

Reading Youth Justice Plan 2024 - 25



Protecting Our Communities



**Youth
Justice
Service**
Reading



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1. Introduction, Vision and Strategy

Welcome to our 2024-25 Reading Youth Justice Strategic Plan and vision. I am confident that this plan will support the strategic partnership to deliver the highest quality Youth Justice Services in Reading and sets clear strategic priorities for 2024 and beyond. This year's Plan builds on strong multi-agency foundations and aims to move us towards our ambition of a fully developed practice model of Child First and identity development practice.

The plan is aligned with the priorities of our Brighter Futures for Children Business Plan 2024-26, the priorities of our Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnerships, and Thames Valley Police's Strategic plan 2024-25 and Race Action Plan 2023-26.

This strategic plan gives an overview of the work of the Youth Justice Service (YJS) in Reading. It sets out details of performance over the past year and our priorities for the next year.

Both the YJS Management Board and the staffing team have been involved in the development of this plan and have agreed that driving Child First and Identity Development practice will be the overarching focus for the service. The Board and service are ambitious to develop this approach and build on the strong practice in 2023-24.

With this in mind, the Board and Service have identified the following as the overarching focus and vision of the Youth Justice Partnership in Reading:

We are aspirational for children and victims of crime in Reading. We are confident that by embedding child first and identity focused approaches to practice across the partnership, we will see improved outcomes in 2024/25. We prioritise the needs of children and victims and will always seek to see children 'as children', build pro-social identity, collaborate with children and divert from stigma'.

This is a shared partnership vision for the Youth Justice Service in Reading, one which permeates across this strategic plan into everything we do.

The Youth Justice Service has a key role to play by:

- Diverting children away from the youth justice system, where appropriate.
- Helping prevent offending and reoffending.
- Reducing the use of custody.
- Contributing to multi-agency public protection and safeguarding.
- Adopting evidence-based approaches such as Child First Practice, Trauma Informed Practice, identity development and whole family approaches to youth justice.

The Youth Justice Service does this by working together with its key partners – the police, children's services, health services, education, probation, community safety and both voluntary and private sector providers – to deliver high quality and effective services to children, their families and the victims of offending.



The overall effectiveness of the Youth Justice Service continues to be monitored by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and this year will continue to be monitored by a wider set of Key Performance Indicators that link directly to the service's core aims for children, families and their communities. The new KPIs will support us to drive improvement across the partnership and further improve the lives of children, families and victims of crime in Reading.

Overall, our local data indicates that we have more work to do for children and victims in Reading. We have strong foundations and a well-resourced multi-agency partnership and feel confident that a focus on child first and identity development for 2024-25 will see outcomes for children and victims improve this year.

In 2023-24, 37 children became first time entrants, a 48% increase on the number in the previous year which was 25. This is a sharp increase which means that the rate of children entering the youth justice system has now overtaken that of all comparator groups. This demonstrates the importance of creating a robust prevention and diversion strategy, in the lead up to the end of the Ministry of Justice funded Turnaround programme in March 2025. Whilst the actual increase in numbers of individual children is small, we know we need to do more in this space. The announcement of the launch of Outcome 22 across Thames Valley, following challenge and support of Police colleagues via the YJ Management Board and across the Thames Valley area, is an important development in this area.

Reoffending data also remains challenging with 35.6% of children reoffending from the 12 month cohort ending June 2022. This represents a 6% increase on the previous 12 month period. In actual numbers this represents an increase from 20 children reoffending to 21, with a reduction in the overall tracking cohort having an impact on the percentage. The number of reoffences per child who has reoffended also increased in the same period to 4.9, a 22% increase on the previous 12 month period. Again, this tells us that more work is needed to develop the effectiveness of our interventions, ensuring that we are consistently working to Child First and trauma informed principles that support the development of positive identity.

The rate of custodial sentences remained static at 0.12 per 1000 of the 10-17 year old population for 2023-24 for the second year running. In actual numbers this amounts to 4 custodial sentences for 2 children. There were 4 children who were Remanded to Youth Detention Accommodation, for a total of 394 bed nights. We know we have a very small and complex group of children for whom we need to do more as a partnership to change their trajectory. Again, the overarching vision and practice approach planned for the service and partnership is directly intended to target this.

Children from Global Majority groups continue to be over-represented in the Youth Justice System in Reading, compared to the general 10-17 year old population. With those who identify as of mixed ethnicity being most significantly over-represented. We also know that black children are more likely to commit offences that are attributed a higher gravity score and therefore receive higher level outcomes. This reinforces the importance of the work that has been driven by the partnership on disproportionality in 2023-24 and indicates that more needs to continue with this work in 2024-25.

In the 12 months ending December 2023, there were 15 Serious Youth Violence offences resulting in a substantive outcome, which is an increase of 6 on the previous 12 month period. The rate per 10,000 is now higher than the YJS Family, South East and National averages. There are initiatives planned for



2024-25 which aim to improve the effectiveness of partnership working as well as to develop specific interventions for children at risk of entering into serious youth violence, that are outlined within the plan.

We know that within our Youth Justice Service, we have a significant number of children with complex and multiple needs due to having experienced abuse, trauma and neglect as well as Special Education Needs and Disabilities and Speech and Language needs. Over the duration of this plan, we intend to focus our approach on proactively addressing trauma and supporting children with identity development. As a result, we continue to prioritise our focus on ETE, emotional and mental health and the participation of children to support identity development. To do this well, we must ensure that we work in partnership with our colleagues in Children's Social Care, Education, Health and others.

2024-25 Youth Justice strategic priorities

The 2023-24 performance data, YJB Serious Youth Violence toolkit, and YJB ethnic disparity toolkit, combined with local and national drivers for systems change in youth justice have informed the following changes in our strategic priorities:

- Reducing First Time Entrants
- Reducing Reoffending
- Reducing the use of custody
- Positively addressing disproportionality
- Reducing Serious Youth Violence
- Embedding Child First and Identity Development Practice as the practice model across the partnership
- Improving outcomes for victims of youth crime

The following theme will cut across these priorities:

- Reducing the number of children who are Not in Education, Employment or Training or who are not receiving their full entitlement of education.

On behalf of the YJS Management Board, I am pleased to present our Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2024-25.



Michael O'Connor
Independent Chair, Reading Youth Justice Service Management Board



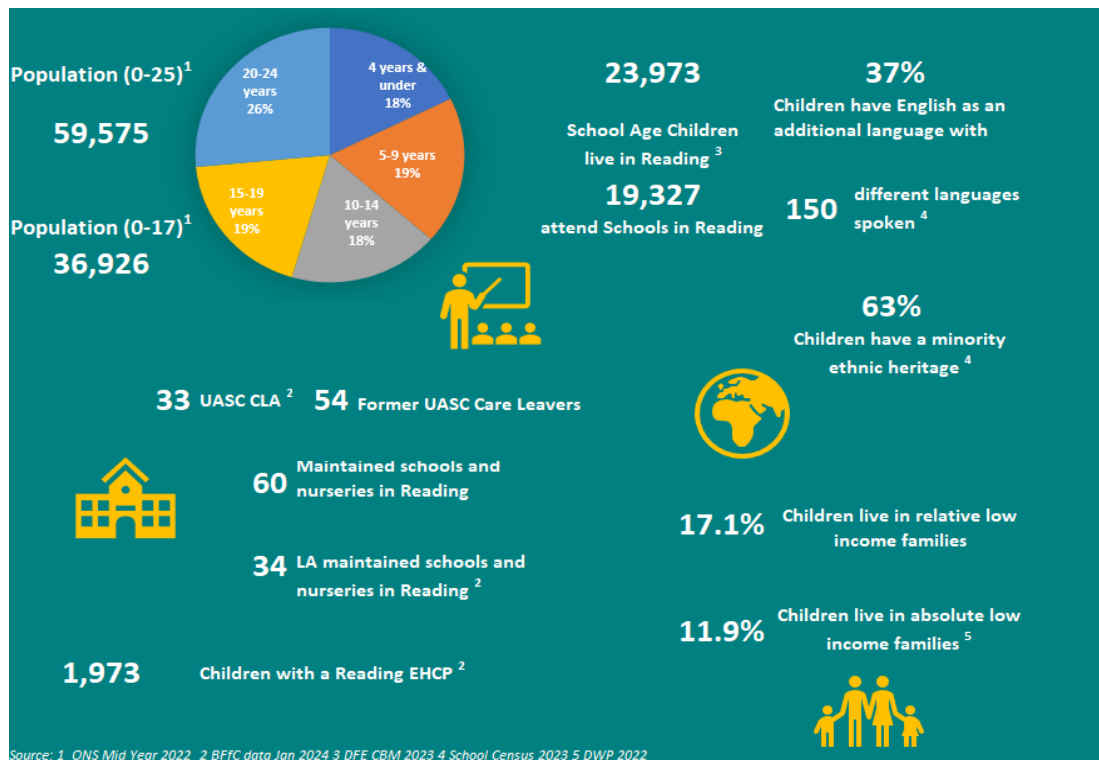
2. Local Context

Reading is a thriving and diverse town. It is home to 174,200 people (2021 Census) which is an increase of almost 12% since the census of 2011. This is higher than the overall increase for England (6.6%) and the South East (7.5%). The overall population in Reading is young, diverse and dynamic with 59,575 children aged between 0 and 18 years of age and 39,936 aged between 10 and 17 years of age (ONS 2022 mid-year). It is a diverse community with 63% of children from Global Majority groups. 37% of children speak English as an additional language. There are more than 150 languages spoken (School Census 2023).

The percentage of children under 16 living in low-income families in Reading is 17.1% with 11.9% living in absolute low income (DWP 2022), compared with 18.5% nationally in 2020. There are limited non-academic and vocational pathways at post 16 and whilst the employment rate in Reading is good, disadvantaged groups including children who have offended have more difficulties in accessing employment opportunities. There are 60 maintained schools and nurseries and 34 Local Authority maintained school and nurseries in Reading. There are 1,973 children with an Education Health and Care Plan in Reading. There are 33 current and 54 former Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) resident in Reading (BfC Jan 2024).

Reading is one of the 3 top crime generating CSP areas in the Thames Valley Community Safety Partnership and has the second highest levels of serious violence in the Thames Valley. Recorded crime is at a similar level to other similar Community Safety Partnership areas across the country.

The following infographic illustrates some of this data:



3. Governance, Leadership and Partnership Arrangements

The Youth Justice Service is located within the Family Help and Safeguarding Directorate of Brighter Futures for Children (BfFC). BfFC are a not-for-profit company, independent of but wholly owned by Reading Borough Council, contracted to deliver children's social care, early help & prevention, education services, including Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Youth Justice Service and fostering and adoption services.

The vision of BfFC is to protect and enhance the lives of the children of Reading and help families find long-term solutions to ensure children lead happy, healthy and successful lives. By 2025 the aspiration of the company is to have developed and embedded new ways of working with and for the community to help families avoid situations which compromise the safety and wellbeing of children and prevent them from reaching the thresholds for statutory intervention.

The Service Manager has joint responsibility for Extra Familial Harm, and reports to the Head of Service for Family Help and Partnerships. The Head of Service has joint responsibility for Early Help Services, Children's Single Point of Access (front door), children missing and exploitation.

The Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB) currently has an Independent Chair since August 2023 and this is supporting us to ensure there is appropriate challenge and support at the strategic partnership to improve outcomes for children and victims in Reading. The YJMB has representation from all statutory partners as well as a range of non-statutory partners, including representatives from the third sector. The current membership of the YJMB is outlined in section 6 and the overall structure of the Youth Justice Service is detailed in Appendix 1.



Operationally, the service benefits from the following partnership arrangements:

- 1 FTE Seconded Police Officer
- 0.5 FTE Probation Officer Post. This is currently vacant as a result of ongoing recruitment and retention challenges in the Probation Service. The Probation Service provide funding to the partnership, in lieu of a seconded officer. A 'concentrator model' is in operation throughout the Probation Delivery Unit which involves one manager, 3 Probation Officers and 3 – 4 Probation Service Officers, to focus solely on Youth cases.
- 0.33 FTE Child and Adolescent mental Health (CAMHS) clinician
- 0.2 FTE Speech and Language Therapist
- 0.27 FTE NHS Nurse.

4. Update on the previous year:

4.1 Progress on priorities in the previous plan

The following table outlines the actions identified in last year’s Youth Justice Strategic Plan and the progress made against these.

Priority one: Reduce first time entrants into the criminal justice system	
Action	Progress
Evaluate school-based Rise Up project	<p>The Rise Up project ceased at year end 22/23. The project delivered one to one work with 16 children identified as at risk of exclusion from secondary school. The year end report submitted in April 2023 reported that of those 16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% had a decrease in conduct points whilst on the project. • 70% increased their attendance at school – some significantly. • 67% had no exclusions since the start of the support. • No children within the cohort had entered into the youth justice system. • 2 children had escalated into statutory services and one had de-escalated from statutory services. • Parents and carers were asked how much they understood the behaviour policy in the school at the start and end of our involvement. 100% of the parents said they understood the policy more at the end of our involvement than they did at the start. 99% of the parents said they felt their relationship with the school had improved since the project.



<p>Develop project to support children at risk of permanent exclusion following learning from Rise Up Project</p>	<p>A bid for funding was submitted to the Community Safety Partnership to continue to deliver the Rise Up project, to support children at risk of exclusion. This bid was not successful. The intention remains to deliver a piece of preventative work in this space and plans are being explored in order to deliver this for 2025-26.</p>
<p>Continue to develop Turnaround Project</p>	<p>The Turnaround Project was live before the start of the year, but 23/24 saw the project embedded fully. The target number of children required to successfully have completed an intervention by March 2025 is 59. As of June 2024 the YJS have successfully engaged 32 children and are in the process of offering support to a further 20.</p> <p>At the time of writing, none of the children who have successfully completed an intervention through Turnaround have gone on to receive a formal judicial outcome or Youth Caution</p>
<p>Peer review action plan delivered</p>	<p>The following pieces of work have been delivered as part of this action plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning of external support to improve the quality of assessments, management oversight and case management. • The introduction of community courts (Community Justice Panels). • Implementation of Turnaround • The launch of the Out of Court Joint Decision making panel



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thames Valley Police have now confirmed the launch of Outcome 22 as an available disposal. • The development of a disproportionality action plan.
<p>Overall impact: Whilst there has been an increase in the rate of children becoming FTE's in 2023-24 in the previous 12 month period, actual numbers remain relatively small. We have recognised the need to respond strategically to address this and have worked hard to challenge and support Thames Valley Police to launch outcome 22 in 2024-25. Driving this approach will continue to be a focus for the partnership moving forward.</p> <p>Following the Rise Up Project, the school that was part of the project saw a significant reduction in exclusions. The approach taken within Rise Up will continue to be embedded in our approach across the partnership in 2024-25</p>	

Priority two: Address Disproportionality/over representation within YJS cohort	
Action	Progress
Develop YJS Disproportionality strategy with contributions from all partners	The YJS has developed a Disproportionality Action plan that reports to the YJMB. This has made some progress in 2023-24 and will continue in 2024-25
Develop and deliver action plan to address any disproportionality issues within YJS cohort	The Disproportionality Action Plan was developed via the Youth Justice Service Management Board. This involves contributions from partners and is monitored via the YJMB. The Disproportionality Action Plan will be reviewed and developed further in 2024-25.



	<p>Following challenge at the YJS Management Board, the YJS and partners completed an audit on Stop and Search which was presented to the YJMB. This led to a number of actions which are being progressed to address the disproportionate use of Stop and Search and to further enhance safeguarding procedures for children who are stopped and searched.</p>
<p>Overall impact: Global Majority children overall, and most significantly, children of mixed ethnicity continue to be disproportionately represented in the YJS caseload and this will continue to be a priority area of work for the partnership moving forward.</p>	

<p>Priority three: Reduce the impact of serious youth violence</p>	
<p>Action</p>	<p>Progress</p>
<p>Implement recommendations from BWSCP Thematic Child Safeguarding Review: services provided to children and their families in relation to serious youth violence –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit protocol between YJS and CSC to review how effectively the protocol is working • Revise protocol in light of above findings. <p>Ensure YJS participation and involvement in multi-agency partnership meetings involving serious violence eg CSP sub group, VRU</p>	<p>Work to develop a problem profile indicating areas of disparity of service provision is continuing and will sit within the Community Safety Partnership’s work under the Serious Violence Duty.</p> <p>The review of exploitation oversight meetings have led to the use of Exploitation Team Around the Child (ETAC) meetings to which YJS are routinely invited.</p> <p>The YJS have contributed to strands of the CSP plan around serious violence and violence against women and girls.</p>



	<p>The Young Voices project in Reading enables the participative approach of children to contribute to strategy and has been involved in Community Safety and Serious Violence planning.</p> <p>The Working together with Social Care Protocol has been revised.</p>
<p>Overall impact: Data from the YJB Serious Youth Violence toolkit indicates that there has been an increase in the rate of SYV in Reading in the most recent period. This continues to be a key area of focus for the partnership moving forward. The YJS will receive support from the Youth Endowment Fund as part of the Assisted Leaders Programme pilot in 2024-25 to develop an improved response to serious violence, as well as the PCC funded Act Now programme. The latter will offer some prevention resource for serious violence to sit within schools.</p>	

<p>Priority Four: Increase opportunities for participation and involvement of children within YJS</p>	
<p>Action</p>	<p>Progress</p>
<p>Develop Community/Peer court</p>	<p>Community Justice Panels have been launched, volunteers trained and panels have started. This work will continue in 2024-25 and there will be an evaluation of impact.</p>
<p>Involve children in the rebranding of the YJS including logos and new location</p>	<p>This was completed. Both the new name of the service and the logo were informed by children’s views. In 2024-25 we will continue to develop this within our child first approach and build on our purpose designed facility for the YJS in Reading</p>
<p>Undertake regular service user feedback on services provided by YJS as well as court and Police custody experiences. Ensure children are informed about outcomes from their comments and/or suggestions to improve services.</p>	<p>Court Experience and Police Custody feedback has been collated and presented to the Youth Justice Management Board. Assessments include feedback from children and parents involved with the service.</p>



Overall impact: Community Justice panels have started this year affording the opportunity to demonstrate procedural justice, and to allow children to reflectively explore offending behaviour in a future focussed process.	

Other notable pieces of work

Following challenge at the YJ Management Board, In March 2024 the YJS set up the Joint Decision Making Panel with colleagues in Thames Valley Police, to ensure there is a partnership approach to Out of Court Decision making. The Panel includes the YJS, Thames Valley Police, as well as colleagues from Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS), Children's Social Care, Family Help (Early Help), and Education.

In February an open event was held with colleagues who work at Katesgrove Community Hub for partners and the public to share some of the work that is completed with children who attend the services based in the building. This successfully showcased this work and enabled attendees to have a better sense of the work that is undertaken at the Hub.

The YJS has continued to support the development of the parent led support group for parents of exploited children. This has provided an opportunity for parents to feel empowered and work together as a group to keep their children safe. Their involvement in some partnership learning work has helped practitioners further understand the impact of exploitation on caregivers. The group were able to present their experiences and thoughts to a group of professionals. Some feedback included:

'This should happen more often. More people need to hear this'

'it feel that hearing individual experiences allows you to open your world view and see varied experiences'

'Definitely - this will mean more than any training. I have been on is only one where I have understood family experience. I don't think, despite all the CPDS and safety meeting, we manage to hear all the things parents are doing - not like we did today.'

'I always try to remember the whole family but this has reminded me to be all inclusive in decisions / discussions'

The YJS submitted entries from the Snapshots project (a created self-expression postcard project) to the Koestler Trust 24 exhibition.

The YJS undertook some research with Children who had been to court as part of an audit into Court work and asked them of their experience of being at court. The research showed:

There are a number of delays in the whole Criminal Justice Process that may be difficult for children who are involved to understand. There are also delays with having cases resolved at Court. Children really valued having people with them to support them and also help them understand some of the things that happen at court. The court experience exacerbates some of the feelings of unfairness that children may have who are appearing in court. The YJS have presented constructive challenge to colleagues from His Majesties Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS), who are part of the YJ Management board, in respect of this. HMCTS involvement on the board also allowed feedback and direct challenge from a child who attended the board meeting in March 2024, regarding the difficulties in understanding his experiences at Court.

The Management Board have made the commitment this year to having the voice of children, families and victims heard at the Board. Children have attended the Board over the year and it is planned to regularly include Service users at Board Meetings.

Through this year the YJS were involved in both renaming the service and designing the logo. In both processes children involved in the service were consulted and their responses were weighted greater



than other professionals and services that are not as connected to the service. This initiative marked the beginning of the service’s journey towards adopting a child first approach.

The YJS support Young Voices, an initiative in Reading that seeks to include the views of children in key decisions. Young Voices have contributed to Community Safety Planning and were involved in developing the [Strategy for Keeping Children Safe from Harm in Reading](#).

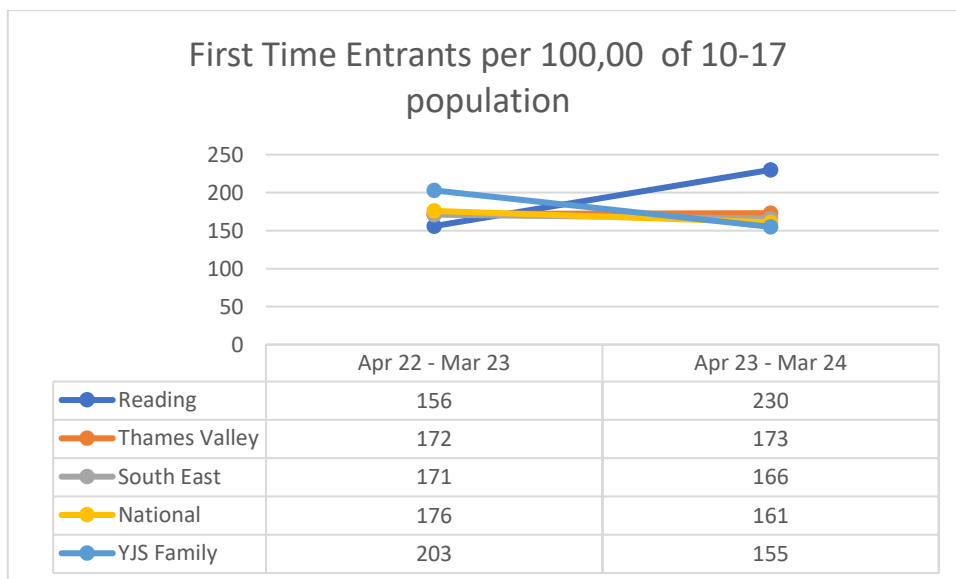
The YJS is supporting the Elevate Programme, which assists those who have previously had contact with the criminal justice system, gain vital exposure to strategic meetings and networks in public sector roles, to assist them in being prepared to advance in to leadership roles in the future.

3.2 Performance over the previous year

The following data is provided for the most recently available period for each indicator. It shows performance for the most recent period, compared against the previous equivalent period.

First Time Entrants

Performance data for the most recently available 12 month period demonstrates a 48% increase in the rate of children entering the Youth Justice System for the first time in Reading, when compared with the equivalent period in the previous year. With a rate of 230 children per 100,000 of the 10-17 population, the rate continues to be significantly higher than all comparator groups. In actual numbers, this amounts to 37 children entering the Youth Justice System in 2023-24, compared to 25 in the previous 12 months.



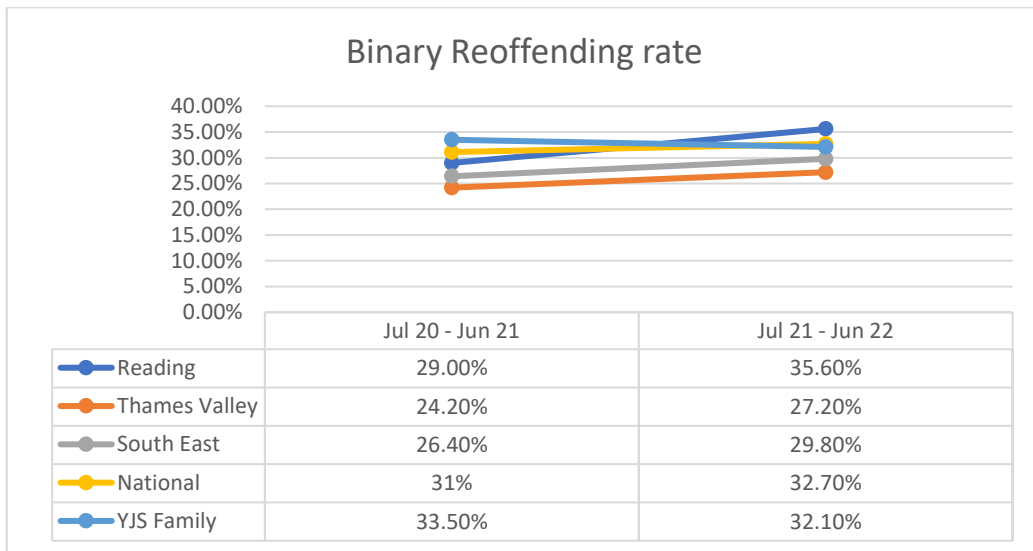
Whilst the numbers remain small, we know we need to do more work in this space. We believe that the absence of Outcome 22 as an available option for prevention and diversion has been a potential



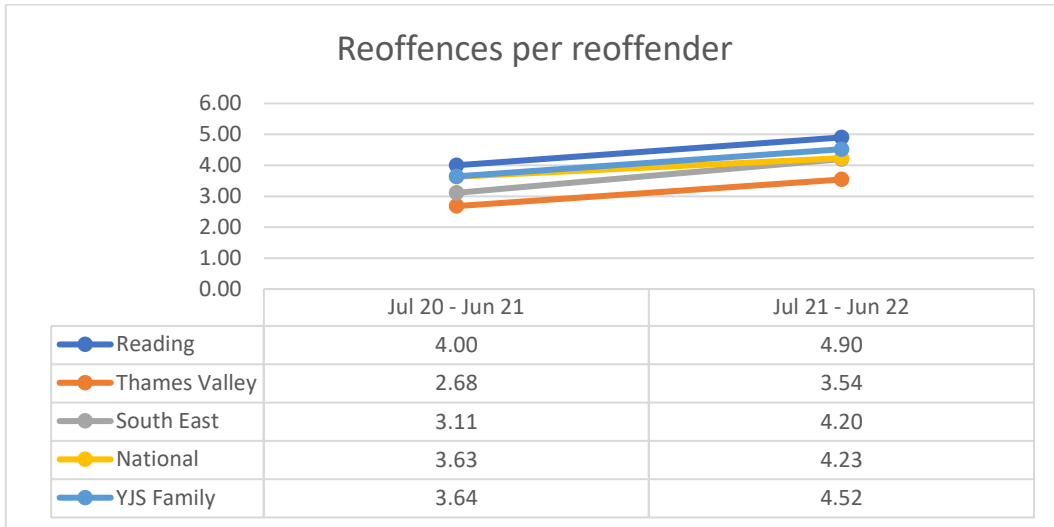
contributor to higher first-time entrant rates across Thames Valley, when compared with comparator groups in other parts of the country. The recent adoption of Outcome 22 by Thames Valley Police, following successful challenge from the YJS and others, is welcome as a tool to assist in reducing numbers of children who enter the Youth Justice System for the first time. Nonetheless, the comparatively higher rates of FTE's in Reading compared with other YJS's across Thames Valley, indicates that more work is required in the prevention and diversion space. In order to positively address the high rate of children becoming first time entrants, further work is planned on developing the joint decision making panel, ensuring that this leads to an increase in numbers of children who are diverted from the formal Youth Justice System. Embedding the use of Outcome 22, and planning a prevention and diversion strategy for launch in 2025-26, following the end of the Turnaround programme will also be priority pieces of work.

Reoffending

The rate of children reoffending has increased to 35.6% in the period most recently available for tracking this data, from 29% in the previous 12 month period. This represents a 6% increase, and whilst it coincides with notable increases in reoffending rates for most other comparator groups, it represents a sharper increase and places Reading's reoffending rate higher than all comparator groups. In actual numbers, this amounts to an increase from 20 children reoffending to 21, but a reduction in the overall tracking cohort from 69 to 59, hence the impact on the overall percentage rate.



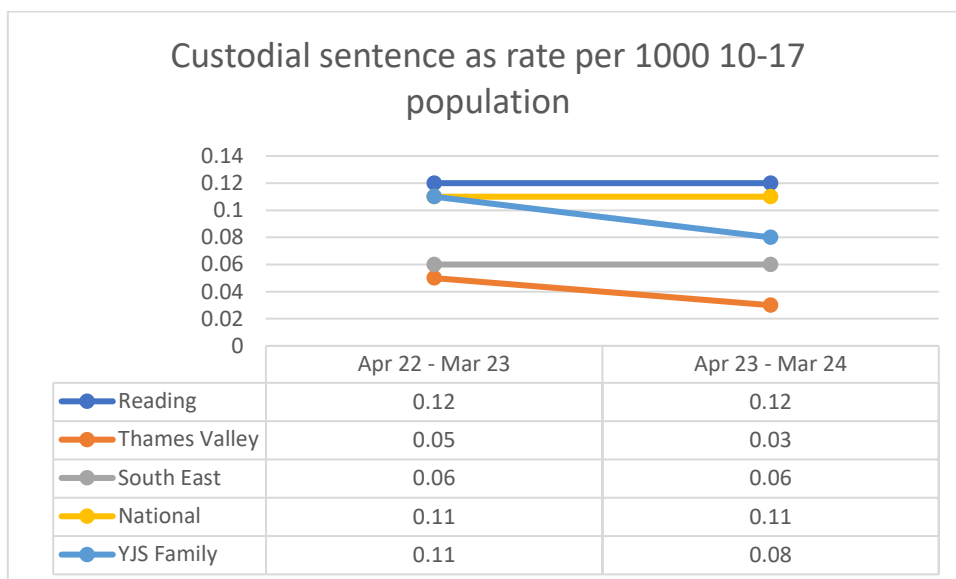
The number of reoffences per child who reoffended was 4.90 in the period most recently available for tracking this data. This represents a 22% increase on the previous 12 month period and is higher than all comparator groups.



Data presented to the Youth Justice Management Board has demonstrated that there are a significant number of children who experience a range of complex needs, some of whom enter the service with a first offence of higher seriousness than would normally be expected. A significant proportion of the children supported by the YJS are also involved with Children’s Social Care and other services, indicating that a coordinated offer of support is necessary. As a strategy to address reoffending, the service will work to further embed trauma informed and child first ways of working with children, to support positive identity shift.

Custody

The rate of children receiving a custodial sentence per 1000 of the local 10–17-year-old population remained consistent from 2023 to 2024. The rate places Reading’s performance in this area below the South-East and Thames Valley rate and broadly in line with the national rate. In actual numbers, this represents 4 custodial sentences given to 2 children.



Of the Custodial Sentences given, one was given for offences committed whilst there was a warrant for arrest in place for failing to comply with a community order. The 2nd was for a child engaging in supervision on a community order. Whilst the YJS had some involvement with the children in the secure estate following sentence, all were or will be released as adults and supervision will be undertaken by the Probation Service. The YJS has identified the recruitment of a dedicated Transitions Officer as an important piece of work to strengthen practice in this area.

Remand data

The following data relates to children remanded to Youth Detention Accommodation. The data shows a significant increase on the very low number in 2022/23, albeit this is significantly lower than the previous year in terms of overall bed nights.

	No. of Children	No. of Bed Nights
2021/22	6	1322
2022/23	1	9
2023/24	4	394

The performance data in relation to children who have received custodial sentences, and those remanded to Youth Detention Accommodation, indicate that there is scope for more work in this area



to develop suitable alternatives to custody for children who have committed or are accused of committing the most serious of offences, and to increase management oversight of proposals made to the Courts.

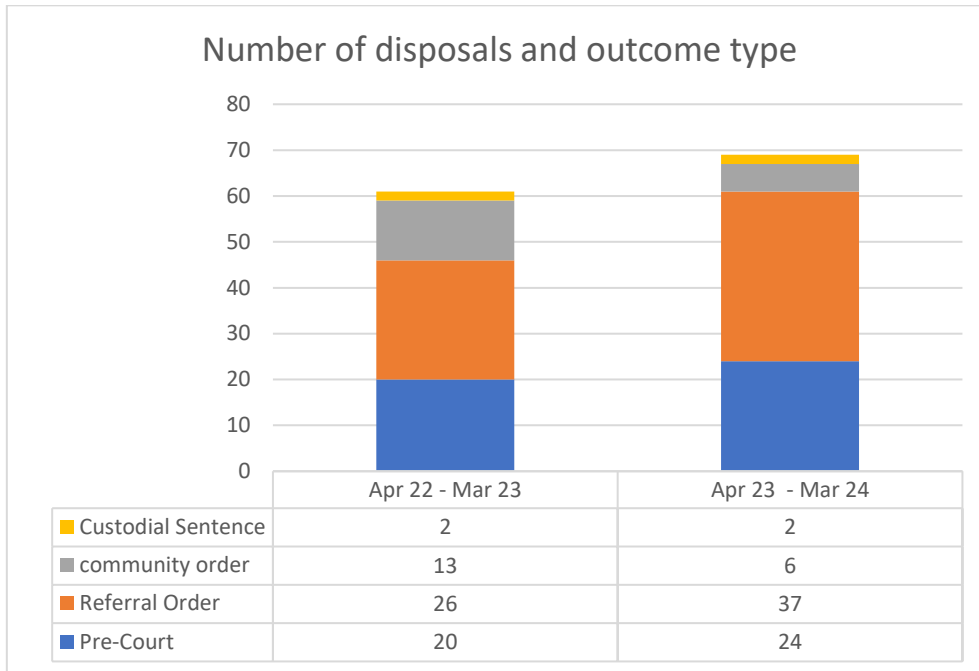
Key Performance Indicators

From April 2023 all Youth Justice Services have been required to gather data on an additional 10 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). There have been concerns over the reliability of the data provided by the YJB and advice was issued in December 2023 from the YJB to YJS's nationally that KPI data should not be relied upon for reporting purposes. The most recent advice from the YJB in June 2024 is that there are still some concerns over the validity of data and a quality assurance process is being applied to KPI data to ensure it is reliable. The advice therefore remains that until such time as this has been resolved, data should not be used for reporting purposes. The table below outlines the KPIs and their definitions.

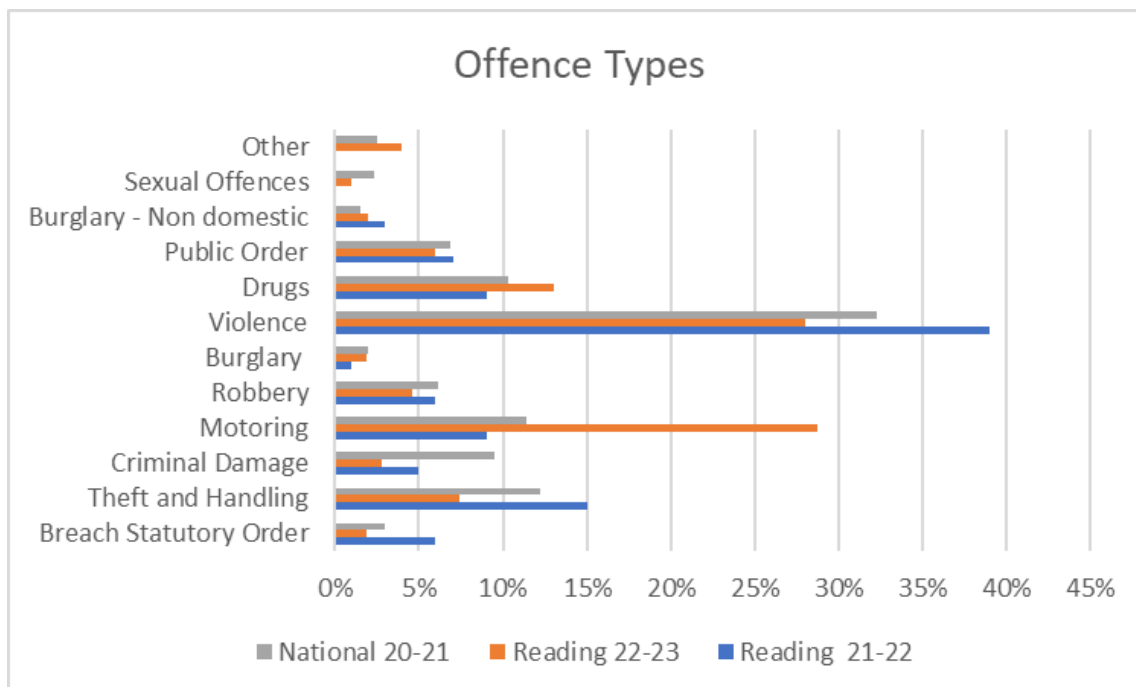
KPI	Definition
KPI 1 - Accommodation	The proportion of children with suitable accommodation arrangements
KPI 2 - Education, training and employment (ETE)	The proportion of children attending a suitable ETE arrangement
KPI 3 - Special educational needs or disability (SEND)	The proportion of children who have an identified SEND need, are in suitable ETE and have a formal learning plan in place for the current academic year
KPI 4 - Mental healthcare and emotional wellbeing	The proportion of children with a screened, or, identified need for an intervention to improve mental health or emotional wellbeing; and offered interventions; and attending interventions
KPI 5 - Substance misuse	The proportion of children with a need for specialist treatment intervention to address substance misuse; and offered intervention and attending intervention
KPI 6 – Out-of-court disposals	The proportion of out-of-court disposal interventions that are completed
KPI 7 - Management Board attendance	Monitoring senior partner representation at management boards, and monitoring if partners contribute data from their individual services that identify areas of racial and ethnic disproportionality.
KPI 8 - Wider services	The proportion of children who are currently on either an Early Help (EH) plan; on a child protection (CP) plan or classified as Child in need (CiN) or have looked-after status.
KPI 9 - Serious violence	The rates of children convicted for a serious violent offence on the YJS caseload.
KPI 10 - Victims	The proportion of victims who are offered and engage with Support from the YJS

Classification: OFFICIAL

Throughput data



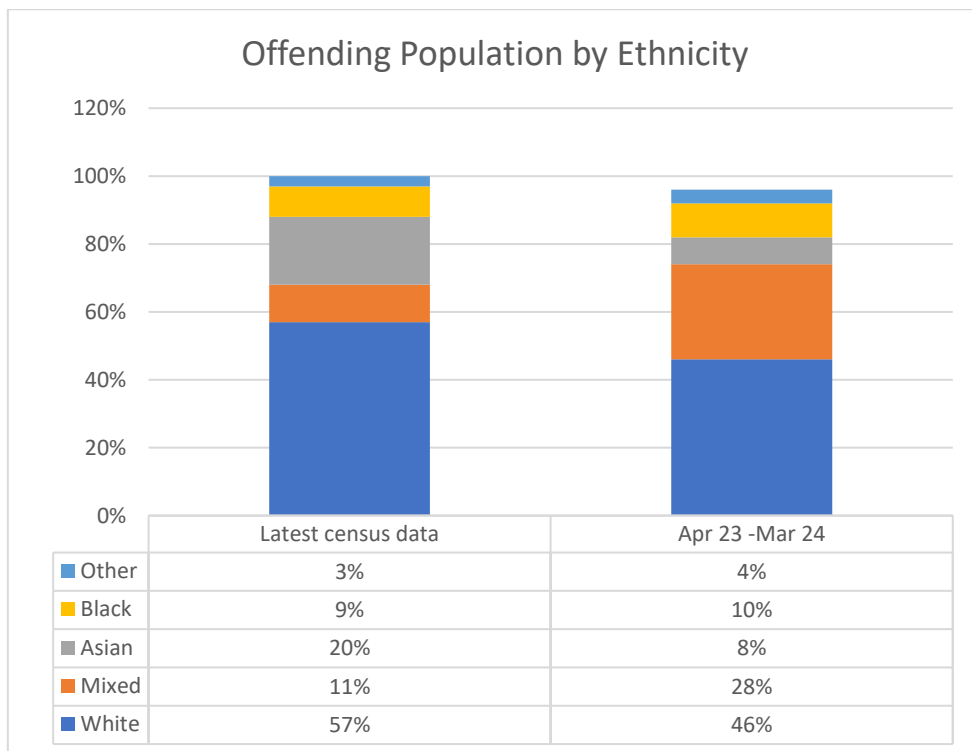
The total number of formal disposals (excluding Community Resolutions) has increased from 61 in 2022-23 to 69 in 2023-24. The number of community order outcomes has reduced whilst the number of Referral Orders has increased between these two periods.



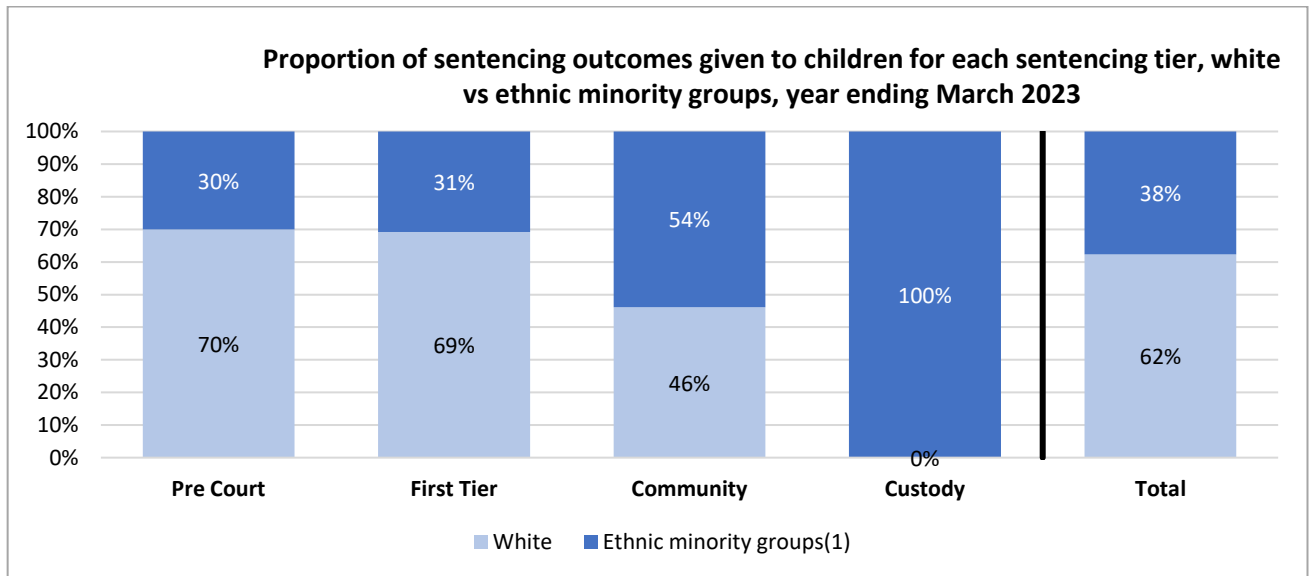
Data from 2022-23, the most recently available period, indicates that whilst the majority of offence patterns are similar to both the national and previous years local data, over the last year there has been a spike in motoring offences and in drug offences, with other offence types being lower than previous rates.



Ethnicity data



Children from Global Majority groups overall are over-represented in the offending population when compared to the general 10-17 population, although not significantly. However, it is notable that children of Mixed ethnicity are significantly over-represented in the offending population.



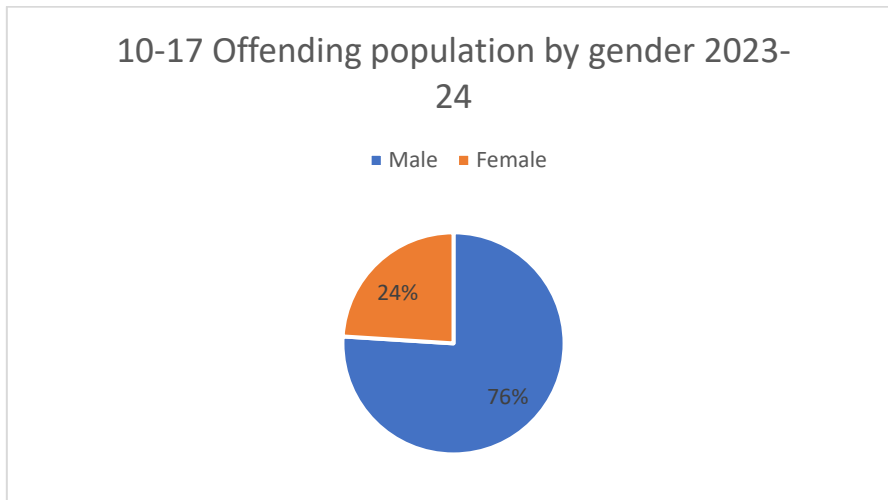
Proportion of offences committed by ethnicity within each gravity score, year ending March 2023

Gravity Score	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White	Ethnic minority groups
1 to 4	5%	24%	8%	1%	62%	38%
5 to 8	0%	43%	4%	0%	52%	48%

These data demonstrate that offences committed by black children over the year are significantly more likely to be of a higher gravity score; this has resulted in this group receiving a higher proportion of court orders, whilst white children are more likely to receive lower level diversionary outcomes than children from Global Majority groups. This demonstrates that more work is needed to address ethnic disproportionality, and that specifically there is work required on scrutiny of out of court decision making.



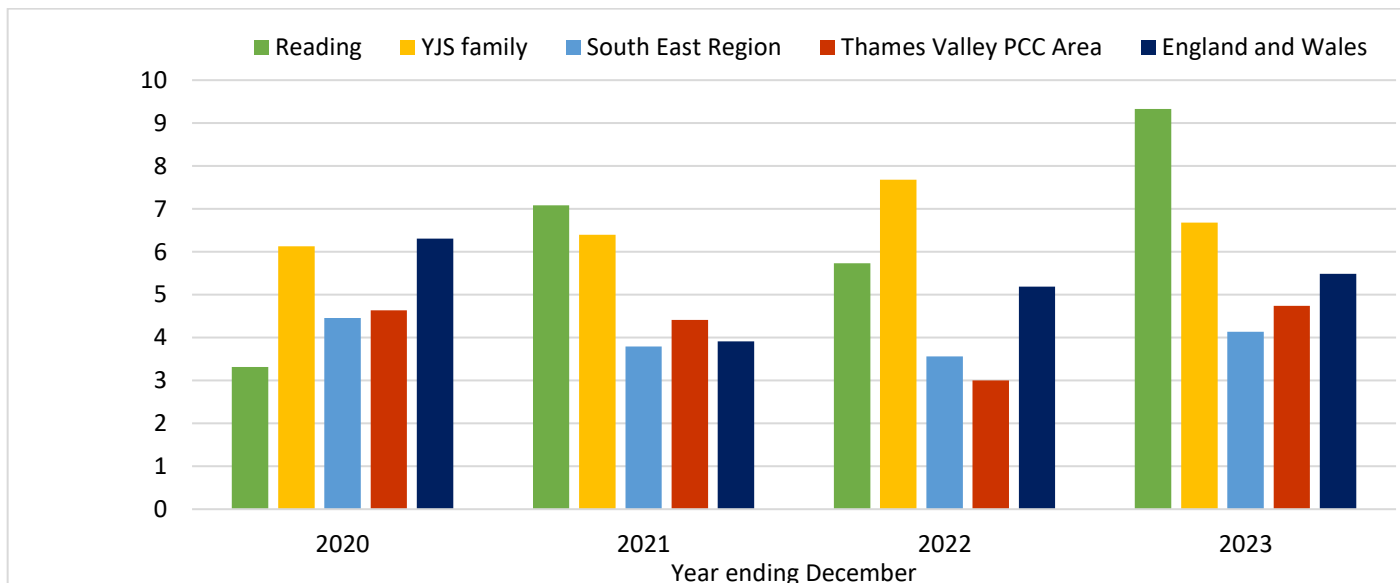
Gender



Whilst the proportion of girls in the cohort is 24%, nationally the proportion of girls in the Youth Justice System tends to be around 15%. This therefore suggests that girls may be an over-represented group in Reading. This area of work requires further exploration, and this is an area of work identified for 2024-25.

Serious Youth Violence

The rate of serious violence offences per 10,000 of 10-17 population by YJS, YJS family, YJS region, PCC area and national average year ending December 2020 - 2023



YJS region	Year ending December							
	2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences
Reading	5	3.3	11	7.1	9	5.7	15	9.3
South East	366	4.5	307	3.8	283	3.6	321	4.1
East Midlands	220	4.9	207	4.6	193	4.2	194	4.1
Eastern	327	5.5	348	5.8	316	5.2	369	6.0
London	1,143	13.8	1,030	12.4	868	10.4	859	10.5
North East	65	2.7	32	1.3	88	3.6	114	4.6
North West	409	6.0	291	4.1	302	4.2	341	4.7
South West	151	3.0	102	2.0	143	2.8	170	3.3
Wales	73	2.6	60	2.1	64	2.2	94	3.2
West Midlands	451	7.8	315	5.4	386	6.5	352	5.8
Yorkshire	259	5.0	250	4.8	263	5.0	255	4.9
England and Wales	3,464	6.3	2,942	3.9	2,906	5.2	3,069	5.5

With a rate of 9.3 serious youth violence offences per 10,000 of 10-17 population, Reading has a SYV rate higher than the family average and all but two YJS's within the family group. It is also significantly higher than the rate for the South-East and all other regions, except London. It is notable that the rate has increased significantly since 2020.

It is important to note, when comparing to statistical neighbours and other comparators, that the relatively small size of the cohort in Reading, means that small increases in numbers can have a disproportionate impact on the rate.

Addressing the ongoing risks presented as a result of serious youth violence will continue to be a priority for the YJS and the partnership in 2024-25. The YJS will be working alongside the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) in 2024-25 as part of the Assisted Leaders Programme pilot, which seeks to increase evidence-based decision making, commissioning and problem-solving in area-based partnerships to reduce children and young people becoming involved in violence. The programme will provide £25,000 of funding, as well as external support from the YEF to support with reviewing systems and leadership. The successful application to be part of this pilot is as a result of close partnership working between the YJS and Reading Borough Council's Community Safety Partnership's Service. The YJS will also be launching the Act Now project, which will provide intervention for children who have been arrested for knife enabled offences.



Prevention

The Turnaround funding from the Ministry of Justice has enabled the YJS to fund 1.68 FTE equivalent staff to provide intervention for children identified as 'on the cusp' of entering the formal Youth Justice system, to divert from doing so. The majority of children identified as suitable for support are those arrested or who have received Community Resolutions. Children are screened for eligibility and allocated to the workers who will make contact and if agreed, make an introductory visit. Children that accept the offer will be assessed and a plan will be completed, based on areas of need. Interventions are based on relationship based practice, and follow trauma informed and child first ways of working. Additional support through YJS resources or sometimes other external provision may be sourced as part of the offer for the child.

The target number of children required to successfully have completed an intervention by March 2025 is 59. As of June 2024 the YJS have successfully engaged 32 children and are in the process of offering support to a further 20.

At the time of writing, none of the children who have successfully completed an intervention through Turnaround have gone on to receive a formal judicial outcome or Youth Caution.

4.3 Risks and Issues

The ongoing absence of a seconded Probation Officer is identified as a risk to the partnership. This is driven by widespread and long standing recruitment and retention issues within the Probation Service. Whilst the Probation Service continue to maintain close working relationships with the YJS and provide funding and operate a 'concentrator model' as an alternative to providing a seconded member of staff, it is recognised that the absence of a qualified probation officer within the team does leave a gap in respect of specialist knowledge skills, and experience in relation to risk and public protection. In order to fill this gap, work is planned in 2024-25 to seek to recruit a 'transitions officer' who would work closely with probation colleagues to supervise children through transition to adult services.

The financial constraints affecting most local authorities and public services are well publicised. Locally, this means that the YJS has been affected by an organisational recruitment freeze. However, permission has been granted to continue with recruitment to fill vacancies in key Youth Justice roles that are identified as crucial in order to support the necessarily improvements in outcomes for children. The YJS and wider organisation have worked hard to ensure that caseloads have not been unduly affected during this period.

March 2025 will see the Ministry of Justice Turnaround funding cease. This will amount to a significant reduction in resourcing to provide prevention and diversion support. The YJS is working with Community Safety partners to identify potential sources of funding to support in providing important interventions to support diversion away from involvement in the Youth Justice system.



5. Plan for the Forthcoming Year

5.1 Child First

Reading Youth Justice Service and the wider partnership are committed to delivering work with children that is effective and routed in the principles of Child First.

The following pieces of work are planned to deliver against this commitment:

- 1) *Prioritise the best interests of children and recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.*

The service will develop a Child First plan and working group to oversee the implementation of a Child First working model that will be embedded across all that we do. This will involve ongoing work with the team to ensure the principles of Child First are fully understood and consistently applied across all that we do. The service will adopt the following 'ABCD' model of child first and challenge ourselves to ensure that these principles are woven in to everything that we do:

- As Children:
- Building Prosocial Identity
- Collaborating with Children
- Diverting from Stigma

The service will continue to embed the use of Community Justice Panels with the aim of delivering a community led problem solving process, based on restorative principles which is focused on children, providing disposals outside the traditional CJS for children who have come into contact with the police for the first time and / or have committed minor offences. The service will continue to involve children and parents/carers when delivering Case Planning Forum's, the YJS own version of 'Risk Management Panels'.

- 2) *Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their prosocial identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.*

Audit work in 2024-25 will focus on ensuring that principles of child first and trauma informed practice are consistently applied to assessments, plans and interventions delivered by the YJS and that all work supports the development of positive identity.

The YJS will deliver the Stay True to You toolkit, developed by the Thames Valley Violence Prevention Partnership, in partnership with children, to support those who are at risk of engaging in serious violence.



- 3) *Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.*

The Youth Justice Management Board will continue to engage children as part of the board and to ensure that the views of children and parents shape key decision making.

The YJS will continue its work with Young Voices, an organisation that seeks to ensure the views of children are involved in shaping key decision making.

The YJS will set up a participation group to ensure that the voices of children and parents are gathered systematically, are acted upon and are used to inform the direction of the service.

- 4) *Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.*

The service will embed the use of the Out of Court Disposal Joint Decision Making panel (JDMP) which has been set up in March 2024, to ensure that children are diverted from contact with the Youth Justice System wherever possible. Alongside this, the implementation of Outcome 22 as an additional informal Out of Court disposal outcome, will enable further opportunities to reduce numbers of children who enter the Youth Justice system for the first time.

The Service will review reparation placements to ensure that they enhance positive identity shift for children.

In March 2024 a child being supported by the YJS, attended the Youth Justice Management Board to talk to strategic partners about his experiences at school and within the Youth Justice System. As a result of this, the YJS was involved in discussions with the education provider to seek to improve the relationship between the child and provider moving forward. Feedback delivered by children to the YJMB in regards needing to feel safe and have positive activities available in their communities, have been used to inform service development, such as ensuring that colleagues delivering youth service provision are part of the Out of Court decision making panel.

5.2 Resources and Services

The Youth Justice Grant will be used exclusively to deliver against activities linked to the 14 Key Performance Indicators. The following activities will be funded by the grant:

- Delivery of effective assessment, intervention planning and supervision for children who have offended or who are at risk of offending in Reading
- Delivery of services to the victims of youth offending
- Development of key areas of practice such as SEND, Education Training and Employment and Restorative Justice
- Analysis of performance information to inform practice development across all areas
- Delivery and development of Community Reparation
- Development and training of staff in effective practice



- Provision of the Childview database, to support effective case management, timely submission of statutory data and the use of connectivity to ensure mandatory documentation is shared securely with the Youth Custody Service.

Local authority funding will also be used to contribute towards the delivery of these outcomes.

Funding from the Ministry of Justice will be used for the purpose of delivering the following activities as part of the Turnaround project:

- Funding two posts to deliver diversionary activities for children identified as 'on the cusp' of the Youth Justice System
- Funding constructive activities for children eligible for Turnaround support

Please see appendix 3 for a full breakdown of the annual budget contributions

5.3 Board Development

We have worked hard since the latter half of 2023-24 to enhance and develop our strategic response to youth justice in Reading. We recruited an Independent Chair, who began Chairing our Board in September 2023. This is beginning to have impact in areas such as our response to first time entrants and disproportionality. Our independent chair also comes with significant expertise regarding leading outstanding, child first youth justice services and this expertise will be utilised in 2024-25 to help develop our practice model. We have enhanced the membership of our Board with representation from the voluntary sector, supporting to diversify the demographic of the Board. The Board also now includes representation from the local authority Public Health department. This will allow the integration of public health approaches to strategic planning to assist in developing preventative approaches, in particular to serious violence.

2024-25 will see a revised performance report format which the board have been consulted on. This will allow greater scrutiny of YJS performance and allow the board to be confident that improvements will be data led.

Since Quarter 3 of 2023-24, the Board have agreed that each board meeting will ensure the views of children and parents are heard in some form, as well as maintaining a focus on developing a practice model that is fully consistent with Child First principles. This is beginning to have impact with children challenging the Board and influencing strategic thinking.

In 2024-25, the board will continue to seek to expand and diversify its participation with partners from Reading Football Club being invited to join, alongside existing third sector providers No.5 and Storry Group.

The Board has engaged in two away days in 2024-25 with a focus on child first practice, leadership and governance, the Board forward plan and the strategic priorities for 2024-25. This year we intend to have two further away days to ensure and develop our practice model and also embed Board members in wider workforce development.



5.4 Workforce Development

We recognise that in order to embed child first across everything we do, we need to take a whole service and whole system approach. This year we intend to invest in further time and capacity from our Independent Chair to get closer to practice and support the service to fully embed child first as our practice model. This will mean that we are not only challenging the partnership strategically, but also driving the evidence-based approach in the service at the same time.

The YJS will seek to expand the use of case formulation delivered by colleagues in the Reconnect team, led by a trained systemic therapist. This will support us to ensure assessments inform intervention plans that are evidence based and focused on the principles of child first practice.

Contextual safeguarding training is planned to be delivered to the team in 2024-25 and we intend to develop our approach relating to community and place-based responses to youth crime and violence.

The YJS will adopt the new YJB Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool and deliver training to the team. Again, this will be underpinned by child first principles and will further support our Joint Decision Making panel to see children 'as children' and support the wider use of diversionary approaches, such as Outcome 22.

All staff are required to complete e-learning on Unconscious Bias. The Service will explore the provision of further training for practitioners on anti-racism, to support the wider work of the partnership to address ethnic disproportionality.

The Service will continue to seek to recruit volunteers to support with facilitating Referral Order panels and Community Justice Panels and seek to diversify the cohort of volunteers.

5.5 Evidence-based practice and innovation

The YJS, in partnership with the local community safety partnership, has been successful in its bid to be part of the Youth Endowment Fund's pilot Area Leaders Programme (ALP). The programme's aims are to increase evidence-based decision making, commissioning and problem-solving in area-based partnerships to reduce children and young people becoming involved in violence.

By aspiring towards adopting Child First as a practice model and guiding principle underpinning everything that we do, we aim to ensure that practice is routed in the contemporary evidence-based understanding of what works in supporting desistance in youth justice. This follows the research of Professor Neal Hazel and others.

The YJS will continue to seek closer working relationships with Public Health colleagues to support approaches to tackling serious violence and will ensure that Public Health colleagues are part of the strategic direction of the YJS via the YJMB.

5.6 Evaluation

The YJS will receive £100,000 from the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver the 'Act Now' intervention to support sustainable desistance for children who have been arrested for knife enabled offences. This follows



successful pilots involving evaluation in both Milton Keynes and Slough. The model follows a ‘reachable moment’ style intervention, of Youth Workers attending to support children in police custody within 90 minutes, with the offer of follow-on support.

The service will explore piloting the use of the Pro-social Identity Scale (PIDS), developed by Professors Neal Hazel and Christopher Birkbeck of the University of Salford. The tool has been designed to enable the quantitative measurement of ‘pro-social identity’ and is suitable to be used with children being supported by Youth Justice Services (Hazel and Birkbeck 2024).

Surrey University have been involved with Reading in the last 3 years as a pilot site in exploring YJS provision for parents and carers of children open to Youth Justice Services. The research has involved site visits and discussions with both staff and the parents that we have worked with. Preliminary findings will be available this year and are expected to help the YJS assess practice in this area and have some external evaluation of this area of work.

5.7 Standards for children

In November 2023 the YJS carried out a self-assessment audit against the National Standard relating to Children appearing at court. There was a specific focus on children appearing for Serious Youth Violence offences. Children and parents provided feedback on their court experiences. The audit highlighted the need for further work to assist children and families to understand the court processes that they were experiencing and to ensure that there is clear and sensitive communication to children and carers.

Following the audit activity an action plan was drawn up and delivered which included:

- Team training and guidance
- Amending the Panel Report template to assist panel members in being aware of issues relating to ethnic disproportionality
- Ensuring there are different mechanisms to gain court feedback from sentencers and court users

5.8 Service development

The priorities for the YJS for 2024 will focus on the following 7 key strategic priorities, with a number of key workstreams and operational priorities existing under each of these which will be delivered in 2024/25 and beyond.

1. Reducing First Time Entrants
2. Reducing Reoffending
3. Reducing the use of custody
4. Positively addressing disproportionality
5. Reducing Serious Youth Violence
6. Embedding Child First and Identity Development Practice as the practice model across the partnership
7. Improving outcomes for victims of youth crime

5.9 Priorities for the coming year

Actions	Measure of Success
Priority 1: Reducing First time entrants	
Ensure children open to YJS who are missing education receive the appropriate levels of support	Children not receiving their full entitlement of Education are tracked and this leads to examples of positive outcomes in terms of reintegration to mainstream education or an increase in education hours
Implement the use of Outcome 22 as a disposal to divert children from the formal Youth Justice System	Data is available by March 2025 demonstrating the use of Outcome 22 to positively divert children from the formal Youth Justice System.
Develop a prevention and diversion strategy as an alternative to Turnaround, that is aligned to the wider Early Help strategy	A strategy that includes both prevention (supporting children identified as vulnerable to possible offending) and diversion (diverting those who have offended from entering the formal justice system where appropriate to do so) is developed for 2025-26 and this is aligned with the wider Early Help strategy.
Priority 2: Reducing Reoffending	
Embed a consistent practice model of Child First and Trauma Informed practice which supports the development of positive identity shift	Audit work leads to actions that demonstrate increased consistency of practice.
Develop a refreshed audit schedule that provides a structured programme including partners and thematic audits.	A comprehensive audit programme is designed and presented to YJS board which is then implemented throughout 2024-25.
Recruit a Transitions Officer to support children in their transition to adult services.	Recruitment of Transitions Officer takes place.
Develop closer working relationships with third sector and community organisations to diversify the range of interventions that support the development of positive identity.	Audits and case studies demonstrate impact as a result of interventions that support the development of positive identity.
Priority 3: Reducing Custody	
Introduce custody panel process to ensure increased management oversight of sentencing proposals	A custody panel process is launched and this leads to examples of robust alternatives to custody that are followed by the Courts.
Continue to improve relationships with colleagues in His Majesties Courts and Tribunals Service and Children’s Social Care to minimise the use of custodial remands	Training is delivered to Magistrates on Child First and trauma informed practice.



Support children in custody to contribute towards the Young Voices participation group.	Feedback is gained from children in custody which supports the wider Young Voices participation group.
Priority 4: Addressing Disproportionality	
Disproportionality action plan to be revised to ensure tangible action against priority areas.	As a result of the revised plan the YJS are able to deliver tangible actions, which are completed and deliver specific impact.
Work with partners to improve safeguarding procedures for children who have been stopped and searched	An action plan leads to changes in process which deliver improved outcomes for children.
Deliver audit work to further understand the extent that girls are over-represented in the YJS in Reading	Audit work is delivered to the YJMB which will determine the need for further work.
Priority 5: Reducing Serious Youth Violence	
Work with colleagues in Public Health to increase data led approaches to Serious Violence via the YJ Management Board.	The contribution of public health colleagues via the YJMB leads to improved understanding of the drivers for SYV locally which informs prevention work.
Introduce the 'Act Now' programme to deliver an effective intervention to support children who have been arrested for knife enabled offences.	Youth workers are recruited and they deliver impact by way of reducing numbers of children who go on to reoffend for weapons enabled offences
Work with the Youth Endowment Fund to pilot the Assisted Leaders Programme to enhance partnership approaches to Serious Violence	As a result of the pilot, the programme delivers improvements to partnership working which are better placed to reduce numbers of children becoming involved in serious youth violence.
Demonstrate the effective use of the Stay True to You resource for children at risk of Serious Youth Violence	Audits and case studies demonstrate the effective use of the Stay true to You toolkit.
Priority 6: Developing Child First Practice	
Develop a comprehensive Child First Action plan that supports the service to fully embed a Child First practice model	Through the delivery of specific pieces of work on the action plan, the service is able to evidence that child first practice has been embedded within culture of the service and that this leads to positive outcomes for children, families and communities.
Set up a Child first working group to drive developments in practice, including but not limited to participation work and identity development.	A systematic process of gaining feedback from children and young people is in place and this contributes to key areas of service development.



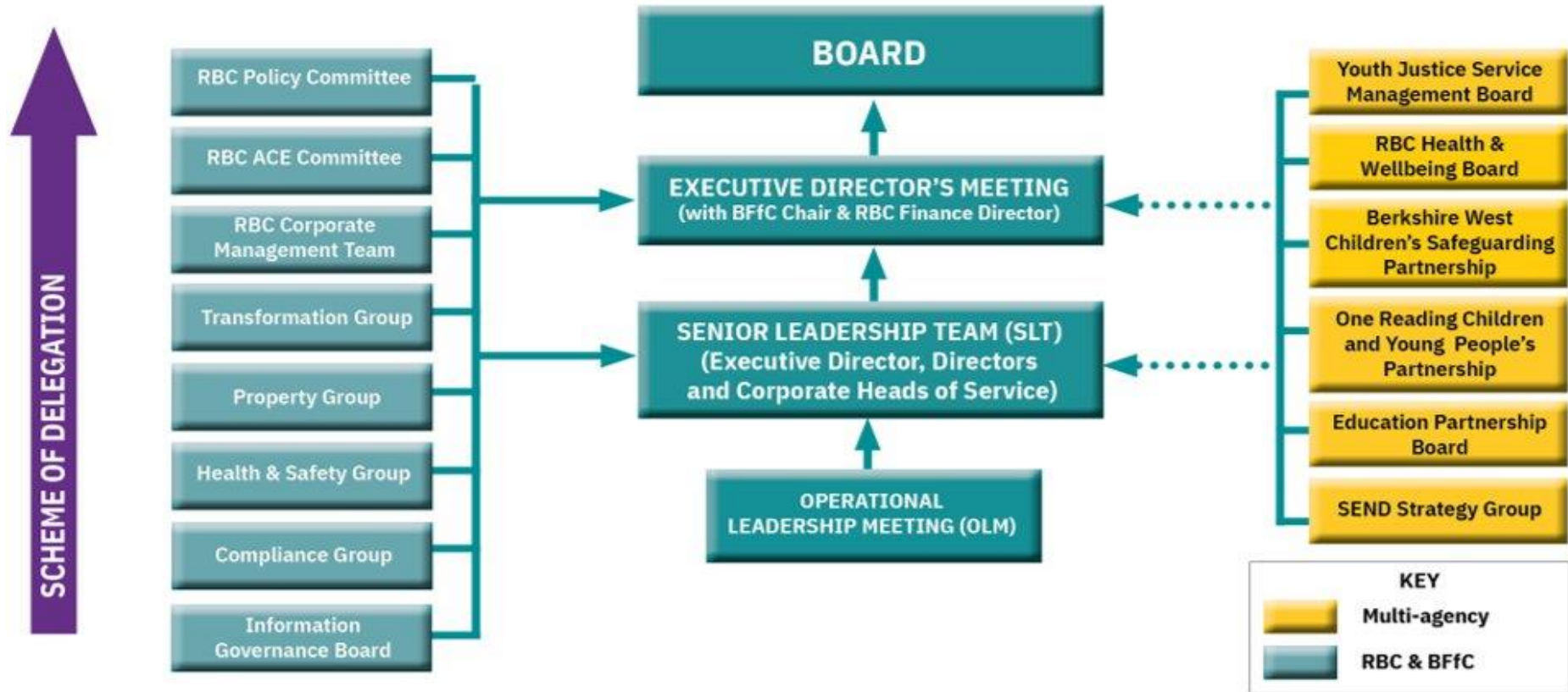
Priority 7: Improving outcomes for Victims of Youth Crime	
Carry out a review of reparation placements to ensure they are consistent with principles of Child First practice.	All placements are verified as being consistent with supporting positive identity development and examples of feedback from children support this.
Carry out an audit on the effectiveness of restorative justice and work to support victims.	Audit work provides the YJS and partnership with clear picture of the effectiveness of this work and this leads to developments in practice.

6 Board membership, Sign off Submission and Approval

Name	Role	Organisation	Signature
Michael O'Connor	Independent Board Chair	Independent Chair	
Ceri Burns	Head Teacher	Cranbury College	
Ollie Foxell	Service Manager, Youth Justice Service and Extra Familial Harm	Brighter Futures for Children	
Jonny Bradish	Head of Service, Family Help and Partnerships	Brighter Futures for Children	
Fiona Hostler	Head of Education Access and Support	Brighter Futures for Children	
Emma Tompkins	Chief Inspector, Deputy Commander – Reading LPA.	Thames Valley Police	
Matthew Prouse	Service Manager	NHS	
Maria Young	Director of Family Help and Safeguarding	Brighter Futures for Children	
John Braddy	Detective Inspector, Thames Valley Police, Youth Justice Unit.	Thames Valley Police	
Jo Middlemass	Community Partnerships Service Manager	Reading Borough Council	
Martin White	Head of Public Health	Reading Borough Council	
Alison Wilding	Director	No.5	
Troy Cutler	Sergeant, Thames Valley Police Youth Justice Unit	Thames Valley Police	
Thomas Jarvis	Exploitation and Crime Diversion Lead	Storyy Group	
Carol Kelly	Youth Court Magistrate	His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS)	
Chantal Foster	Head of Probation Delivery Unit, Berks West	His Majesties Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS)	
Paul Brown	Head of Strategy and Impact/Safeguarding Lead	Reading Football Club	
Brian Grady	Director for Education	Brighter Futures for Children	



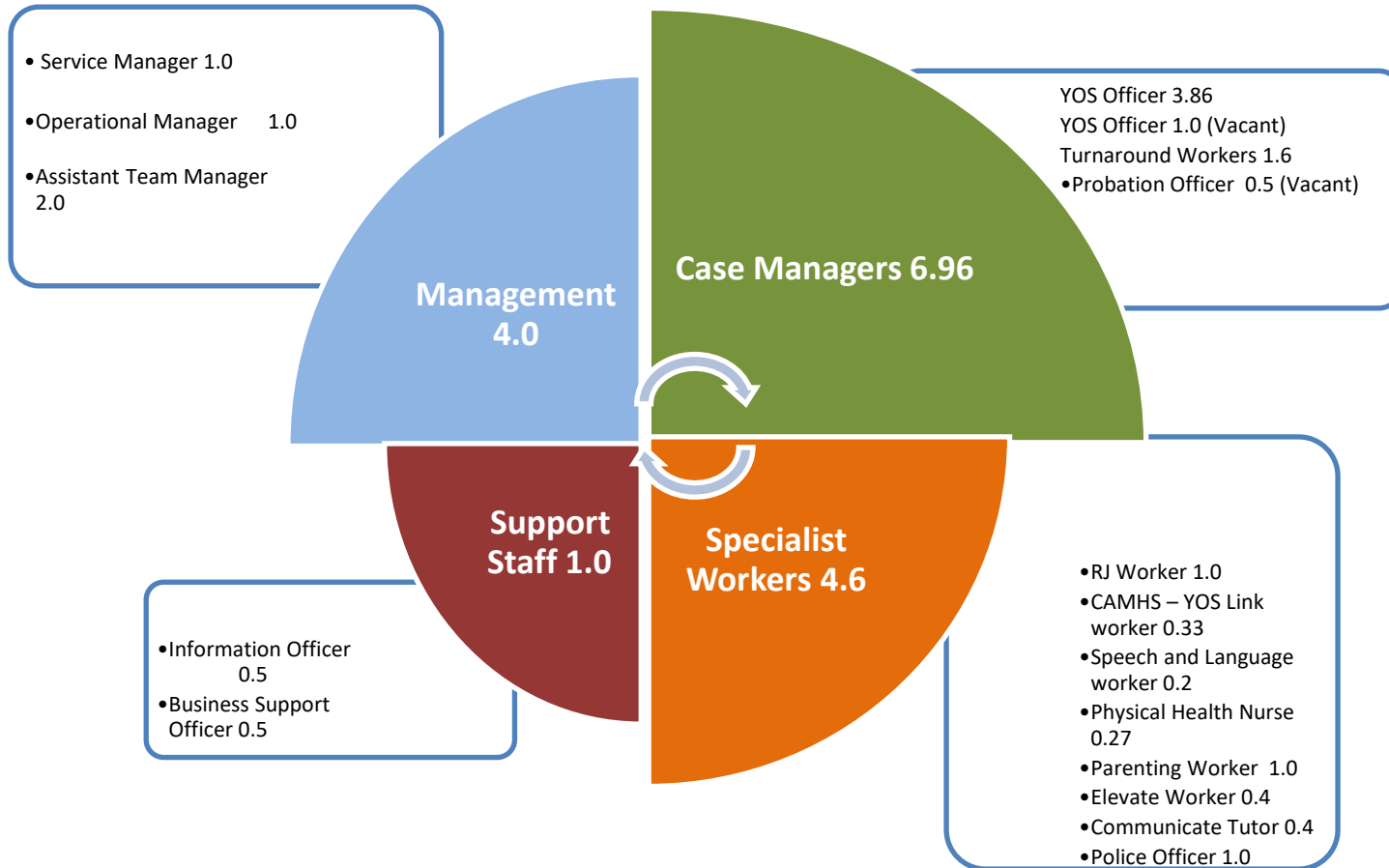
Appendix One – organisational structure charts



Appendix Two - YJS Structure and staffing



Youth Justice Service Reading



Role	Establishment	In Post	Vacancies
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		(Mar24)	
Service Manager	1.0	1.0	
Team Manager	1.0	1.0	
Assistant Team manager	2.0	2.0	
Performance and Business Support Officer	1.0 0.6	1.0	0.6 vacant BSO
YOS Case Officers	4.86	3.86	Vacant – 1.0
RJ Worker	1.65	1.0	Vacant – 0.65
YOS Parenting Worker	1.0	1.0	
Rapid English	0.4	0.4	
Elevate Worker	0.4	0.4	
Turnaround	1.68	1.68	
BfC Staff	15.59	13.34	
Other Specialist Posts (not employed by RBC)			
Police	1.0	1.0	
Probation	0.5	0.0	Vacant
CAMHs Clinician	0.3	0.3	
S & L Therapist	0.2	0.2	
Physical Health Nurse	0.27	0.27	
Seconded staff	2.4	1.9	
TOTAL	17.99	15.24	

Ethnicity	
White	13
Black	1
Asian	5
Mixed	0
Other	0

Gender	
Female	13
Male	6

ions 24/25

ICIAL



	Cash contribution	Payments in kind	Total	% contribution
PCC	0	0	0	
Police	0	63,146	63,146	6.58
Probation	38,568		38,568	4.02
Health	0	75,739	75,739	7.89
Local Authority	387,700	0	387,700	40.41
YJB	318,165 ¹	0	318,165	33.16
Ministry of Justice (Turnaround)	75,970	0	75,970	7.91
Total	820,403	138,885	959,288	

¹ ¹ At the time of writing the YJB grant allocation for 2024/25 is yet to be confirmed. Figure is therefore based on the grant allocation from 2023/24