at a senior level.



Progress and priorities

Progress

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

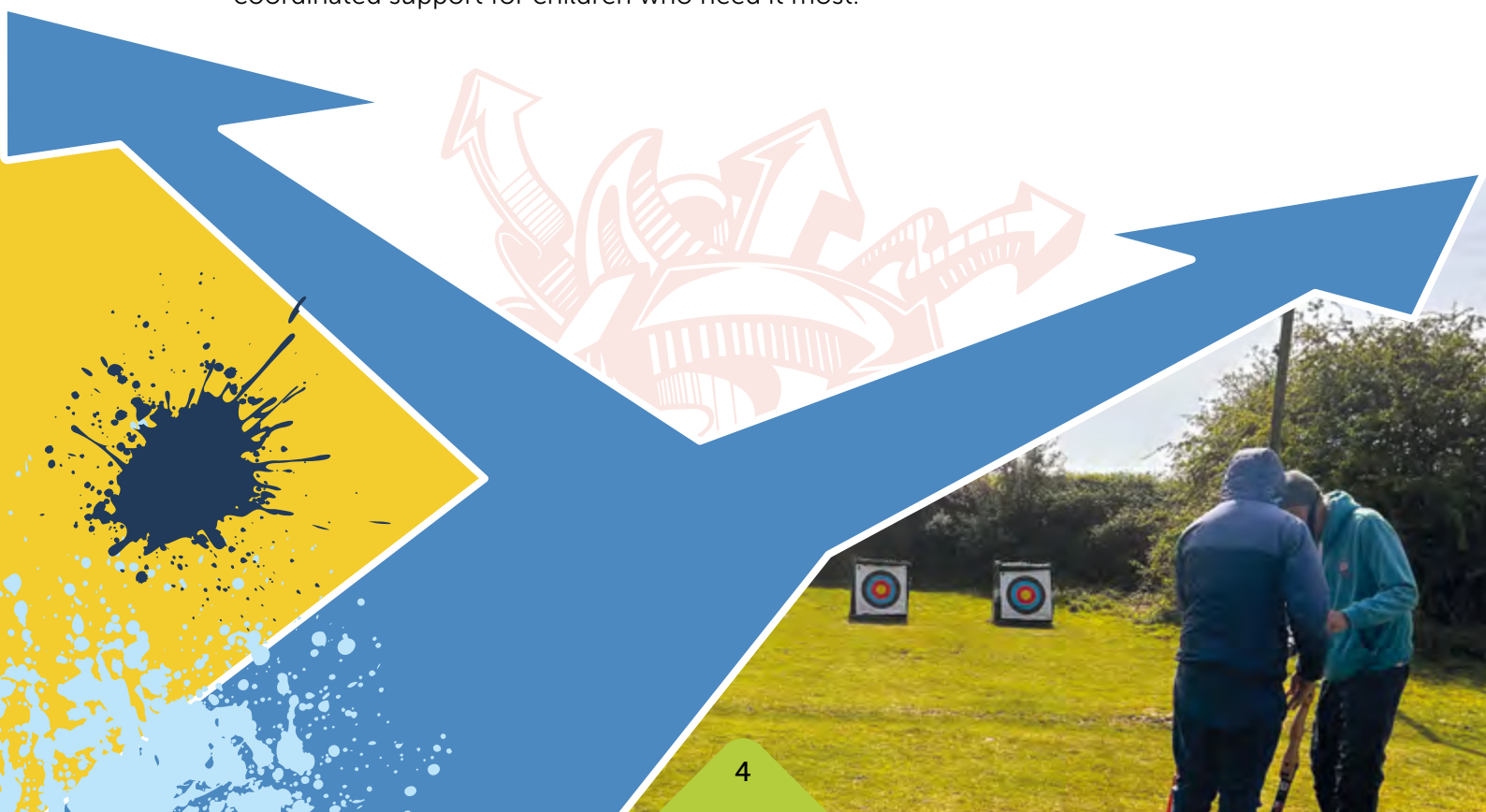
These areas were:


- 1 For education to be an increasingly protective factor for children**
Over the past year, Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Service made progress in strengthening its approach to education and early intervention. A detailed report on suspensions and exclusions was shared with the Board, highlighting rising trends and reinforcing the importance of education as a protective factor. This insight will shape future strategic planning and deepen Youth Justice Service in local efforts to reduce exclusions from education.

To enhance staff capability, training on Nottinghamshire's graduated response to Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) has been delivered, with further development underway to build understanding of the Education Code of Practice and key roles within the education system. The service continues to ensure that children known to the Youth Justice Service are in suitable education, with seconded Education, Training and Employment advisers supporting access to appropriate provision. Numbers of children not in education remain low and are closely monitored.

The Youth Justice Service has also worked collaboratively with schools and partners to build capacity in the delivery of early intervention. Workshops, targeted school-based interventions, and joint development sessions have helped raise awareness and strengthen partnerships.

Finally, the service has contributed to a wider review of education partnerships, helping to shape future work in the development of a framework for joint working between the Youth Justice Service, schools, and Schools Early Intervention Officers (SEIOs); ensuring timely, coordinated support for children who need it most.





2 To improve the health outcomes for children that were working with the Youth Justice Service


The service has continued to prioritise the health and wellbeing of children, with a particular focus on those presenting with Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB), neurodiversity, and mental health needs.

The rising concern around online sexual harm has been actively explored through the HSB group. In response, partners have committed to expanding the specialist CAMHS Head 2 Head team to better support children with complex needs, including those not subject to statutory outcomes. This enhanced offer will provide a more holistic approach through additional clinical roles supporting the work of the Youth Justice Service which is set to launch in summer 2025.

Efforts to improve access to mental health and speech, language, and communication support have progressed through strengthened links with the Staying Close Multi-Disciplinary Team, ensuring children in supported accommodation receive joined-up care.

Understanding and responding to the needs of children with SEND remains a key focus. Recent analysis has deepened insight into the prevalence of neurodevelopmental needs among first-time entrants to the Youth Justice Service. This has led to stronger connections with commissioning and transformation teams, and the establishment of a neurodiversity task and finish group.

Work is also underway to strengthen the autism pathway and improve how services support children's individual needs. These developments will inform future planning and ensure that health and wellbeing remain central to the work of the Youth Justice Service.



3 For the partnership to identify and meet the needs of children in the community, reducing their vulnerability and risk

Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Service has been working closely with police and community partners to develop a more consistent and collaborative approach to tackling anti-social behaviour involving children. While strategic agreement has been reached on the need for a cross-district policy, operational progress is still developing. Identified leads from the Youth Justice Service and Police Prevention Hub are working to build momentum, with promising engagement from local community safety partnerships.

Learning from other regions has informed this work, and joint training sessions with Neighbourhood Policing Teams and Community Safety staff are already underway. The Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) is also coordinating efforts to strengthen detached youth work across the county, supporting efforts to reduce children's vulnerability in the community.

Efforts are being made to improve the Youth Justice Service oversight of police-led community resolutions, particularly in support of wider work around groups of children who are overrepresented in the Criminal Justice Service.

4 To ensure that children who are subject to bail and remand processes receive high quality of service

Work is underway across Nottinghamshire to ensure children subject to bail and remand processes receive a high-quality, child-centred service. Police, Youth Justice Service (city and county), and Children's Social Care have re-established regular meetings to review overnight remands, assess their appropriateness, and share learning. These meetings are supported by a revised protocol aimed at frontline staff, with youth justice playing a key role in bail enquiries and early intervention.

Efforts to improve the use of police bail are also progressing. Multi-agency discussions have focused on how to reduce unnecessary time in custody and improve joint working under PACE. These discussions have informed updates to the PACE policy, which now includes clearer guidance on bail and oversight of remands. Monitoring of these processes will continue to ensure effective and proportionate responses to children in the justice system.

Custodial remands are being routinely monitored through performance reporting and reviewed quarterly by the Board. This aligns with the expectations of the 2025 Youth Remand Concordat ([gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100000/youth-remand-concordat-2025.pdf)), which calls for greater scrutiny of potentially inappropriate remands.

5 To develop and implement a diversity strategy and framework to support staff in assessment and delivering interventions that reflect children's needs

In response to recommendations from HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP), this year a multi-agency working group has been established to lead the development and implementation of a diversity strategy for Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Service. This group includes partners from Children's Social Care, Police, Education, the OPCC, and both city and county Youth Justice Service teams. The strategy has been agreed by the Board and is now supported by quarterly meetings, chaired by the Violence Reduction Partnership's strategic lead.

Recognising the need for a joined-up approach, the group has aligned with the city Youth Justice Services to strengthen collaboration across shared areas such as health and policing. The Diversity and Disproportionality Group will report annually to the Board, ensuring transparency and accountability.

The Partnership Board will embed oversight processes to monitor progress and respond to recommendations aimed at reducing disparity within services and across local Criminal Justice Services. These priorities will be reviewed regularly and refreshed every three years, ensuring the strategy remains responsive and relevant.

Voice of children, parents and carers

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, parents and carers.

Children have commented that:

“He got me into a youth centre and because of him I made new friends.”

“We made a plan together and there was no messing around.”

“My youth justice worker was very supportive and helpful and listened to everything I had to say.”

“I haven't been arrested again. I don't chill with stupid people anymore.”

“I always got a say in what happened, sometimes we needed to do things, sometimes I could choose.”

“I told them what I wouldn't be comfortable with, and they listened and gave me options.”

“My worker asked me what I wanted help with, and we did sessions based on what I wanted.”

“She does an amazing job and has been a massive support.”

“I was able to freely speak about situations without any issues and was listened to whilst doing so.”

“He listened; we went shopping as I needed some new clothes.”

“My worker helped me not get arrested and got me a job.”

Parents have commented that:

“We would have never got through our journey without our Youth Justice worker, it's been a difficult time and having them be a consistent support has helped us as parents. I felt she always had Jo's best interest at heart.”

“Our worker was great from the get-go, she made myself and my son very comfortable and on meeting Sam, she started to put together a plan of what work she would be doing with my son.”

“Our worker was effective in building relationships, making it easy to talk openly and listen to each other.”

“We worked together every step of the way. Our worker considered the impact on the family as a whole and made the support work in everyone's best interests.”

“We all sat and made a plan together and listened to me when other things cropped up, she always spoke to me before making any referrals and explained the benefits.”

“Our worker communicated with me at every step and ensured I agreed what was being put into place for my child.”



Priorities for 2025/26

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

These are:

- ✓ Keeping children in education and out of the Criminal Justice System
- ✓ Increasing access to health and well-being support for children involved with the Youth Justice Service
- ✓ Working together to support children and reduce vulnerability in Nottinghamshire
- ✓ Driving improvements for victims in Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Service



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1. Keeping children in education and out of the Criminal Justice System

Staying in education is one of the strongest protective factors against offending. That's why Nottinghamshire's Youth Justice Service and its partners continue to work closely with schools and educational settings to ensure children get the right support at the right time.

The partnership is focused on identifying children who may be vulnerable to becoming involved in the Criminal Justice System, such as those experiencing school suspensions or behavioural challenges, and responding with timely, supportive interventions. The aim is to help children remain engaged in education and be diverted from the Criminal Justice System through, inclusive, preventative approaches.

A key part of this work involves developing a clear framework for joint working between schools, the police, and the Youth Justice Service to strengthen early intervention and ensure children receive timely and co-ordinated support.

This year the partnership will:

- ▶ Use school exclusion data to target and evaluate preventative projects aimed at keeping children engaged in education.
- ▶ Strengthen communication and collaboration between schools, Schools Early Intervention Officers (SEIOs : Police), and the Youth Justice Service to ensure children are receiving the right support.
- ▶ Raise awareness in schools about the needs of children who may be vulnerable to becoming involved with the Criminal Justice Service, promoting trauma-informed and inclusive practices.
- ▶ Improve Youth Justice support for children with SEND through reviewing current practices and working with partners to enhance the service offer.
- ▶ Expand support for young people post-16, including mentoring and transition planning, to improve long-term outcomes.



2. Increasing access to health and well-being support for children involved with the Youth Justice Service

Work is underway to improve how services identify and support children across all stages of their journey, whether at risk, currently involved, or exiting the justice system. The Youth Justice Service remains committed to the early identification of neurodiversity needs, and adopting trauma informed approaches, to support children effectively, improving health outcomes and meeting any unmet need. The focus is on early intervention, particularly for children from overrepresented groups, by promoting access to early help and improving pathways to support identification.

Plans are underway to integrate specialist health professionals into the Youth Justice Service. These roles will support staff in the Youth Justice Service in working with children with complex needs, including those presenting with HSB, through clear referral pathways and a holistic, multi-agency approach.

Recognising the importance of neurodiversity, the service is working with partners to raise awareness, develop screening tools, and ensure timely access to specialist support. Joint training opportunities will help staff across the partnership to better understand the links between neurodiversity, trauma, and offending behaviour.

Feedback from children, parents and carers highlights that unmet needs in mainstream education are contributing to disengagement and increasing the risk of exclusion. Children consistently tell us that they want to be in education, while parents and carers value the Youth Justice Service's collaborative work with schools to ensure that appropriate plans are in place to support their child and keep them in education.

Families also report challenges in accessing health support for their children. Many face long waiting times for assessments or are unsure where to turn for help. This feedback has directly shaped this year's strategy and ambition; to improve access to health and well-being support for children, and to children with the right support at the right time to keep children in education and out of the Criminal Justice System.



3. Working together to support children and reduce vulnerability in Nottinghamshire

Nottinghamshire's Youth Justice Service and its partners are continuing to strengthen their approach to supporting children involved in anti-social behaviour, recognising it as a potential early indicator of wider risks and vulnerabilities, particularly regarding harms outside the home. While many agencies already work together in the community, there is now a renewed focus on creating a more coordinated and consistent response.

A new multi-agency strategy is being developed to ensure that responses to anti-social behaviour are child centred, timely and effective. This includes establishing clear policies, referral pathways and early interventions, informed by best practice from across the region. The partnership is also working closely with the Violence Reduction Partnership to embed Young Futures Prevention Panels as part of this approach.

By improving how agencies share information, respond to concerns, and refer children to early support services, the aim is to reduce risk and avoid criminalisation, improving outcomes for children. Monitoring data, including protected characteristics, will ensure that support is fair, inclusive, and tailored to each child's individual circumstances.



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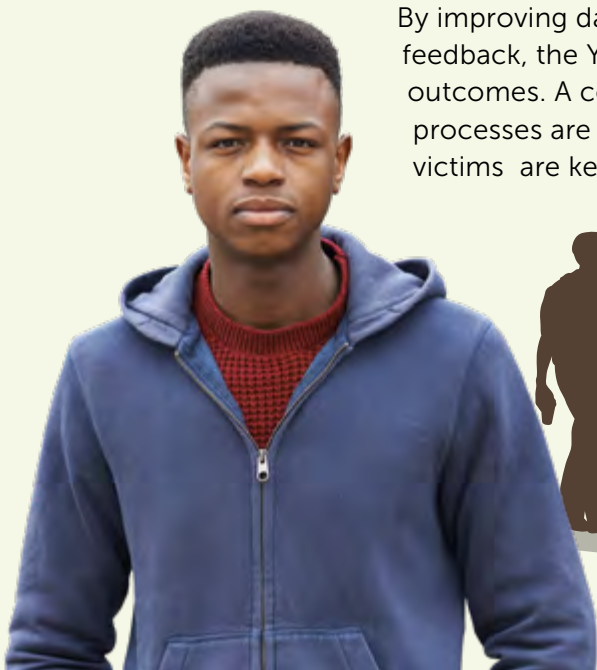


4. Driving improvements for victims in Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Service

For over 15 years, Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Service has worked in close partnership with Remedi to support the victims of children who have offended. This long-standing collaboration reflects the service's dedication to restorative justice and victim care.

Alongside updated inspection standards from HM Inspectorate of Probation, which place greater emphasis on outcomes for victims, the Youth Justice Service is strengthening its approach. This year, the focus is on improving the consistency of practice and effectiveness of its response to victim's needs. Key priorities include listening to victim's voices, improving levels of support and ensuring that restorative justice processes are victim centred.

By improving data collection, closer collaboration, and gathering regular feedback, the Youth Justice Service aims to deliver more meaningful outcomes. A core part of this work also involves ensuring robust processes are in place to ensure that both current and potential victims are kept safe within the community.





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