

**BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST**

Youth Justice Plan 2021 -2022

Birmingham Youth Justice Partnership

Draft

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1. Introduction, Vision and Strategy

Welcome to the Birmingham Youth Justice Partnership Plan 2021-2022. This plan has been developed collaboratively with Birmingham's Youth Justice Partnership and has since been subject to expansive consultation.

Across the city we have high aspirations for our children, families and communities. Our ambition is that all children and families achieve their full potential and are supported by a confident workforce, with a common core of knowledge and understanding of children's needs, the importance of building positive relationships and a consistent approach to practice. Achieving our ambition will mean Birmingham is a great place for all children to grow up in and Birmingham Youth Offending Service have a key part to play in this.

In 2020, Birmingham Youth Offending Service was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). The inspection concluded that the quality of work needed to be improved at pace and gave an overall rating of 'requires improvement'. Whilst these findings undoubtedly presented their challenges, they also provided the partnership with opportunity, and a platform from which innovation and development could be driven forward. In 2020/21 the YOS Partnership Board membership was strengthened, and meetings increased in frequency, providing much needed additional opportunity for scrutiny, support and challenge. I was welcomed as the independent Chair of the Board and the YOS Leadership Team was expanded. This year we will see a creative, and exciting recruitment campaign, further enhancing the services we are able to provide, supporting our ambitions set out within this plan. The Service is in a period of significant reform, with children, families, victims and communities central to this. There is a detailed and robust improvement plan, responding to the inspection findings, that is owned and overseen by the Strategic Partnership Board.

Violence and exploitation within our city remain a concern and is a key priority and challenge for the partnership. We know that nationally there are predictions that youth violence will potentially rise over the summer, a situation many feel has been aggravated by COVID lockdowns, mental health problems and months out of education for our children. Within Birmingham the Youth Offending Service is working closely with the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit, the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership, the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partners and others to ensure that the work of the Service is effectively contributing to reducing youth violence and supporting children through taking a public health approach. It is clear, that enforcement as a standalone strategy is insufficient. We must work with compassion, to secure engagement in order to effect change and these principles will be instrumental in how services are shaped within the Youth Offending Service.

Across Birmingham Children's Trust there is commitment to building a practice model that is underpinned by being strengths and relationship based, trauma informed and responsive. Children have been disproportionately impacted by COVID, primarily as a result of the containment measures, leading to social and economic impacts and negative impacts on their emotional and mental health and long-term prospects. This plan is cognizant of that, and the work around the practice model, emphasis on education training and employment and workforce development will ensure that as a youth offending service our colleagues are well placed to support children and families in the right way.

Work to tackle disproportionality, strengthen approaches to risk management, develop services to victims, parents and carers, the review of appropriate adult provision and the development of a robust prevention offer are several of the workstreams that the service will be delivering against this year. This plan sets out an ambitious programme for change, that is supported by all stakeholders.

It is without doubt an exciting time for Birmingham Youth Offending Service and Partnership Board. We have an innovative programme of recruitment and service reform ahead, helping children to lead healthy and happy lives, to be safe from harm, to achieve and to be ready to contribute to adult life.

John Drew

Chair of the Birmingham Youth Offending Service Partnership Board

2. Purpose of the Plan

There is a statutory requirement in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Section 40, for every local authority, after consultation with partner agencies, to produce and implement a Youth Justice Plan. The plan must set out how local youth justice services are to be provided and funded. There is a requirement for the Plan to be submitted to the national Youth Justice Board (YJB) and published in accordance with the directions of the Secretary of State.

The principal aim of the Youth Justice System, established by Section 37 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, is to prevent offending and re-offending by children aged 10-17 years. Local youth justice services are delivered and managed through Youth Offending Services, which are multi-agency partnerships with statutory representation from local authorities (specifically Social Care and Education), the Police, Probation and Health. The model brings together a range of agencies with expertise in welfare and enforcement practices to improve outcomes. Many of the services are prescribed by statute or policy. Birmingham Youth Offending Service (BYOS) is the largest metropolitan Youth Offending Service in the country and is identified as the most complex by the Youth Justice Board given its urban context. The Service works to achieve the following national youth justice strategic objectives:

- Prevent offending;
- Reduce re-offending;
- Reduce anti-social behaviour;
- Increase victim and public confidence;
- Ensure the safe and effective use of custody.

In support of the national objectives, the board monitors several locally agreed performance indicators:

- Assessment completion;
- Contact frequency;
- Victim engagement and satisfaction;
- Education, training and employment distance travelled;
- Referral to specialist services;
- Black children as a percentage of all first-time entrants and as a proportion of the overall case load of the YOS.

Collectively these objectives contribute to the shared ambition across the partnership for Birmingham to be a great place for all children to grow up in, leading to the following outcomes:

- Healthy, happy and resilient children living in families;
- Families (especially parents, but also children) take responsibility for their wellbeing;
- Children attend, learn and maximise their potential at school;
- Children are ready for and able to contribute to adult life; and
- Children are protected from significant harm.

This plan outlines the governance arrangements, including the role of the Youth Offending Service Partnership Board, which ensures the statutory requirements are met. The Board has responsibility for overseeing the performance of the Birmingham Youth Justice Partnership against national and local outcomes, maximising its collective resources and contributing to wider priorities as set out in Council and partnership plans. The Board also prioritises the quality of core casework through both regular audit and national standards monitoring. Strong partnership working is essential across criminal justice and children's welfare services to ensure improvements in outcomes related to the prevention and reduction of offending by children, public protection and the safeguarding of children. This plan outlines Service performance benchmarked against comparators, outlines the latest evidence on what works and outlines the priorities for 2021 -2022 and has been informed by self-assessment surveys completed by children.

2.1 Context

Birmingham, the biggest city in the UK outside London, is a diverse, multicultural city. More than half its one million population identified as non-white British in the 2011 census and that figure is likely to be higher in 2020. The latest census figures identify that over 26% (274,135) of the population is under 18 years and 58% of these are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are approximately 117,000 10-17-year-olds.

Birmingham is one of the most deprived local authorities in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation statistics from 2019. In the last 15 years, Birmingham has become more deprived, moving from the 16th most deprived local authority in 2004 to sixth in 2019 and

overtaking Sandwell in 2015 as the most deprived authority in the West Midlands. Although many children achieve good outcomes, others face a range of challenges, particularly in terms of their wellbeing and staying safe.

The prevalence and impact of serious organised criminality and related/non-related serious violence across the city remains a concern across the partnership. Second only to Greater London, the West Midlands are the next largest exporters of drugs nationally, with Birmingham responsible for the highest number of 'County Lines' in the region. Children and the community are routinely and significantly affected by exploitation and serious youth violence. A key Community Safety and Safeguarding Children's Partnership priority is to continue to tackle and reduce violence, exploitation, 'County Lines' and the effects on children of urban street gangs and child sexual exploitation.

Section 39 (1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the cooperation of the named statutory partners (Local Authority, Police, Probation and Health) to form a Youth Offending Team, which includes staffing contributions from those statutory partners. The Service must provide the main supervisory elements of statutory youth justice services:

- Assessment and management of risk and safeguarding;
- Effective interventions.

These main elements are achieved through:

- The delivery of Appropriate Adult Services and Pre-Court Interventions, including Cautions and Community Resolutions;
- Support to those children:
 - subject to civil and criminal anti-social behaviour contracts and orders;
 - remanded in custody and local authority care, and those requiring intensive bail support in the community;
 - Subject to court orders managed in the community, including the provision of a lay youth panel to discharge the responsibilities of Referral Orders;
- The delivery of Parenting Contracts and Orders;
- Restorative Justice to support victims of crime;
- Effective and robust sentence planning and delivery of services for children in custody and in the community.

The youth justice system works by addressing risk and vulnerability factors such as: family breakdown, educational underachievement, substance misuse, mental illness, recent bereavement or loss within the family and building resilience as the best way to reduce a child's likelihood of offending and re-offending.

Birmingham Youth Offending Service has five multi-agency area-based case management teams across the city: a city-wide alternative to custody in its Intensive Supervision and Surveillance (ISS) Team; a Court, Bail and Remand Team and a Harmful Sexual Behaviour Team supporting children aged 6 – 17 years. In addition to statutory partners, the Service benefits from co-located specialist staff, including Restorative Practice Workers, supporting victims of crime; Parenting Workers, offering individual and group work support to parents and

carers; an Accommodation Officer; specialist Autism Worker; Substance Misuse Case Workers; Speech and Language Therapists (SALT) and Training and Employment Mentors.

The Service supports and deploys volunteers to support the delivery of the Appropriate Adult service and Referral Order panels.

2.2 Inspection 2020

In March and July 2020, the Service was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation¹. In October 2020, the findings of the inspection were published with the Service being judged overall as requires improvement. The report acknowledged that the period following inspection was a critical time and indeed for a rating of inadequate to be avoided inspectors commented how *"there must be a high level of scrutiny and a relentless focus on making improvements with pace"*. The report made 12 recommendations that inspectors felt if implemented would have a positive impact on the quality of the Service and would consequently improve the lives of those children who it comes into contact with and better protect the public. Since this time, a robust improvement plan has been developed and work is underway to deliver improvements ensure that the services delivered to children, families and victims are advanced.

This plan sets out the proposals for 2021/22 and a longer-term vision for the Service, that seeks to address the findings from HMIP's published report but also aligns the Service with local and national expectations around working with children in this context. Across the Trust, Council and partnership there is a collective commitment to making improvements and doing better.

3. Governance, Leadership and Partnership Arrangements

Youth Offending Services were established under the statutory provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Act sets out the requirement for local Youth Offending Teams to comprise the four statutory agencies: The Local Authority (including Children's Services), Police, Probation and Health. The primary duty to ensure a Youth Offending Service, and appropriate youth justice services are in place, rests with the Chief Executive of the local authority. The Youth Justice Board later set down requirements for governing Management Boards.

The Birmingham Youth Offending Service Partnership Board currently meets 8 times per year and in 2021/22 an independent chair was appointed, with the Head of Birmingham Probation Service, retaining the role of Deputy Chair.

The Board is primarily responsible for:

- Providing strategic direction and delivering the principal aim of preventing offending and re-offending;
- Determining how appropriate services are to be provided and funded;

¹ <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspections/birminghamyos2020/>

- Ensuring the effective delivery of services for children through the provision of scrutiny and challenge;
- Ensuring children involved in the youth justice system have access to universal and specialist services delivered by partners and key agencies;
- Ensuring that the services delivered reference the responsibility towards victims of youth crime;
- Providing support to the Service.

Board members comprise representatives of each of the statutory partners, in addition to representation of the Chair of the Youth Bench, a community member and other local partners. The Board reports to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and the chair of the CSP is a member of the YOS Partnership Board.

The Youth Offending Service is hosted by Birmingham Children's Trust (BCT). Birmingham Children's Trust exists to make a positive difference for children and families in the city. Formerly Children's Services and run by Birmingham City Council, for a period Birmingham needed to do much more to support disadvantaged children in the city and make sure they were safe.

In April 2018, Children's Services became a Children's Trust to help accelerate these changes. The Trust is owned by, but independent from, Birmingham City Council.

The work is supported by a Children's Trust Board and the Director for Education & Skills (DCS) for Children and Young People, and Director of Children's Services is responsible for ensuring children's social care is effectively delivered through the Children's Trust.

Birmingham Children's Partnership (BCP), established in 2018, is a partnership committed to transforming the system of services and support, and improving the lives and outcomes of children and families. The BCP brings together the local authority, NHS commissioners and providers, the police, voluntary sector, the Children's Trust, plus children themselves, to work together to improve the lives of children and families in Birmingham. The Service is represented within this partnership through the attendance of the Trust Chief Executive Officer. The BCP has developed Birmingham's BIG IDEAS² setting out the ambition for all children within the city and the work delivered by the Service seeks to further support this ambition.

Birmingham Children's Partnership

Birmingham's BIG IDEAS

- 1 Be a child friendly city**
We celebrate our youth and super-diversity, and value our children and young people. Birmingham is a Child Friendly City.
- 2 Invest in early help**
Early help is everyone's business, and the responsibility of all professionals. We are investing to support families before their needs get worse.
- 3 Lift children out of poverty and adversity**
Through this investment we will reduce the number of children growing up in poverty, invest in jobs, education and outdoor spaces, and reduce needs such as mental ill-health, substance misuse and domestic abuse.

So every child and young person has a bright future



² <https://www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk/professionals-and-education-settings/birmingham-childrens-partnership/birmingham-childrens-partnership-vision-for-children-and-families/>

4. Partnership Arrangements

In addition to the existing partnership arrangements that support the direct work with children and families, the Service is currently represented at several relevant strategic and operational meetings, including:

- Birmingham Children's Partnership
- Birmingham's Fair Access Governance Board
- Birmingham Tackling School Exclusions Partnership
- Birmingham Community Safety Partnership
- Birmingham Safeguarding Children's Partnership
- Birmingham Early Help Partnership
- Birmingham Contextual Safeguarding Board
- Birmingham Preparation for Adulthood Board
- Birmingham Strategic Life Course Board
- Birmingham Prevent Strategic Board
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Partnership Forum
- Substance Misuse Strategy and Commissioning Group
- West Midlands Head of Youth Offending Strategic Leads Group
- Birmingham CYP 0-25 Mental Health Transformation Programme Board
- Birmingham Gangs, Violence and Serious Organised Crime Operational Group
- Birmingham Channel Panel
- Birmingham One day One Conversation (child focussed integrated offender management)
- Community Safety Partnership Operational Meeting
- Joint Decision-Making Panel (Partnership response to use of out of court disposals)
- Youth Justice Board Midlands Developing Practice Forum
- YOS/The Probation Service Operational Transitions meeting
- Birmingham Strategic Gangs, Violence and Serious Organised Crime Board
- Birmingham CYP 0-25 Mental Health Transformation Programme Board
- Birmingham Think Family Operational Group
- The West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit Strategic Board
- Integrated Offender Management Strategic Group

These partnership arrangements provide the opportunity to work collaboratively and provide the opportunity to highlight and respond to the specific and often complex needs of children involved with the Service.

5. Resources and Services

The Youth Offending Service partnership's overall delegated funding for 2021/22 is £8,523,071.

Birmingham Children's Trust's contribution for 2021/22 is £4,172,661, this includes £462,214 which funds the Business Support and Services staff. For 2021/22, BCT funding has increased by £200,000 to support the Service on its improvement agenda and £118,491 for staff pay increments. The Trust are funded by Birmingham City Council in the core contract, including for the delivery of YOS services.

For 2021/22 the Youth Justice Board grant allocation has been confirmed at £2,106,280, an increase of £146,512 compared with 2021/22.

Probation, Health and Police partners continue to second staff into the Service.

The West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner funding has been confirmed for 2021/22 at £275,000. This is underpinned by a detailed spending plan and funding received contributes to the delivery of the Female Gender Specific Programme, Speech and Language Therapy, Knife Crime Prevention, delivered through mentoring provision, Serious Youth Violence Prevention, and therapeutic work with children where harmful sexual behaviour is a concern.

Other funding sources include Think Family and funding from Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group.

The YOS received a local financial contribution under the Supporting Families programme, £646,862. This allows the service to take a systemic approach to working with children. It enables children and families to remain open on a voluntary basis, once statutory involvement has ended, where ongoing support is wanted, in support of improved outcomes as set out in the Think Family strategy. The service remains committed to supporting this agenda and further embedding the principles into the practice model within the service.

Partner	Staffing	Payments in Kind	Other Delegated Funds	Total
Birmingham Children's Trust	£3,528,334		£644,327	£4,172,661
Police	£322,000			£322,000
Police & Crime Commissioner	£166,195		£108,805	£275,000
Probation	£152,052		£15,000	£167,052
Health	£253,327			£253,327
Youth Justice Board	£2,106,280			£2,106,280
Other sources of funding	£1,165,251		£61,500	£1,226,751
Total	£7,693,439		£829,632	£8,523,071

6. Performance and Priorities

6.1 Performance Against the National Youth Justice Priorities

Reducing the Number of First-Time Entrants

First Time Entrants (FTEs) to the criminal justice system are classified as those children (aged 10 - 17), resident in England and Wales, who received their first caution or conviction in a given period. The figures are presented as a number and as a rate per 100,000 of the 10-17-year-old local population. The latest national figures for first time entrants (January – December 2019) identify that Birmingham's performance against this national priority continues to improve year on year. The total number of FTEs between 01 January 2019 and 31 December 2019 was 410 children, a reduction of 9.5% from 453 in

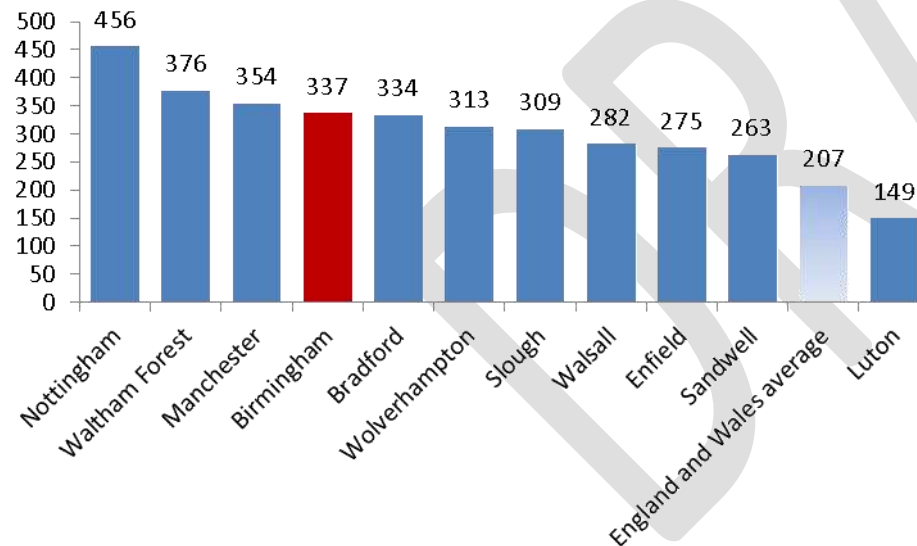


Figure 1: First time entrants, Jan – Dec 2019, YOT family comparison

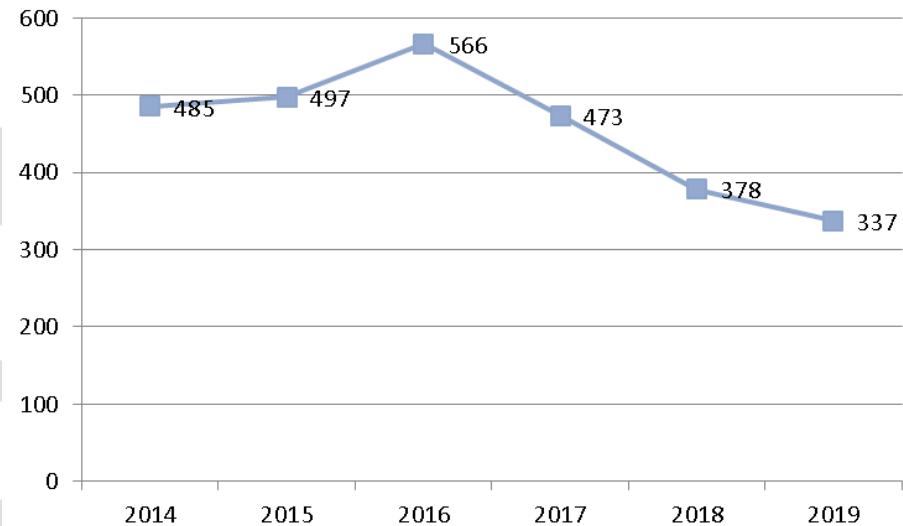


Figure 2: First-time entrants, 2014 – 2019, National dataset

the same period the previous year. Over the same period the first-time entrant rate fell from 378 children per 100,000 to 337 children per 100,000, an improvement of 10.8%.

The Service is currently performing more poorly than the England and Wales average, though it is similar to other Core Cities and its YOT Family³.

Analysis of local data for 2020/21 (a different period to the national dataset) has identified that the majority of first-time entrants were aged 15-17, with 43.1% aged 16 or older. 12.5% of first-time entrants were female. The most prevalent offences amongst first time entrants were Violence against the Person, Motoring offences and Robbery.

Black, Asian and other minority ethnic children accounted for 69.4% of all First Time Entrants compared with 55.0% in the general 10 -17 population.

Black and Black British ethnic categories are over-represented appearing at approximately twice the rate of their incidence in the general 10-17 population. Furthermore, children from a Black or Mixed ethnicity (108 children) accounted for 38.4% of all first-time entrants while comprising 19.15% of the general 10 -17 population.

Violence Against the Person was the most prevalent offence category accounting for 146 offences which is 52.0% of all proven offences for first time entrants. Compared with the same period in 2019/20, the category shows a decrease of 5.2%.

In the period, 166 Community Resolutions were issued and though these do not count as substantive outcomes and therefore do not feature in the First Time Entrants figures, they are an informal way to deal with children coming to the attention of the Police for the first time.

Community Resolutions are jointly assessed with West Midlands Police (WMP) at the Joint Decision-Making Panel to identify whether the child and/or their families need additional support provided through the Service's 'Think Family' responsibilities. This includes children who have been excluded from school. 36.7% of children becoming a first-time entrant had an identified special educational need.

Of the outcomes given to first time entrants, 41.8% received pre-court outcomes, 50.5% first-tier outcomes, 7.7% community penalties, and 2.9% were sentenced to custody. As we move through 20/21 and beyond, the Service will be working with colleagues in West Midlands Police and Liaison and Diversion Teams to strengthen our collaborative preventative and diversionary responses to children coming to the attention of the criminal justice system. As a collective, we will build an understanding around each child becoming a first-time entrant, so that we can be assured that this was the most appropriate course of action.

³ The YOT families, set by national government, group services that are deemed to be similar in terms of the socio-demographic characteristics of their area. They enable YOTs to benchmark their performance with other YOTs.

Reducing Re-offending

The latest national figures (April 2018 – March 2019) show the Service is performing better than the England and Wales national average and is in the top quartile of all Youth Offending Teams across the country. The Service continues to perform well in comparison with others in its statistical family.

Within this period were 718 children, the largest nationally, with a 35.0% re-offending rate, which was one of the lowest within its statistical family and lower than the England and Wales average.

However, there is more work to do. In 2021/22, one of the Service's key priorities will be to establish a local re-offending cohort so that we are better able to monitor and understand children's reoffending in a timelier manner and in a way that supports the meaningful development of practice to support a child's move away from offending.

An analysis of Birmingham children shows that those who re-offended were more strongly affected by the following risk factors than those who did not re-offend:

1. Lack of commitment including truancy;
2. Living in families under stress due to criminality, substance misuse, mental health issues;
3. Special Educational Needs;
4. Children in Care status;
5. Having a large number of previous outcomes;
6. Young people at risk of gang affiliation

A public health approach to tackling the root causes of a child's offending is required. In response, the service:

- Commissions dedicated education mentors to break down barriers and support engagement and attendance
- Works systemically with children and their families, including support of Parenting Officers

Re-offending Rate per 100,000: Apr 2018 to Mar 2019 cohort

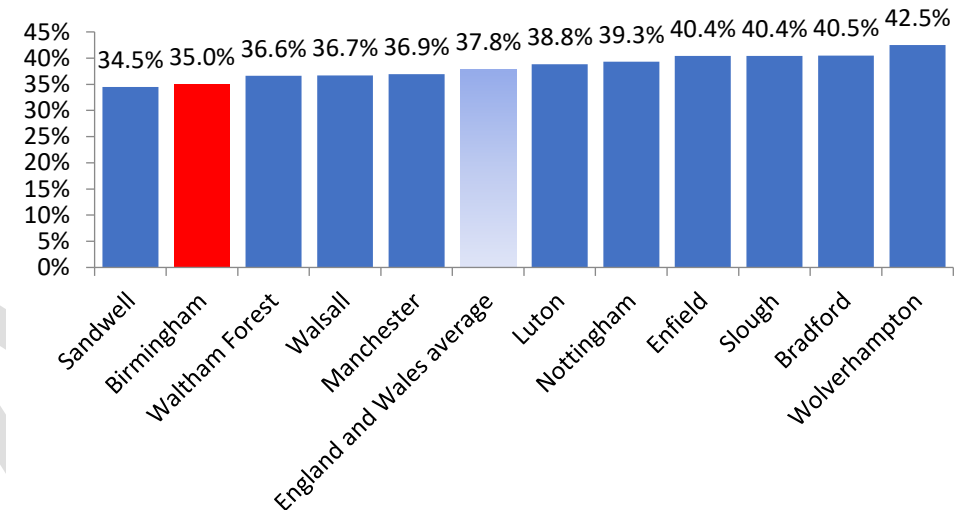


Figure 3: Recidivism, Apr 2018 -Mar 2019 cohort, YOT Family comparison

- Is supported by dedicated Aquarius substance misuse workers, Forward Thinking Birmingham Nurses and Speech and Language Therapists
- Commissions specialised mentoring around knife crime prevention and those children who are gang affiliated

It is clear from the data that children in care are over-represented across the service. In 2021/22, plans to tackle disproportionality will be progressed across the partnership. The Service will work with colleagues across west Midlands Police and the Trust, including the corporate parenting board, to consider how we seek to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of children in care. As part of the plan to tackle disproportionality there will be scrutiny around each first-time entrant to understand the root causes of this and take appropriate actions.

Reducing the Use of the Secure Estate

This indicator compares the number of custodial sentences against the 10 –17-year-old population of a local area.

Birmingham has a higher rate of custodial sentences than the national average, although within the range of other Core Cities. Whilst it is positive that the number of children sentenced to custody in Birmingham has decreased, from 66 in 2019/20 to 40 in 2020/21, this remains a priority for the Trust and Service and features within the improvement plan.

In 2021/22 a system will be developed to allow for the scrutiny of each child entering the secure estate. This will allow for a learning review of each child and will critically include the quality of pre-sentence reports, including victim work. The work to strengthen the prevention offer delivered by the YOS, will support this priority, as will the work to tackle disproportionality across the system.

The latest national data for custodial sentences (April 2020 – March 2021) shows the Service is performing worse than the national average and worse than most other members of its statistical family.

Rate per 1,000 of the 10-17 population

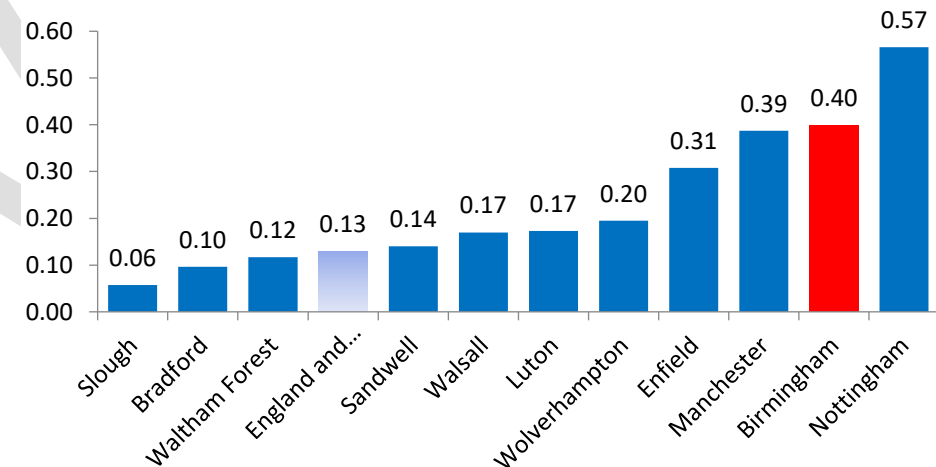


Figure 4: Custodial sentences, April 2020 – March 2021, YOT family comparison

The majority (64%) of young people sentenced to custody were aged 16-17. Boys of either Black or Black British ethnicity or dual heritage backgrounds remain over-represented in comparison with the general population. Black, Asian and other minority ethnic children accounted for 75.8% of all children receiving a custodial disposal compared with 55.0% in the general 10 -17 population. 3% of those sentenced to custody were female.

Violence Against the Person is most prevalent offence category accounting for 40 offences which is 34.2% of proven offences. Compared with the same period in 2019/20, the category shows a decrease of 47.4%.

Further work is required, through the disproportionality taskforce to ensure that we strengthen our understanding of our practices across the partnership. It is only then, that as a partnership, we can begin to educate and challenge disproportionality where it is evident within the system.

Remand Bed Nights

The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012 introduced a new remand framework for 10- to 17-year-olds in December 2012.

A remand to youth detention accommodation is currently to either: a secure children's home (SCH); a secure training centre (STC); or a young offender institution (YOI).

Between 01/04/2020 and 31/03/2021, a total of 61 children were remanded to the secure estate, representing a decrease from 74 in the previous year (17.6%). However, what is clear is that in 2020/21, children on average spent longer held on remand: much of which is explained by the COVID-19 pandemic and the restricted court time due to the lockdown. In 2020/21, 61 children spent a total of 5316 nights held on remand (average of 87 nights per child) in comparison to 74 children, spending 4767 nights in custody in the previous year (an average of 64 nights per child).

In 2020/21 children placed in SCHs spent a longer period of time (66.4 days) compared with STCs (48.0 days) and a shorter period of time than YOIs (92.1 days). By establishment type, the figures for 2019/20 were 44.2 for LASCHs, 18.6 for STCs and 64.2 for YOIs.

Of the 61 young people remanded during the period 26 (42.62%) were Children in Care at the time of the remand. A further 4 were previously a Child in Care. 35 young people (57.4%) gained Child in Care status as a result of their remand.

As a Service we are committed to reducing the use of the secure estate and tackling the over-representation of Black, Asian and other minority ethnic children in the secure estate. Various actions are contained within the improvement plan in support of this and critically, the implementation of a learning review, post every child entering the secure estate, will help us to understand, shape and improve practice and performance in this area.

6.2 Performance Against Local Indicators

Education, Training and Employment

The engagement of children into positive education, training and employment (ETE) is a clear protective factor and contributes significantly to the reduction of further offending. It is a priority objective for the Service.

A number of our children are disengaged from the academic GCSE education provision and struggle to cope in the larger classroom environment. This is not uncommon within the Youth Justice arena. Within Birmingham we have a disproportionately high number of children with Education Health and Care plans and special educational needs (SEN) open to the Service. In June 2021, 44% of children open to the service had either an EHCP or SEN. In addition, we have a considerable number who have not had their educational learning needs identified, often due to sporadic or non-attendance. The service has responded in several ways. Across the city Speech and Language Therapists provide assessments, diagnostic reports, deliver interventions of support and support Case Managers in their work. This is a valuable resource to help us better understand the learning needs of those who may previously have gone under the radar.

The Service's ETE Engagement strategy continues to use, at its core, the deployment of dedicated ETE mentors across the city. This is combined with the offer of highly supported and enhanced curriculum vocational provision and skills development opportunities. These are delivered either one to one or in small nurture groups, to help prepare children for ETE re-engagement. This provision includes:

- Music Recording Studio;
- Functional Skills support;
- Construction, Motor vehicle;
- Landscaping / Estate Improvement;
- Boxing, Sports Leaders Award;
- Health and Social Care;
- an Entrepreneurial provision.

Funding from the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) has helped us to offer this provision as a catalyst to re-engage children. The outcomes of the ETE Re-engagement programme during 2020/21 not only improved engagement in ETE but had a dramatic effect on reducing re-offending. Out of the 22 who engaged, only 1 had re-offended as of 31st March 2021 (project end date). On the back of this success continuation funding has been provided by the BCSP for 2021/22.

In addition, the Service has successfully launched the “Skill Mill”⁴ employability scheme during 2020. This scheme provides 32 employment opportunities for our children over the next 4 years. This supported employment offer provides a route out of offending for some of our most complex children.

The Service recognises the need for a targeted offer for those with specific barriers and needs and in response we continue to fund Barnardo’s to provide a specialist autism mentor. We also utilise a range of gang specialist mentoring providers to support our children who are sadly gang-affiliated or have been exploited for “County Lines”.

The Service has secured a range of externally funded mentoring options that supports ETE re-engagement. This includes sports based mentoring programmes from Aston Villa FC, Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) funded resettlement mentors from Phoenix United CiC and from July 2021 mentoring support from Catch 22 for those trying to move away from gang influences. In addition, we continue to benefit from having dedicated Post 16 ETE Intervention Workers based with the Service via the European Social Fund (ESF) Youth Promise Plus initiative. This mentoring support combined with access to our re-engagement provision, provides a fantastic opportunity for many of our children to re-engage and thrive as we tailor this offer so their needs can be met. However, our funding only enables us to offer this provision part time as an interim solution.

To help track and monitor the educational offer and engagement for our young people, the Service, alongside its partners, is developing a “Virtual School” concept. This will entail keeping a school register that will identify clearly any child who does not have a school place and highlight those who are disengaged from their school offer. This will and is helping us to collaboratively develop and implement a strategic and operational response to improve school engagement and ensure no child will be without a school or alternative provision offer. As a result of this more intensive tracking, the numbers of children identified as without a school place have reduced significantly. Most notably at the end of June 2021, all children known to YOS and in the community had a school place, albeit across BYOS and Education and Skills departments, there is a shared commitment to driving up attendance and engagement. This is strengthened and evidenced by the regular joint review of children's education placements and the addition in 20-21 of the Head of Service for Schools Admissions and Fair Access, Education and Skills Department to the BYOS Partnership Board, bringing much welcomed scrutiny and support around this area. In addition, support for the PRUs is being increased with staff from the Service being utilised to support the work of the Pupil Referral Units.

The Service continues to play a key support role in influencing the provision and ETE landscape in Birmingham, supporting the work of SENAR and the Education and Skills Directorate.

⁴ <https://www.theskillmill.org/>

Assessment Completion

A local target has been identified and is monitored and reported, to ensure that all children's assessments are completed and reviewed within prescribed timescales. This is critical to ensuring the planning for and the delivery of work is informed by a good understanding of the needs in the case and can commence before a child becomes disengaged. At the same time as driving up compliance with this target, the Service's quality assurance and audit process provides an ability to measure assessment quality.

In January 2021, the average performance across the Service was 49.7% which has improved to 81.9% at the end of June 2021. Stretch targets will be set in 21-22.

Contact with Children

The contacts between our staff and our children are a fundamental aspect to the work. We know that through building trusted, safe and secure relationships with our children, we are better placed to identify needs, secure engagement and work to help guide children away from offending. As a service it is essential that we understand and are assured that we are working alongside our children as their assessment tells us they need.

This indicator measures the percentage of our children who are being seen in line with the 'Scaled Approach' guidelines for contacts. Where this is not happening, the Leadership Team have the information to enable them to pick up conversations where required, so that swift action can be taken to address this.

In January 2021, the average performance across the Service was 65.9% which has improved to 75% at the end of June 2021. The Service has a set target of 90%.

Victim Engagement and Satisfaction

This is an area that is identified as requiring improvement and this local indicator will support change.

At the beginning of 2021, the average performance across the Service was that 39.3% of identified victims were contacted. Of those responding in terms of their satisfaction, 80% were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the support they had received. At the end of June 2021, this had improved to 59.1% of identifiable victims contacted with 66.6% saying they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied".

As a service we are fully committed to ensuring that every identifiable victim, who has consented to being contacted, receives an offer from Birmingham Youth Offending Service. In 20/21, the Service will be recruiting to a Restorative Practice and Victim Coordinator, who will be driving forward developments in this area, including:

- Strengthening systems so that we receive high quality information from WMP ensuring consent is sought in every case, and where unclear, Police colleagues revisit this;
- Developing robust internal policies and procedures, that ensure a consistent response is delivered to victims across the city

Referral to Specialist Services

Birmingham YOS is truly multi agency and there is access to a range of internal and external specialist practitioners, commissioned services and pathfinder projects. The expectation is that appropriate services are explored and accessed where a need is identified. We know that many of the children in the youth justice system have often experienced adversity, trauma and have unmet need and experience inequality, including for many poverty, poor health and absence of opportunity.

The Service monitors the involvement of specialist practitioners cross-referenced against identified needs from Asset Plus. Currently, this is restricted to Substance Misuse and Mental Health provision with Speech and Language being added in 21-22.

In January 2021, 10.2% of children's case files had a recorded involvement with a specialist provision where it had been identified in the Asset Plus assessment. At the end of June 2021, this had risen to 61.5%.

Disproportionality of Black Children in the Youth Justice System

We know that children from Black and other minority ethnic groups are over-represented within the criminal justice system with clear evidence of the extent of this across Birmingham. Children from these ethnic groups account for a disproportionate number of those arrested, and this over-representation continues and is evident at every stage of the justice system. The Service and its partners are committed to reducing this over-representation, with a vision that the incidence of each ethnic group is proportionate to its incidence in the general 10 -17 population.

Work is on-going to ensure alignment with the Trust's Equalities and Diversity Action Plan whilst ensuring that the wider context of the criminal justice system is considered. A disproportionality taskforce has been established and is developing a multi-agency action plan for 2021/22 which will support this priority in the Service's wider Improvement Plan.

How we Measure Performance and Quality

The Youth Offending Service performance framework has recently been strengthened to support individual teams, case workers and managers to deliver the best possible service to children and their families. Several individual strands underpin this and are supported by the Service's Performance Improvement Framework and case management system:

1. Weekly reports for individual case workers and managers, identifying pending and outstanding assessments, plans and reviews;
2. Weekly team briefings for team management and staff to identify actions addressing priorities for the coming week;
3. End-of-week performance roundups to look at data, identify blockages and set priorities;
4. Monthly service-wide performance Improvement meeting;
5. Monthly case file audits;
6. Learning from Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ);
7. Learning from feedback from children and families;
8. Learning from victims of crime;
9. Learning from Thematic inspections and serious incidents.

The Service contributes to the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment and the West Midlands Combined Authority Strategic Needs Assessment. The Service contributes data to the city-wide Children's Services data-sharing hub (Sentinel) which brings together, cleans and matches data from the Care Director (Youth Offending), CareFirst (Social Care) and Impulse (Education) case management systems to provide a holistic 'single view' of a client's interaction with the numerous services.

6.3 Our Children and Families

In the period 01/04/2020 to 31/03/2021, the Service worked with 750 children subject to court ordered programmes and Youth Conditional Cautions. This compares with 844 children in the previous year. Though the overall number has fallen, there has been a rise in the proportion presenting with complex needs and high-risk behaviours requiring a more intensive approach and interventions. 194 children were supported whilst subject to anti-social behaviour disposals and specialist interventions such as: harmful sexual behaviour (6-17 years) and funded preventative programmes. In addition, 31 victims of youth crime were offered a service and 155 Community Resolutions were triaged. Additionally, the Service has supported 24 children on court orders who are the responsibility of other local authorities but are placed in Birmingham under caretaking arrangements.

The Service has adopted a whole family response under the city's 'Think Family' approach, conducting a systemic assessment of the child within the context of their family. Across the Service, many practitioners and managers have been trained in 'Working with Complex Families (Level 4, City and Guilds)', to promote a consistent approach across the city. The Service benefits from a range of disciplines through seconded

officers (mental health, substance misuse, education link mentors, speech and language, probation and police) and this allows for creative support and access to opportunities for all family members.

Assessing and Addressing Need

Assessing children in the youth justice system requires the consideration of the wider social context of the child's behaviour and of the fundamental importance of trusted professional relationships as a medium for change. The Youth Justice Boards 'Child First' vision, was further reinforced by the publication of the Punishing Abuse Report in February 2021, commissioned by the West Midlands Combined Authority and the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. This report set out the results of an action research project designed to discover the extent of abuse and other adversity for a diverse range of children known to Youth Offending Teams in the West Midlands.

The report highlighted the systemic failure to meet the needs of children encountering the criminal justice system and made a series of recommendations for reform. The report emphasised the impact of abuse, loss, trauma and attachment difficulties and recognised the wide-ranging and often complex vulnerabilities of children known to Youth Offending Services. It is these very children who are regularly punished for behaviours that are intrinsically linked to their childhood experiences, which for many is completely outside of their control.

Assessing and responding to need on an individual and child first basis and taking on board the relevant findings from the punishing abuse report is a clear priority for the Service.

Our work with children includes personalised interventions to remove structural barriers, including exclusions from education, training and employment. It promotes engagement with the wider social context especially the family but also peers, schools, colleges and work, creating opportunities, enhancing social inclusion and promoting individual change, aspiration and sense of hope.

'Asset Plus', an assessment and planning framework, implemented nationally by the Youth Justice Board, contains materials premised on desistance theory and the practical application of desistance. Use of this framework allows for the personalisation of support for children and this is supplemented by a range of assessments, services and interventions informed by research and best practice. These include: Asset Plus, AIM2, Triple P Positive Parenting Teen; Multi Systemic Therapy; Restorative Justice; Family Group Conferencing; Good Lives; Cognitive Behavioural Therapy; Dialectical Behaviour Therapy; Female Gender Specific Interventions and trauma informed approaches. Asset Plus categorises the risks to a child and the risk that they pose in 4 broad categories (Low, Medium, High, Very High) and sets out an indicative level of intervention (Standard, Enhanced, Intensive) to meet the assessed need.

Between 01 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 694 children completed self-assessment surveys. The information these provide the service help to shape and influence partnership and commissioning priorities:

- 406 (58.5%) get angry and lose their temper.
- 291 (41.9%) admitted to truanting from school.
- 117 (16.9%) wanted help with writing.
- 58 (8.4%) reported living with others who got into trouble with the police.
- 27 (3.9%) drank alcohol too much and 36 (5.2%) used drugs too much.
- 313 (45.1%) had friends who got into trouble.
- 257 (37.0%) had lost someone special from their life.
- 102 (14.7%) wanted help with reading
- 47 (6.8%) had thoughts about hurting themselves and 40 (5.8%) had thoughts about killing themselves.

Our aim is to work alongside children and families, within a model underpinned by relationship-based practice which is fundamental to the effectiveness of our work.

Birmingham Children's Trust is currently developing a practice model that will define key principles and ways of working with children, families, carers and communities. As a Trust there is a clear commitment to child-centred practice, with a focus on keeping children safe, meeting their needs whilst at the same time involving parents, or carers, and wider family members. The vision is that involvement should always be collaborative and reflect the expertise and resources of families and local community networks and this will span the Service.

Identifying, Managing and Reducing risk

Criminal exploitation, including "County Lines" and gang affiliation, are complex and developing areas of youth justice, social work and family support practice. Protecting children from risks outside the family home requires a creative, often different partnership approach. Children at risk of, or being, criminally exploited or those affiliated to gangs are generally influenced by their peer group and adults external to the family network. A response is needed that addresses these extra-familial contexts including disrupting the exploitation.

Research tells us that many children may not recognise their experience as being abusive or exploitative. However, many want to end their association with this activity but continue because of coercion and threats to them or their families and many are unable to communicate this to professionals or their families. The most effective method to prevent children becoming involved in gangs and/or criminal exploitation is early identification. Intervening early to help children make positive life choices and distance themselves from gang-related activity. Birmingham's 'Right Help Right Time' guidance and front door arrangements (CASS/MASH) have been strengthened to recognise the potential harm for children.

'Contextual Safeguarding' is an approach to understanding, and responding to, children's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. Traditional approaches to protecting children from harm have focussed on the risk of violence and abuse from inside the home, usually from a parent/carer or other trusted adult and don't always address the time that children spend outside the home and the influence of peers on a child's development and safety.

Contextual safeguarding recognises the impact of the public and social context on children's lives, and consequently their safety. Contextual safeguarding seeks to identify and respond to harm and abuse posed to children outside their home, either from adults or other children. It is an approach that looks at how interventions can change the processes and environments, to make them safer for all children, as opposed to focussing on an individual.

In 2020 Birmingham Children's Trust broadened the reach of their safeguarding response through the development of the multi-agency EmpowerU Hub model, providing a robust response to contextual safeguarding. The Service has established effective working relationships with the Hub and work is underway to explore the co-location of staff within this hub. The EmpowerU hub coordinates the response to children missing, holds daily briefings examining critical incidents, promoting the sharing of information across the partnership, coordinating and assisting with immediate safety planning and leading on disruption planning meetings, where needed.

Safeguarding

The growing complexity of those children encountering the service is evident from the data presented. As those children assessed as 'Low' safety and wellbeing is falling, we are seeing a rise in those children assessed as medium or above.

BCT's Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS) is a multi-agency front door using the principles of Right Help, Right Time. The Youth Offending Service provides daily support to CASS which has improved:

- Timeliness and quality of YOS safeguarding referrals;
- A greater understanding around Remands to Local Authority Accommodation and Youth Detention Accommodation for colleagues in other services;
- An Increase in early partnership referrals to the YOS Harmful Sexual Behaviour Team;
- YOS attendance at strategy discussions and meetings;

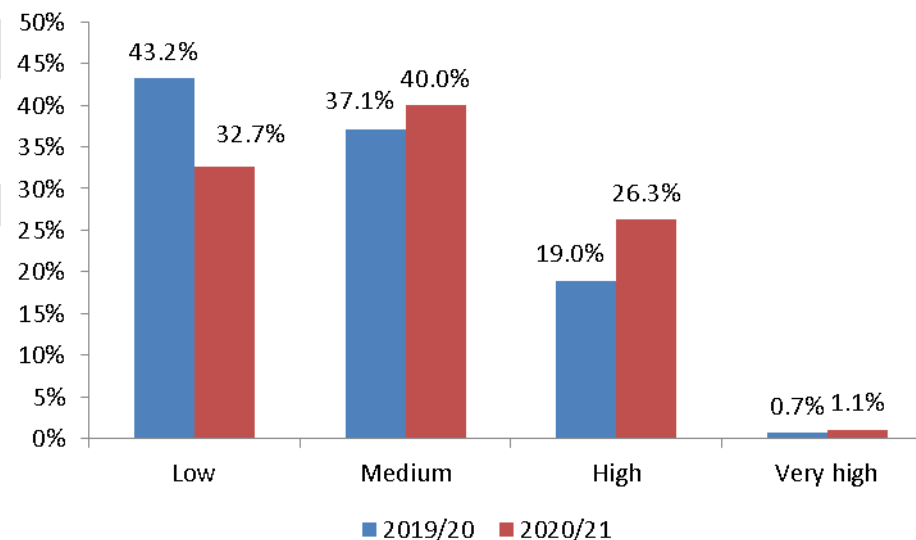


Figure 5: Assessed level of risk to safety and well-being, comparison 2019/20 - 2020/21

- Understanding changing threats and risk, including child criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation
- understanding around the factors related to desistance in strategy discussions
- understanding around YOS assessments and interventions

Within the Youth Offending Service all children are screened for issues of safety and well-being. Between 01/04/2020 and 31/03/2021, 750 children were assessed for safety and well-being compared with 844 children in the previous year. 505 (67.3%) children were identified as at a having medium or high vulnerabilities, requiring an enhanced response to mitigate these, compared with 56.8% in the previous year. The proportion of those assessed with 'High' or 'Very High' vulnerabilities increased to 27.3% in 2020/21 compared with 19.67% in 2019/20. Responses include referrals to Children's Safeguarding Services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, intensive family and mentoring interventions, increased offender management and intensive interventions, and substance misuse and alcohol treatment services.

During the period April 2020 – March 2021, there were several recurring risk factors within children's Asset Plus assessments. 5 risk factors were identified as each, in turn, affecting over 40% of the young people

Tackling these factors, alongside strengthening protective factors helps to support children to avoid further offending and helps to mitigate the effect of static risk factors and those which are more difficult to change. Of the children assessed between April 2020 and March 2021, 83.2% of those assessed were judged to have at least one protective factor.

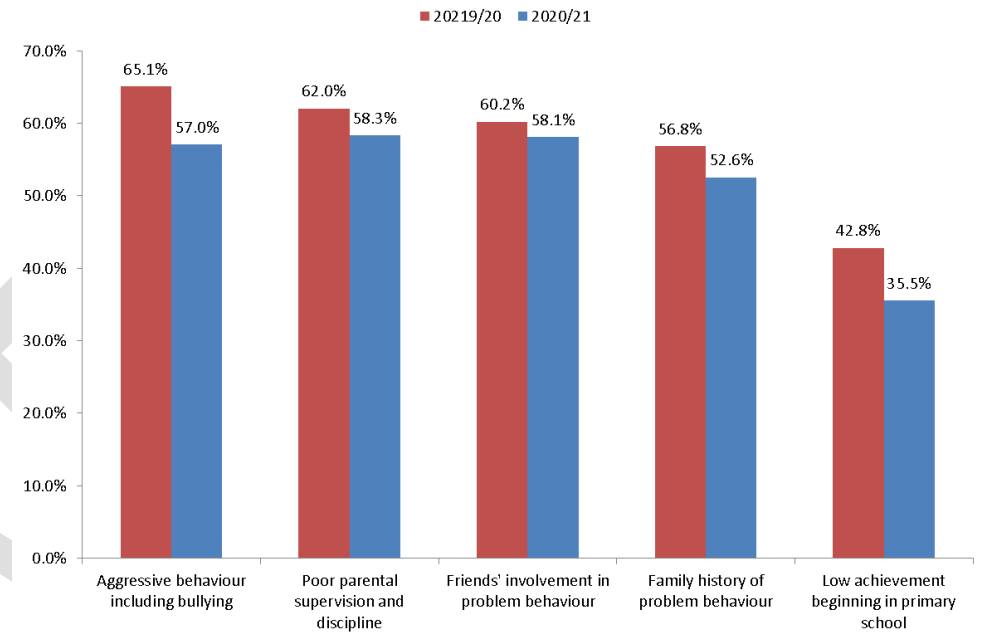


Figure 6: Significant risk factors, comparison 2019/20 – 2020/21

Public Protection

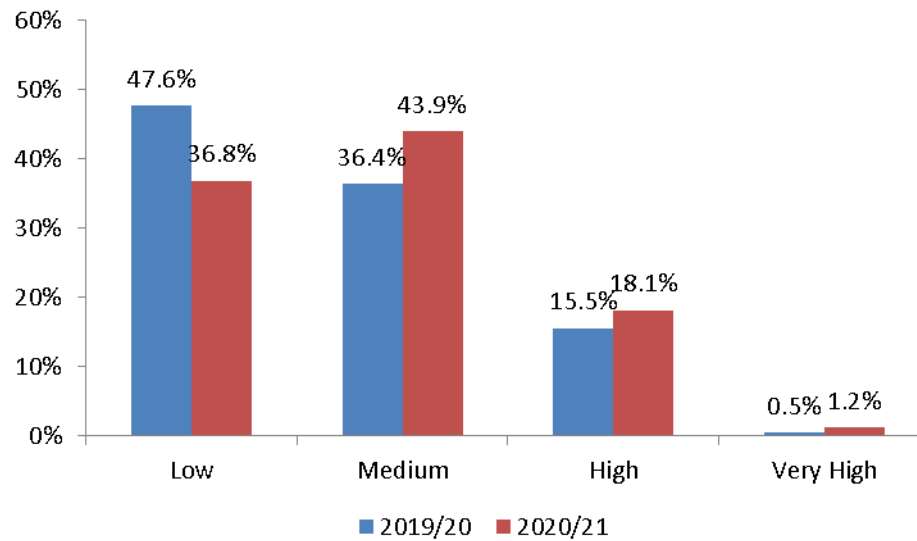


Figure 7: Assessed level of Risk to others, comparison 2019/20 – 2020/21

The Scaled Approach lays down, within National Standards, how each child is set an 'intervention level' and the levels of contact that each child subject to a court order will receive. This is regularly reviewed within the 'Asset Plus' framework. 2020/21 saw an increase in the proportion of children within the Service's caseload assessed on the Enhanced level of intervention compared with 2019/20. Those children requiring an Intensive level of intervention remained static. Those on an Enhanced and Intensive level require higher contact levels than the Standard intervention level.

Integrated Offender Management (IOM) brings a cross-agency response to the crime and reoffending threats faced by local communities. The most persistent and problematic offenders are identified and managed jointly by partner agencies working

The management of children subject to court orders is a key responsibility of the Youth Offending Service. Those children assessed as posing a higher risk to the public are subject to a more intensive multi-agency approach.

The Youth Offending Service continues to lead and chair local Risk Panels to discuss those children assessed at medium to high risk of reoffending, harm and vulnerability. This allows the Service to co-ordinate services for the child to reduce risk and vulnerability.

The Service is responsible, within the Asset Plus framework, for completing assessments of the risk posed by children and co-ordinates robust multi-agency plans for these children. Compared with 2019/20, 2020/21 saw 474 (63.2%) assessed as medium or high risk to others compared with 442 (52.4%). There has been an increase in the proportion of children assessed as high or very high risk to others from 16.0% to 19.3%.

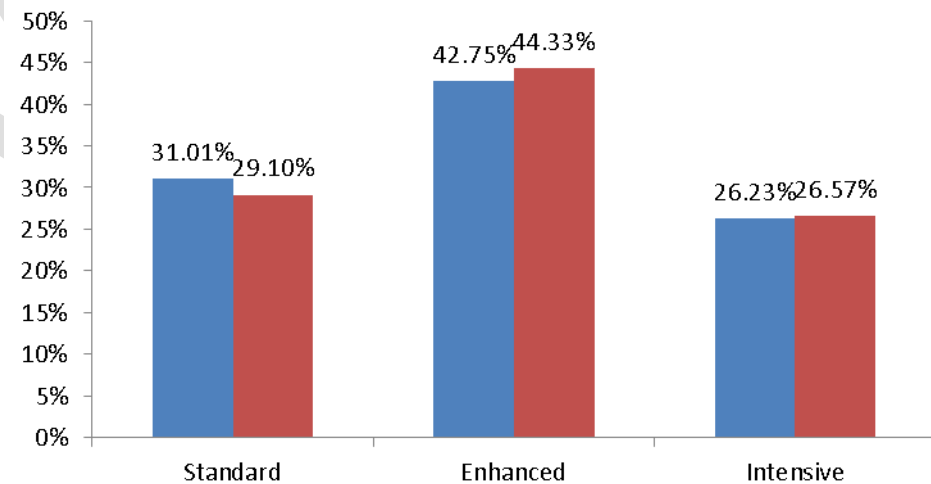


Figure 8: Intervention levels, comparison 2019/20 – 2020/21

together. The Youth ODOC (“One Day One Conversation”) case management meeting is steered within a pan-Birmingham Strategy in line with adult offender management but recognising the differences in managing the risk of children and children. Police Youth Offender Managers are closely aligned to the Service and work in partnership alongside YOS case managers with those children who require more intensive engagement and management.

The Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) are a key part of the government’s strategy in protecting the public and are intended to help manage the risks presented by those individuals committing serious violent and sexual offences. The four key functions of MAPPA are to:

- Identify all relevant individuals;
- Complete comprehensive risk assessments that take advantage of coordinated information sharing across agencies;
- Devise, implement and review robust MAPPA management plans;
- Focus available resources in a way which best protects the public from serious harm.

In every child’s case and as part of the risk assessment, the Service considers the need for MAPPA in the management of risk to the public. All Asset Plus assessments are subject to management oversight, and this, alongside the case management data, supports the accurate identification of those children relevant under these arrangements.

Children in Care

National research has concluded that children in care are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system and recommends the use of restorative justice as an alternative form of behaviour management for minor offences. The latest Local Authority returns identified that 31 (3.2%) of the 962 children aged 10 or older who had been looked after for more than 12 months had a conviction or were made subject to a youth caution during the period 1st April 2019 - 31st March 2020, a reduction from 46 (4.6%) out of a total of 979 children in 2018/19. This compares with the national average of 2.9% and has been supported by Police and Crown Prosecution Service practices to reduce criminalisation of children in care for minor offences such as criminal damage.

Children in Care are an especially vulnerable group and their prevalence in the youth justice system is regularly monitored and reported upon. 71 children were currently or had previously been looked after at the point of receiving a substantive outcome in 2020/21.

Children with a history of being looked after were more likely to be sentenced to custody, with custodial sentences comprising 9.8% (8 children) of all children in care sentenced. Despite this, children with a history of being looked after only constituted 3.6% of First Time Entrants during the period. Of the 61 children remanded during the period 26 (42.62%) were Children in Care at the time of the remand. A further 4 were previously a Child in Care. 35 children (57.4%) gained Child in Care status as a result of their remand. These 26 children accounted for 2158 (40.6%) of the 5316 bed nights in 2020/21.

Serious Incidents Procedures

In May 2018, the requirement for Youth Offending Services to notify the Youth Justice Board of all serious incidents was abolished. Instead, locally youth justice services are required to ensure that there are clear pathways to identify and review relevant safeguarding and public protection incidents.

Whilst the Youth Justice Board will be reinstating a requirement for YOTs to notify from 2022/23, in 2021 the Service has conducted a full review, with the Safeguarding Children Partnership, of internal processes to ensure a robust and appropriate response. It has further been agreed that the Service will take part in the voluntary notifications to the YJB for the remaining part of 2021/22.

Whenever there is a serious safeguarding or public protection incident involving a child, it is imperative that YOS liaise with partners to ensure:

- relevant professionals are aware of the incident and
- immediate action is taken to promote the welfare of the child and take steps to safeguard others.

It is vital that we understand the circumstances of the incident and any learning or improvements in the case are identified, action is taken, and learning is appropriately shared.

The relevant reportable incidents fall under two criteria as follows:

Safeguarding – Where a child:	Public Protection – Where a child is charged with:
Dies	Murder/Manslaughter
Attempts suicide with intent to end life	Rape
Is the victim of rape (where allegation has been made to the Police)	A Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Serious Further Offence when the child is already subject to MAPPA
Is the victim of sexual abuse or exploitation	A Terrorism related offence
Has sustained a life-threatening injury or serious / permanent impairment of health and development	

In all cases the Service will conduct an internal learning review. The purpose of this is to provide the opportunity to reflect, identify good practice and learning to improve practice and service delivery. The findings should inform any external statutory review and will support the creation of a learning culture within the Service.

In all internal reviews, the author will examine any factors in the child's life that could have helped to predict that the incident might occur, what measures have been taken to reduce the likelihood of the incident being repeated and the quality of practice evident within the case, including management oversight. Where appropriate, we will work alongside the child and their system to understand their views of the incident, their involvement with the Service and what needs to happen to ensure as best as we can that there is no repeat incident.

The Service's Partnership Board will receive quarterly reports on serious incidents in the period with a summary of findings and actions.

6.4 Priorities

Capturing the key priorities for the Service is essential. As a partnership we are attempting to navigate the findings of the YOS HMIP inspection in the context of the challenges the city faces and the partnership responses to this. The Service Improvement Plan is robust, and captures the activity linked to each of the HMIP recommendations, alongside those actions arising from internal audit and review, broader HMIP Inspections, Serious Case Reviews and Safeguarding Children Practice Reviews. The key priorities for the Service in 2021/22, expanded later in the report, are:

- Reviewing and enhancing the Service prevention offer across the partnership;
- Developing robust approaches to effective multi agency risk management;
- Ensuring practice is of consistently high priority;
- Responding to disproportionality where it exists across the service;
- Workforce Development; Including a programme of restorative practice training across the Service;
- Ensuring that services to victims are considered in all cases and are delivered well;
- Developing a Birmingham YOS identity, culture and vision that secures consistency across the city and promotes best practice.

A robust approach to audit, review and learning is essential to the Service's improvement journey. An improved understanding of the quality of local practice will allow the Service to respond quickly to areas for improvement.

In 2021/22 an annual audit plan has been developed which has a focus on the quality of core case practice (assessment and planning) at the start of a child's involvement with the Service. Additionally, thematic audits including children in custody and resettlement will also be conducted.

The Service has also commissioned two detailed case audits which will be externally and independently conducted in 2021/22. The first will focus on the quality of the Service's work in relation to out of court disposals and this will inform practice development with West Midlands Police. The second audit will concentrate on those children receiving a court disposal. The findings of both audits will contribute to the Improvement Plan and its actions.

7. Responding to the Pandemic and Recovery from COVID-19

All Services have experienced significant and unprecedented challenges since March 2020. Birmingham YOS is no different and since this time, there has been much activity around responding to the crisis, the needs of the children, families, victims and employees whilst at the same time planning for recovery.

COVID 19 has had a major impact in how we work with all stakeholders encountering our Service. With the government restrictions and the closure of all YOS premises, came the necessity to develop a creative approach to delivering support, meeting needs and managing risk. Most YOS services continued in a virtual space: processes and procedures were adapted, and new ones created to support continued delivery.

In February 2021, the Service took the decision that all contact with children, families and victims should resume, in person, with the necessary social distancing and personal protective equipment in place. This has been welcomed.

Across the Trust, we are on a recovery journey and the Service is well connected to this, with a particular focus on estates. Whilst the pandemic has presented some significant challenges, including for the staff team, there will undoubtedly be some opportunities. The Service is exploring new, more child friendly premises; we are considering what we have learned through the pandemic; how, moving forward, the delivery of our services could continue in a 'blended' manner, where appropriate; and opportunities to work smarter, more effectively and more responsively to the needs of individuals.

In November 2020, HMIP published a thematic review of the work of Youth Offending Services nationally during the COVID-19 pandemic. This report acknowledged the unprecedented challenges that had been faced by services and acknowledged that at a local and partnership level there had been a quick response to the needs of children and families. This report summarised several key recommendations and learning points including for YOT Management Boards and YOTs and these are included within the COVID-19 Recovery strand of the Service's Improvement Plan. This plan is kept under regular review, and we are continually assessing our ability to respond and learn from the pandemic, alongside our children, families and victims.

In addition to the impact of the pandemic on services, we know that children, particularly those already experiencing inequalities, have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. The COVID-19 Marmot Review: Build Back Fairer⁵ commissioned by the Health Foundation highlights growing concerns around some key areas:

- The mental health of children is worsening;
- Exposure to abuse at home has risen;
- Unemployment is rising.

The Service must adopt a trauma informed, relationship-based approach to our work with children. This need has never been greater, and this is a key workforce development priority in 2021/2022 and beyond.

8. Challenges, Risks and Issues

Aside from the challenges presented by the pandemic, the Service was inspected by HMIP during this period. The inspection published in 2020, identified that the service required improvement and made several recommendations. All recommendations are contained within a structured improvement plan, they have a lead officer and clear timescales for implementation. The Service and plan benefits from the support of a Project Manager and there are scheduled meetings to review progress, understand barriers and collectively problem solve.

As part of improvement journey and action planning, we have embedded recommendations from other HMIP inspections and learning from Local Safeguarding Children Practice Reviews. As we progress through improvement and raise local practice standards, we intend to benchmark practice within the Service against published recommendations, including those contained within the findings of the YJB report “Ethnic disproportionality in remand and sentencing in the youth justice system”⁶ published January 2021 and the HMIP annual report published November 2020⁷.

During 2020/21, the Senior Leadership Team within the Service has been expanded as there was recognition that, such is the size of the Service and breadth of improvement required, increased resource at this level was necessary and this was progressed swiftly by the Trust Executive. Critically, an immediate change around the management and responsibility for the budget attached to remands of children was

⁵ <https://www.health.org.uk/publications/build-back-fairer-the-covid-19-marmot-review>

⁶

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952483/Ethnic_disproportionality_in_remand_and_sentencing_in_the_youth_justice_system.pdf

⁷ <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/11/HMI-Probation-Youth-Annual-Report-2020.pdf>

made. This strategic decision immediately alleviated the burden on the Service to meet any costs exceeding the remand grant from the central budget. These two decisions have been critical for the Service.

The Service is undoubtedly on a significant improvement journey. HMIP's inspection highlighted key issues around:

- the consistency of practice across the city;
- the quality of assessments carried out;
- practice around those children in custody;
- the overall quality of practice in riskier cases;
- the over-representation of black and mixed heritage boys;
- the routine and standard delivery of victim and restorative practices;
- consistency of out of court disposal work and partnership working.

In addition to this, in 2021 Birmingham has tragically experienced a number of serious incidents involving the murder of children either known to the Service or committed by children known. This has required a joined up and partnership response and the Service has been integral to this and is connected to the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP), West Midlands Police and Birmingham City Council Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit. Across the city and West Midlands region, there is a shared commitment to tackling serious violence through a public health approach. It is widely recognised that health and well-being must be at the heart of policy change in this area if we are to genuinely affect change and recognition across the region that we cannot simply enforce our way out of youth violence. There is a shared recognition that we must 'do more' and we must 'do better'. Without a culture of compassion, there is mistrust, there is a lack of engagement and a subsequent inability to effect change. The developing practice model within the Service, will support our ability to do more and to do better.

A West Midlands conference in July 2021 brought together key strategic stakeholders and keynote speakers to support the collaboration and joining up of our work in this area. Within Birmingham, it is acknowledged that there is much more to do and commitment to the development of a shared BSCP and CSP strategy and operational infrastructure to tackle serious violence, underpinned by the Serious Violence Duty.

Delivering services at a time when the city feels unsafe is a significant challenge. Children very often do not feel safe, and neither do some of our colleagues. The Service is carefully considering the safety of staff and those we are working alongside and exploring ways of responding to this which, at the same time, allow us to fulfil our statutory obligations. In 2021/22 the Service has given a commitment to investing in and rolling out a personal safety system

9. Service Business and Improvement Plan

The Service's improvement plan can be directly linked back to the findings of the HMIP inspection published in 2020. Twelve recommendations were made within this report, spanning core case practice, strategic activity and governance. As a Service, progress has been made with the expansion of the senior leadership team, the appointment of an independent Chair of the Partnership Board, strengthening of the board membership and additional assurance Board meetings.

The plan has been developed, reviewed, prioritised and work is being delivered to improve the quality of practice within the service. Progress against improvement is monitored via monthly project meetings and overseen by the YOS Partnership Board. It is evident from the HMIP Inspection report and breadth of work contained within the plan, that the improvement journey will take some time, not least around the culture and shared vision within the service. However, across all partners and within the Service there is a clear understanding of the need to improve and a commitment to this.

Key priorities include:

- Reviewing and enhancing the Service prevention offer across the partnership;
 - Recruitment of a dedicated Prevention Coordinator; expansion of the team of Prevention Officers, including a Serious Youth Violence Prevention Officer; development of pathways and promotion of the developing YOS offer across the partnership;
- Developing robust approaches to effective multi agency risk management.
 - Development of Birmingham YOS Risk Management Policy; review of internal risk management processes; work to strengthen understanding and application of MAPPA.
- Improving the quality and consistency of practice;
 - Development of a robust audit programme and audit cycle for 2021/22; ensuring that findings are collated and fed back to teams and are informing practice development and workforce development.
- Responding to disproportionality where it exists across the service;
 - Re-forming of the disproportionality working group; development and implementation of a multi-agency action plan, including the development of a robust data set.
- Workforce Development; Including a programme of restorative practice and trauma informed training across the Service;
 - Training needs analysis, drawing upon developmental needs across the service; creation and implementation of a workforce development plan.
- Ensuring that services to victims are considered in all cases and are delivered well;
 - Recruitment to a Restorative Practice and Victim Coordinator; Building consistency around the offer to victims; embedding victims voices, views and wishes appropriately across the system; RP training across the service.
- Developing a Birmingham YOS culture and vision that secures consistency across the city;

- Rolling out an all-staff survey; sharing findings and using these to inform development; communication strategy, including service development days.

The Youth Justice Board 2021-2024 Strategic Plan⁸ sets out several clear priorities that will help to shape the development of the Birmingham YOS culture and vision as we start work on this in 2021/22. Our aim is to provide: the best possible service to children, their families and victims, to be creative, responsive, relationship based, and trauma informed, that is underpinned by a recognition that children experience inequality, to build a system that works for them which is accessible and not overly bureaucratic, and our aspiration for them to lead safe, happy and fulfilling lives, will be just some of our core values.

Underpinning the improvement plan is a communication strategy. In 2021/22, new initiatives have been introduced to improve the quality and transparency of communication, including:

- Fortnightly service-wide briefings;
- Monthly “Keeping in Touch” sessions hosted by the Head of Service;
- Bi-Annual Service Development days.

Investing in our staff and recognising the workforce as our greatest asset will be vital as we improve. As a Service we are connected to the BCT Practice Hub and are working alongside them to understand the needs of the workforce, translating this into a clear training plan which aligns with the priorities contained within the improvement plan.

The Youth Justice Board are a key member of the YOS Partnership Board and strong connections exist between the Regional Advisor, who attends the Board, and the Head of Service. In addition to Board attendance, monthly meetings are held providing support and monitoring functions and opportunities to reflect on Service priorities and emerging regional and national priorities.

⁸ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/966200/YJB_Strategic_Plan_2021_-_2024.pdf

10. Sign Off, Submission and Approval

[illegible]

Appendix 1: Glossary

Absolute discharge: Discharges are given for minor offences at Court. An 'absolute discharge' means that no more action will be taken.

Bed night: measure of occupancy one young person for one night in the secure estate.

Breach of statutory order: Is an offence of failing without reasonable excuse to comply with the requirements of an existing statutory order.

Community Sentence: When a court imposes a community sentence, the young person carries out this sentence in the community. Community Sentences in the Youth Justice System include Youth Rehabilitation Orders.

Criminal Behaviour Orders: Civil orders (which replaced ASBOs), designed to prevent someone causing "harassment, alarm or distress". Breach of an order is a criminal offence, punishable by up to 5 years in prison (2 years for juveniles).

Detention and Training Order (DTOs): Detention and Training Orders (DTOs) are determinate custodial sentences which can last from four months to 24 months in length. A young person spends the first half of the order in custody and the second half released on licence. If they offend while on licence, they may be recalled back to custody.

Disposals may be divided into four separate categories of increasing seriousness starting with out-of-court disposals then moving into first tier and community-based penalties through to custodial sentences.

First-tier penalty: This is an umbrella term used for the following orders made at court: Referral Orders, Reparation Orders, bind over, discharges, fines and deferred sentences.

First Time Entrants: First time entrants to the criminal justice are classified as offenders who received their first caution or conviction, based on data recorded by the police on the Police National Computer.

Intensive Supervision and Surveillance: Intensive Supervision and Surveillance (ISS) is attached to a Youth Rehabilitation Order and has been set as a high intensity alternative to custody. ISS combines a set period of electronic tagging, with up to 25 hours per week intensive supervision. ISS is aimed at young offenders on the custody threshold and must be considered as an option before a custodial sentence is given. ISS may also be attached to conditional bail.

Parenting Orders: Parenting Orders aim to prevent offending and anti-social behaviour by reinforcing parental responsibility.

PENY: Police Electronic Notification to YOTs. Daily information sent to YOTs regarding children and young people coming to notice.

Pre-sentence report: This is a report to the sentencing magistrates or judges containing background information about the crime and the defendant and a recommendation on the sentence to assist them in making their sentencing decision.

Proven offence: A proven offence is defined as an offence which results in the offender receiving a caution or conviction.

Remands: When a case is adjourned, the court has a number of options to ensure that the defendant returns on the next occasion, refrains from further offending and does nothing to interfere with victims or witnesses.

Bail: Can be unconditional or have any number of conditions placed upon it including a curfew, residence requirements and electronic tagging.

Bail Supervision and Support: Bail Supervision and Support (BSS) is an intervention provided by the YOT to help ensure a young person meets the requirements of bail. The young person may additionally be electronically tagged.

Once the court has denied bail, there are two remand options:

Remand to local authority accommodation: A young person may be remanded to local authority accommodation. This remand may be accompanied by electronic tagging.

Remand to Youth Detention Accommodation: If the court is not satisfied that imposing community-based bail will ensure compliance, or if the offence is serious, or if the young person frequently offends, then it may order a remand to the secure estate.

Restorative Justice: Restorative justice is an approach to justice that focuses on the needs of the victims. Victims can take an active role in the process, whilst offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions.

Section 90/91 of the Criminal Court Sentencing Act (2000): Any young person convicted of murder is sentenced under section 90. A section 91 sentence is for young people convicted of an offence other than murder for which a life sentence may be passed on an adult. The court can, if appropriate, sentence a young person to detention for life.

Secure estate: There are three types of placements in the secure estate. These are Secure Children's Homes (SCH), Secure Training Centres (STC) and Young Offender Institutions (YOI):

Local Authority Secure Children's Home (LASCH): Secure Children's Homes in England are run by Local Authorities and are overseen by the Department for Education in England. They generally accommodate remanded or sentenced young people aged 12-14 and girls and 'at risk' boys up to the age of 16. They can also accommodate young people placed by Local Authorities on welfare matters.

Secure Training Centre (STC): There are four purpose-built Secure Training Centres in England offering secure provision to sentenced or remanded young people aged 12-17. They provide a secure environment where vulnerable young people can be educated and rehabilitated. They are run by private operators under contracts which set out detailed operational requirements.

Young Offender Institution (YOI): Young Offender Institutions can accommodate young people and young adults who offend from between the ages of 15-21 years old.

Substantive Outcome: Is an umbrella term referring both to sentences given by the court and pre-court decisions made by the police.

Self-harm: Self harm is defined as any act by which a young person deliberately harms themselves irrespective of the method, intent, or severity of the injury.

Youth Offending Service (YOS): The Youth Offending Service comprises of seconded representatives from police, probation, education, health and social services, and specialist workers, such as restorative justice workers, parenting workers and substance misuse workers.