

Westmorland and Furness Youth Justice Service Plan 2025-26



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Forward

This is our third Westmorland and Furness Youth Justice Plan and possibly our most significant to date. In December 2024, we had our very first HMIP Inspection, which highlighted the 'impressive progress' the Youth Justice Service have made to date. The Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB) acknowledges the "Requires Improvement" rating and is committed to implementing the report's recommendations, enhancing services, and maintaining high ambitions for all young people. The YJMB has formulated a thorough and detailed action plan outlining our intentions for the next year and specifically addressing areas highlighted in the Inspection. It was extremely positive to read the positive feedback relating to the work carried out by the service.

Over the last year there has been a review and change in the membership of the YJMB to increase its influence, reach and impact across the partnership. This included widening the membership and ensuring that the YJMB members' knowledge of the youth justice system is developed. This work will continue with an improved and specific training programme developed for 2025/26. It is credit to the partnership that there is good attendance and engagement from all partners and a collective ownership of the service.

The YJMB continues to hear firsthand from practitioners and young people about their experiences of working in the service and interventions being delivered. It provides a powerful insight into the work and demonstrates the quality, openness and commitment of all our workforce. We continue to celebrate success and build upon what works well, using performance management information alongside young people's lived experience, to inform future decisions and priorities as we shape the next stage in our development.

A priority for this year is to further improve our use of performance information to ensure that the service and YJMB are fully sighted on the most vulnerable children and those who are causing the most harm to our communities.

Our prevention offer will be aligned to our Family Help service, which will bring about a holistic system-wide approach to deterring young people from negative behaviours.

On behalf of the YJMB, I offer my sincere thanks to all Westmorland and Furness Youth Justice Service volunteers, practitioners and managers who have worked extremely hard this year.



Jonathan Taylor

Assistant Director, Children and Families, Chair of the Youth Justice Management Board



**Councillor
Janet Battye**
Cabinet Member
for Children's
Services,
Education and
Skills

This year is important in the development of our Youth Justice services and support for children, young people, their parents, carers and families, and communities in Westmorland and Furness. While the recent Inspection was impressed by the progress we have made since Local Government Reorganisation, noting that they found “a service on a positive trajectory that was clear in its identity and vision...(with) motivated and positive staff who are child-centred and committed to achieving the best for the children they work with” but we are required to make a range of improvements. I’m pleased to report that this is already well in hand and joining the Partnership as Lead Member for Children’s Services, I’m pleased to echo and support the positive work that is being done to ensure that we’re providing co-ordinated, supportive services for these children and young people who find themselves within our Youth Justice Services.



1. Introduction, vision, and strategy

In Westmorland and Furness all our work is underpinned by our 'Ambition for Every Child', for Westmorland and Furness to be a great place to live, work and thrive; a place where there are opportunities for children and young people to live happy healthy lives, be safeguarded from harm in the place they call home and within their community.

Westmorland and Furness Youth Justice Service was established in April 2023 following Local Government Reform in Cumbria. From 1 April 2023, the former six district councils of Cumbria and Cumbria County Council were replaced by two new unitary local authorities, Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council, which comprises the area formerly covered by Barrow-in-Furness, Eden, and South Lakeland districts. The Youth Justice Service sits within the Children's Services Directorate of Westmorland and Furness Council.

Westmorland and Furness is the second-largest local authority in England by land area, spanning 3,760 square kilometres and making up 27% of the North West region. With a population of 228,187, it is also the fifth least densely populated local authority in England (Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates, 2023).

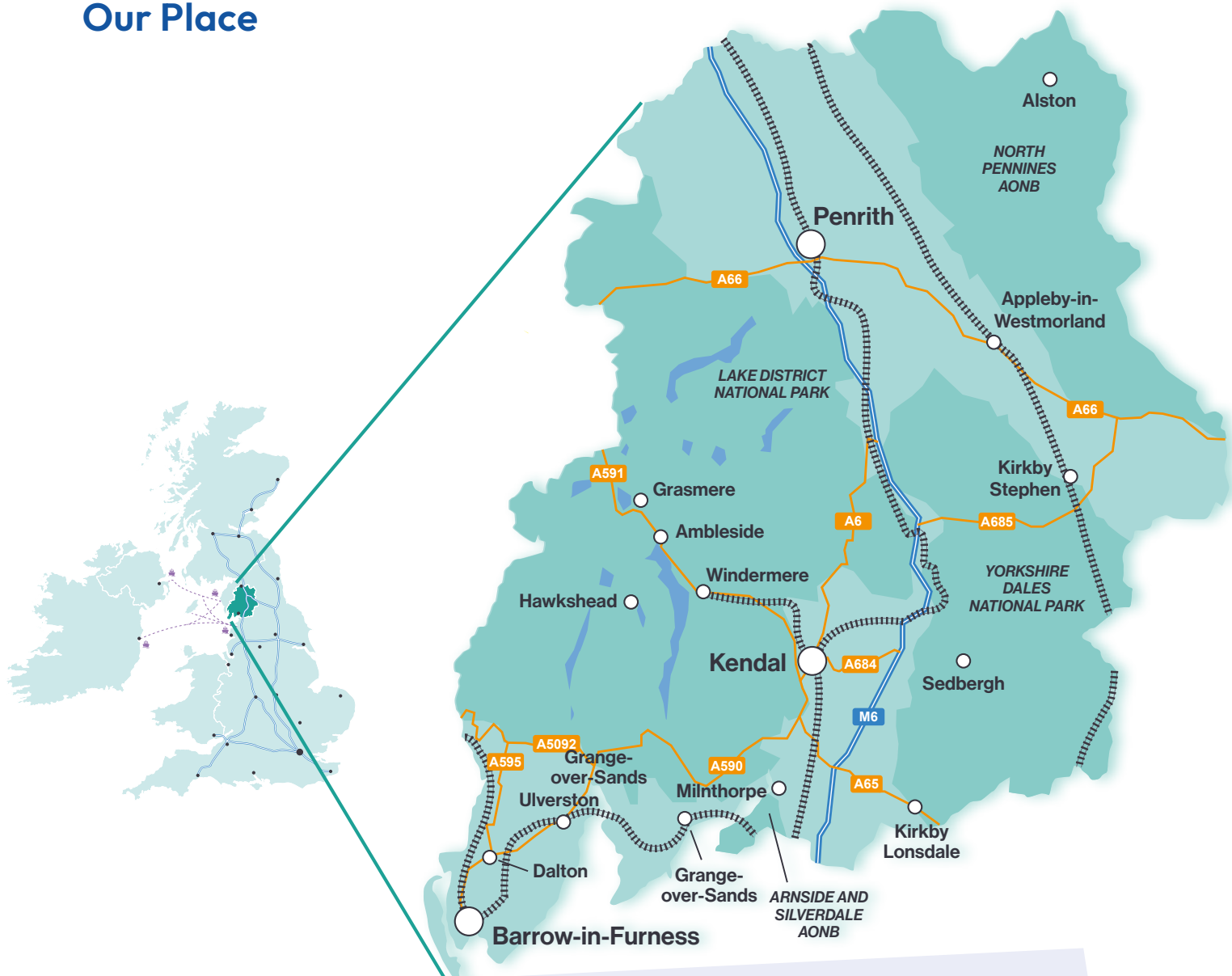
There are 19,137 children and young people aged between 10 and 17 living in the area. As of 31 March 2025, there are 350 children and young people with a Child in Need plan, 197 subject to Child Protection plans, and 260 who are Cared for Children. In addition, 4.3% of the population aged 0 to 25 in Westmorland and Furness (2,424 young people) have an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).

Westmorland and Furness is a special place. On our coast is Barrow-in-Furness, a busy shipbuilding town and port with cutting edge sub-sea technology industries, while inland South Lakeland and Eden have a rural, land-based economy with a strong visitor and cultural economy.

Every town, village and hamlet has its own unique community; welcoming, proud and resilient with ambitions for the future. Almost all have a town council, a parish council or a parish meeting which gives them a local voice.



Our Place



Our vision for the service is:

To work with children and young people to prevent offending by building on their strengths and addressing the root causes of antisocial behaviour.

Through meaningful engagement and tailored support, we create opportunities for them to unlock their potential, develop a pro-social identity, and overcome barriers to success. By fostering resilience, we equip young people with the skills to navigate challenges and sustain long-term positive change. Our overall aim is to prevent offending and reoffending; managing risk to ensure public protection and respecting the needs, safety and wishes of the victims.

2. Governance, leadership, and partnership arrangements

The Westmorland and Furness Youth Justice Management Board now meet on a bimonthly basis. The Chair of the Board is part of the Directorate Senior Leadership team for Children's Services and a member of the Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children's Partnership Board. All members of the Board ensure that they promote the work of the Youth Justice Service at relevant Boards, Forums and strategic meetings.

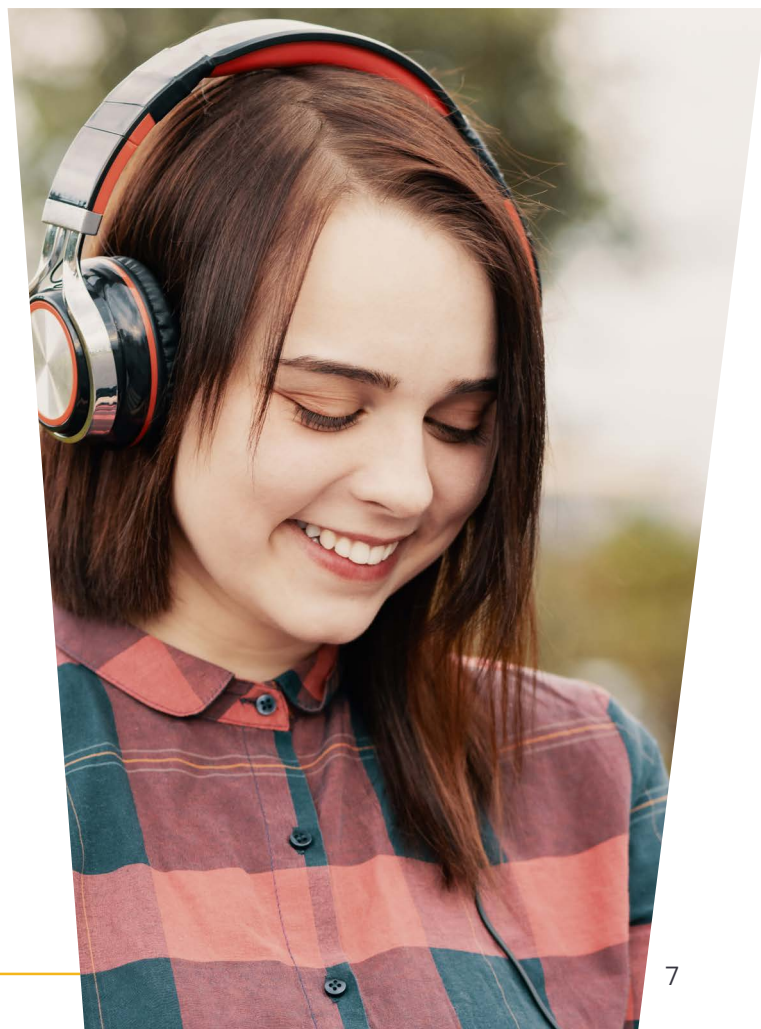
The Youth Justice Service (YJS) sits within Westmorland and Furness Council's Children's Service Directorate. The role of Head of Service is undertaken by the Youth Justice and Prevention Service Manager. This role is overseen by a Senior Manager in Children and Families, who reports to the Children and Families Assistant Director.

We have increased our management team with the recruitment of an additional Team Manager and Advanced Practitioner to the service. Development of the workforce and recruitment and retention remains a priority.

The operational team currently has 16 staffing posts and is made up of directly employed staff and seconded staff:

- Team Managers
- Advanced Practitioner
- Interventions Co-ordinator
- Seconded Police Officer based within the service
- Youth Justice Service Officers
- Low Risk Case workers
- Education worker
- Restorative Justice worker
- Parenting Officer
- Probation Officer
- Substance misuse worker
- Specialist Youth worker delivering reparation and intervention
- The service also trains and works with volunteers

The service's probation officer is currently hosted within the Cumberland Youth Justice Service. There is currently a national Probation review of funding allocations taking place. Following completion of this, the Probation offer across both YJS in Cumbria will be reviewed.



We have a strong relationship with our local child centred policing team. We have weekly joint decision-making panels with the police and have mutually reviewed our joint decision-making protocol. As of 1st Nov 2024, assessments take place pre decision using the new YJB Prevention and Diversion assessment tool before any Out of Court Disposal decisions are made.

As a service we have developed our quality assurance processes. The Youth Justice Service have integrated into the Children and Families Service practice week which takes place on a quarterly basis and focusses on collaborative auditing and observation of practice.

Partnerships

We have a key role to play in making the link between criminal justice and social welfare systems. It is only by working together that we can achieve the best outcomes for children, young people, and their families. Westmorland and Furness Youth Justice Service takes part in this partnership working formally, through representation on numerous partnership boards and through the multi-agency working that takes place via more informal partnerships:

Safer Cumbria: The Safer Cumbria Partnership provides a platform for the partner organisations involved, alongside the wider third sector and voluntary network, to work collaboratively to deliver a co-ordinated approach to Criminal Justice, Combatting Drugs, Serious Violence and Counter Terrorism across Cumbria. YJS remains a key and valued partner that works closely with other criminal justice and community partners to support the reduction of crime in the county.



The YJS Service manager is a member of the Criminal Justice Group and Serious Violence Group. Youth Substance misuse now sits within this service and the Service Manager is involved the delivery of the Combatting Drugs strategy. The Service Manager also is Deputy chair of the Channel Panel.

Westmorland and Furness Community Safety Partnership: The Westmorland & Furness Community Safety Partnership has been established to meet the requirements of Section 5 & 6 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and any amendments made to it in subsequent legislation. The Westmorland & Furness Community Safety Partnership also fulfils the requirements of the Prevent Duty (which is part of the Counter Terrorism Act 2015).



The YJS engage and participate with the Prevent Delivery Group to fulfil the duties of the Prevent agenda which will include awareness raising ensure vulnerable young people are safeguarded.

At a local level within Westmorland and Furness we also have representation at the local focus hubs that have been refreshed this year and continue to work to strengthen the partnership in dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children's Partnership (WFSCP): The YJS is represented on the CSCP's working and strategic groups in respect of Missing, Exploited and Trafficked children. The YJS Service Manager chairs the CSCP MET Steering Group, further strengthening the partnership arrangements. The service is also represented on the main partnership board by the Assistant Director Children and Families.



Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) SMB: The YJS is also a core member of the MAPPA Management Board which meets on a quarterly basis and continues to provide a framework for managing the risks to the public presented by sexual and violent offenders.

Family Help Partnership Board: In Westmorland and Furness, we have adopted the phrase Family Help to encompass Early Help. Early Intervention and Prevention. Family Help is a partnership model of delivery, that includes Health partners, Police, Education, Local Authority, Voluntary and Community sectors working together to identify needs within families as early as possible.



As part of the process of strengthening the YJS Prevention offer the YJS are now part of the Family Help Partnership Board, and a new YJS Prevention subgroup has been established. The goal of the YJS prevention subgroup is to review the current criminal/ASB prevention interventions and pathways across Westmorland and Furness, including those from other funding streams. This review will ensure that any future pathways align with YJB guidance, the HMPI framework, the Family Help Offer, and Westmorland and Furness values.

Education: Over the past year, we have continued to work in close partnership with local education providers to ensure that children's needs are effectively assessed and that all young people are supported in accessing appropriate educational provision.

Following the introduction of the Working Together to Improve School Attendance statutory guidance, the Local Authority implemented a new Attendance Policy and expanded their team to include dedicated Attendance Officers who have supported young people in improving their school attendance. We are acutely aware of the negative impact that poor attendance can have on young people involved with the Youth Justice Service (YJS). Our interventions have included targeted support for emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), advocacy on behalf of young people during multi-agency meetings, and ongoing efforts to reduce barriers to attendance. We maintain regular communication and meetings with Attendance Officers to support them in their role and ensure coordinated responses.

Another impact of poor attendance on young people is also access to immunisations, this year we have worked alongside colleagues from the Immunisation Team to recognise young people within our cohort who have missed school immunisations and sign post them for vaccinations, which we hope will lead to improved health outcomes for our young people.

We have strong collaborative links with the Learning Improvement Service, the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Team, the Virtual School, and individual schools within Westmorland and Furness. Regular communication with these partners ensures that the needs of each young person are identified and addressed appropriately. This year, we also presented to the Local Alliance of System Leaders (LASL) to promote greater understanding of the Youth Justice System among education leaders.

14% of young people we support are educated through alternative provision. We are active members of the Local Authority's Alternative Provision Quality Assurance Group, which aims to ensure that vulnerable learners access high-quality, appropriate educational settings.

We continue to attend inclusion panels for Furness and South Lakes, which support pupils at risk of permanent exclusion. These panels also serve as valuable opportunities to build and strengthen relationships with schools and key education stakeholders. Additionally, we utilise the Local Authority's exclusion dashboard to monitor trends and data relating to exclusions.

Our involvement with the NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) provider forums ensures we remain informed about post-16 opportunities available to our young people. These forums also allow us to highlight gaps in local provision and advocate for additional support where needed.

We maintain strong partnerships with Inspira to ensure that young people receive high-quality careers advice and guidance. Most young people engaged with the YJS have the opportunity to create CVs and access tailored careers support, either through bespoke in-house services or via our external partners.

Recognising the potential challenges associated with key educational transitions particularly between Key Stages 2 and 3, and Key Stages 4 and 5 we monitor and support young people throughout these periods. This includes liaising with current education providers and intended destinations to ensure continuity and stability in their educational journey.

Our Education Sub-Group, which meets quarterly, includes representation from the YJS Board, SEND Team, Virtual School, and the Post-16 Officer. This group plays a vital role in analysing education-related data, identifying patterns, addressing complex cases, and informing forward planning and continuous improvement in education support.

Additionally, our Education Representative has collaborated with the Child Centred Policing Team, the Youth Work Partnership, and local Pupil Referral Units to deliver preventative sessions in schools, aimed at reducing the risk of offending.

3. Progress on priorities in previous plan

Objective 1: Impactful Interventions at every level

This will enable Westmorland and Furness Youth Justice Service to reach children and young people before they enter the formal criminal justice system and to provide positive intervention for those in the criminal justice system.

The MoJ Turnaround Programme has been further developed and expanded, with a clear focus on strengthening the Westmorland and Furness YJS prevention offer. As part of this work, a dedicated task and finish group has been established to drive forward the development of a sustainable prevention model. This group is actively reporting into the Family Help Partnership Board, ensuring strategic oversight and alignment with wider family help and prevention priorities across the partnership.

Significant progress has also been made in partnership with Cumbria Constabulary, particularly the Child Centred Policing Team, to strengthen the decision-making panel and enhance outcomes for children and young people. A new Prevention and Diversion Strategy is being developed with support from the Children's Services Improvement Lead, ensuring a more integrated and effective approach.

In support of this, the new YJB Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool (PDAT) was implemented in June 2024. To ensure effective use of the tool, YJS managers attended the Youth Justice Board (YJB) training in November 2024. The PDAT is now being applied consistently in all Out of Court Disposal (OCD) cases prior to decision-making, ensuring a more informed and child-focused process.

To further strengthen partnership working, the Prevent and Deter meeting has been established to link Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) processes with the Local Focus Hubs (LFH). This ensures joined-up, multi-agency responses to key areas of concern.

A diverse and engaging range of reparation activities and interventions has also been developed, ensuring meaningful and effective engagement with young people. This includes accredited Open College Network programmes, as well as creative cooking and art projects delivered throughout school holidays. These interventions support personal development, build practical skills, and provide positive alternatives that contribute to long-term outcomes.

Work is also underway to build a stronger focus on diversity and anti-racist practice across the service. A training provider has been identified to support this work, and once delivered, the training will promote a more confident and consistent approach across the team. This marks an important step in ensuring practice reflects the diverse backgrounds and needs of the children and families we support.

Finally, initial steps have been taken toward developing a dedicated health offer at the prevention stage. The Integrated Care Board (ICB) has reviewed the current YJS health provision across both the Lancashire and Westmorland and Furness footprint. While no immediate actions have followed the review, it has provided a valuable foundation for future planning. In the meantime, the recommissioning of the 0–19 service has temporarily paused direct health provision. However, this transition period presents an opportunity to co-design a more targeted and integrated health offer through the new commissioning arrangements.

Objective 2: Reduce reoffending

We will target the hard-to-reach group of children and young people in the middle, those families entrenched in criminal behaviour, breaking the cycle of offending and adverse childhood experiences.

Significant progress has been made in understanding and utilising data to better inform resource allocation and tailored interventions. Bespoke consultancy support from CorePlus has been secured to provide dedicated guidance for the effective use and management of the case management system.

Collaboration with the Corporate Performance Team has led to the development of a Power BI data-cleaning tool, enabling the re-submission of the last 18 months of KPI data to ensure accuracy. This data will now be maintained on a monthly basis and submitted to the Youth Justice Board (YJB) quarterly, aligning with national expectations. As a result, the service will now be more accurately represented within the YJB family group and is on track to be placed within the Northwest cohort.

Further joint work with the performance team is ongoing to develop a robust dashboard for the YJS Board, and to ensure the service can effectively report on targeted areas such as Serious Youth Violence, Female Offending, and disproportionality. This will support strategic oversight and data-led decision making.

Work is continuing with CorePlus to further enhance data capabilities, including use of the reoffending tracker, accurate reporting of First Time Entrants (FTEs), and utilisation of the Disproportionality Widget.

Efforts are underway to establish a clear and accessible pathway for mental health and emotional wellbeing support for all young people. This is being prioritised as part of the wider post-HMIP inspection improvement plan and will ensure that no young person is left without appropriate support during or after their intervention.

The Youth Substance Misuse (YSM) worker role within the service continues to be developed, with ongoing discussions exploring its alignment with the Complex Safeguarding Team. Where links or pathways are not yet established, these are being identified and raised with Public Health to address gaps and ensure effective support for young people.

Work has progressed to develop an informed and effective approach to Serious Youth Violence. This includes reviewing and analysing local data and integrating evidence-based programmes such as the Youth Engagement Fund evaluations. Internal resources have been reviewed and interventions have been graded to ensure that responses are proportionate ensuring, for example, that young people on a Community Resolution are not receiving the same intervention as those on a Youth Rehabilitation Order.

In terms of risk management, a new internal policy was launched in Summer 2024 to strengthen multi-agency risk forums. All high-risk Safety and Wellbeing cases are now included. External agencies are routinely invited and attend these forums, improving the quality of planning and the shared understanding of risk across services. The revised referral and meeting templates have been well received, with staff briefings and updated guidance now in place.



Objective 3: Improving partnerships contributions for Children, young people and their families

Ensure that our Children, young people, and families are given every opportunity to lead healthy and safe lives.

A new feedback form has been developed in consultation with young people to improve how their views and those of their families to inform service delivery. This marks the first stage in enhancing participation and is part of a wider body of work that will contribute to the HMIP improvement plan.

While a full review of commissioning arrangements with all health partners is still to be completed, this work has been prioritised within the broader HMIP improvement plan to ensure that all young people accessing the service receive the health provision they need. Similarly, the development of a partnership with Speech, Language and Communication Therapists remains a key area of focus. This will enable staff to better identify and respond to communication needs. The work is planned as part of the wider improvement strategy.

Performance in ETE remains a priority to ensure young people have both aspiration and access to appropriate provision. A dedicated ETE subgroup has now been established, meeting quarterly and including representation from the Board and YJS staff. Membership has expanded to include a post-16 officer, SEND and virtual school to strengthen the multi-agency response.

Work is also in progress to develop the role of the Education Worker with a renewed focus on preparing young people for employment through the development of practical skills and increased opportunities.

Stronger relationships are being built with the voluntary and community sector to support reintegration and offer more meaningful work-related opportunities for young people. The service has established links with Cumbria CVS to recruit more volunteers and is now part of their regular mailing group. This connection will be used to explore additional third sector organisations who can support opportunities for young people in the area.

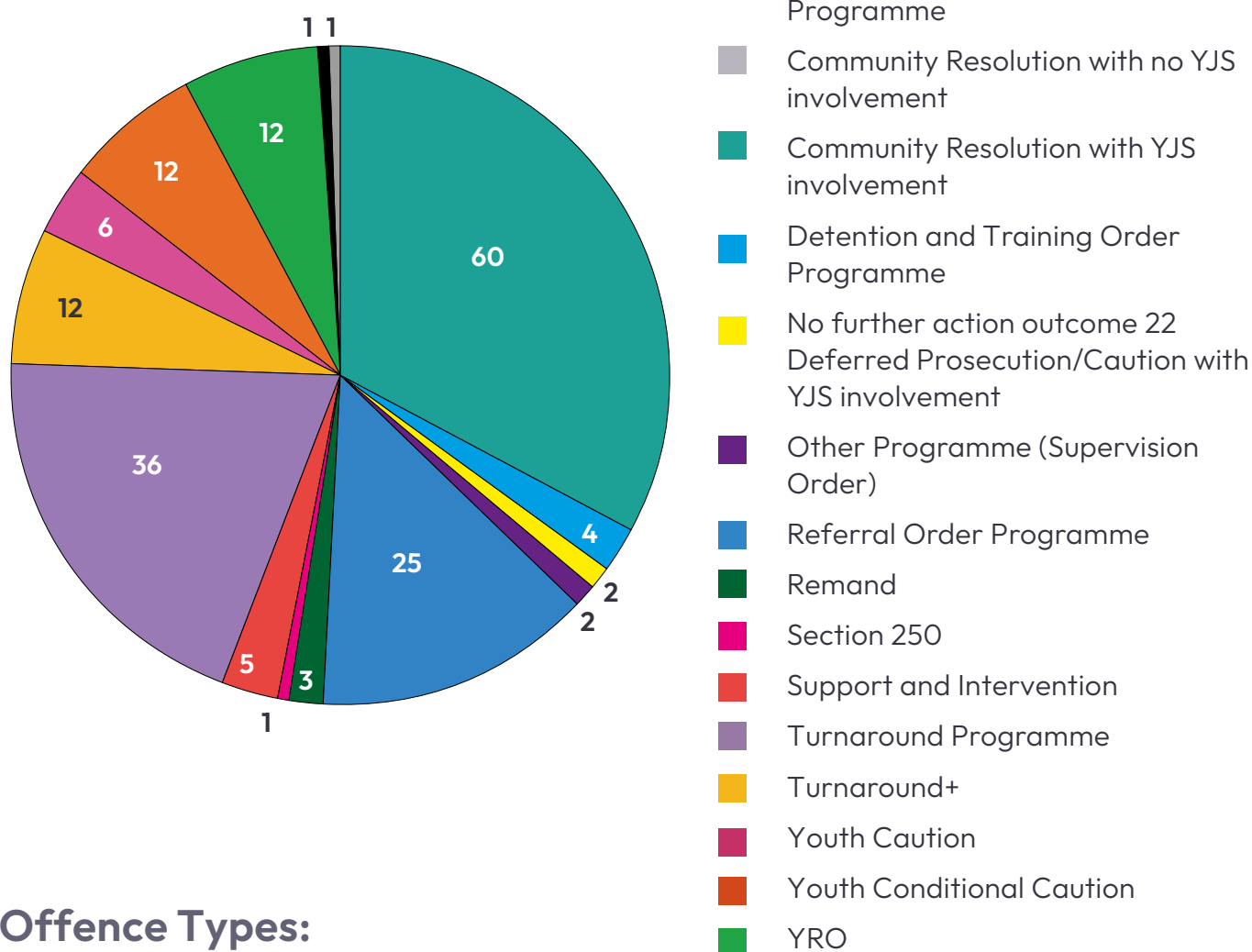
In addition, the YJS has played an active role in the development of the Family Hub in Barrow and is a committed partner in the Barrow Youth Work Partnership Group. These collaborations are helping to embed youth justice within the wider community support infrastructure, promoting joined-up responses and earlier intervention.

4. Performance over the previous year

Between April 2024 and March 2025 Westmorland and Furness YJS delivered 182 disposals.

This equates to 53 prevention cases, 81 Out Of Court Disposals (OOCd) cases and 46 statutory Orders. This is in line with the national picture of OOCd and prevention work making up a higher percentage of Youth Justice Cases. There has been a slight reduction of cases in our prevention arena as we stopped taking Turnaround cases at the end of 2024 due to uncertainty about funding moving forward and needing the capacity to focus on the current cohort and being able complete work with them. It is envisaged this will increase again once the Prevention offer is finalised and promoted with stakeholders.

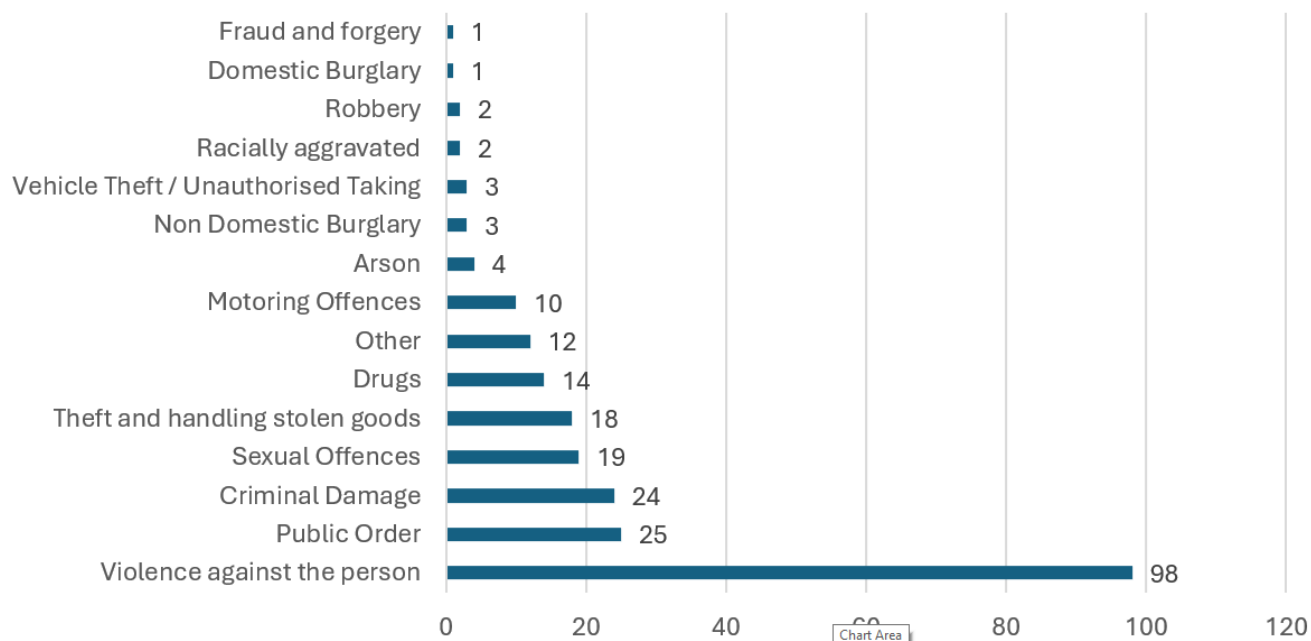
Total Disposal Types 24 - 25



Offence Types:

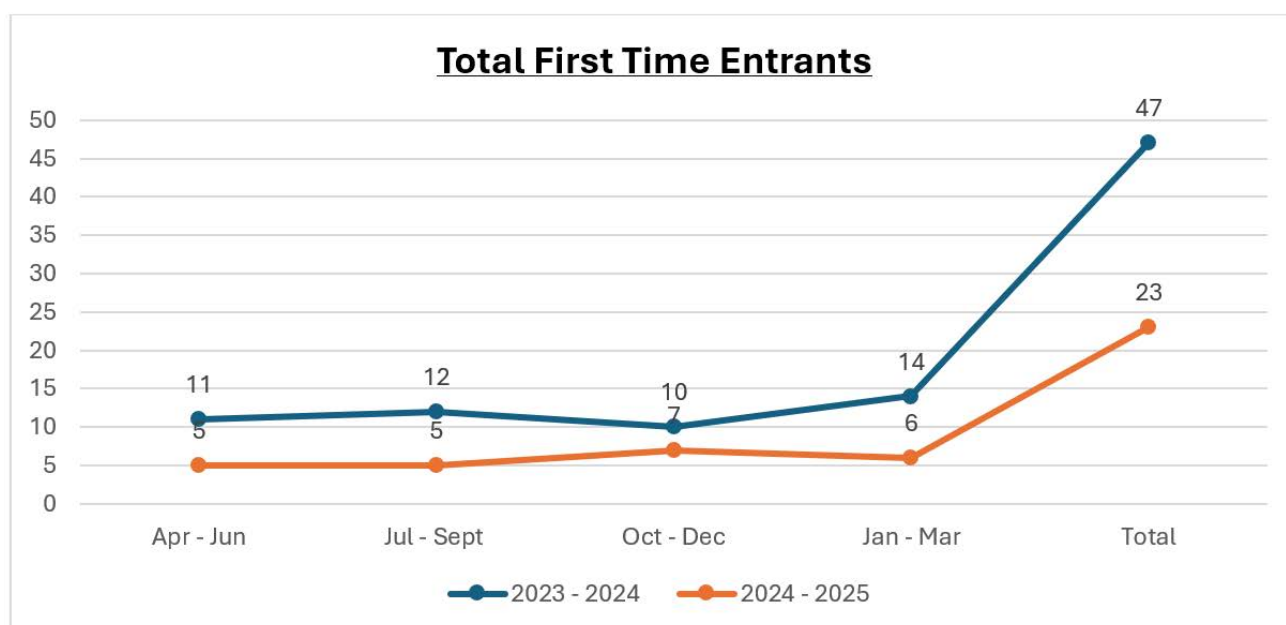
The most common offence type for children and young people committed in Westmorland and Furness is violence against the person "Violence against the person" offences in Westmorland and Furness range from Section 39 assaults and possession of weapons to more serious offences such as Section 18 (wounding with intent). For the second consecutive year, this has been the most common offence type among under-18s in the area. A detailed analysis is planned to better understand the severity of these offences, identify emerging themes, and ensure that appropriate and targeted interventions are in place.

Total Offence Types



Youth Justice Board key performance indicators:

First Time Entrants (FTE's)



Whilst there has been a slight increase in the second half of the year in FTE there has been significant progress made in the reduction of FTE's this year compared to last. When broken down the biggest reduction is in Youth Cautions which has a direct correlation to the development and progress of our OOCDC panels.

Use of custody

Four young people were sentenced to custody during 2024–2025, each with complex backgrounds including previous youth justice involvement, social care concerns, and links to child exploitation. Two cases received their sentence as an adult and were transitioned to Probation. Two cases had positive conclusive grounds via Home Office National Referral Mechanism. All four cases were also on Child Exploitation pathways, highlighting exploitation as a recurring factor. All had a history of YJS involvement and sentencing occurred after new serious offences had been committed. Common risks included substance misuse, mental health, violence, and risk to others.

Reoffending

The reoffending rate is 40.6% for Westmorland and Furness range from Section 39 assaults and possession of weapons to more serious offences such as Section 18 (wounding with intent). For the second consecutive year, this has been the most common offence type among under-18s in the area. A detailed analysis is planned to better understand the severity of these offences, identify emerging themes, and ensure that appropriate and targeted interventions are in place. under 18’s which is higher than the national average. According to the latest Youth Justice Board statistics for England and Wales, the proven reoffending rate for children increased to 32.5% in the year ending March 2024, marking the second consecutive annual rise.

Several factors could contribute to this, including the complexity of individual cases, local socio-economic conditions, and the availability and effectiveness of services across the board.

Youth	Offenders	Re-offenders	Re-offending rate
Female	85	31	36.5%
Male	231	98	42.4%
Total	317	129	40.6%

Planned Work:

1. Conduct a Detailed Analysis: Examine the profiles of reoffending individuals to identify common factors such as age, offence type, prior history, and socio-economic background.
2. Enhance Intervention Strategies: Implement targeted programs focusing on education, employment opportunities, and mental health support to address underlying causes of reoffending.
3. Strengthen Multi-Agency Collaboration: Work closely with local authorities, schools, health services, and community organizations to create a comprehensive support network for at-risk youth.
4. Monitor and Evaluate Programs: Regularly assess the effectiveness of intervention programs and make data-driven adjustments to improve outcomes.
5. Engage with Stakeholders: Involve families, community leaders, and the youths themselves in developing and refining strategies to reduce reoffending.

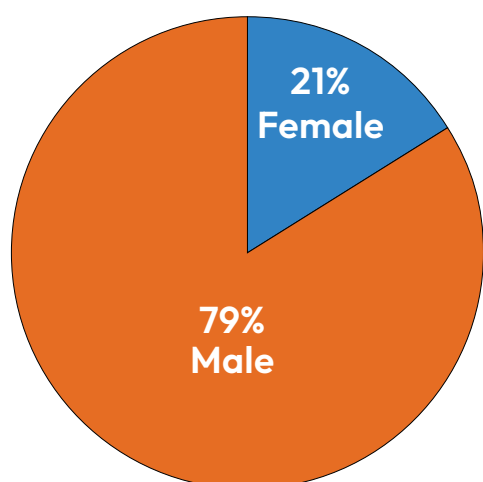
Disproportionality

Females accounted for 21% of the total cohort, consistent with the proportion recorded last year. The average age of girls engaging with the service is 14.8 years, and all identified as White British in terms of ethnic background. The majority of female cases are from the Barrow area (58%), followed by Eden (31%), South Lakeland (4%), with the remainder from out-of-area placements.

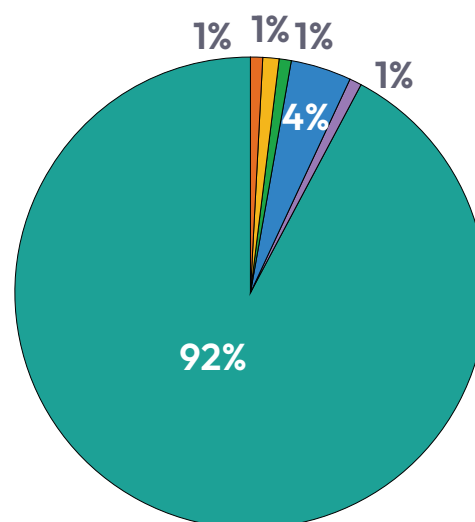
A notable contrast is seen when compared with male cases, where South Lakeland represents the second highest area (25%), unlike the female distribution.

The overall proportion of female cases remains higher than the national average of 15%, standing at 21% for a second consecutive year. This variance highlights the need for further analysis, and ongoing collaboration with the Female Criminal Justice Partnership Board will help ensure that appropriate, gender-responsive interventions are in place.

Total Gender



Total Ethnicity



There is not any obvious disparity with the ethnic background of the children that come into contact with the service, but this will continue to be monitored.

Planned Work

- 1. Gather and analyse offence data:** Extract offence type data for girls to confirm the trend and identify patterns.
- 2. Establish working group:** Create a multi-disciplinary staff working group to lead on analysis, engagement, and planning.
- 3. Engage with girls in the cohort:** Facilitate focus groups or 1:1 discussion with girls to gather their views on needs, experiences, and support gaps.
- 4. Examine best practice and research:** Review national and local best practice, evidence-based interventions, and guidance relevant to girls in the YJS.
- 5. Co-design targeted intervention:** Develop a tailored intervention plan based on findings, aligned with trauma-informed and gender-responsive practice.
- 6. Monitor and review impact:** Develop a framework for tracking implementation and outcomes, with a view to continuous learning.

5. Risks and Issues

Risk	Actions to mitigate
Partnerships resources	To continue to work with our Partner's through the YJS Board and other strategic groups to ensure that the Youth Justice Service has the correct statutory resources.
Workforce	- Develop and implement a Youth Justice Workforce Strategy that prioritises retention, continuous professional development (CPD), and staff wellbeing, aligned with wider Children's Services workforce priorities - Develop a cross-sector volunteer infrastructure, aligned with Family Help and local VCS networks, to create a more resilient and coordinated approach to volunteer recruitment and retention. - Develop and roll out clear, consistent practice guidance and tools to ensure all team members apply the same standards, regardless of location.
Children's feedback	Develop a co-produced participation strategy which includes a structured system for collecting feedback from children at various stages of their engagement with the YJS.

6. Child First

A Child First approach is the guiding principle of the youth justice system, placing children at the centre of all decisions and interventions. It means recognising children as children—seeing beyond their offending behaviour to understand the whole child, including the complex challenges and structural barriers they may face. This approach aims to support children in overcoming those barriers and creating meaningful opportunities to move forward with their lives. Built on decades of evidence, Child First is not a new concept but a summary of what we know works in youth justice. It has proven effective in both addressing the behaviours of the small number of children currently in the system and in preventing others from entering it. By focusing on better outcomes for children, Child First not only benefits the individuals involved but also contributes to safer communities with fewer victims. It underpins key sector guidance, such as the Standards for Children in the Justice System and Case Management Guidance, and should inform work with all children, recognising and nurturing the potential each child brings. Below is a summary of how we approach this in Westmorland and Furness Youth Justice Service using the four Child First Tenet.

Tenet 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.

Westmorland and Furness Youth Justice Service recognises and treats children as children, not as offenders. Every child engaging with our service participates in a thorough assessment process designed to identify their needs, capabilities, and potential. This process is collaborative, with the child and their carer actively involved to ensure the assessment is carried out with them, not to them. Their voices and views are central in shaping the support they receive.

The assessment draws on information from a range of sources including the police, education providers, and children's services to develop a holistic understanding of each child's individual needs, strengths, and barriers.

Our dedicated Education Representative plays a crucial advocacy role for children, requesting Educational Psychology involvement and EHCP assessments where issues are identified. If a child already has an EHCP, it informs the design and delivery of their sessions and interventions to ensure they are appropriate and accessible. Where there is concern about undiagnosed special educational needs, we liaise with the child's educational setting, carer, and the local SEND team to secure the right support.

At court, our staff work closely with the Crown Prosecution Service, defence solicitors, and the court's legal team to encourage diversion from court proceedings wherever possible. In all formal reports including court reports, panel reports, and assessments diversity needs are considered carefully. We evaluate how these may impact a child's ability to engage and participate, and plan proactively to reduce any barriers.

We apply the Trauma Recovery Model throughout our assessment and planning processes, ensuring that children's experiences and needs are acknowledged and that interventions are tailored accordingly. In addition, we utilise the Enhanced Case Management pathway across all disposals. This involves clinical input where needed and allows us to identify and respond to needs effectively including, where appropriate, divergence from National Standards to support the best outcomes for children.



Tenet 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.

At Westmorland and Furness Youth Justice Service, relational practice is at the heart of our approach. Our assessments and plans prioritise the essential conditions for effective intervention, including setting targets to build strong working relationships between children and their case managers before delivering specific interventions.

Education is a central priority across our service. We collaborate closely with the local authority's apprenticeship team to ensure that children engaged with the YJS receive reasonable adjustments to support their applications. We are also developing partnerships with local private sector employers to help overcome barriers our children face in accessing employment opportunities within the community. In addition, we offer accredited learning portfolios that lead to qualifications in Maths and English, as well as an award in Bricklaying. These are designed to support the pro-social development of children who struggle to access mainstream education.

Our use of diversionary interventions is guided by a consideration of each child's goals and aspirations. Where possible, we propose outcomes that minimise disruption to future career plans avoiding criminal records where appropriate and using disposals that will be 'spent' by the time the child reaches key milestones, such as applying for employment or further education.

We maintain strong links with community and third-sector organisations to connect children with positive, pro-social activities. This includes our role as an active member of the Furness Youth Work Consortium, referrals into and promotion of Brathay Trust activities in South Lakeland, and the development of new partnerships with youth work providers in Eden.

Our case audit process and supervision tools are designed to assess the impact of our work on children and the progress they make during their time with the YJS. This ensures that we remain focused on positive outcomes, maintain a future-oriented approach, and deliver meaningful change for the children we support.

The most important component for the youth justice service is to ensure the child builds a strong relationship with their worker for all intervention to be meaningful. Therefore, workers will ensure that they take the time to get to know the child well and build a trusting professional relationship. Workers will always be open and honest with the child to ensure that they explain things in a way that they understand. All intervention plans are written and agreed between the child parent slash carer and the worker ensures the child understands what is on their plan giving them ownership. Appointment times and dates are kept consistent and where possible a child will only have one consistent worker, locations of appointments are carefully considered to ensure that sure that the child feels safe and comfortable to engage.

Tenet 3

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

At Westmorland and Furness Youth Justice Service, we are committed to making sure that children are heard, included, and actively involved in every stage of their journey with us.

Participation starts at the individual level. Children's voices are central to our assessment process, which includes self-assessment tools and input from parents or carers. Our plans are child-centred and designed with tools that help young people consider and reflect on risk, need, and their own perspectives. Children are always involved in developing and sequencing their plans, which are written with them and their carers in a child-friendly format to ensure the support being offered is clear and accessible.

When a Referral Order Panel Report is completed, children contribute in their own words, which are included alongside the practitioner's input to the report. Children and their families are also involved in regular reviews of their plans, in case audits, and are invited to give feedback at the end of their intervention. Even when challenges arise, such as non-compliance, we work in partnership with children and families to understand what's getting in the way and to co-create solutions together.

It was recognised within the HMIP report that whilst information is gathered this needs to be conducted, analysed and reflected in a more coordinated approach so this coming year the service will be working with the Children's Improvement Team to develop a co-produced Participation strategy.

We tailor our approach to meet each child's needs and remove barriers to participation. This includes adjusting the way we deliver support to meet individual needs, offering translation or interpreter services where needed. We also consider digital access, transport issues, and cultural or personal factors that may impact how a child engages with us.

Our staff maintain regular contact with children and their families, including home visits, to keep everyone informed about progress. Plans are reviewed frequently, with children and carers asked if the support is working and whether anything should be changed. Any updates to the plan are made together, ensuring support remains relevant and effective. As part of our commitment to long-term success, we also support children with a clear and supportive exit plan to help them continue progressing after their time with the service ends.

Beyond individual engagement, we also promote wider participation and social inclusion. Every child working with us is offered the chance to take part in the annual Make Your Mark ballot, and we were proud to receive a Gold Democracy Award in 2024 for our high rate of involvement. We continue to build on this success by supporting children to learn about the Youth Parliament, explore ways they can influence.

Tenet 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.

At Westmorland and Furness Youth Justice Service, we are committed to early intervention and keeping children out of the formal justice system wherever possible. A key part of this is our prevention and diversion offer, which we are currently reviewing to ensure it meets the needs of children and families in a consistent and coordinated way.

As previously mentioned we have implemented the YJB Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool (PDAT) to support a more strengths-based and child-centred approach to assessment and planning. Training and support are being rolled out to staff to maintain high standards in delivering effective early intervention.

Following on from Turnaround our current prevention offer targets children who have come to the attention of the police due to persistent anti-social behaviour or being on the periphery of criminal activity. This is a consent-based programme, and children and families work with us voluntarily. The PDAT tool guides our assessments, helping us focus on each child's strengths, needs, and potential for positive change.

As part of a wider review, we are aligning this prevention offer with the broader Family Help framework within Westmorland and Furness. This ensures that all children and families receive a consistent level of support, and that our service is equipped with the right resources to offer the most appropriate interventions and pathways.

When children are eligible for diversion, the PDAT is completed with the child and their parent or carer. A multi-agency decision-making panel meets weekly to determine the most appropriate outcome. This panel includes:

- Child-Centred Policing Inspector (Chair)
- YJS Manager and Case Manager
- YJS Police Constable (PC)
- Restorative Justice Worker
- Liaison and Diversion (Health) Team Manager

The panel considers the child's needs and views, as well as those of any actual or potential victims, to make a balanced and informed recommendation.

Cumbria Constabulary has recently introduced Deferred Cautioning and Deferred Prosecution for children. This gives us greater flexibility to divert young people from the formal system while still offering meaningful intervention. Notably, Deferred Prosecution enables us to consider diversion even if a child is unable to make a formal admission, increasing our ability to respond compassionately and effectively.

Early Prevention and Police Involvement

Our commitment to early intervention is embedded across all levels of practice. The YJS Police Constable is co-located with the Child-Centred Policing Team, focusing on early prevention work. They review all youth crimes recorded in the local area and provide direct guidance to officers to promote community-based and preventative responses.

In partnership with other agencies, we are also implementing Prevent and Deter Panels to tackle persistent anti-social behaviour that may stem from more complex needs. These panels bring together a range of services to provide targeted and universal support outside of the Youth Justice System wherever possible. This approach reduces reliance on punitive measures such as Criminal Behaviour Orders or Anti-Social Behaviour Injunctions, and instead promotes positive, joined-up support.

Even at the prosecution stage, our Court Officers continue to seek opportunities to divert children from prosecution. They advocate for the use of Out of Court Disposals, ensuring that intervention remains proportionate and focused on positive outcomes.

We also plan for what comes next. Exit planning is a key part of our process, helping to review the impact of intervention and identify any unmet needs. Where additional support is required, we work with partner agencies to ensure onward referrals and signposting are in place reducing the risk of children returning to the system because their needs weren't addressed.

Young person feedback:

We gather feedback from the young people we have worked with to make sure we are helping young people in the ways that they need and to improve the service.

Paper forms and links to electronic questionnaires were given in person or sent out to young people who had had a service from staff in the YJS team between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025. A total of 44 responses were received from across the service which is an increase on the previous year. It is acknowledged that work is needed to improve feedback and participation forms part of our overall improvement plan.

A summary of the feedback is provided below.

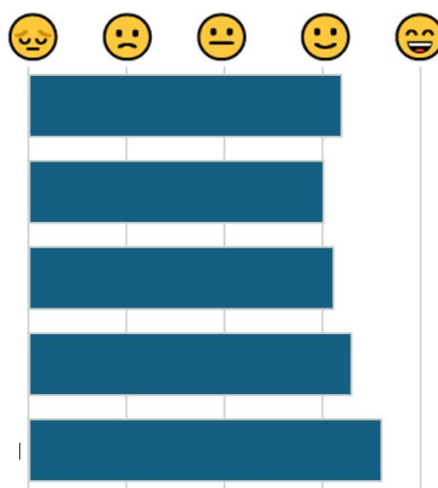
What the service does well

- Overall satisfaction levels are high. Feedback indicated that staff:
 - Successfully build strong relationships with young people
 - Provide effective, personalised support
 - Communicate effectively and explain things in a way that is easy to understand.
- 100% of respondents said they felt treated with respect, listened to, and involved with their intervention plan – 3 specifically made comments that described co-production.
- Raising awareness and education about the effects/dangers of drugs and alcohol².
- Adaptability and inclusivity: 1 parent highlighted that staff's excellent understanding of neurodiversity (ASD) - adjusting the approach to suit the young person's needs.

94% of respondents said they felt the YOS provided either 'excellent' or 'good' help.

YJS has helped me to:

- Think of the affect of my actions on other people and myself
- Say no when people try to get me to do things
- Think before I do something that's wrong or I am unsure of
- Find positive ways of dealing with problems
- Know what I need to do to avoid getting into the same situations as I used to



Impact

The support young people have received has led to meaningful/positive changes such as:

- Improved behaviour, decision making and mindset which helps them 'think before acting' and 'stay out of trouble' (see chart left).
- Better home life including relationships with family.
- Changing social circles and staying away from certain people where necessary.
- New school, moving house or help finding a job.
- Several comments showed that the support helped them reduce their use of drugs/alcohol.

How could the service improve:

- **Timeliness of Intervention:** Some children felt that offences should be dealt with more quickly.
- **Consistency in Appointment Preparation:** There were comments about materials not always being ready during appointments. This suggests that greater consistency and preparation could enhance engagement and build confidence in the service.
- **Support with Education, Training and Employment (ETE):** Both children and parents reflected that more could be done to support access to education, qualifications, and employment. Strengthening planning and partnerships in this area could improve long-term outcomes for young people.
- **Clarity Around Future Planning:** When asked what still needs to happen to sustain positive change, some responses lacked direction or were left blank. This indicates that the feedback questions need reviewing and/or more guidance needed.
- **Understanding of Harm and Impact:** Feedback and assessment scores suggest that children do not always fully understand the impact of their behaviour on others, including family members and victims. This highlights an opportunity to strengthen restorative approaches and increase awareness of the harm caused.

We also gather feedback from children and their parent/carers during our collaborative audits that are completed every quarter, we have also received feedback from young people in the HMIP inspection.

From the collaborative audits:

One family member reported that “she was kept in the picture throughout the order and the use of the mindfulness diary is still being used with the young person”.

Another parent stated responded that there has been a whole attitude change, and the child is listening more and keeping to rules at home whilst staying out of trouble. Mum also feels listened to and there is support at the end of the phone which has made a positive difference.

Grandparent reported that the worker was ‘smashing’ and that the child now understands and keeps to the rules and it was helpful to have someone to explain things. Child said that they have helped him understand what is happening and helps them keep out of trouble.

Another child reported that the scenarios and intervention work helped. That they are more aware of their actions and what consequences could be, relationships improved between them and family. They now feel ready and focused for their final year in school now they have the tools.

Feedback from the inspection report highlighted:

When asked how they rated the service they had received from the YJS, 15 children responded, with seven giving a score of 10 out of 10. Inspectors also spoke to eight children and five parents. All but one felt that their YJS workers had the right skills to do the work. Most felt that they had been able to access the right services and support to help them stay out of trouble. All stated that the places where they were seen were safe and accessible for them.

One child, talking about their case manager, said: "My worker listens to everything I say and offers me good alternatives to have fun and stay out of trouble. I think they have given me really good advice, especially around drinking alcohol and the impact."

Another child commented: “My worker is good, they are really nice, knows how to talk to me and listens to me.”

A parent commented: “The worker is great; they are keeping everything on track with school and attends early help meetings to support us. They do not label my child and speak to him about all things that worry him, and he wants help with.”

Another parent said: “My child's worker is very down to earth, very personable. They are very respectful; they do not look down on my child and do not treat him in a negative way. She has an excellent rapport with my child.”

Whilst we obtain feedback from a number of sources it was highlighted in the HMIP report that this needs to be completed in a consistent way. As identified, we are co-producing a Participation framework .

7. Resource and services

Youth Justice Service Budget Breakdown

Source	Staffing	Other	Total
Youth Justice Board Grant	£415,044	£24,584	£439,628
Police Grant	-	-	-
Probation Service Grant	-	-	-
Probation Service In Kind	£15,809	-	£15,809
NHS In Kind	-	-	-
Cumbria Police In Kind	£61,238	-	£61,238
Other Grants	-	-	-
COUNCIL	£438,020	£25,945	£463,964
TOTAL BUDGET	£930,111	£50,528	£980,639

8. Board Development

A comprehensive review of Youth Justice Management Board membership has been completed this year, aligning with recommendations from the HMIP inspection. A key priority now underway is to enhance the Board's understanding of the Youth Justice Service and its strategic responsibilities.

As part of the HMIP improvement plan, several actions have been identified and are already being progressed:

- **Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities:** A clear framework is being developed to outline the roles and responsibilities of Board members, ensuring alignment with Youth Justice core values—particularly the Child First principles—and the Youth Justice Board (YJB) national standards.
- **Improving Induction and Onboarding:** A rolling induction package is being designed to provide all new Board members with the knowledge and context needed to contribute effectively. This will include an evaluation questionnaire to capture feedback and measure the impact of the programme.
- **Ongoing Development and Training:** A targeted training and development plan is being created to build deeper understanding of key areas such as Custody and Resettlement, Victim and Reparation, Desistance, and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).

Development sessions are already scheduled and form a key part of building a confident, informed, and effective Board that is well-positioned to support and challenge the service moving forward.

9. Workforce Development

At Westmorland and Furness Youth Justice Service, we are committed to fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement. Our aim is to ensure all staff have the skills, knowledge, and confidence to provide the highest quality support to children and families.

Learning and development are supported by the YJS Team Practice Managers. All council-employed staff receive regular supervision every four weeks, with training and development included as a standing agenda item. Additional training needs are also identified through the Council's appraisal process, which informs the annual Training and Development Plan.

Training and Development: 2024/25

This year's bespoke training programme includes:

- **Child First Effective Practice Certificate** All staff will complete this nationally recognised course to ensure a consistent understanding and approach across the service, rooted in the Child First principles.
- **Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) Training**
 - AIM3 Refresher Courses for staff who have previously completed this training
 - AIM3 Assessments and Interventions training
 - Technology-Assisted HSB awareness training
 - In partnership with the Children's Services Directorate, **AIM3 Foundation Training** is also being delivered to social workers and Targeted Youth Support staff to strengthen cross-agency consistency.
- **Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool (PDAT) Training** This ensures staff are confident and skilled in using our new strengths-based tool for early intervention.

Focus Areas for Service Improvement

In line with this year's service improvement plan, additional training will focus on:

- Risk of Harm assessment and management
- Out of Court Disposal (OOCDD) Matrix Guidance
- Review of Remedi Practice for supporting victims and incorporating restorative justice principles
- CorePlus training
- Unconscious bias training
- MAPPA

Planning for the Future

Looking ahead to 2025/26, we will be using the Youth Justice Board's Skills Audit Tool to help us identify any gaps in knowledge, behaviours, or skills within the team. This will allow us to tailor future training more effectively, ensuring our workforce continues to evolve and respond to the needs of the children and communities we serve.

10. Evidence based practice and innovation

Good Practice Example: Creative Reparation Project at South Walney Junior School

The Youth Justice Service (YJS) interventions team, led by Steve and Ellen, has developed a strong working relationship with South Walney Junior School, previously supporting groundskeeping projects alongside young people as part of their reparation work.

During Easter half-term 2024, the school's Deputy Head, Michelle Banks, discussed the need to replace an old ocean-themed mural. Ellen offered the support of the YJS team, and together with Steve and Michelle, they planned a creative reparation project to design and paint a new mural.

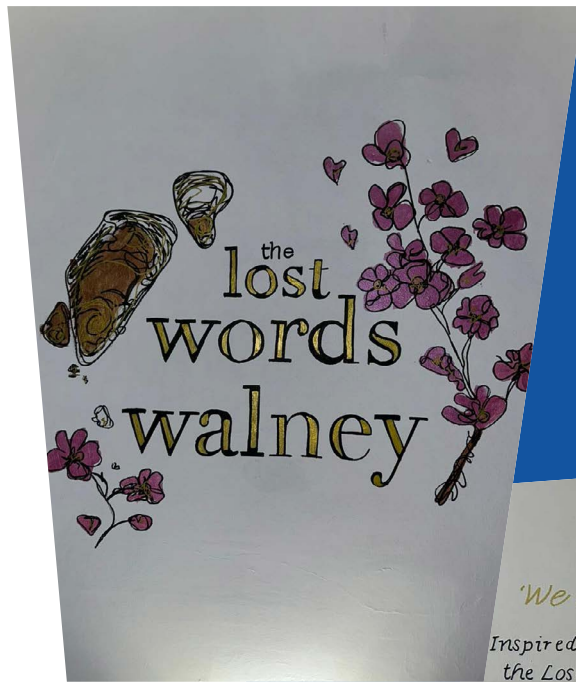
The new mural, titled "The Lost Words of Walney", was inspired by Year 5 students' nature-themed poetry and the book *The Lost Words* by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris. Originally conceived during the 2020 lockdown to foster a love of nature and community, the project gave the school's corridor a complete transformation—from a dark, dated space into a vibrant gallery of student poems and wildlife-inspired art.

Throughout the summer holidays, YJS reparation workers and young people prepped the walls through sanding, cleaning, and whitewashing. They then carefully mapped out the designs, using projection and freehand techniques. The artwork was brought to life using Sharpies, acrylic pens, and metallic paints. Ellen dedicated additional time to finalising the mural, ensuring it reflected the children's creativity and the school's vision.

The finished mural received widespread praise. Michelle Banks sent a heartfelt thank you to the YJS team, shared images on social media, and tagged the authors and artists. Jackie Morris, co-author of *The Lost Words*, reposted the project with her endorsement, and the South Cumbria Multi-Academy Trust highlighted the collaboration on their official page.

This project is a powerful example of how creative reparation work can make a lasting positive impact—supporting young people's development, strengthening community ties, and enriching local educational environments.





'We do not care for what we do not know'

Inspired by the Lost Words (Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris), the Lost Words of Walney was born, a project originally designed during the Covid lockdown in 2020 to foster a love of poetry and to show the children the wonder and beauty of our local community. Enjoy their creativity- immortalised in this amazing gallery by Ellen Bromley and her team.

M Banks 2024



11. Priorities for the coming year / National Priority areas

National Priority Areas – Westmorland and Furness YJS Response

Priority Area	Current Position	Planned Actions
Over-Representation	No current over-representation of Black or Minority Ethnic children. High numbers of children with SEND/EHCPs entering the system.	- Continue to monitor and analyse data on BME children. - Continue to monitor and analyse data on SEND and EHCP involvement. - Develop influence of Education subgroup to ensure???
Policing	Cumbria Constabulary are committed to providing a child centred policing response and recognise offending by children is often a symptom of other challenges they are facing in their lives. A priority is to ensure that young people are not unnecessarily criminalised, and every opportunity is taken to divert them away from offending and the reachable and teachable moments are maximised.	- Outcome decisions are made by a multi-agency triage panel in a timely way. - Effective diversion scheme in place and working with data scrutinised and evaluated. - Reoffending rates are monitored, and repeat offenders are referred to YJS at the earliest opportunity. - Data for CR's/ cautions/ youth conditional cautions/ charges given to under 18's are monitored and scrutinised. - OOCD external scrutiny panel is in place to regularly review U 18 disposals. - Multi-agency protocol in place in line with the national protocol to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of children in care and care leavers. - Training provided to front line officers, to take a Trauma informed approach when engaging with children and young people
Prevention	Prevention work delivered in partnership with Child-Centred Policing Teams and Family Help.	Review prevention offer post Turnaround in line with Family Help offer in WaF.

Priority Area	Current Position	Planned Actions
Diversion	Multi agency panels held weekly which include pre assessment prior to decisions taking place.	- To ensure OOCd form part of the QA framework - To review
Education	Good working relationship and links within eh wider sector to ensure improved outcomes for young people.	- Continue to link in with Attendance Officers - Continue offer for immunisations to those that have missed them - Attendance at assurance group - Attendance at inclusion panels - Links to NEET provider forums - Continue to provide and analyse data
Restorative Approaches & Victims	Dedicated RJ practitioner contacts all victims involved in OOCd and court orders.	Remedi to be commissioned to help us audit our victim work in line with the new HMIP standards.
Serious Violence, Exploitation & Contextual Safeguarding	Evidenced in HMIP report that there is a good and impactful working relationship with the Westmorland and Furness Contextual Safeguarding Team.	- Active involvement in Serious Violence Group, MACE, and CHANNEL panel. - Continued multi
Police Custody	Appropriate Adult service in place (W&F YJS during hours, CANW out of hours).	- Custody review meetings. - Hold biannual contract reviews with CANW.
Remands	Increase in remands year 24-25	- Continue to offer high quality alternatives to remand at Court. - Ensure and review protocols are in place between liaison & diversion teams, police, CPS, emergency duty teams, YJS etc, to enable services to identify children at risk of remand early
Custody & Resettlement	Number of Custody cases have increased. HMIP identified that improvement is needed for the resettlement offer to children in W&F.	Working group from Board to be set up to ensure HMIP improvements are developed and implemented.
Working with Families	Parenting officer in post.	Review parenting offer in line with the wider children's services offer to ensure same approach and improve resilience

12. Standards for children

As part of our HMIP improvement plan, Westmorland & Furness Youth Justice Service is strengthening its approach to quality assurance by aligning practice more closely with the National Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System. This work supports improved outcomes, greater consistency, and better oversight across the partnership.

Overview of Planned Improvements:

National Standard	Aligned Action	Details
Standard 1: Out-of-Court Disposals	Targeted auditing of O OCD cases	We will conduct regular audits focused on out-of-court disposals to ensure effective risk management and decision-making. Learning will be fed into service development.
Standard 2: At Court	Quality assurance of court work and assessments	We will strengthen case file audits and moderation to ensure assessments presented to court are robust, balanced, and meet the needs of children.
Standard 3: In the Community	QA and practice moderation of community interventions	The revised QA framework will include audits of community orders, ensuring plans are proportionate, timely, and inclusive of children's voice.
Standard 4: In Secure Settings	Focus on constructive resettlement and planning	Audits will include resettlement planning where custody is involved, with a view to achieving a gold standard resettlement offer.
Standard 5: On Transition and Resettlement	Strengthen transition planning for children leaving custody or YJS involvement	We will review housing and service pathways and ensure assessments include all relevant risk factors, including historical behaviour.

Supporting Actions Across All Standards:

- **Re-launch of National Standards Briefings:** All YJS staff and partner agencies will receive updated briefings to ensure a consistent understanding of expectations and responsibilities in line with the National Standards.
- **Enhanced Quality Assurance Framework:** We are revising our QA framework to embed a stronger moderation process and introduce external validation where appropriate, ensuring a transparent and consistent approach to quality improvement.
- **Staff Development and Training:** Targeted training will be delivered to build staff competence in moderation, risk analysis, and reflective practice. This will ensure effective oversight and greater confidence in case decision-making.
- **Audit Tool Review and Implementation:** We are updating our audit tools to ensure they reflect National Standards, are strengths-based, and enable analysis of both compliance and impact.
- **Risk-Informed Case Audits:** New audits will explicitly examine the identification and management of risks, including prior behaviours and convictions, to ensure assessments are robust and defensible.



13. Service Development

The main focus of this years' service development will be in line with the HMIP improvement plan. This was the first HMIP inspection of Westmorland and Furness YJS; the inspectors were on site for a week beginning 2nd Dec 2024. HMIP inspected cases sentenced or licence began, out-of-court disposals were delivered, and resettlement cases were sentenced or released between 4th Dec 2023 and 27th Sep 2024.

Whilst the outcome was Requires Improvement, the report overall was positive.

"This is the first inspection of Westmorland and Furness YJS. Both the local authority and the YJS are new organisations created in 2023 and it is impressive how much progress they have made in that time. The YJS is still developing, and we found a service on a positive trajectory that was clear in its identity and vision."

Strengths were that the Board members were positive and motivated to support the service, staff were knowledgeable, and morale was high, staff valued one another and their managers, there was evidence in the cases inspected that staff did all they could to encourage high levels of engagement with children. Both staff and managers were child-centred and knew their children well. Staff advocated for children and challenged services when appropriate to ensure that children received the support they needed.

Areas for development include Board members developing their understanding of the youth justice system so they can help improve services for children. The board should make sure children get the right healthcare support for their emotional and mental health needs, ensure they are assessed for and have access to speech and language services, continue to push the Probation Service to meet its responsibilities, and work together to improve support for children leaving custody. The service should also have clear support in place for volunteers, make sure risk assessments and safety planning in out-of-court cases are done well, and set up a way to collect and use feedback from children to improve services.

The main actions for the HMIP improvement plan are summarised below.

1. Strengthen Board Knowledge and Oversight

- Deliver a development plan for Board members, including training, service visits, and alignment with YJB National Standards.
- Establish a new QA and performance data framework to monitor key outcomes.
- Review service resources to ensure they are fit for purpose.

2. Improve Health Provision for YJS Children

- Establish a Strategic Health Group to assess and improve emotional, mental health, and wellbeing support.
- Create and embed clear health pathways with appropriate resources and access for YJS children.

3. Address Speech, Language and Communication Needs

- Secure a seconded speech and language therapist for YJS.
- Develop structured neurodiversity and communication support pathways tailored to young people's needs.

4. Secure Probation Secondment Provision

- Work with Probation to fulfil statutory duties and secure a part-time seconded officer based in Barrow.

5. Strengthen Resettlement Planning and Accountability

- Review and update resettlement policy, ensuring joint agency responsibility.
- Develop tracking mechanisms, co-produced practice guidance, and integration with trauma-informed approaches.

6. Formalise Volunteer Framework

- Create a structured framework covering recruitment, training, and supervision.
- Define volunteer roles, support professional development, and improve communication and engagement.

7. Improve Risk and Safety Practice in Out-of-Court Disposals

- Deliver targeted training on risk assessment and OOCDC processes.
- Review policies, implement regular case audits, and commission external support for victim practice assurance.

8. Embed Children's Feedback in Service Improvement

- Develop a co-produced participation strategy and feedback collection system.
- Regularly analyse and report on feedback, integrating findings into planning and decision-making.
- A comprehensive action plan has been developed and submitted to HMIP which has been approved. This is now being overseen by the Youth Justice Management Board and reviewed on a Bi-monthly basis.

14. Sign off

Chair of YJS Board:

Jonathan Taylor, Assistant Director Children's Services, Westmorland and Furness

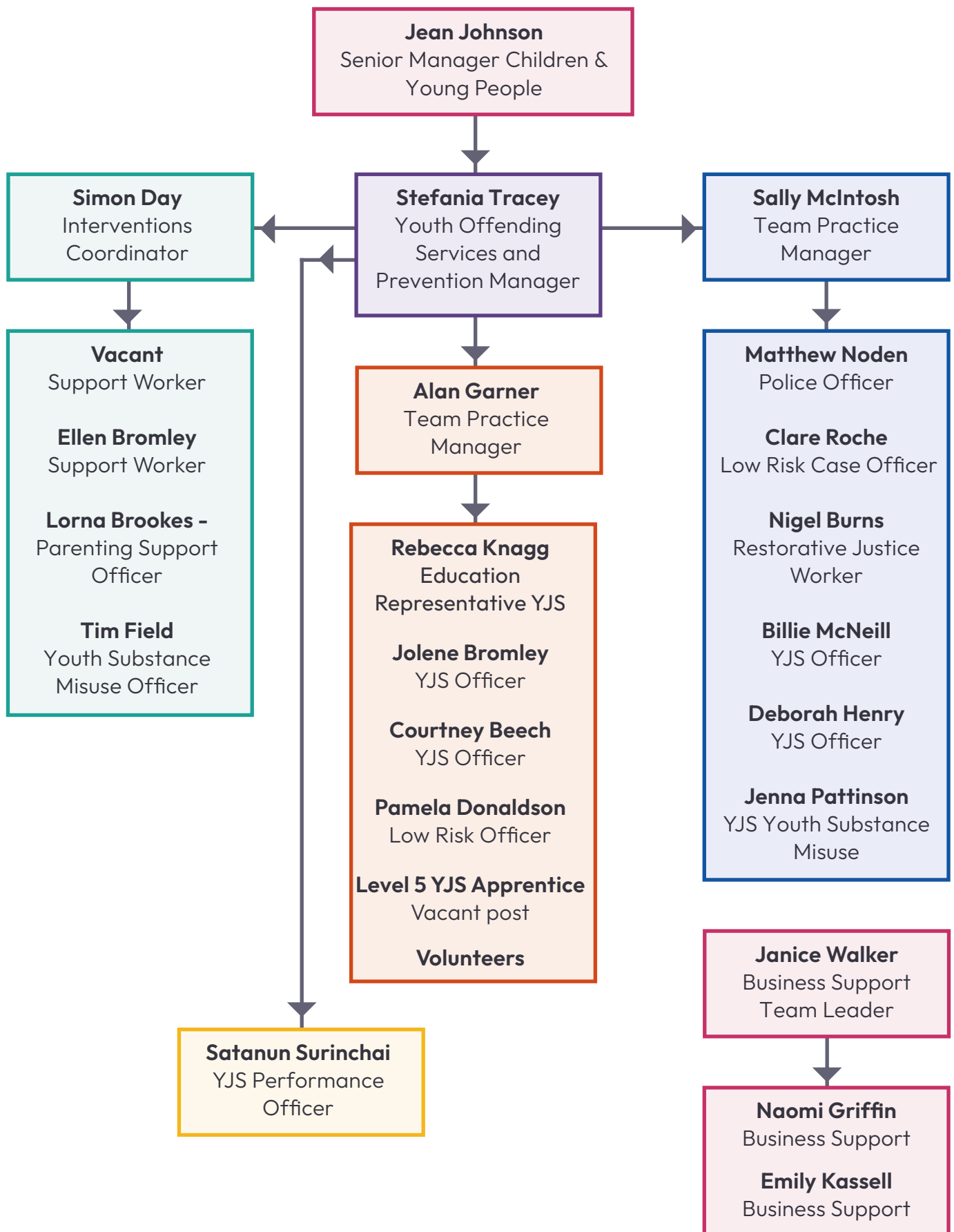
Signature:



Date:

30/06/2025

Appendix 1 – Staffing Structure



Translation Services

If you require this document in another format (e.g. CD, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone: **0300 373 3300**.

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