



Hartlepool  
Borough Council

# Children's Services Committee

## Agenda

30<sup>th</sup> June 2026

**Time:** 4:00 pm

**Location:** Council Chamber

**Members:** Children's Services Committee

Councillors Anderson, Cowie (VC), Dunbar, B Harrison, Holbrook, Lindridge (C) and Napper

Parish Council Representatives: Kiara Hutchinson (Elwick Parish Council) and Chris Robson (Dalton Piercy Parish Council)

Co-opted Members: Gillian Hood, C of E Diocese and Joanne Wilson, RC Diocese representatives.

School Heads Representatives: Adam Palmer (Secondary), Sue Sharpe (Primary), Zoe Westley (Special).

Parent Governor Representative: Martin Pout

Six Young Peoples Representatives

Observer: Councillor Wiley, Chair of Adult Services and Public Health Committee

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### 1. Apologies for absence

### 2. To receive any declarations by members

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### 3. Minutes

- 3.1. To receive the Minutes and Decision Record in respect of the meeting held on 1 June 2026 (previously published and circulated).

### 4. Budget and policy framework

- 4.1. Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2026-2027 (*Executive Director of Children's Services*)

### 5. Key Decisions

- 5.1. No items.

### 6. Other items requiring decision

- 6.1. No items.

### 7. Items for information

- 7.1. Hartlepool Local Area SEND Reform Plan 2026 (*Executive Director of Children's Services*)

- 7.2. Ofsted Focused Visit – Verbal Update (*Executive Director of Children's Services*)

### 8. Any other business which the chair considers urgent

## For information

Date of next meeting – 29<sup>th</sup> September 2026, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

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**Report of:** Executive Director of Children’s Services  
**Subject:** Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2026-2027  
**Decision Type:** Budget and Policy Framework

### 1. Council Plan Priority

<b>Hartlepool will be a place:</b>
where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community. (Organisation)

### 2. Purpose of Report

2.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Children’s Services Committee with the draft Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2026–2027 (**Appendix A**) for review and comment. As part of the consultation process to inform the final version, the draft plan will be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 14 July 2026 and the Safer Hartlepool Partnership on 23 July 2026. Feedback from these bodies will be incorporated into the final plan, which will be brought back to the Children’s Services Committee for final endorsement on 3 November 2026, ahead of submission Full Council.

2.2 The draft plan will be submitted to the National Youth Justice Board by 30 June 2026

### 3. Background

- 3.1 The National Youth Justice System aims to prevent children and young people aged 10 to 17 from engaging in offending or reoffending behaviour. It also ensures that, where a young person is arrested and charged with a criminal offence, they are treated differently from adults to reflect their specific needs and welfare as children.
- 3.2 Local Youth Offending Services were established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to develop, deliver, commission and co-ordinate the provision of youth justice services within each Local Authority.
- 3.3 Hartlepool Youth Justice Service (YJS) was established in April 2000 and is responsible for youth justice services locally. It is a multi-agency service and is made up of representatives from the Council's Children's Services, Police, Probation, Health and Education.
- 3.4 The primary objectives of youth justice services is to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people and reduce the use of custody.
- 3.5 The draft Youth Justice Plan provides an overview of how the Youth Justice Service, Youth Justice Service Strategic Management Board, and wider partnership, will ensure the service has sufficient resources and infrastructure to deliver youth justice services locally, in line with the requirements of the National Standards for Youth Justice Services to:
- Promote performance improvement;
  - Shape youth justice system improvement; and
  - Improve outcomes for young people, victims and the broader community.

### 4. Proposal

- 4.1 The following strategic objectives and priorities are proposed for adoption by the Youth Justice Service within the 2026–2027 Plan:
- 4.2 **Re-offending:** Reduce further offending by children who have committed a crime with a particular emphasis on continuing the development of Service interventions that are structured, responsive, tailored to meet identified individual needs, and evaluated (both within Youth Justice Services and provided by external agencies).
- 4.3 **Early/Targeted Intervention, Prevention & Diversion:** Sustain the reduction of first-time entrants to the youth justice system by ensuring creative strategies and services remain in place locally to prevent children from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

- 4.4 **Remand, Custody & Constructive Resettlement:** Demonstrate there are robust and comprehensive alternatives in place to support reductions in the need for remands and custody. Ensure bespoke constructive resettlement packages are implemented at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.5 **Risk and Safety & Wellbeing:** Ensure all children entering, or at risk of entering, the youth justice system benefit from a high-quality structured needs assessment to identify risk of harm, safety and wellbeing concerns and desistance factors, to inform effective intervention and risk management.
- 4.6 **Restorative Justice:** Ensure all victims of youth crime have the opportunity to participate in restorative justice approaches, and that restorative justice is incorporated into the work undertaken with children who offend.
- 4.7 **Effective Governance:** Ensure the Youth Justice Strategic Management Board is a well-constituted, committed, and knowledgeable Board that scrutinises Youth Justice Service performance and drives continuous improvement.
- 4.8 **Voice of the Children:** Ensure all children are actively involved in developing their own plans and are encouraged and supported to inform current and future service delivery.
- 4.9 **Child First:** Ensure the Child First principles are regularly reviewed and embedded within the Youth Justice Service and that every child has the opportunity to live a safe and crime-free life and make a positive contribution to society.
- 4.10 **Education, Training, Employment (EET):** Working in collaboration with partners, i.e. Schools, Virtual School and 'One Stop Shop' to ensure all children open to Youth Justice Services are actively engaging in suitable education, training or employment, thus reducing young people who are not in employment, education or training, increasing attendance and improving outcomes.
- 4.11 **Substance Misuse:** Working in collaboration with partners, i.e. Horizons/START, to improve and sustain the engagement of children open to the YJS within substance misuse services.
- 4.12 **Serious Violence & Exploitation:** Working with and alongside all partners, including the Police, Multi-agency Child Exploitation (MACE) and Violence Reduction Unit, to address and reduce serious violence and all forms of child exploitation.
- 4.13 **Over-represented Children:** Identify and address any areas of over-representation within the YJS cohort, alongside the management board and partners.

4.14 Collectively, these priorities provide a comprehensive framework to guide the Youth Justice Service's work over 2026–2027, ensuring a continued focus on prevention, safeguarding, effective intervention, and improved outcomes for children, victims and communities.

## 5. Key Risks to Future Delivery of the Strategic Plan

- 5.1 **Financial Pressures:** Unpredictable and increasing costs, particularly in relation to secure remand and custody placements, alongside potential reductions in Youth Justice Board (YJB) grant funding, which may impact the sustainability of service delivery.
- 5.2 **Demand and Complexity of Need:** Increasing complexity in the needs of children (e.g. trauma, mental health, neurodiversity, exploitation) may have an impact on services and require more intensive, specialist interventions which have waiting times.
- 5.3 **The unpredictability associated with secure remand episodes:** Secure remand length has the potential to place significant financial pressure on the Youth Justice Service and the broader Local Authority.
- 5.4 **Re-offending Performance:** A failure to achieve reductions in re-offending could impact both outcomes for children and the service's performance against national indicators.
- 5.5 **Serious Youth Violence and Exploitation:** Ongoing risks associated with serious violence, criminal exploitation, and County Lines activity which may increase demand on services.
- 5.6 **Partnership and System Dependency:** Delivery of the plan is reliant on effective partnership working. Reduced capacity and competing priorities may have an impact on the outcomes we wish to achieve.
- 5.7 **Policy and Legislative Change:** Changes in national policy and transformation activities may require rapid adaptation of local services and priorities.
- 5.8 These risks will be actively monitored and managed through the Youth Justice Strategic Board to ensure effective delivery and achievement of the ambitions set out in the Plan.

## 6. Other Considerations/Implications

<b>Risk Implications</b>	<p>The strategic plan identifies key risks to future delivery as detailed in the Risks and Issues section of the plan and Section 5 of this paper. The primary concerns relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The unpredictability associated with secure remand episodes. Secure remand length has the potential to place significant financial pressure on the Youth Justice Service and the broader Local Authority.</li> <li>• Managing the Youth Justice Board Grant which has been agreed for the next</li> <li>• Performance on re-offending outcomes and impact on children. A key performance measure for the YJS is children who re-offend. If children continue to re-offend, there is a real risk they become entrenched in the youth justice system leading to poorer outcomes in their adult lives.</li> <li>• Continued concerns around Serious Youth Violence, Criminal Exploitation and County Lines.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Considerations</b>	<p>There are no financial considerations arising from this report. Multi-year funding has been agreed for the next 3 financial years; however, this constitutes as a real-term cash freeze.</p>
<b>Subsidy Control</b>	<p>There are no Subsidy Control considerations.</p>
<b>Legal Considerations</b>	<p>Crime and Disorder Act 1998: A local authority must submit a Youth Justice Plan annually to the Youth Justice Board, setting out: (a) how youth justice services are to be provided and funded in their area and (b) setting out how the Youth Offending Team will be structured and funded, how it will operate, and the functions it will undertake. The plan must also be published in accordance with the manner and timescales directed by the Secretary of State.</p>
<b>Single Impact Assessment</b>	<p>Please see the attached <b>Appendix B</b>.</p>
<b>Staff Considerations</b>	<p>There are no specific staffing considerations.</p>

<b>Asset Management Considerations</b>	There are no asset management considerations arising from this report.
<b>Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Considerations</b>	There are no specific environmental, sustainability, and climate change considerations arising from this report
<b>Consultation</b>	This report is presented to the Children's Services Committee to seek approval to commence a programme of consultation on the draft 2026–2027 Plan. Consultation will be undertaken with children, young people and their families, partner agencies, and other key stakeholders. Feedback from this process will inform the development of the final plan, which will be presented to the Children's Services Committee, and Full Council, for approval.

## 7. Recommendations

7.1 It is recommended Children's Services Committee:

- Notes the progress made in delivering the local Youth Justice Plan (2025–2026) as set out in section 3 of **Appendix A**; and
- Approves the draft local Youth Justice Plan (2026–2027) for consultation, as outlined in this report, prior to the final plan being presented to the Children's Services Committee in November 2026.

## 8. Reasons for Recommendations

8.1 The Youth Justice Plan for 2026–2027 will provide clear strategic direction for the Youth Justice Service, supporting further reductions in youth offending and improving outcomes for children, young people, their families, and the wider community.

8.2 The Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2026–2027 will establish clear responsibilities for the Youth Justice Service and the Youth Justice Strategic Board to deliver improvement activity within agreed timescales.

8.3 No alternative options are presented as it is a legal requirement to consult upon and approve a Youth Justice Strategic Plan.

## 9. Background Papers

9.1 The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:

- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2025/26

## 10. Contact Officers

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Sign Off:

Chief Executive	Date: 11.06.2026
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 10.06.2026
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 10.06.2026



# Hartlepool Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2026/27



<b>Service</b>	Hartlepool Youth Justice Service (YJS)
<b>Assistant Director</b>	Laura Gough, Assistant Director Children’s Services
<b>Chair of YJS Board</b>	Emma Rutherford – Executive Head Teacher – Vulnerable Pupils, Childrens and Joint Commissioning Service, Hartlepool Borough Council (Chair Hartlepool YJS Management Board)

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7. Sign off, Submission & Approval

Appendix 1 – Staffing Structure

Appendix 2 – Staffing of the YJS by sex and ethnicity

## Foreword

On behalf of the Youth Justice Service Strategic Management Board, I am pleased to endorse the Hartlepool Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2026/27.

It is an absolute privilege to support the continued work of our Youth Justice Service and the dedicated partnership that surrounds it. This plan reflects not only clear strategic direction, but also a deep and compassionate understanding of the children, families and communities we serve. At its heart lies a simple but powerful principle – that every child matters that they deserve the opportunity to feel safe, understood and able to achieve their potential.

As I read this plan, I am struck by the commitment across the partnership to work together with care, curiosity and determination. We know that the children we support are often facing significant challenges, and it is through kindness, consistency and strong relationships that we are able to make a meaningful difference. The continued focus on a “Child First” approach, on listening to the voice of the child, and supporting families, is essential.

I would like to thank the staff within the Youth Justice Service and all our partners for their unwavering dedication. Their work, often unseen, changes lives every day. It is not always easy, and progress is not always immediate, but it is always important. This plan recognises both the complexity of the work and the hope that underpins it.

As we look ahead, I am confident that by working together with openness, respect and shared purpose, we will continue to improve outcomes for children and young people in Hartlepool. Our ambition is not only to reduce offending, but to help children build positive futures, feel valued in their communities, and believe in themselves.

I am proud to support this strategy and the people who bring it to life.

Emma Rutherford  
Executive Head Teacher – Vulnerable Pupils,  
Children’s and Joint Commissioning Service, Hartlepool Borough Council  
(Chair Hartlepool YJS Management Board)

# 1. Introduction, vision, strategy & local context

## Introduction

The Youth Justice System exists to ensure that children between the age of 10 and 17 (who are arrested and charged with a criminal offence) are dealt with differently to adult offenders, to reflect their welfare needs.

In summary, children who offend are:

- Dealt with by youth courts
- Given different sentences in comparison to adults and
- When necessary, detained in special secure centres for children.

It is the responsibility of the Local Authority and statutory partners to secure and coordinate local youth justice services for children in our area, who encounter the Youth Justice System, because of their offending behaviour. This is achieved through the established Youth Justice Services.

The primary functions of Youth Justice Services are to prevent offending and re-offending by children, reduce the use of custody and ensure all the above are delivered with a “Child First” ethos embedded across the service.

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service (YJS) was established in April 2000 and is a multiagency service, made up of representatives from Children’s Services, Police, Probation, Public Health, Health and Education.

Hartlepool YJS seeks to ensure that:

- All children entering the youth justice system benefit from a structured needs assessment, to identify risk and protective factors associated with their offending behaviour, to inform effective interventions.
- Courts and Referral Order panels are provided with high quality reports that enable informed decisions to be made that reflect the child’s circumstances.
- Orders of the Court are managed in such a way that they support the primary aim of the youth justice system, alongside managing risk of harm, and ensuring there is due regard to the welfare of the child.
- Services provided to Courts are of a high quality and ensure that Magistrates and the Judiciary have confidence in the YJS’s supervision of children.
- Comprehensive bail and remand management services are in place locally for children remanded, sentenced to custody, or on bail whilst awaiting trial or sentence.
- The needs and risks of children, sentenced to custodial sentences (including long-term custodial sentences), are assessed to ensure effective resettlement and management of risk.
- Those in receipt of youth justice services are treated fairly, regardless of race, language, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability or any other factor, and actions are put in place to address discrimination, if identified.

In addition to the above, the remit of the service has widened significantly in recent years, due to both national and local developments relating to prevention, diversion and restorative justice, and there is now a requirement to ensure that:

- Creative strategies and services are in place locally to prevent children from becoming involved in crime or anti-social behaviour
- Out of Court Resolutions deliver targeted and bespoke interventions for those children at risk of entering the Youth Justice System
- Assistance is provided to the Police when determining whether Youth Caution's should be issued
- Restorative approaches are used, where appropriate, with victims of crime and ensures that restorative justice is central to work undertaken with children open to the YJS
- The Turnaround Programme continues to meet targets in line with Government criteria, multi-year funding has allowed us to continue the valuable support that Turnaround has provided.

The Hartlepool Youth Justice Plan for 2026/27 sets out how the YJS will deliver services to children who are referred into the service. Children will be central to the decisions made, and we aim to improve outcomes for children who are involved in offending and ensure they receive services that both meet their needs and reduce further offending.

Our response will be shaped by local and national policies intended to support some of the most vulnerable children in society and, as a partnership, identify how we contribute to a reduction in the seriousness and frequency of offending by children. We will also draw upon findings published in HMIP reports and use a 'what works' approach to continually build on best practice.

We will continue to work within a multi-agency setting, ensuring children, families, communities, and victims receive a service that not only meets their individual needs but also improves the lives of those affected by crime.

## **Vision & Strategy**

Hartlepool's Children's Strategic Partnership has set out its vision for children within the town as follows:

### **Vision:**

Our ambition, as a children's partnership, is to enable all children and families in Hartlepool to have the opportunity to make the most of their life chances and be supported to be safe in their homes and communities.

### **Priorities:**

- Children can make the most of their life chances and are safe
- Improving family relationships, strengths, skills and resilience
- Reducing the impact of domestic violence, mental health, drugs and alcohol misuse on children and families
- Helping parents, carers and children to gain skills and secure jobs

The Youth Justice Service, as part of the wider Children's Services, seeks to deliver on the vision and objectives through a number of identified Youth Justice Service Strategic Priorities for 2026/27 which shows a commitment that sustained change is possible with determination and a collaborative response.

In addition, these priorities align and overlap with the strategic priorities set by the Safer Hartlepool Partnership for 2024-27:

- Anti-social Behaviour;
- Drugs and Alcohol;
- Domestic Violence and Abuse and
- Serious Violence.

Hartlepool's YJS Strategic Plan also aligns with Cleveland's Police and Crime Commissioners, Police and Crime Plan, objectives being

- Reduce Crime, Anti-Social behaviour and Harm
- Improve safety for women and girls
- Ensure the right support for victims and vulnerable people
- Tackle offending and reoffending

The Department for Education published their white paper, Every Child Achieving and Thriving in February 2026. Their summary highlights

- Schools, trusts and colleges prepare the next generation to shape our world together.
- They see children's strengths and where they need extra support, recognising high standards and inclusion as two sides of the same coin.....They deliver support and stretch for every child
- Disadvantaged children – especially white working-class children – and children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are not succeeding as they should, with too many children not stretched to achieve all they can.

The aspiration of the white paper is that the 'disadvantaged gap will be halved', and children from low-income households will achieve around a full grade higher in each of their GCSEs than is the case today.

Whilst the white paper is ambitious, the YJS acknowledges the need for change and considers what can be done to support the children open to the YJS, improving educational outcomes whilst also addressing wider issues linked to behaviour and societal factors, and ensuring every child is supported to reach their potential.

The Youth Justice Service (YJS) has been part of the creation of the Hartlepool Local Area SEND Reform plan, providing a valuable opportunity to influence the direction of the local SEND agenda at a strategic level. This engagement ensured that the needs and experiences of children known to the YJS are appropriately reflected and considered within this key development plan.

## **Youth Justice Service Strategic Objectives and Priorities – 2026/27**

We will use our grant, partner contributions and available resources effectively to deliver services that support the achievement of our agreed objectives and strategic priorities on an annual basis:

**Re-offending** - reduce further offending by children who have committed crime with a particular emphasis on continuing the development of Service interventions that are structured, responsive, tailored to meet identified individual need and evaluated. (Both within Youth Justice Services and provided by external agencies).

**Early/Targeted Intervention, Prevention & Diversion** – sustain the reduction of first-time entrants to the youth justice system by ensuring that creative strategies and services remain in place locally to prevent children from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

**Remand, Custody & Constructive Resettlement** – demonstrate that there are robust and comprehensive alternatives in place to support reductions in the need for remands and custody. Ensure bespoke constructive resettlement packages are implemented at the earliest opportunity.

**Risk and Safety & Wellbeing (AssetPlus/Prevention and Diversion assessment)** – ensure all children entering or at risk of entering the youth justice system benefit from a high-quality structured needs assessment to identify risk of harm, safety and wellbeing concerns and desistance factors, to inform effective intervention and risk management.

**Risk of Harm** – Support for children who are assessed as being a high/very high risk of harm to others. Children who are deemed to be a significant risk to the public will benefit from a multiagency approach to manage and reduce their potential risk. Children assessed as presenting a high or very high risk of harm will be subject to an additional dedicated review at the 12-week point, to identify whether any alternative approaches or interventions could further reduce the level of risk.

**Restorative Justice** – ensure all victims of youth crime have the opportunity to participate in restorative approaches and restorative justice is incorporated into the work undertaken with children who are responsible.

**Effective Governance** – Drive the development of a well-constituted, fully engaged, and knowledgeable Youth Justice Strategic Management Board that robustly scrutinises YJS performance and actively advances continuous improvement.

**Voice of the Children** – ensure that all children are actively involved in developing their own plans and are encouraged and supported to inform current and future service delivery both operationally and strategically.

**‘Child First’** – Embed, regularly review, and champion Child First principles across the Youth Justice Service, so that every child is supported to lead a safe, crime-free life and make a positive contribution to society. Promote a culture in which all children, regardless of age, are recognised and treated as children first, with their rights, needs, and developmental stage at the centre of all practice.

**Education, Training, Employment** – Working in collaboration with partners i.e. schools, Virtual School and the One Stop Shop to ensure all children open to the YJS are actively engaging in suitable Education, Employment or Training, thus reducing NEET numbers, increasing attendance, reduction in the seriousness and frequency of offending and improving academic outcomes.

**Substance Misuse** – Working in collaboration with partners i.e. START (local substance misuse service) to improve and sustain the engagement of children, open to the YJS, within substance misuse services.

**Serious Violence & Exploitation** – Work collaboratively with all partners, including the Police, Harm Outside the Home (HoTH), and the Violence Reduction Unit, to prevent and reduce serious violence and all forms of child exploitation through a coordinated, multi-agency approach.

**Overrepresented Children** - Identify and address any areas of over representation within the YJS cohort alongside the management board and partners.

**Violence Against Women and Girls** – Promote awareness and understanding among all children referred to the Youth Justice Service of the harmful impact of online and misogynistic attitudes and behaviours. Deliver targeted support and education to challenge and address concerning beliefs, with the aim of reducing harm and preventing victimisation, particularly of women and girls.

**Improved Health**- Improve emotional well-being and increase access to mental health support services so young people receive timely and effective care. Promote positive sexual health, healthy relationships, and protection from exploitation through education, support, and early intervention; and reduce health inequalities while promoting overall health and wellbeing by addressing disparities and improving access to quality services for all.

## **Local Context**

Hartlepool YJS covers the local authority area of Hartlepool, which is impacted upon by a range of social, economic and environmental factors.

Using the 2019 average score of the Indices of Deprivation, Hartlepool is currently the 5<sup>th</sup> most income-deprived area based on percentage of lower super output areas (LSOA's). According to the most recent data published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS), Hartlepool's overall income deprivation is 22.8%. Hartlepool continues to experience and be affected by high levels of unemployment, deprivation, inter-generational familial offending/substance misuse and anti-social behaviour within communities, all of which provide significant barriers for the children we work with and their lived experience.

According to the Mid-year population estimates, England and Wales, June 2024, the population for Hartlepool is 98,180 which is a 6.3% increase compared to 2019, of this, **27.2%** children live in relative poverty<sup>1</sup>. The population of children aged between 10-17 is **10,120**, an increase of 3.7%

The Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population in Hartlepool has seen a slight increase, however, continues to remain low in comparison to other areas locally at **4.9%** of Hartlepool Population (Non-White ethnic groups, Census – ONS). The 10-17year olds age range BAME population is – **662 (6.2%)**

Hartlepool currently has 382 children cared for by the Local Authority, of whom 228 (59%) are aged 10–17. The overall number of children in our care has increased by 13% compared to the previous year, highlighting a rising level of need among children and young people across the borough. At the time of writing this Strategic Plan, there are 7 children in care who are also open to the Youth Justice Service (YJS), underscoring the importance of targeted, multi-agency support for this particularly vulnerable cohort.

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<sup>1</sup> ONS data

Hartlepool is served by five secondary schools, one Pupil Referral Unit (The Horizon School), Catcote Academy, which caters for secondary and post-16 students with special educational needs and one Free School for children with Social, Emotional and mental health needs (SEMH). Of the secondary schools in the town, four of the five secondary schools are Academies, with two part of the same Academy Trust. There are three sixth form providers, two of which are located within secondary schools. There is limited Post-16 Further Education(Post 16) provision in Hartlepool. Current provision consists of one Further Education provider with additional training opportunities coming from two national providers. The gap in provision has been discussed with the Hartlepool Borough Council NEET Reduction Lead who has raised this with the Department of Work and Pensions; this is an area of need to support our children leaving school and going into further education and raising their aspirations.

The local picture is sadly showing little sign of positive change, many of the issues are linked to the wider socio-economic issues within the Borough, with limited opportunities for children and families which inevitably has a longer-term impact on the children we support. However, that does not mean we don't continue to encourage and support children to reach their potential. There will be times when we are the catalyst for change and may not always see the direct impact.

We remain responsive to change on both a local and national level, both of which are likely to affect how we respond to children, families and victims affected by offending.

The YJS continues to operate within a relatively stable delivery model consisting of two small teams responsible for the oversight and delivery of Out of Court Resolutions and work with children on Court Orders with continued support from a small cohort of dedicated volunteers and Business Support. The YJS Leadership Team has remained consistent, this provides continuity and stability for the YJS staff and ongoing relationships with key partners.

We acknowledge the complexities of children within the youth justice system, and the need to ensure the team are well-equipped and have the appropriate skills, knowledge and training to offer the right service to children at the reachable and teachable moments. Where a particular need is identified or there is an emerging theme, we understand our limitations and who may be responsible for meeting the individual needs of the child. We drawdown the information made available by research from the YJB and HMIP Inspection reports, allowing us to build on what is seen as good and emerging practice that fits the local approach for children and victims in Hartlepool.

Whilst caseloads are generally lower—particularly within Post-Court work—the needs of children subject to Court Orders are often more complex, requiring a higher level of involvement and supervision.

The demographic of the YJS caseload is consistent, we predominantly work with boys aged between 14-16, who reside within some of the most deprived wards in Hartlepool and generally have a poor experience of education.

Ongoing review of the children referred into the YJS identify that they will have experiences of:

- higher than average mental health need (both diagnosed and undiagnosed)
- higher levels of drug and alcohol misuse
- low educational attachment, attendance and attainment
- Accessing alternative education provision
- Undiagnosed speech, language and communication needs
- Social emotional and mental health needs
- Known to services for risk of or being exploited (Harm Outside the Home)
- Peers known to Police for offending or exploitation
- having family members or friends who offend

- higher than average levels of loss, bereavement, abuse and violence experienced within the family – historical trauma
- a history of family disruption
- chaotic and unstructured lifestyles
- exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) from a young age

Alongside this, we have a cohort of young, white females of similar age (14-17), whom, although perhaps not as prolific in terms of reoffending, are of significant concern due to multiple complex issues, which are more welfare orientated. These include substance misuse, chaotic lifestyles, sexual exploitation, missing from home episodes and family breakdown. Again, as with the male cohort, young females referred into the YJS are noted to have a higher prevalence of poor emotional well-being and poor school attainment and outcomes.

As can be seen from the figures above, Hartlepool does have a relatively low BAME cohort of children when compared to local and regional YOTs, despite this, we apply a Child First approach to all children, regardless of their ethnicity or cultural background. More notably the number of Children in Our Care (CIOC) does fluctuate within the YJS cohort, the data is regularly analysed and there is ongoing work with Social Care and carers to ensure appropriate provision is in place to support this vulnerable group of children. CIOC are a priority for the YJS, we work with Social Care to assure ourselves, especially when offences are committed in the home or a Local Authority Childrens Home that children are not unnecessarily criminalised. Data on CIOC is reported to the YJS Management Board on a quarterly basis.

The YJS Leadership Team are aware of the increase in children who have an EHCP, SEN or identified as needing SEN support. The YJS, through support with their commissioned services and support from the Virtual School are ideally placed to identify children who may have an unmet learning needs which may be a contributing factor in their presenting behaviour within the school and social environment. We continue to see schools apply their behaviour policies to try and 'manage' the child's behaviour. Unfortunately, we encounter children who have a poor experience of school which may be a contributing factor to school attendance, attainment and aspirations.

The YJS work hard to establish supportive relationships with the schools/education providers and encourage conversations that are both challenging and work towards positive outcomes that allow the child to achieve and unlock their potential. Supporting children in education will contribute to a reduction in re-offending, promoting emotional wellbeing, self-belief and a pro-social lifestyle and identity which may support desistance.

## **2. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements**

### **Governance:**

The Youth Justice Service is part of Hartlepool Borough Council's Children & Joint Commissioning Services Department, which also includes Children's Social Care and Early Help services. The Management Board is chaired by Emma Rutherford (Executive Head Teacher - Vulnerable Pupils, Hartlepool Borough Council, Children's and Joint Commissioning)

The board is made up of representatives from Children's Social Care, Police, Probation, Youth Justice Board, Public Health, Education, Youth Support Services, Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner, Community Safety and Substance Misuse. At the time of the plan being written we are consulting with members of the Voluntary and Community Sector and Post-16 Education representative as to whether they are able to join the YJS Management Board.

Effective integrated strategic partnership working and clear oversight by the Management Board are critical to the success and effective delivery of youth justice services in Hartlepool. The board is directly responsible for:

- Determining how appropriate youth justice services are to be provided and funded
- Overseeing the formulation each year of the youth justice plan
- Agreeing measurable objectives linked to key performance indicators as part of the youth justice plan
- Ensuring delivery of the statutory aim to prevent offending by children and young people
- Giving strategic direction to Youth Justice Service Manager and Youth Justice Service Team
- Providing performance management of the prevention of youth crime and periodically report this to the Safer Hartlepool Partnership
- Ensuring that Standards for children in the youth justice system 2019 and the Child First ethos are embedded across the whole service and audits are completed within required timescales
- Promoting the key role played by the Youth Justice Service within local integrated offender management arrangements
- Advocate on behalf of the YJS within their own service areas and beyond, specifically supporting the YJS to overcome barriers to effective multiagency working
- Oversight of all data submissions to the YJB ensuring timeliness, especially conditions set out in the YJB grant
- Ensuring the recommendations outlined in YJB papers and HMIP inspection reports/thematic reviews are addressed and monitored at board meetings

The Management Board is clear about the priority areas for improvement and monitors the delivery of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan, performance and prevention/diversion work. It is well attended and receives comprehensive reports relating to performance, finance and specific areas of service delivery.

Members of the Board are knowledgeable, participate well in discussions and are members of other related boards, such as the Children and Young People's Partnership, Local Safeguarding Children's Board, Safer Hartlepool Partnership and Health and Wellbeing partnerships, as well as the Cleveland Criminal Justice Board, all of which contribute to effective partnership working at a strategic level. Board meetings are well structured, and members are held accountable.

### **Leadership/Structure**

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service has a total staff team of 19.5, which includes the seconded Police Officer, and YJS volunteers, numbers fluctuate due to the nature of the arrangements. We are continuing to review how best to utilise volunteers to ensure the volunteering arrangements are mutually beneficial and rewarding. (**Staffing structure attached at Appendix 1**). Within this figure, the service benefits from a team of three active volunteers who are Referral Order Panel members. All staff and volunteers are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, which are renewed every three years.

There are also two external staff commissioned into the service, both of which are funded by the YJS, one x PT (0.3) Speech and Language Therapist (SALT) and one x PT (0.1) Specialist Educational Psychologist. The YJS are fortunate to have input from Forensic (F)CAMHS for those children presenting with challenging and serious offending. Colleagues from FCAMHS will support the staff team in formulation meetings to try and understand the child's behaviour, deliver direct work with the child and support risk management processes.

Four Custody Navigators have been employed via the Violence Reduction Unit (CURV); they are based in the central custody suite (Middlesbrough) and engage all children entering custody, with a view to support, guide and direct them for further support. (These are not included in the total staff team numbers)

At the time of writing this report all statutory partners have seconded staff within the YJS or have provided direct pathways i.e. Health, Education, Police, Social Care and Probation. The YJS are without a Seconded Probation Officer; in the absence of a Probation Officer, the National Probation Service provide a financial contribution. Despite there being no Probation Officer in post, the YJS have strong links with Probation to ensure those children who are transitioning from the YJS to Probation understand the roles, expectation and how service delivery and expectations are very different.

The YJS delivery model has been reconfigured and restructured during the last year to ensure the service remains sufficiently flexible to address future challenges. This will continue to be achieved through a generic case management and intervention delivery model, across pre and post court functions. This will ensure maximum resilience, capacity and flexibility to meet the needs of children and the service.

The current YJS structure aims to consolidate areas of strong performance and effective practice, whilst also providing a dynamic framework to respond to emerging priorities, recognised by both the Local Authority and key partners. This model (alongside the YJS strategic plan) allows the organisation and the wider YJS partnership to action the priorities for service delivery and to achieve best outcomes for children across the range of statutory and preventative services.

The Social Care reforms (2026) have seen a slight change in the local staffing structure. This change has seen the YJS move under the Head of Service (Front Door, Harm Outside the Home, Missing and Edge of Care). This move aligns the YJS with a team of specialists who are working with children, families, and in some instances, victims, some of which are known and open to the YJS. It is intended that the structural and physical location of the YJS will see improved lines of communication, information sharing and a coordinated response to some of the most vulnerable children within the Borough. The YJS remain in the Directorate of Children's and Joint-Commissioning, reporting to an experienced Assistant Director and Executive Director.

## **Partnership Arrangements**

Hartlepool Youth Justice Service is a statutory partnership which includes, but also extends beyond, the direct delivery of youth justice services. To deliver youth justice outcomes it must be able to function effectively in both of the two key sectors within which it operates, namely:

- Criminal justice services
- Services for children and their families

The Youth Justice Service contributes both to improving community safety and to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and in particular protecting them from significant harm.

At the time of the plan being written the YJS are working to establish and improve relationships with the local further education providers and members of the VCS. The YJS Leadership Team, Board members and wider staff team, recognise the contribution further education providers and the VCS will bring to the children, families and victims involved with the YJS. It is the intention that the collaborative work will improve outcomes for children, reduce further offending and support children to reach their potential.

The YJS cannot work in isolation, we continue to support some of the most vulnerable children within the Borough, many of which have experienced early life trauma and sadly, many have had extensive involvement from services, including Children's Services and a poor experience of education. The needs of the children, and victims, referred into the YJS can be complex and

often require a coordinated response to meet their individual needs. Identifying support is achieved through an effective assessment which identifies areas of need, strength, issues linked to risk and safeguarding concerns. The YJS can achieve this due to their partnership working with Children's Services, Education including Virtual School, Police, Harm Outside the Home and Health colleagues.

The emergence of exploitation within Hartlepool is concerning. Fortunately, the YJS continue to have effective and meaningful relationships with the HOTH Team, working with children who are most at risk and ensuring there is a coordinated approach, and those exploiting children are identified, disrupted and targeted by Police. Where concerns are raised and ongoing, the YJS attend mapping meetings for children identified as being at greatest risk of exploitation or there is an escalation in their behaviour/offending which requires a multi-agency response.

The YJS have representation, both operational and strategic, at a number of key partnership meetings which promote effective delivery of interventions, support for children, families, victims, partnership working and identifying areas of need. These include:

- Child Sexual Abuse Steering Group
- Cleveland sexual harm network strategic planning/strategy development group
- Hartlepool Inclusion Panel incorporating Prevention Panels
- Multi Agency Harm Outside the Home
- Persons of Concern/Locations of Concern (POC & LOC- Chaired by HOTH)
- Stalking Working Group
- MAPPA Strategic Management Board
- Cleveland Liaison and Diversion Steering Group
- Bronze Prevent
- Victim and Witness Group
- Children in Custody over 12 hours
- Vulnerable Pupils Operational Group
- Teesside Restorative Justice Network
- Community Safety
- Local Criminal Justice Partnership (OPCC)
- Reducing Re-offending Group
- Cleveland Police Tactical Command Group
- YJB NE Practice Forums

### 3. Update on the previous Year 2025-2026

#### Progress on previous strategic priorities

#### Youth Justice Strategic Priorities 2025/26

**Re-offending** - reduce further offending by children who have committed crime with a particular emphasis continuing the development of Service interventions that are structured, responsive and tailored to meet identified individual need and evaluated. (Both within Youth Justice Services and provided by external agencies).

#### **Key Actions**

- Undertake quality assessments of children at risk of re-offending, ensuring risks, desistance factors and needs are identified which inform effective intervention planning
- Continue to improve interventions delivered, through innovation and collaboration where appropriate
- Improve intelligence and timely information sharing relating to those children who are at risk of offending, to inform service-wide improvement activity or targeted work

- Continue to improve the 'Child First' approach and Health offer within the service and with partners
- Continue to undertake activities in relation to retaining both the Speech & Language Therapist, Trauma Informed Care Pathway and Emotional Wellbeing pathways within the YJS beyond March 2025

### **Update**

- Re-offending remains a priority.
- We continue to review the re-offending rates of children who have previously been open or continue to be open at the time
- The YJS Leadership Team are auditing those children who re-offended and did the plan meet the needs of the children and could we have done anything differently
- Where a child re-offends and is open to the YJS, a review of the assessment and plan is undertaken to ensure there are no missed opportunities and what, if anything, has changed in the child's life
- The YJS are closely aligned with HOTH, once we are co-located with the HOTH team, this will improve lines of communication, partnership working and a timely response to try and prevent further offending
- Greater focus on a partnership/strategic response to children who re-offend
- We are beginning to see a slightly improved notification period from point of arrest to a child being charged, hopefully this will allow the YJS to be more responsive to the child's behaviour, allowing us to address the underlying cause/driver to the offending

### **Concerns**

- Rate of re-offending has not reduced to the levels that would satisfy the YJS Leadership team; this will remain a priority and be under ongoing review.

**Early & Targeted Intervention/Diversion** – Continue to prioritise a reduction in first time entrants to the youth justice system by ensuring that creative strategies and services remain in place locally to prevent children and children from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

### **Key Actions**

- Maintain and enhance the YJS Early & Targeted Intervention programme "Choices" across Children's Services and the partnership
- Operate a targeted approach to supporting individuals and groups of children at risk of offending - based on intelligence and collaborative working with key partners (Police, ASB, Early Help, Voluntary Community Sector, Schools, etc.)
- Work with the HOTH team and partners to reduce and respond to Child exploitation
- Ongoing trend analysis of past and current FTE's to identify key themes and responses
- Ongoing briefings to key partners (such as Police and Social Care) to emphasise and promote the Prevention and Diversion agenda
- Continue to review and deliver our point of arrest diversion as a distinct and substantially different response to formal out of court disposals
- Continue to review the Diversion & Prevention strategy in place ensuring it includes how children are identified for diversion/prevention, how the services are delivered, by whom and how success is evaluated.

### **Update:**

- All referrals received for consideration of an Out of Court Resolution are discussed in the YJS OoCR Joint Decision-Making Panel to ensure an appropriate outcome
- Where possible, the lowest form of disposal is used, reducing stigma and ensuring both the child and victims voice is heard
- Continuation of the Turnaround programme has allowed the YJS to provide support from the point of a child's arrest or identification via other agencies i.e. Community Safety, Hartlepool Inclusion Panel for those children at risk of exclusion

- Forged relationships with Community Safety for those children deemed to be on the cusp of offending and what can be done to support and reduce their involvement in ASB
- The YJS continue to have the offer of the Choices programme for children open to early Help/Social Care, the teamwork alongside the Social Worker/Family Support Worker to prevent a child having contact with the Police
- The YJS also attend the Prevention Panel, a pilot programme funded directly from the MoJ and delivered by the Cleveland Unit for Reducing Violence (CURV) with multi-agency representation. The panels will allow the early identification of children who may be at risk of offending and what support can be put in place.
- Implementation of the revised knife crime guidance. Hartlepool YJS have met with Cleveland Police to discuss the pathway to ensure a swift and timely response to children who were arrested for a knife enabled offence. Notification from Police aims to follow the Governments guidance and the YJS being notified within one working day. Referrals will be discussed and considered in the YJS OoCR Joint Decision-Making Panel to determine the most appropriate outcome, Youth Conditional Caution or Deferred Prosecution. We will continue to apply the child first principles and offer the most appropriate outcomes that meets the child's needs.

**Remand and Custody & Resettlement** – demonstrate that there are robust and comprehensive alternatives in place to support reductions in the use of remands and custody and the YJS Resettlement Policy is reviewed and evaluated.

### **Key Actions**

- Monitor and maintain the use of Compliance Panels to ensure continued effectiveness
- Ensure the Service provides intensive packages of supervision and support to high intensity orders and bail arrangements
- Ensure that the needs of children in custody and the factors relating to their offending behaviour are addressed in the secure estate to prevent further offending upon release
- Continue to review and evaluate the Resettlement Policy in place for children upon release from the secure estate (HMIP Youth Justice inspection framework, standard 4.1 Resettlement, May 2021)
- Regularly review capacity to deliver ISS, and resource appropriately, through a multiagency approach

### **Update**

- Resettlement document reviewed by the YJS Leadership Team, document aligns with the Child First principles
- Consideration for planning a child's release from custody is done from the first day of sentence, allowing a meaningful, successful transition from custody back into the community.
- Where deemed appropriate, greater use of ROTL will be applied for children in custody.
- Where engagement on a community order is deemed problematic, review of the approach and plan undertaken to ensure we are meeting the child's needs and there are no barriers to engagement.
- Hartlepool YJS along with colleagues from South Tees YJS and Stockton YJS were successful in their collaborative bid for the Regional Remand MoJ pilot bid. The bid is in partnership with SHiFT; the project aims to support children in the community with a robust alternative to a custodial remand The funding is significantly less than applied for, however, SHiFT are supporting the bid and continue to work closely with the three youth justice areas.
- The YJS commission a Court Officer who has an excellent relationship with the Magistrates and knowledge of legislation and sentencing, which puts us in a favourable

position when liaising with the courts. The commissioning arrangement has been extended for a further three years.

### **Concerns**

- There continues to be a national shortage of suitable regulated local placements for children remanded to local authority accommodation, which places huge challenges both financially and operationally on the authority, service and most importantly the children and their families. There are ongoing strategic discussions nationally.
- Despite requests being made, the Teesside Court User Group has yet to be re-established.

**Risk, Safety & Wellbeing (AssetPlus/Prevention and Diversion assessment)** – ensure all children who are at risk of entering the youth justice system benefit from a structured needs assessment to identify risk of harm, safety and wellbeing concerns and desistance factors, to inform effective intervention and risk management.

### **Key Actions**

- Continued AssetPlus refresher training, ensuring robust assessment of a child's needs
- All of the YJS Pre-Court Team have had internal training on the completion of the YJB approved, Prevention and Diversion assessment which focusses on several areas including, building on strengths, family needs, child friendly language and more focus on behaviour.
- Work in partnership with other agencies to ensure there is a co-ordinated assessment and plan relating to a child's risk and safety & wellbeing
- Implement an audit cycle/performance clinic to ensure assessment and plans are meeting the appropriate quality standards through robust and transparent quality assurance and feedback.
- Ensure that desistance factors are identified and analysed in all assessments of every child subject to YJS supervision through quality assurance and staff supervision.
- Attendance and contribution to YJB Regional Effective Practice groups and peer collaboration with Tees Valley and North East YJS colleagues
- Ongoing internal staff training and workshops to benchmark quality standards in the management of risk and safety & wellbeing
- Continue to work alongside the partnership to identify suitable interventions and pathways for children, those criminally exploited and potentially being drawn into County Lines activity

### **Updates**

- Acknowledgement given to those children who present with risky behaviour and are deemed a risk to the public, communities and further victims
- Continued support from colleagues in Forensic CAMHS, this includes an opportunity to have case formulation meetings and direct work completed with the children.
- Ongoing review and refresh of the internal risk management paperwork and associated processes, ensuring it is fit for purpose, manages the risk and prevents the child from committing further harm, whether this is intentional or not.
- Where risk is identified, the individual children will have additional YJS Management oversight
- Consideration given to whether a child meets the criteria for management of their behaviour via MAPPA
- Case discussions may be held with the YJS commissioned Education Psychologist to offer an alternative perspective on a child's presenting behaviour

**Restorative Justice & Victims** – ensure all victims of youth crime can participate in restorative justice approaches and restorative justice is incorporated into the work undertaken with children who offend.

### **Key Actions**

- Ensure that victims of youth crime can participate in restorative justice (RJ) approaches leading to improved outcomes for victims
- Continue to use restorative practice across all aspects of the Youth Justice Service
- Regularly re-visit, review and develop practice and process around Referral Order panels to ensure increased involvement from victims, panel members, children and their families
- Continue to develop the in-house RJ 'offer' to consolidate and embed current and better integrated working practices – including the victim's evaluation

### **Updates**

- We considered our approach to supporting young victims in school/further education. After reflection it became clear that some education providers may see a change in the students behaviour but it is unclear why. With support from the Virtual School, we adopted a similar approach when working with the children referred into the YJS and the support we offer schools, we applied this to young victims ensuring wrap around support and school understand why there may be a change in the child's behaviour.
- There is a greater emphasis on working restoratively across the service, victim work isn't seen as an 'add-on'.
- Where a need is identified, young victims are also able to access our health offer comprising of SaLT, YJS Nurse and Education Psychologist
- Hartlepool YJS' Victim Lead Chairs the Teesside Restorative Justice network, the network provides an opportunity to share best practice, what works and any emerging local or national issues
- Victim audits continue to identify areas of practice which meet the needs and wishes of the victim whilst also raising the child's awareness of their behaviour and impact
- Community based reparation intends to raise the profile of the child and allows them an opportunity to make a positive contribution
- Reparative activity is reviewed on an individual basis, any new proposed projects must meet the YJS standards in that they are not intended to embarrass the child, be seen as overly punitive and it provides an opportunity to learn a new skill whilst giving something back
- Ensuring our practice aligns with the revised HMIP Inspection Standards

**Effective Governance** – ensure that the Youth Justice Strategic Management Board is a well-constituted, committed and knowledgeable Board, which scrutinises Youth Justice Service performance.

### **Key Actions**

- The Youth Justice Management Board will provide oversight and scrutiny of the service action plan and performance
- Ensure Management Board members attend regular development and shadowing opportunities as provided by the YJS Manager.
- Continue to review the Terms of Reference for the YJS board to ensure it is fit for purpose and includes appropriate representation and contribution of all statutory partners.
- Attendance and representation at YJB Regional executive meetings with colleague YJS Managers from the North East – to share learning and Governance issues to improve wider regional service delivery

### **Update**

- A new Chair of the YJS Board was appointed in March 2026, Emma Rutherford brings a wealth of experience from a background in education. More importantly, Emma understands the needs and complexities of the children we support and how important it is for children open to the YJS to be accessing education.

- At the time of plan production, the YJS and Board are exploring broadening the membership of the YJS Board, to include representation from the VCS and further education representation. The intention is that the new members will bring an alternative perspective and be able to support the YJS in meeting the needs of the children.
- Attendance at Board meetings is consistent and with the right strategic members.

**Voice of the Children** – ensure that all children are actively involved in developing their own plans having the opportunity to develop and inform current and future service delivery

### **Key Actions**

- Ensure children’s involvement in relation to their assessment and plans is clearly evidenced within the records.
- Children to be actively involved in developing their own plans and their comments are captured at implementation, review and closure of all plans
- The service will ensure children are provided with opportunities to influence and shape service delivery – through access to, and completion of, Survey Monkey feedback, session evaluations, closure summaries and self-assessment questionnaire.
- YJS leadership team to hold regular evaluation/feedback meetings to ensure all comments are seen and actioned where required and findings shared at quarterly management board meetings

### **Update**

- We continue to advocate and promote the voice of the child, ensuring this is reflected within the child’s assessment and plan.
- Exploring alternative ways to make sure the child’s voice is not only heard but central to the work we do.
- Feedback is captured at review points and closure. Closure feedback is provided in Board reports.
- We are reviewing the feedback/questions asked of the children, we want to make sure the questions provide the children an opportunity to provide a honest response which allows us to reflect on our own practice.
- At the time of the plan being written, we are in meetings with software provider, Mind of My Own (Xchange) who have developed a mobile app which is designed for children open to youth justice services and aligns with AssetPlus. There is a cost which we have to consider and whether it represents value for money and improves the feedback and engagement with children.

**‘Child First’** – ensure that the Child First principles are regularly reviewed and embedded within the Youth Justice Service and that every child can live a safe and crime free life, and make a positive contribution to society.

### **Key Actions**

- Prioritise the best interests of children, recognising their needs, capacities, rights and potential.
- Encourage children’s active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion.
- Ensure that all work carried out by the service is a meaningful collaboration with children and their parents/carers.
- The YJS will promote a childhood that is removed from the Justice System, using prevention, diversion and minimal intervention and that all work minimises stigma.

### **Update**

- We have implemented and revised knife crime guidance will further enhance our diversionary offer and hopefully divert those children who are eligible, out of the youth justice system
- Promoting inclusion through working with the schools to support their students and look beyond the behaviour

- Continue to build and promote a child's identity through the use of sports-based activities, removing stigma and offering children a safe space to have fun and play sport, regardless of ability and skill
- As the child first ethos has developed, we are seeing a shift in how YJS staff now talk about behaviour, as opposed to 'offending'
- Where the YJS attend multi-disciplinary meetings, we continue to promote the use of the child being seen as, and referenced as a child, regardless of their age
- QA of assessments and regular staff supervision ensures the YJS Leadership Team can encourage and promote child first principles.

**Education, Training, Employment** – Working in collaboration with partners i.e. schools, virtual school, One Stop Shop etc. to ensure all children open to the YJS are actively engaging in some form of suitable ETE, thus reducing NEET numbers and increasing attendance and attainment.

### **Key Actions**

- Ensure education is suitably represented on the Strategic Management Board
- Education reports are submitted by partners for each Strategic Management Board meeting and contain as a minimum, how many children are not receiving their education entitlement, how many are excluded, on part time timetables or electively home educated. This data should be analysed to identify any disproportionality and care status of the child. The number of children who have Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP) who are open to the service should be provided.
- Encourage children's active engagement with their respective education provider
- Continue working in collaboration regarding children with EHCP/SEN

### **Update**

- The YJS Leadership team are forging relationships with Post-16 education providers to explore pathways and support for children who are open to the YJS and want to go into further education. Sadly, many children working with the YJS have had a poor experience of education and don't aspire to go onto further education.
- With support from the Chair of the Board, we are looking to broaden Board membership to include a Strategic Lead from a local College who can advocate, promote and work with the YJS to ensure children who are open to the YJS and express an interest in the college, have the opportunity to be successful and achieve their potential
- The 2026 education reforms will support the YJS to work with schools/education providers, allowing greater opportunities for children to be successful in school
- YJS SaLT is developing a working relationship with the Local Authority SENco Teams to improve partnership working and encouraging schools to make reasonable adjustments to support the child in school and overcome barriers to learning
- The commissioned Education Psychologist continues to be an integral part of the YJS in supporting the team when working with and challenging schools
- The YJS have representation at both the Hartlepool Inclusion Panel and the Vulnerable Students Operational Group meeting; both meetings allow the YJS to advocate on behalf of the vulnerable children we are supporting.
- At the time of the plan being written, the YJS have met with a Primary School Executive Head Teacher to explore ways in which we can support the school and their Year 5 and Year 6 children at greatest risk of involvement in crime. It is envisaged this will allow earlier identification of children and the opportunity to offer support via Turnaround.

### **Concerns**

- There are still too many children who work with the YJS and do not reach their potential, this needs to change. Every child should be supported to achieve their potential; this is a system wide issue and the YJS are actively working with schools and academies to overcome barriers to learning.

**Serious Youth Violence & Exploitation** – Working in collaboration with the HoTH, Police and all other partners to ensure that all forms of serious youth violence and exploitation are identified and suitable plans implemented to reduce the risks.

**Key Actions**

- Continue to have representation at all HoTH meetings
- Ensure any identification of potential exploitation via assessment and ongoing work is referred into the HoTH straight away
- Alongside partners, ensure NRM referrals are completed for all relevant children and followed up
- Build upon the risk management meetings (RMM) convened by the YJS ensuring all actions are completed, safety plans are in place and suitable contingency plans are identified
- Continue to ensure senior YJS representation at all relevant strategies/complex case discussions and mapping meetings
- Continue to have senior representation at all PREVENT meetings
- Continue to work alongside the OPCC/Police and all partners in improving and sustaining the Violence Reduction Unit – CURV

**Update**

- Planned staff development in PREVENT/Extreme Right-Wing training completed May 2026
- Management representation at the MAPPA Strategic Management Board.
- Involvement in the development of the Child Adolescent Parent Violent Abuse (CAPVA) workstream. Early identification and support for children who are displaying violent and abusive behaviour towards their parent/carers.
- Co-location with the HOTH Team is planned from June 2026, this will improve lines of communication and identification of children who may be linked to other children or adults of interest
- The YJS have management representation at all HoTH person and location of interest meetings
- All ongoing NRM and potential NRM are discussed and scrutinised at the HoTH meetings
- The YJS attend monthly Police Tactical Control Group (TCG) and Multi Agency Risk of Serious and Organised Crime meetings to discuss in depth Organised Crime Groups, Criminal Peer Groups and any children potentially linked to these
- RUI continue to be analysed in monthly leadership meetings and scrutinised alongside serious youth violence offences with the Police and CPS, daily data spreadsheets are produced by the seconded Police Officer, giving live updates on all cases.
- The three Cleveland YJS's have strategic representation across all tiers of the VRU (CURV)
- All children who are assessed as high or very high risk of harm are subject to internal RMM. The YJS Leadership Team will hold a separate review for all children who are assessed as a high or very high risk of harm and what, if anything, may be done differently to reduce the risk
- A separate report will now be completed which outlines the cohort of children open to both the YJS and HoTH

**Substance Misuse** – Working in collaboration with partners i.e. Horizon/Start to improve and sustain the engagement of children open to the YJS within substance misuse services.

**Key Actions**

- Ensure substance misuse providers are suitably represented on the Strategic Management Board
- Regular reports/updates submitted to the Strategic Management Board by substance misuse providers

- Ensure the continued working arrangements/pathways are embedded between the YJS and substance misuse partners
- All children identified as needing support are actively encouraged to engage with appropriate substance misuse services

### **Updates**

- Piloted a dedicated YJS Substance Misuse Worker to work with and support children who are experimenting and misusing substances.
- Continued collaboration and case discussions with staff from START
- Where children are reluctant to engage with partner agencies, the YJS staff are confident to deliver low level intervention and encourage receiving structured support from START practitioners
- Continue representation from the START Head of Service at the YJS Management Board allowing collaboration and how barriers to engagement may be overcome.
- Where substance misuse is problematic and linked to a child's offending, the YJS will propose a substance misuse requirement as part of a YRO to try and manage the child's behaviour.

### **Concerns**

- Active participation with START continues to be a concern, however, working with START is consent based
- We continue to work with children who are using substances who don't appear ready or willing to reduce and stop using.

**Over represented children** – Identify and address any areas of over representation within the YJS cohort alongside the management board and partners

### **Key Actions**

- Ensure a quarterly needs analysis of the YJS cohort continues to be presented at each Management Board for analysis of over representation and ongoing needs/gaps within service delivery
- Continue to scrutinise all HMIP Thematic report findings i.e. the over representation of black and mixed heritage boys, Children in Our Care (CIOC), stop and searches/strip searches etc and ensure discussions and any potential actions are agreed and implemented by the management board

### **Update**

- Disproportionality is now reported on within the YJS Managers Report at the quarterly management boards, highlighting any over representation. Discussions are undertaken and all actions are formulated and monitored.
- Employed a dedicated YJS Through Care Support Worker for those children who are a CIOC/have Leaving Care status.
- Ensure an appropriate response for any children with a BAME background, or a minority background.
- Links with Children's Services and the dedicated Social Worker for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
- Through support of the Education Psychologist, we are able to identify children who may benefit and be eligible for an EHCP through the statutory pathway.
- Stop searches and strip searches are monitored and all information/data discussed at Management Board meetings.
- Regular discussions with all partners including Police and Social Care are undertaken to address and look at potential actions for any areas of over representation within the service.
- If there is an increase in the number of over represented children the YJS will review referrals on an individual basis and respond accordingly.

### **Concerns**

- No major concerns identified

## **Performance over the previous year**

### **Binary reoffending rate -**

The reoffending toolkit has been embedded within the ChildView management information system (MIS). This enhanced capability provides robust, high-quality data insights that are both informative and accessible, supporting effective decision-making at management boards and informing a wide range of reporting requirements.

We continue to establish and embed a collaborative multiagency solution and response to reoffending. Strong communication across Children's Services and Cleveland Police ensures regular discussions/mapping meetings are being undertaken, with clear accountable actions. Alongside this, the YJS puts significant focus on their multiagency risk management meetings for those small numbers of cases posing the highest risk of reoffending.

The YJS have representation on the Cleveland Reducing Re-offending Group, which feeds into the Cleveland and Durham Local Criminal Justice Partnership. There is also representation on the Cleveland Prevention and Diversion, and Youth Offending sub-groups.

The information below are local reports tracked through our MIS, Child View and gives a timely update on reoffending data. It is worth noting that the cohorts highlighted below are tracked from their start date for 12 months tracking and a further 6 months to ensure there is nothing outstanding, this is in line with the MOJ/YJB tracking model.

### **Latest 4 Qtrs. reoffending Binary rates:**

- 2025/26 Qtr 1 – Cohort used: Oct – December 2023 – **20%** (3/15\*)
- 2025/26 Qtr 2 – Cohort used: Jan – Mar 2024 – **20%** (4/20)
- 2025/26 Qtr 3 – Cohort used: April – June 2024 – **32%** (7/22)
- 2025/26 Qtr 4 – Cohort used: July – September 2024 – **20%** (3/15)

\*these figures denote the number of children in the cohort and how many re-offended in the reporting period.

Reporting provided to the YJS Management Board has showed a slight increase in the re-offending rate which is of concern; the YJS Leadership Team are acutely aware and have begun to audit those children who re-offended and what could have been done differently. Whilst re-offending is a key performance indicator, it needs to be seen as a partnership response. Many children who are working with the YJS, will often have a team around supporting the child and family. Acknowledgement needs to be given to those children and the system wide response to meet the complex and challenging needs of the children.

At the time of the plan being written, the YJS Manager has met with Forensic CAMHS to explore and understand the impact of a Child's 'Core Needs' not being met and what impact this may have on our cohort of children who re-offend.

The 10 Children's Core Needs;

1. Connection and Belonging
2. Safety
3. Expression of Emotions
4. Stability
5. Self-appreciation
6. Independence
7. Realistic Limits
8. Love and Care
9. Spontaneity and Play
10. Identity

Many children supported by the Youth Justice Service have experienced unmet needs in early childhood, and, regrettably, continue to face gaps in meeting their fundamental needs as they transition into adulthood. Research suggests that if a child gets their core needs met through a specific strategy (behaviour) or source (exploitative peers) these behaviours can become ingrained and more problematic. We acknowledge that the breadth of support and need for intervention can be far reaching, this is why a multi-agency response is essential to support children and reduce any incidents of further offending. It is our hope that we are able to work with FCAMHS and develop a framework that not only supports the YJS when working with children, but it also improves outcomes for children whose core needs were not or are not being met at the time of the YJS becoming involved.

As can be seen from the figures above reoffending binary rates do fluctuate. It continues to be an area of priority for the YJS and partners to identify these YP earlier and offer suitable packages of support.

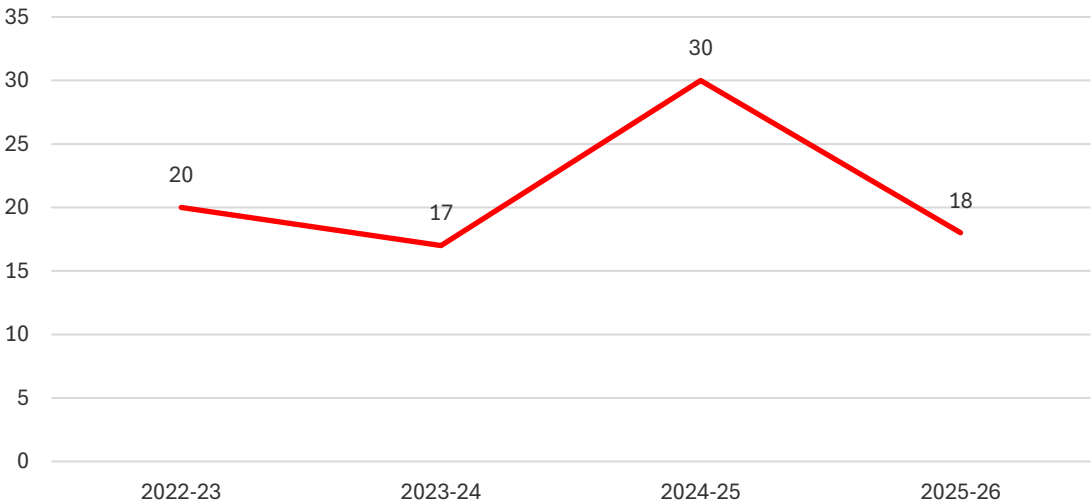
**First time entrants (FTE)**

We have seen a reduction in the number of FTE in comparison to the previous year (2024/25), the reduction in FTE was largely expected due to the number of children who were involved in the widespread violent disorder in 2024.

The YJS continue to hold Out of Court Resolution (OoCR) Panels for all children who are eligible for an OoCR. The continuation of the Turnaround programme has allowed the YJS to support those children at a much earlier stage and prevent escalation into the system.

The revised knife crime guidance will also allow us to divert children by using deferred prosecution. This guidance gives us greater flexibility when considering knife enabled offences whilst applying child first principles. We can also apply any aggravating or mitigating factors whilst also assuring ourselves that the right decision is made that safeguards the wider community.

Number of FTEs Year on Year comparisons



## **Use of custody**

There has been one child sentenced to custody in late 2025, this child had transferred to the Hartlepool area from a neighbouring authority. At the time of their transfer into Hartlepool, the child was subject to a DTO Post Custody Supervision following his release from custody. Unfortunately, there was a significant deterioration in the child's behaviour and he was involved in a further serious offence which resulted in a recall and he was later sentenced.

Where there is a risk of remand, Hartlepool YJS will explore available bail support packages to prevent the unnecessary use of remand, however, we also consider the potential risk to the victims, the wider community and the child. The new remand pilot will give us greater opportunities to consider what options are available to manage the child in the community with a robust package of support.

Hartlepool YJS have a clear process for alternatives to custody through the offer of Bail/ISS packages and utilisation of pre-breach compliance meetings for those at risk of custody via non-compliance.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Remands</b>	<b>Custody</b>
<b>2022-23</b>	2	2
<b>2023-24</b>	1	2
<b>2024-25</b>	1	0
<b>2025-26</b>	1	2
<b>2026-27</b>	0	1

## **Additional key performance indicators (KPIs)**

It is a requirement of the service to report on the following key performance indicators, our first submission was August 2023 and quarterly thereafter. Hartlepool YJS have purchased the KPI reporting tool from CACI for their MIS ChildView and are hoping to be in a position very shortly to provide more updated, accurate and in-depth data on the below KPI's.

### **Suitable accommodation – *The proportion of children in suitable accommodation at the end of their order***

We know that access to safe and suitable accommodation reduces the risk of reoffending. This KPI indicates how many children are in suitable/unsuitable accommodation. This will allow us to understand and evidence the barriers to escalate with partners and to target support when children are in unsuitable accommodation.

Where there are any concerns with a child's/family housing, we link in with the appropriate services or if necessary, escalate to Social Care to identify appropriate housing options and offer challenge where necessary.

### **Education, training and employment – *The proportion of children in suitable ETE at the end of their order***

We continue to have representation at the Hartlepool Inclusion Panel and Vulnerable Pupils Operational Group; both forums allow us to advocate on behalf of the child and raise our concerns and challenge where appropriate.

Continued support from the Education Psychologist is proving to be beneficial in terms of upskilling the YJS staff, offering appropriate challenge to schools and identifying areas of potential unmet learning needs which may result in an Individual Learning Plan for the child or consideration for an EHCP. There are a number of children who are not accessing a mainstream education placement, alternative provision or electively home educated.

We are making links to post-16 education providers to explore pathways to support and remove barriers for further learning and raise their aspirations.

It is our aspiration that we begin to work more closely with schools and raise the attendance percentage of children who are working with the YJS.

As a Strategic Partnership, Leadership Team and wider YJS team, we acknowledge the need for children to be in education, achieving and fulfilling their potential. We are now offering young victims access to support in school, ensuring schools are fully aware so they can support the student and understand that any change in attainment, attendance and behaviour may be linked to the offence. It's important schools also understand that any change in the student's behaviour may present in the future, not immediately after the offence.

There is research highlighting low educational outcomes for children who are open to the YJS, this isn't good enough and with the Government white paper, Every Child Achieving and Thriving and a willingness to improve outcomes, this is achievable and a priority for the YJS. As a Partnership, the issue of a lack of appropriate post-16 provision has been raised by the Local Authority NEET Reduction Lead, this was relayed to the Department of Further Education representative. The current Board Chair will also support the YJS in raising the profile of children open to the YJS and ultimately their aspirations.

**Special educational needs and disabilities/additional learning needs – The number of children with a formal plan in place as a proportion of children with identified SEND/ALN.**

We continue to commission an Education Psychologist (EP) for 0.5 days per week, the insight and knowledge of the EP is proving invaluable in regard to staff development, confidence and liaison with schools.

In addition to the continued EP support, the YJS commissioned SaLT has begun to develop pathways into the Local Authority SEN Teams to ensure any unmet learning needs are identified and met.

Referrals for a statutory assessment (EHCP) are to be completed within 20 weeks, the YJS may be the catalyst for an EHCP, we may not always see the outcome of the assessment but it is our hope that the child is supported within their education setting.

**Mental health care and emotional wellbeing – The number of children with a screened or identified need for a mental health (MH) or emotional wellbeing (EW) intervention at the end of their order as a proportion of number of children with an order ending in the period.**

The prevalence of poor mental health/emotional well-being needs is higher than in the general population. The YJS are fortunate that our health offer is good and includes, Specialist YJS Nurse, YJS commissioned SaLT, Education Psychologist and weekly input from FCAMHS (Senior Social Worker or Associate Nurse). The health offer allows for a wider understanding of what the child's health needs may be.

Through attendance at the Hartlepool inclusion Panel and ongoing relational work with schools, where an emotional well-being need is identified, we can also suggest referrals into Alliance for low level counselling. There is also an opportunity to refer children into the Tees Valley Getting Help service and iTHRIVE to support with emotional well-being concerns.

Waiting lists for CAMHS and specialist services is an issue and beyond the control of the YJS. We do have links to CAMHS and concerns can be escalated. We continue to encourage children to access support via the online platform, Kooth. Kooth have trained counsellors who children can engage with and receive appropriate advice and guidance.

**Substance misuse – The number of children with a screened or identified need for intervention or treatment to address substance misuse at the end of their order as a proportion of number of children with an order ending in the period.**

We continue to work with children who misuse substances. The use of illicit substances is an ongoing concern, we have referral pathways in place to support children into structured treatment with the local substance misuse provider, unfortunately this is consent based and children can be reluctant to access support.

The YJS employed a dedicated substance misuse worker on a 1 year fixed-term contract, the intention was they could be both reactive and responsive to children who may be misusing substances. However, the fixed term post has not been as successful as we had envisaged, this is under review and we are considering the most appropriate approach to ensure children continue to receive an offer which meets their needs and reduces their substance misuse.

The YJS health offer, specifically the Specialist Nurse will also work with children to address their substance misuse with advice, guidance and resources utilised from the substance misuse service. YJS Staff are also confident in delivering low-level substance misuse interventions and seeking advice/support where appropriate. We continue to have senior management representation from the Substance Misuse Service at the YJS Board.

**Out-of-Court Resolutions – The number of children who completed OoCR intervention programmes in the period as a proportion of the number of children with an OoCR intervention programme ending in the period.**

The Pre-Court Team continues to be the busiest YJS area with fluctuating levels of need. All children referred for consideration of an OoCR are discussed in the YJS OoCR Joint-Decision Making Panel, the views of the child, parent and victim are gathered and used to inform the decision at Panel. Increasingly, assessments are identifying high levels of unmet need, specifically linked to the child's speech, language, communication and health needs. There is recognition that the child's health needs are a contributing factor to the child's presenting behaviour.

Turnaround continues to be useful in supporting those children who may not be known to the YJS and they may have been released under investigation, bailed or identified as being involved in ASB and at risk of permanent exclusion from school. Submission of the Turnaround returns is showing only low numbers of children who have received Turnaround support who then go on to commit an offence.

**Links to wider services – The proportion of children connected to or supported by wider care and support services at end of order.**

In order to effectively support children and reduce re-offending and the seriousness/frequency of offending, it needs to be a collaborative approach and not a single-agency response. We are co-located with Children's Services which has allowed us to develop relationships that encourage and promote a mutual understanding of roles/responsibilities and having difficult conversations whilst keeping the child at the centre of what we are collectively trying to achieve.

**Management board attendance – The number of senior partners attending management boards (MBs) out of five**

We continue to have senior representation at the YJS Management Board. Where absence is noted, this will be addressed and raised with the relevant partner. Board attendance will be monitored on a quarterly basis.

**Serious violence – The number of proven serious violence offences as a rate per 100,000 of the 10-17 population (2021).**

We continue to work closely with our partners from Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV) and attended the Serious Youth Safety summit, with the aim of addressing “challenges in tackling Youth Violence and in adopting a needs based approach”.

Where a child is arrested/bailed for a serious violent offence, if the child is open to YJS we review the assessment/plan to ensure it is appropriate, meeting the child’s needs and managing any potential risk. Consideration will also be given as to whether an internal risk management meeting is held with partners. For any child who is bailed, released under investigation and not currently know or working with the YJS, we will offer support via Turnaround.

**Victims – The number of victims engaged with on Restorative Justice opportunities as a proportion of total number of victims who consent to be contacted.**

We have a statutory duty to provide support to victims, where consent has been given. If consent is not clear, the YJS Police Officer will make contact with the victim, discuss the options available and whether they would like to be involved in a restorative process. Once consent is explicit, the YJS Officer (RJ) will contact the victim and discuss their rights as per the Victims Code and what their wishes are. The approach taken is led by the victim and this is incorporated into the assessment, plan and to support the risk management process. HMIP’ revised inspection framework puts greater focus on the work of YJS’ and their victim work. We also have pathways into the Teesside Victim Care and Advice Service who can provide ongoing support for victims of crime.

**Local performance**

Despite being a relatively small service, we continue to support children with complex and high levels of need, often presenting with challenging and unpredictable behaviours. We recognise the importance of strengthening our performance, particularly in relation to reoffending rates, and are committed to working collaboratively across the partnership, including with strategic partners, to identify and implement effective solutions.

We have worked hard to establish relationships with our partners in Children’s Services including HOTH who undoubtedly form part of the team around and contribute to our performance. We try and be proactive to any emerging trends and themes which may be an influencing factor in the child’s behaviour, increase their potential risk or vulnerability.

**Risks and Issues**

The key risks and issues that have the capacity to have an adverse impact on the Youth Justice Service in the coming twelve months and potentially beyond are detailed below:

Risks	Potential Impact	Control Measures
<b>An increase in secure Remand Costs and children remanded to Local Authority Accommodation</b>	The unpredictable nature of children offending and being involved in behaviour that warrants a remand, including remand to Local Authority Accommodation brings additional budget pressures. The lack of locally approved Remand Carers and regulated placements locally	Where there is a reasonable risk of a child being remanded, the YJS need to demonstrate to the Judiciary that there are robust alternatives to remanding a child.  The YJS are a part of the 3 year MoJ regional remand pilot in partnership

	<p>leads to children being placed out of the local area, within unregulated placements at significant costs to the YJS.</p>	<p>with South Tees YJS, Stockton YJS and SHiFT. The pilot will enhance our current offer and work towards supporting children in the community and reduce the need for secure remands. Supporting children in the community as a partnership will also offer mentoring opportunities from SHiFT practitioners.</p> <p>In addition to the remand pilot, where there is a team around a child, this will form a part of the package of support to support the child and family in the community.</p>
<p><b>Multi-year grant confirmed from the YJB which included Turnaround. Whilst this is welcomed news, in real terms it is a cash freeze and does not allow for annual inflation/cost of living.</b></p>	<p>We had confirmation that the YJB Grant was multi-year funding which is welcomed and allows us to plan ahead. However, the grant does not allow for any uplift in salaries, inflation and cost of living, all of these issues are likely to affect the overall budget position as commissioned services are increasing their contract costs which is being absorbed by the YJS.</p>	<p>Commissioned services will be reviewed to ensure they are value for money and continue to provide much needed support for the children open to the YJS. Alternatives will be explored via the LA Commissioning Team to ensure service provision is both value for money and fit for purpose.</p> <p>Robust financial management and oversight from strategic board.</p>
<p><b>Continued concerns around Serious Youth Violence, Criminal Exploitation and County Lines</b></p>	<p>Children who are being exploited and involved in serious youth violence are at an increased risk of entering the youth justice system and risk being remanded or becoming a CIOC. These children may become unduly criminalised and may be at greater risk of disengaging from education and not achieving their potential.</p>	<p>At the time of the plan being produced, there are plans in place for the YJS to be co-located with the HOTH Team which will improve lines of communication and mapping of individual children who are linked to peers or adults seeking to exploit children.</p> <p>Continued partnership working with CURV and supporting their wider objective in '<i>tackling youth violence</i>'.</p> <p>We continue to work closely with our partners to identify children who may be at greatest risk of becoming involved in serious youth violence or at risk of exploitation.</p> <p>The HOTH Team now provide a quarterly report into the YJS Management Board which will highlight any areas of concern and emerging issues that require a proactive and proportionate response.</p>

<p><b>The rise and emergence of toxic male masculinity and misogynistic views being shared on social media and influencing the views of impressionable males.</b></p>	<p>There may be an increase in young males being arrested for sharing and displaying attitudes/behaviour that is largely influenced by content they have watched/being exposed to online.</p>	<p>Views of all children, especially males are captured as part of the assessment process. Where concerns are identified or shared, appropriate education and support is put in place to provide a balanced view to educate and support the child.</p>
<p><b>Issues</b></p>	<p><b>Potential Impact</b></p>	<p><b>Proposed Controls/actions</b></p>
<p><b>Like many local and national YOTs, we are still without a Probation Officer to support children transitioning from the YJS to Probation.</b></p>	<p>Without a successful transition to adult services, some older children (17.6+) may struggle to adapt to a service that is designed to work with adults. The lack of transition for this cohort of children may see increased rates of re-offending.</p>	<p>Whilst there is no designated Probation Officer, the YJS have an established relationship with the Probation Service to support those eligible for transition and to be successful.</p>
<p><b>More onus placed on YJS nationally by YJB, HMIP etc. via research, thematic and HMIP inspections to ensure certain services are available for children open to the YJS i.e. Speech and Language, TICP.</b></p>	<p>Much more pressure being placed on YJS to ensure a more bespoke package of support is available for children entering the service i.e. SALT, Trauma Informed Care Pathways etc and YJS not being adequately funded, supported for these specialist services.</p>	<p>Research has identified that 85% + children entering the youth justice system have a speech, language and/or communication need. Services need to be supported and funded to provide this offer to all children. Schools/academies are best placed to identify the early signs of communication difficulties, although this can often be perceived as 'difficult behaviour' and dealt with via the school's internal behaviour system as opposed to what may be influencing the child's behaviour.</p> <p>Hartlepool is a National Pilot area for Early Language Support in Schools (ELSEC). This is a different approach which may help shape future models, policies and service delivery.</p>

## **4. Plan for the coming year 2026/27**

### **Child First**

In line with the Youth Justice Boards Strategic Plan 2024-27 Hartlepool Youth Justice Service (YJS) is committed to:

- Prioritise the best interests of children and recognise their individual needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.
- Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social 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.

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

As a service, we are committed to ensuring children are central to the decisions made by the YJS to support and sustain positive outcomes. Children referred in for consideration of an Out of Court Resolution will be spoken to in order to gather their thoughts, wishes and feelings on working with the YJS and identify any barriers and strengths.

Continuation of the Turnaround programme has allowed the YJS to intervene at a much earlier stage and offer support to children identified as being at risk of entering the youth justice system. The funding has also allowed the YJS to partially commission specialist services which include an Education Psychologist and a Speech and Language Therapist.

As a service we continue to advocate on behalf of the children and offer appropriate challenge to partners who focus solely on the child's behaviour and not what may be driving/influencing their behaviour and response to situations.

The YJS have worked hard to establish their '*health offer*' which is supporting the wider team to understand how a child's health needs may be influencing their behaviour. The health team will also support the team around and ensure they are aware of the child's individual needs and in respect of education, reasonable adjustments may be needed to meet the child's needs in school/alternative education or further education.

### **Voice of the child**

We continue to reflect on how we can capture the child's voice in both the assessment, review and at the point of closure. The child's voice is essential to ensure the service meets their needs and we understand their strengths and any potential barriers to engagement. It's important that the views of the child are considered and reflected on at all points during the child's involvement with the YJS. Children may need support in recognising their achievements and strengths, sadly many children are unable to tell us what they are good at and don't celebrate their achievements.

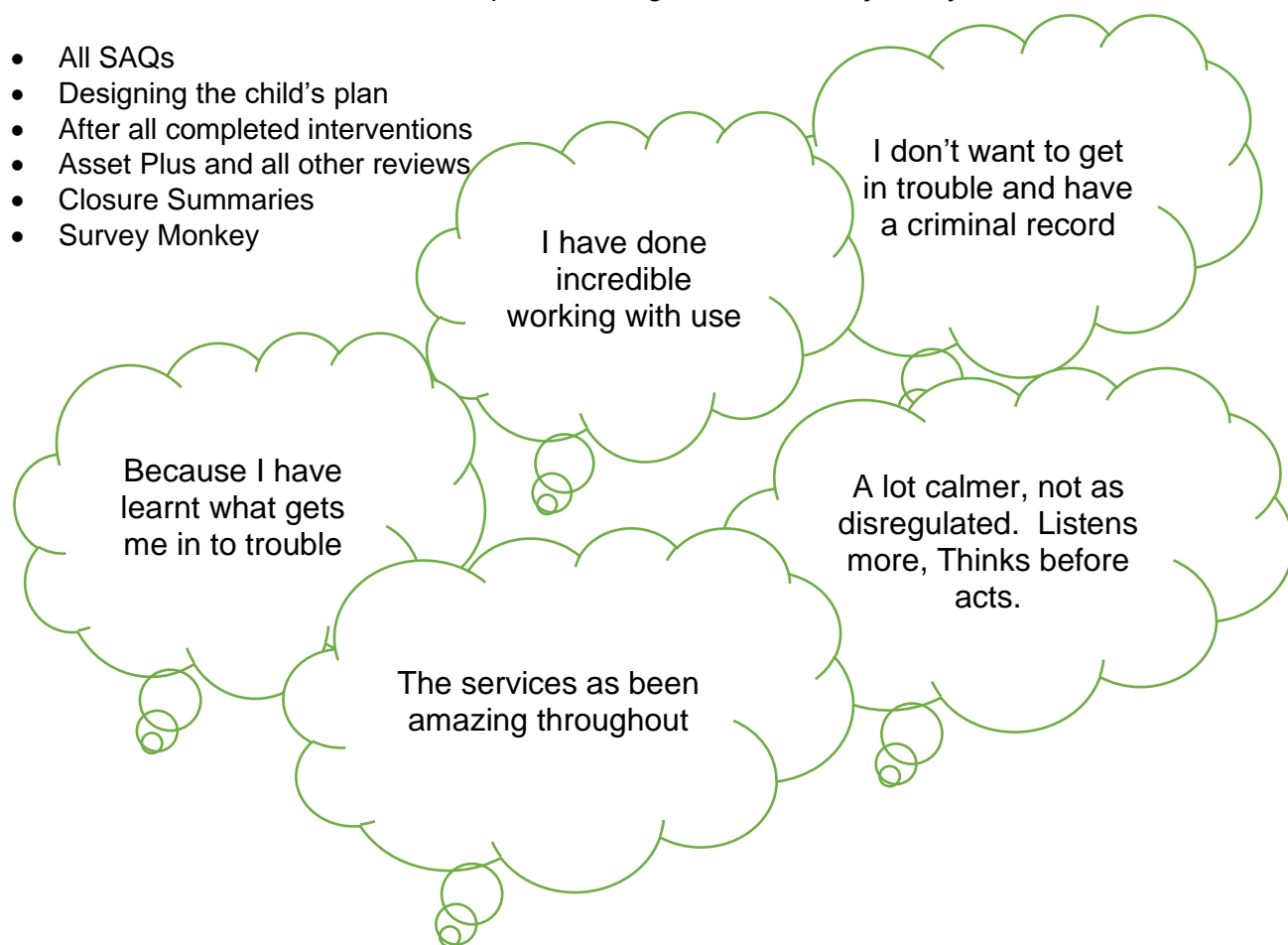
At the time of writing the plan we are in talks with 'Mind of My Own', a software provider who have developed an application that aligns with AssetPlus and is designed to engage children open to YOTs. The app comes with a cost that needs to be factored in, in relation to its engagement and feedback from children worth the investment.

The YJS have a variety of methods to capture the child's voice, this includes the AssetPlus SAQ which we have adapted and made SLCN friendly; we also designed our own SAQ to be used for the Prevention and Diversion assessment.

Relational work is encouraged by the YJS Management Team, it's widely accepted that children need to build trusting relationships with adults to be able to share their life experiences, what worked, what didn't and what strengths can be built upon.

We ensure that the child's voice is captured throughout the child's journey with the service:

- All SAQs
- Designing the child's plan
- After all completed interventions
- Asset Plus and all other reviews
- Closure Summaries
- Survey Monkey



Feedback is consolidated from the various sources and analysed via the monthly leadership meetings and quarterly service management boards. Any potential areas for concern or good practice are addressed appropriately.

The YJS will always advocate on behalf of the child at all meetings attended and where required their voice and that of parents/carers will be gathered in advance. There has been a marked increase and improvement in this process which has been particularly evident within education meetings. More in depth discussions are now taking place with education providers on a regular basis especially around exclusions/suspensions, reduced timetables and alternative provision.

**Example** – The YJS Educational Psychologist recently completed some work with a young person, where over the course of several sessions exploring her views on school, she reported some difficulties with reading and words “moving about”. Rather than dismissing this, we explored the conditions where this happened for her and how this affected on her ability to access texts. Feeding this back to school, we were able to do some further work with her to identify changes to text to increase its readability, which school can adopt. Feeding this information back

to mum through the Ed Psych and YJS Officer led to mum arranging an optician's appointment, where further assessment work is ongoing relating to a possible diagnosis of an eye condition.

This piece of work highlights the importance of drawing on successful positive relationships built with the young person (and staff) to feel comfortable sharing their difficulties, and the importance of sharing their voice with those around them to identify effective and timely support.

## **Resources and Services**

The Youth Justice Service budget is resourced by a combination of Local Authority funding, Youth Justice Board grant and partner contributions.

\*\*2026/27 budget costs and contributions are attached at Appendix 2

We received confirmation of our multi-year core grant and Turnaround funding on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026. The early notification and addition of guaranteed multi-year funding was welcomed, and it does allow the YJS to plan ahead, unfortunately the grants are a real term cash freeze.

Despite the welcome news of multi-year funding from the YJB, the YJS were notified on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2026, of a 50% reduction in the grant funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the grant had enabled the YJS to fund a full-time worker to contribute to the delivery of the Triage programme. Triage has been successfully diverting children away from the youth justice system since 2009 and significantly contributed to the reduction in First Time Entrants. The decision to make such a significant cut was done so without consultation with the YJS. The reduction in funding has been challenged; we are awaiting an opportunity to meet with the OPCC and discuss the dis-investment in preventing children from entering the youth justice system. This funding cut also contributes to wider budget pressures.

Like many local and national YOTs, we continue to be without a seconded Probation Officer, we receive an annual cash contribution of £5,000, whilst the funding does contribute to wider service delivery, the lack of a Probation Officer and their experience, knowledge and support in transitioning to adult services, is a gap in service delivery.

The incremental increase in the commissioning arrangement for SaLT provision will bring about budget pressures in the coming years, this will be compounded by the real term cash freeze in regard to the core grant. It is likely that the YJS will need to explore what options are available, the SaLT provision is valuable in identifying areas of unmet need that will likely support the child in other areas of their life including education. Any areas of need linked to a child's language, communication, retention and processing will also support the child's family and the team around to effectively work with and support them, leading to improved outcomes.

Cleveland Police continue to provide a full-time seconded Police Officer.

We use our grant, partner contributions and available resources to deliver the strategic priorities highlighted in Vision & Strategy section and via the services identified below to all children. In the coming years (2026 – 2029), we aim to improve and maintain our performance across all areas of delivery ensuring a child first ethos is embedded throughout.

- Early/Targeted Intervention via Turnaround
- Prevention & Diversion
- OOCR

- All Post Court orders

### **Board development**

Board members have had periodic updates of the new HMIP Inspection framework during the quarterly YJS Board meetings. Board members are aware of the changes and the revised inspection standards, specifically the new standard to the focus on victims.

It has been proposed that we broaden Board membership to include representation from the voluntary and community sector and further education providers. It is hoped that new members will support and help deliver on the strategic priorities, including the reduction of re-offending plus improving educational outcomes. YJS staff who are responsible for the delivery of direct work with children and victims presented to Board members so they understood how the strategic priorities are being delivered by the team and some of the challenges faced.

	<b>Board Development</b>	<b>Action Taken/Planned</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Target Date/Completed</b>
<b>1</b>	Board induction for all new members	Board induction to be undertaken with all new board members, utilising the template shared by the AYM	YJS Manager/Board chair	Ongoing throughout the year and as and when there is a new Board member.
<b>2</b>	Review the new HMIP framework, ensuring board members understand their role.	Board members will be given the revised HMIP framework documentation and an overview provided at a Board meeting.	YJS Manager/Board chair	YJS Manager/Board chair

### **Workforce Development**

An annual YJS training needs analysis is completed with the staff and forwarded to the local authority Workforce Development team. The YJS is constantly identifying creative and bespoke training for the staff in line with identified needs of the children we work with.

Staff also attend all relevant local authority training as and when required.

	<b>Workforce Development</b>	<b>Action Taken/Planned</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Target Date/Completed</b>
<b>1.</b>	Internal staff training delivered by the YJS Health team. Health team are responsive to any local/national themes that may influence the children open to the YJS.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Internal training programme being updated.</li> <li>2. All YJS staff including volunteers to be invited and attendance prioritised.</li> </ol>	YJS Manager YJS Health team	Training programme being developed. Ongoing review and responsive to local/emerging themes.

2.	Training specific to children's core needs and how this affects the behaviour displayed by children referred in.	1. YJS Manager has met with a Consultant Psychologist from Forensic CAMHS to discuss and understand how a children's core needs not being met will affect both their behaviour and relationships.	YJS Manager	Ongoing and Forensic CAMHS are looking at their current framework and training package. Once framework is finalised, YJS Leadership Team to complete audits of all children (2025/26 cohort) who re-offended and whether their core needs were being met.
3.	YJS to ensure all case managing staff are AIM assessment and intervention trained.	1. AIM training to be sourced and secured for case management staff.	YJS Manager/ YJS Business Support YJS staff	1. AIM training identified, booked and relevant staff to attend.
4.	Implementation of the revised knife crime guidance	YJS Leadership Team have met with Cleveland Police to discuss the new guidance and how this can be embedded.	YJS Leadership Team. Seconded YJS Police Officer	Referral process agreed with Cleveland Police and reviews scheduled to discuss any issues with the new process.
5.	Consideration will be given to any changes in policy/ practice which may come about following the youth justice reforms.	1. Review of any policy/legislative changes that may be published by the YJB/MoJ and how these may influence and change local practice.	YJS Leadership Team	Ongoing review of how youth justice services function and perform.

### **Knife possession guidance**

The revised knife crime guidance places greater emphasis on a timely response to children who are arrested for possession of a knife.

Cleveland Police, along with the three local Youth Justice Services have met to discuss and implement the pathway to ensure we are notified within the timescale as directed by the MoJ ensuring a timely response and children are supported. Consideration will be given to the most appropriate outcome whether it is a Deferred Prosecution, Youth Caution or a Youth Conditional Caution.

The YJS are committed to reviewing all eligible referrals, applying the child first principles and offering the most appropriate outcome based on the information we have at the time of the panel being held. All decisions relating to outcomes that do not follow the revised guidance are recorded and have management oversight to support the decision making. Where an agreement on the outcome cannot be reached, the matter will be escalated to the Police and within the YJS.

### **Evidence-based practice and innovation**

The purpose of evidence-based practice and innovation is to promote effective practices, which achieve positive outcomes for children. This includes systems, ways of working or specific

interventions, which are based on the best available research, are child focused and developmentally informed.

Alongside this the YJS are constantly looking at creative ways to improve delivery and evidence effectiveness, all commissioned services deliver evidence-based practice i.e. SLCN, TICP.

The following are examples of practice which identify innovation and evidence-based practice:

### **Evidence-based**

It is widely known that children working within the youth justice system are more likely to have poorer educational outcomes when compared to peers in the general population<sup>2</sup>. As a service we recognise that this simply isn't good enough and are working hard to bridge the gap and improve outcomes so children are able to reach their potential and lead lives free of involvement in crime.

In order to do this, the YJS are working closely with Hartlepool Virtual School to support those children open to the YJS and work with the local secondary and further education providers. We are advocating on behalf of children and victims to ensure there is appropriate support in school, and their needs are being met. We are also working with AQA Unit Award Scheme (UAS), registration which allows the YJS to have access to 20,000+ programmes that are a recognised accreditation. The UAS allows the YJS to evidence the work completed by children whilst open to the YJS which can evidence their motivation and supporting the child to build a portfolio of nationally recognised certificates that show willingness to learn. The UAS is especially important for children who may leave school/college without any formal qualifications. It is our hope that by registering with the AQA we can increase confidence in children and show that they are both capable and they can succeed within an education setting.

### **Evidence-based**

We continue to commission the time of an Education Psychologist (EP). The arrangement continues to have a positive impact on the team and most importantly, the children we support. The EP also forms a part of the internal YJS health offer and gives an insight into identifying any issues linked to learning and cognition. The EP is instrumental in working with/challenging schools to ensure there is an appropriate package of support that meets the needs of the child. The EP may also be the catalyst for an application of a statutory assessment in the form of an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The EHCP is the legal document that may support children up to the age of 25 whose needs cannot be met through the standard education system. Sadly, too many children's learning needs are masked by behaviour and the response from schools can be to follow the school's behaviour policies as opposed to understanding the factors driving or influencing the child's behaviour.

### **Innovation**

As technology continues to advance at pace, it is essential that we keep abreast of these developments to ensure interventions are delivered in ways that are both engaging and educational, and that effectively meet the evolving needs of children and young people.

The use of technology needs to be embraced and explored to understand how we can incorporate technology to deliver targeted interventions. An example of this would be to consider and invest in the use of virtual reality headsets which will allow a safe space to 'walk through' scenarios and select different outcomes. Whilst this is innovative, we also have to consider the child's learning needs and whether the scenarios are appropriate and learning is taken and retained. Any use of virtual headsets/technology needs to be evaluated and shows positive outcomes.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://hmiprobation.justiceinspectores.gov.uk/our-research/evidence-base-youth-justice/specific-areas-of-delivery/education-training-and-employment-vi/>

## **Evaluation**

Consideration is being given to investing in an application (Mind of my Own) that has been designed to capture the voice of children who are working with YOTs. It's important we understand what children genuinely think of the service they are receiving and what can be done differently to improve outcomes and reduce the risk of further offending.

## **Innovation**

The emergence of toxic masculinity is a concern, especially amongst young boys who are impressionable and spend an increasing amount of time online.

The publication of the 2025 VAWG strategy is clear in its ambition "*Ending violence against women and girls is a moral mission for our whole society and it will require a whole of society effort to achieve it. Our mission prioritises prevention, focused on addressing root causes*". We need to have an appropriate and timely response to those boys who are exhibiting behaviour which may typify their view of men and societal norms. The persuasive effect of social media influencers/personalities on young boys cannot be overlooked. We need to be able to respond and tackle misogynistic views through education and promoting healthy relationships. Before we respond, we need to understand their own lived experience and what is influencing their behaviour/views. This is undoubtedly a challenge with many issues to consider including the perception some young boys have, such as "*the need to be strong*" and how do we respond appropriately and address this alongside many other issues. Is it a parenting issue and is there a need to understand and respond to the views of male family members?

## **5. Priorities**

### **Standards for children in the justice system**

Alongside the Strategic Priorities of the service, we need to ensure that we deliver all services in line with the Standards for Children in the justice system (2019).

These standards being:

N1 OOCR

N2 At Court

N3 In the Community

N4 In Secure Settings

N5 On Transition and resettlement

In 2025/26 there were no requirements for the YJS to undertake any mandatory self-assessments linked to the Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System. Despite this, we continue to monitor and self-evaluate our performance, ensuring children are receiving the support they both need and deserve. There are also appropriate policies in place ensuring any areas of need are met. We also undertake a monthly data cleanse and check against the KPIs both of which offer additional assurances that performance is maintained.

In addition to the data cleanse and KPI checks, the YJS Management Team also undertake self-audits to have a greater insight into performance and use the findings of published HMIP reports to inform practice.

Quarterly Management Boards also allow an opportunity to reflect on previous performance, specifically re-offending and FTE and what are the trends, themes and what, if anything, could we have done differently. This allows us to reflect on practice but also areas where partners may be held to account and support the service in achieving its objectives.

Through continuous self-evaluation and review of working practices, we are confident of

- Quality assurance processes are well established and are used as a means of developing good practice, constructive feedback and wider team learning;
- Court work – Hartlepool YJS reviewed the current Court arrangements which is provided by South tees Youth Justice Service. The commissioning arrangement allows consistency of a dedicated Court Officer who has an in-depth knowledge of legislation, sentencing powers and established relationships with the judiciary and legal representatives;
- All children appearing at Court for the first time are given the opportunity to meet with the YJS and talk through the process, visit Court and ask the Court Officer what will happen on the day. It is hoped this will alleviate any concerns/worries the child or parent/carers may have;
- We have continued to work in partnership with the Virtual School, this arrangement allows ongoing and professional challenge to schools/education when there are issues raised
- All OoCR are discussed in panel to determine the most appropriate outcome with child first principles being central to our decision making;
- We are confident that the revised knife crime guidance will be successfully implemented;
- Further review of our approach to the defensible and successful management of risk posed by children open to the YJS;

### **Service development**

This Improvement Plan is presented quarterly within Management Board reports produced by the YJS Manager and discussed/monitored to ensure that relevant senior strategic oversight is in place and direction of travel remains positive. Service development also includes views of the wider staff team following an online consultation.

	<b>Service Improvement</b>	<b>Action taken/Planned</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Target Date/Completed</b>
1.	Findings and review of published HMIP/YJB reports	Ongoing review of HMIP/YJB reports to support delivery of YJS specific interventions. Practice deemed effective can be adapted and replicated to meet local need.	YJS Management Team	Ongoing with new published reports. Periodic reviews of new reports which may be in line with the recent reforms.
2.	Strengthen the early identification and response to children's health needs including early and timely access to mental health support.	Ongoing review of the YJS health offer, bespoke training that is responsive to the individual needs of the YJS cohort of children.	Oversight from the YJS Management Team. Health Team to lead and deliver specialist training	Ongoing and where possible the YJS will be proactive to understand the individual health needs and how these may affect children and their behaviour.
3.	Support children referred into the YJS to maintain their place in school/education.	Review of the education white paper and how this supports children open to and working with the YJS	YJS Manager YJS Board	Ongoing and aligned with local implementation.
4.	Support all school aged children to increase their attendance percentage by an achievable figure i.e. 5%. It is the hope the increase will	1. Review the education White Paper and how this can support children open to the YJS 2. Continued representation at the Hartlepool Inclusion Panel to work with and support	YJS Management Team Local Authority Virtual School	With immediate effect to enable and support change.

	improve a child's educational outcomes and reduce the risk of exclusion.	schools to build positive working relationships 3.Attendance at the Vulnerable Pupils Operational Group 4.All children open to the YJS will have an education meeting with their respective school and the LA Vulnerable Students Officer. The plan will likely stay with the child beyond the involvement of the YJS. 5.Victims will receive a similar level of support offered by the YJS RJ Officer who will liaise with the Vulnerable Students Lead to collaborate with schools and ensure they understand why there may be a change in attendance, attainment and behaviour.		
5.	Staff training/awareness of how a child's speech, language and communication needs can underpin risk, engagement and compliance. Inclusion of SLCN and impact on a child' education, planning and provision to support a reduction in exclusions and non-attendance.	1.YJS SaLT to consider bite sized training on how to communicate consequences to a child and SLCN linked to non-compliance. 2. Shift in a child's SLCN being seen as a health issue and moving towards seeing a child's SLCN as a risk reduction strategy, predictor of breach/non-compliance, re-offending and an escalation of behaviour	YJS SaLT, YJS Health team	YJS SaLT ongoing with review of health offer, specifically linked to SLCN.  Delivery of planned interventions aligns with internal health training.
6.	Having an appropriate response to address and respond appropriately to children who may have misogynistic views	1.Review of published reports linked to VAWG. 2. Review of the Youth Endowment Fund and an evidence led approach to interventions with young boys who exhibit misogynistic attitudes/views	YJS Management Team	Exploration of interventions that address the child's behaviour have begun.
7.	Support for children who have been exposed to extremist content online.	1. Explore what is available locally and online (YJB Resource Hub/Youth Endowment Fund)	YJS Management Team	Ongoing and to be completed by October 2026
8.	Consider the use of virtual reality interventions as a way of delivering interventions.	1.YJS Manager to explore options including costings and the evidence base.	YJS Manager	July 2026, if it's a viable option, consider costings, procurement and Board agreement
9.	Increase the number of children who are working with the	1.Following consultation and agreement from the Board, we recruited a dedicated YJS	YJS Management Team	The fixed term contract will come to an end in October 2026.

	substance misuse service.	Substance Misuse Worker in October 2025 on a fixed 1 year contract. Despite best efforts to integrate and promote the support available, we have not seen the uptake expected.		There is a need to increase the number of children accessing and receiving support for their substance misuse. Pathways for support are in place, we need to understand the barriers for children accessing the service
10.	Monitoring of children who have been arrested, bailed or RUI for sexual offences	1.Monthly monitoring by the YJS Seconded Police Officer and review of children who remain on bail/under investigation.	YJS Management Team Seconded YJS Police Officer	Ongoing

## 6. National Priority Areas

The service continues to work towards achieving and improving their delivery and outcomes of the identified Strategic Priorities highlighted earlier in this plan, which includes the National Priorities below:

### **Children from groups, which are over-represented**

The number of children with an identified Special Educational Need including those requiring additional support without a formal diagnosis is increasing, the overall cohort of children with an identified SEN inevitably fluctuates. The increase in numbers may be attributed to the early identification of a possible SEN by the YJS Staff and their increased awareness of learning needs plus support of the commissioned Services, specifically Speech and Language Therapist, Specialist Educational Psychologist and Specialist YJS Nurse.

The White paper, 'Cutting Youth Crime. Changing Young Lives' is explicit in that children from ethnic minority backgrounds are disproportionately represented at almost every stage of the youth justice system. It's also widely acknowledged that it is not just black and mixed heritage boys, children from Roma, Gypsy and traveller backgrounds are also over-represented.

Locally, we have not seen an increase in the number of children from ethnic or minority backgrounds. Despite the low numbers being referred in, we are conscious of how these children and families may feel they have been treated. When working with a child/family from an ethnic minority background we are confident that we are culturally sensitive and if necessary, will seek out additional expert advice and support.

Disproportionality is covered within the YJS managers' report at quarterly management board meetings. The following information was presented and discussed at the 2025/26 QTR4 board meeting held in April 2026

### **Children in our Care (CIOC)**

- In Q4 there were 7 children who were open to the YJS, 3 on statutory Court Orders, and 4 working with Pre Court.
  - All 7 children were CIOC before becoming open to the service.
  - As at the 10/11/2025 there were **228** CIOC 10-17 year olds – information received from Data Team
  - 3.07% of the overall CIOC cohort were open to the YJS at the time of the plan being
- 39

produced, this represents a slight reduction when compared to 2025/26 when we were supporting 4% of the CIOC.

It is encouraging that the YJS reforms aim to “*reduce the criminalisation of children in care and care leavers in England*” and acknowledge that behaviour displayed by children in home may be dealt with differently for children in care and lead to involvement from Police and more formal youth justice processes.

As a partnership we continue to work closely with Cleveland Police, CPS and the Judiciary to ensure all CIOC appearing before the Courts have had the 10-point checklist completed to make sure decisions made are balanced, proportionate and the child is not being unduly criminalised and consideration given to alternative disposals.

Co-location with Children’s Services affords us the opportunity to discuss children who have been arrested or there are concerns that the child may be arrested if their behaviour within the home (Foster Care/Children’s Home) continues and what support (Choices/Turnaround) is available to both manage the behaviour and prevent the child from having any contact with the Police and more formal youth justice services.

## **Policing**

We continue to have an excellent relationship with Cleveland Police, both at an operational and strategic level. The revised guidance on knife crime offences was welcomed by Cleveland Police who actively engaged with the YJS and neighbouring YJS’ to look at how a process can be embedded to ensure a swift and timely response to children who have been arrested for a knife crime offence.

We have seen improved lines of communication with Police regarding children who are or suspected of being exploited by adults. Police have taken a pragmatic approach and actively seeking the views of the YJS and the direct work undertaken with the children.

Despite internal movement within the Police being commonplace, we are fortunate to have retained our seconded Police Officer who is an integral member of the team and a vital link between the YJS and Cleveland Police. The seconded Police Officer has significant experience within Hartlepool, knowledge of the children, families and more importantly, has embraced the Child First ethos and approach to working with children. Where a child is being considered for diversion, the YJS Police Officer will liaise directly with the responsible Officer and offer appropriate advice and guidance regarding their own processes.

Attendance at the YJS Strategic Management Board is well attended with a Chief Inspector attending, their input and contribution is welcomed and willingness to work with and be supported by the YJS is also apparent. The YJS have been approached by Cleveland Police to explore possibilities of delivering briefings to Police Officers on restorative approaches and working in a restorative manner.

## **Prevention**

As a service we continue to see the value in offering prevention support as a means of intervening with children at a much earlier stage and if possible, diverting away from a more formal criminal justice response. However, we do so with no additional funding and incorporate the support into our current approach of working with children and families. Ultimately, it is seen as the ‘right thing to do’ and forms a part of our wider response in being ‘Child First’.

To do this, our targeted prevention programme is only available to children who are actively open and working with Children’s Services, either as part of the universal offer (Early Help) or on a more formal/statutory basis. With agreement we will work alongside the Family Support

Worker/Social Worker and with a specific focus to support around behaviour and reduce the risk of the child being arrested. This is available to all children aged 10-17, children are discussed on an individual basis and an appropriate plan agreed and put in place. If a child does not meet the criteria or it's felt there are too many professionals actively involved and working with the child/family, the YJS are able to offer advice and guidance regarding appropriate interventions.

Hartlepool was fortunate to be selected as a pilot area for the delivery of the 'Young Futures Prevention Partnership Panels', funded via the Violent Reduction Unit within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The panels have been embedded into the Hartlepool Inclusion Panel, it was felt that the right partners attended this meeting and it had well established referral pathways. Attendance at the partnership has allowed a joined-up approach when working with schools and identifying children who may need additional support and what is available. The Prevention Partnership adds an additional layer of existing support for vulnerable children within Hartlepool.

As with all other YJSs nationally, Hartlepool welcomed the news that funding for Turnaround had been extended and guaranteed for a further 3 years. The funding has allowed retention of staff and more importantly, continued support for those children deemed at risk of offending. Early indications from national data published by the Ministry of Justice indicate Turnaround is having a positive impact on the children who have been supported.

As the programme has developed, our confidence in the offer and support to eligible children and families has grown. We, along with other YOTs, and are now in a position where children who may need additional support are able to access this without coming to the attention of the Police.

## **Diversion**

Our diversionary offer continues to be the busiest service area within Hartlepool YJS. As with many YJS', both locally and nationally, pre-court will likely be the busiest regarding referrals with services continuing to demonstrate the need to divert children away from more formal criminal justice processes.

Referrals for consideration of diversion are made directly by the Police or Courts, each referral is discussed within the YJS Out of Court Resolution Joint Decision-Making Panel, chaired by a YJS Manager with attendance from the YJS Police Officer, YJS Victim Lead and colleagues from Social Care/Early Help if the family are known and open. Prior to the panel being held, the allocated worker will contact the child, family and gather their views on working with the YJS and try to identify any strengths, barriers and considerations for any identified victims. The victim will also be contacted independently to discuss how they have been affected, would they like to be involved in a restorative process and what options are available.

The Chair of the panel will consider any aggravating/mitigating factors that may have been a prominent factor in the child's behaviour, when these have been applied it supports the decision making and a review of the gravity score.

The revised knife crime guidance will also enable the YJS to consider and discuss eligible children and whilst applying the child first principles, we can explore what is an appropriate outcome, these being a deferred prosecution or youth conditional caution. As a service, we are confident that regardless of the outcome, the plan will be robust and proportionate to the child's needs and behaviour.

At the time of the plan being produced, I'm pleased to note that the OPCC have re-introduced the Out of Court Scrutiny Panels, offering independent oversight and scrutiny in the issuing of OoCR, ensuring that disposals issued follow the principles and they are not unduly used. Once implemented, any feedback, both positive and negative will be used to inform future delivery.

In 2025/26 Hartlepool YJS worked with **82 children**,

Triage (66),  
Triage 2 (2),  
Restorative Intervention (9),  
Youth Caution (3)  
Youth Conditional Caution (2)

## **Education**

Education for all children open to the YJS continues to be a service priority. Acknowledgement is given to the low educational outcomes for children open to YJS', and as a Service, this is not good enough. It is the hope that the new education reforms will enable the YJS to support children open to the service reach their potential and succeed.

There is greater focus on a national level for supporting children into further education and reducing the NEET figures. As a YJS, we are acutely aware of the need for children to be in school and having an opportunity to achieve similar outcomes like that of their peers. Being open to the YJS should not be a barrier to education and learning opportunities. This is a fundamental feature in the ongoing commissioning of the Educational Psychologist and SaLT, both of which are supporting the YJS to identify unmet learning needs, pathways to support and being a catalyst for change.

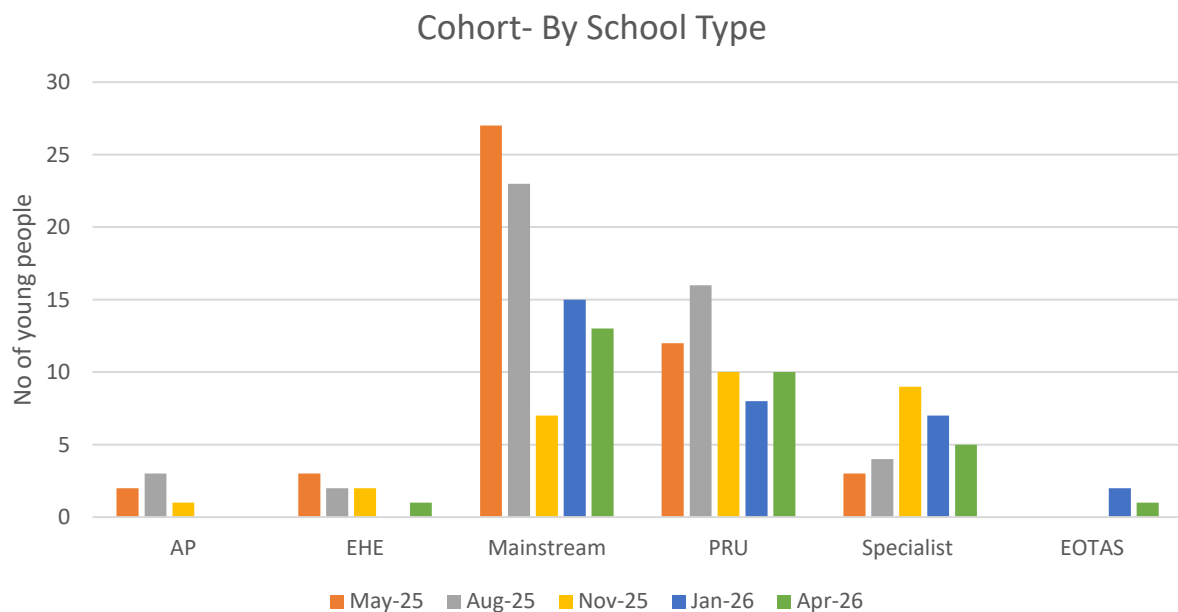
We acknowledge the difficulties faced by education providers, both statutory school age and post-16 providers, however, we are working hard to build relationships with all schools and further educational establishments to identify barriers to learning and how can we support them to ensure the student is successful.

We are fortunate that the new Chair of the YJS Strategic Management Board is also the Executive Head Teacher for Vulnerable Students, with YJS children falling under this remit. The appointment not only brings a wealth of experience within education, but also a strategic leader who understands the complexities and difficulties faced by children open to the YJS.

Education is now a standing item at the YJS Management Board meetings, attended by the Virtual School Head Teacher, data is provided on a quarterly basis. Ongoing discussions highlight the need for a collaborative approach to improving outcomes for children. Data provided illustrates some of the challenges faced, challenges which cannot be overcome whilst working in isolation.

Data below was taken from the 2026 QTR 4 Management Board

	SEN	% School Aged cohort	% Post 16 cohort	TOTAL
Jan-26	EHCP	31.3	15.8	25.5
	SEN Support	21.9	47.4	31.4
Apr-26	EHCP	30	27.3	29.3
	SEN Support	30	45.5	34.1



Academic Attainment	% of cohort (Nov 2025)	% of cohort (Jan 2026)	% of cohort (Apr 2026)
Significantly below age related expectations	79.3	84.4	75.9
Below age related expectations	13.8	9.4	20.7
At age related expectations	0	6.2	3.5
Significantly above age-related expectations	0	0	0

In the 2025/26 data provided by the Virtual School Head Teacher shows there were far too many children with school attendance less than 90%. It is widely known that poor school attendance is an indicator of poor school outcomes. It will be a strategic priority in the coming years that we work with schools/post-16 education providers and look to improve school attendance.

The above table, provided by the Virtual School is a stark reminder of why there is a need to focus on the attainment needs of children open to the YJS and accessing school. The YJS are in a fortunate position where we can work with schools, children and families and signpost to

relevant services, whilst being inquisitive about the presenting behaviour and what may be influencing the child's behaviour when in school or their education setting and look to understand what the triggers for a child's behaviour are.

Upon receipt of a referral Children referred into the YJS will continue to have an individual education meeting, led by the Education Officer- Vulnerable Pupils, held with their respective school and areas of need/strength identified.

### **Restorative approaches and victims**

We continue to place an emphasis on supporting victim of youth crime, ensuring their voice is heard and their needs/wants are listened to. Data shows we are seeing an increase in the number of referrals for children being diverted away from a more formal criminal justice process, however, we continue to offer the same level of support to all victims, regardless of the offence.

The revised HMIP framework and the victim standard is welcomed by the YJS, placing greater focus on the work undertaken by the YJS and the opportunity for victims to be giving an appropriate level of support. The framework will ensure we are working towards giving victims the best possible service, both operationally and at a strategic level. YJS Board members have also had a presentation on our victim offer and how the work we do, aligns with the HMIP framework.

Review of our support to victims identified an area of unmet need, this being education and how victims may be affected in both the short and long-term and education providers (Schools/Colleges) noting the change in attitude, attendance, attainment and behaviour and using the behaviour policy as a response without knowing how the student has been affected. With support from the Virtual School, it was agreed that with consent from the victim, we would meet with school, outline the circumstances of the offence and how their student has been affected and what approach to take.

Early indications have shown a positive response from schools who have been able to listen to the victims wishes and make positive reasonable adjustments. We also ensure that education providers understand that change in a student's behaviour may not be immediate and to be curious as to whether any change in the following weeks/months may be linked to the impact.

The YJS Leadership Team are exploring support and links to Primary Schools to understand their approach and response to dealing with school-based issues with a view of preventing an escalation in the child's behaviour and subsequently the school's response. At the time of writing the plan, this approach is very much in its infancy and initial talks have been had with one Primary School which is part of an Academy. It's acknowledged the response from schools is not the responsibility of the YJS, however, it aligns with being 'Child First' and trying to intervene at the earliest opportunity and preventing offending.

2025/26	QTR 1	QTR 2	QTR 3	QTR 4	Total
Male	8	16	7	5	36
Female	16	8	11	9	44
Sex not specified	1	0	0	2	3
Corporate	0	4	5	7	16
<b>Total</b>					<b>99</b>
Consent provided	10	11	7	7	35
Consent declined	3	0	6	6	15
No response	12	17	10	10	49

The above table was taken from the QTR4 2025/26 YJS Management Board, showing an increase in the number of victims, sadly, just under 50% of victims, did not respond and despite giving initial consent, a further 15% of victims later declined to work with the YJS RJ Lead. We need to understand the barriers to being involved in a restorative process, is initial consent given at a time when the victim does not fully appreciate or understand what their choices and rights are or is it simply too early to consider a restorative approach. Despite this, under the Victims Code, they have the right to opt-in/out at any given time which can cause some difficulties if a child is open on an OoCR and has completed the planned work.

We are encouraging all staff to have restorative conversations from their first contact with the child and family, its important restorative practice is seen as an intervention that supports daily practice and not an 'add-on' which is completed towards the end of the child's time with the service.

There are many options available to victims, reparation being one of them. The belief of the YJS is that reparation should be meaningful and allows the child an opportunity to make a positive difference for their community and if appropriate, the victim. Below are examples of reparation being undertaken by children open to the YJS.

Mediation is also a consideration, but this is specific to the victim, child and do both parties actively consent to participating in a meaningful and restorative process. Mediation takes time and both the child and victim are kept central to any decisions made. Only when both parties agree and it is supported by YJS staff, we would look to bring the child and victim together. Rushing into a mediation process is likely to cause further distress and possible harm.



*"The children love working in the mud kitchen and it is the perfect height and size for the children. All staff have commented on how great the items are and I personally am very grateful for all the items we have received because they have been purpose built with our children in mind. It is truly fantastic!"*

Our reparation activities are varied with seasonal projects planned across the year. We have worked hard to establish relationships with local voluntary groups and organisations to have maximum impact, broadening children's understanding of groups and how they benefit the community. This also raises the profile of the children working with the YJS, showcasing the excellent work they complete, as highlighted in the feedback received from a Mud Kitchen which was built and donated for younger children to use.

## **Serious Violence and Exploitation**

The YJS were invited to participate in the Cleveland Youth Safety Summit, 'Working together to address the causes of serious violence' organised and Chaired by the OPCC with input from Cleveland Police, Youth Endowment Fund, Forensic CAMHS and Housing. The day shone a spotlight on serious youth violence within the Cleveland area and the importance of a partnership approach.

The three Cleveland YJS' have also been invited and participated in the Serious Violence partnership, the vision is for '*Cleveland to be a safe space for everyone to live, learn and work free from the fear, effects and consequences of violence*'. A collective approach and response is welcomed, as a partnership there is a focus on identifying children most at risk and putting appropriate, targeted support in place.

Hartlepool YJS Manager attends and represents the three Cleveland YJS at the MAPPA Strategic Management Board, attendance at the Board allows access to training linked to serious violence and support when it comes to managing any children who meet the threshold for MAPPA. All three Cleveland YJS' have strategic representation within the Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV). There are several meetings, boards and training events organised via CURV that the YJS attends. Improved data sharing and intelligence is evident and there are much clearer links across the local authority and wider partners regarding Serious Violence. The

The YJS Leadership Team also has 'serious incidents' identified within their quarterly report to the board and these are discussed and analysed for any lessons learned etc. During 2025/26 Hartlepool YJS reported **2** Serious Incident to the YJB which is a slight reduction of 1 when compared to on the previous year.

The YJS are due to move physical location and will be co-located with the HOTH Team, the move will improve lines of communication, case discussions linked to children who may be displaying violence or are being exploited and ensuring there is a co-ordinated approach and response to supporting some of the most vulnerable children in the Borough. Where a need is identified with a child and there are concerns a child may be at risk of offending, the YJS will be in a position to offer support either via Turnaround or the internal Choices programme, working together to support and manage the child's behaviour.

Application and oversight of the NRM referrals continues to be led by the HOTH Team, a single agency response is easier to oversee and co-ordinate. With that in mind, the YJS have had instances of children with a 'Conclusive Grounds' NRM, who have appeared at Court for linked offences and sentenced, which causes concern. Where appropriate, the YJS have sought legal advice from the Youth Justice Legal (YJLC), experts in child law and it affords us the opportunity to ensure the child is receiving appropriate legal advice. It is, however, a concern that children who have been exploited, not acting of their own freewill are being charged and appearing in Court. We are continuing to monitor and take appropriate action.

All YJS staff have completed the PREVENT awareness in May 2026, this is in line with the local authority requirements. The LA have a legal duty to co-operate with Prevent, the YJS Manager is also a member of the Bronze Prevent Group, a valuable forum for information sharing in order to safeguard children and communities. Advice and guidance is also given to colleagues within Children Services as to whether a child would meet the criteria for a Prevent referral.

The majority of children RUI who meet the criteria will be offered Turnaround. As part of the YJS managers' report to management board meetings all Released Under Investigation (RUI) and bail figures are shared and discussed to measure the time from arrest to outcome. Suitable challenge is made where required.

The following data is correct as of May 2026 regarding outstanding Police investigations/enquiries; inevitably numbers fluctuate on a weekly basis

### **43 Incidents/ 45 Children**

- 15 - RUI (Including 9 Out of Court disposals)
- 30 - Unconditional/Conditional Bail
- 29 - 0-3 months

- 10 - 3-6 months
- 2 - 6-9 months
- 1 - 9-12 months
- 3 - 12 months+

Sexual allegations and Possession of Imitation Firearm (with CPS for review)  
12mths+

- 1 child is from out of area and committed the offence in Hartlepool.
- 1 child was arrested and bailed for an alleged sexual assault on sister, whilst the investigation was ongoing, Police also discovered indecent images on the child's phone which prolonged the investigation.
- The child was arrested for a firearm offence which was reviewed by the CPS, an action plan provided which included, test the velocity of the weapon and further forensics to be carried out.

The YJS monitors time from offence to outcome and updates all data via the quarterly YJS management board meetings and challenges the Police/CPS as required.

### **Detention in police custody**

The monthly Children in Custody continues with all children detained 12+hrs being discussed to understand why. Attendance at the meeting is consistent with senior representation from Police, Custody Management, Health (within custody), Custody Navigators, EDT, Liaison and Diversion and the three Cleveland YJS'. The meeting is informative with Police being appropriately challenged when it is unclear why a child has been held unnecessarily.

Custody navigators continue to support and engage children when they are held in Custody, the trauma informed custody suite, specifically for children is designed to support children and keep them away from the main adult population within the Custody Suite. We are fortunate that the Custody Navigators will also notify us of any issues with appropriate adults which may result in a delay to a child being interviewed, where needed the YJS can then speak to Social Workers/Family Support Workers or if the child is not open, the YJS will then act as the child's appropriate adult.

### **Remands**

Hartlepool YJS collaborated with South Tees YJS, Stockton YJS and SHiFT, the collaboration was to submit a bid to the MoJ and the Regional Remand Pilot. We were successful in the bid albeit with a reduction in the funding initially applied for. South Tees YJS will manage the contract and resource attached. It is the intention that the partnership will enhance our offer to children who are at risk of being remanded and enable us to safely manage them in the community to prevent a remand to a custodial setting. At the time of the plan being written work is ongoing to put contracts/terms of reference in place prior to commencement of the pilot.

In 2025/26 Hartlepool YJS had 1 remand to Local Authority Accommodation

Where there is a real prospect of a child being remanded to custody, the YJS will consult and put a package of support together to safely manage the child in the community. We are confident that a multi-agency response can work towards safely managing the child's behaviour whilst safeguarding the victim and any possible victims.

The Youth Justice reforms highlight how too many children are held in custodial remand unnecessarily; it is encouraging that the MoJ will aim to reduce this by 25%. Children should only be remanded as a last resort and to ensure public protection. The reforms acknowledge how

damaging a custodial remand can be, resulting in children being moved away from their family, friends, community and education is disrupted. A large proportion of custodial remands often end up in a community sentence, which suggests the threshold for custodial remand may not have been met. Encouragingly, the reforms also highlight the need to work more effectively across health, social care and children services to identify children at the earliest stage to prevent an escalation in their behaviour and reduce the complexities faced by children. Increasing the minimum term of a DTO to 12 months may also see a reduction in custodial remands.

### **Use of custody and constructive resettlement**

The use of custody is a last resort and should only be used for children where custody is inevitable and managing their risk in the community, public protection is an ongoing concern. The reforms highlight how there has been a substantial reduction in the use of custody. As a service, it is our aim to safely manage children in the community and offer meaningful and rehabilitative community options to negate the need for a custodial sentence. As a Service, children sentenced to a DTO is low, the use of DTO' are considered and explored to safely manage the child's behaviour and prevent further victims and harm being caused.

The MoJ will set out a more detailed transformation plan in autumn which may have a positive effect on children being sentenced. As previously highlighted, increasing the minimum term of a DTO to 12 months will likely have a positive effect on the number of children being sentenced to short-term DTO' which can be damaging in the sense that the child is moved away from their family, friends, education is disrupted and the perceived stigma that can come with serving a custodial sentence. If we can demonstrate a robust alternative to remand and the child is being managed safely and engaging, this may support and strengthen our decision for the judiciary to impose a community sentence.

When the custody threshold has been passed, the YJS will explore what options are available to assure the Judiciary that the child can be safely and effectively supported in the community. As a service, we consider the child's education and what does their provision look like as this promotes desistance. All options will be considered and discussed with a YJS Manager and the dedicated Court Officer.

For any child sentenced to a DTO, exit planning begins from the initial sentence planning meeting. We need to maximise the use of children being released on temporary licence (ROTL), although this is 5 months post-sentence or half of their sentence, whichever is earlier. ROTL will strengthen the child's links to their community, using foundations within the community, such as education provision and building on the child's sense of identity. ROTL can also support the YJS to understand the child's strengths, interests and how these can be used to support a positive pro-social identity and reintegration back into the community.

Any child serving a custodial sentence can also affect their family, whilst a child is in a secure setting, the YJS will remain in contact with the family, providing an opportunity to establish meaningful relationships and support their transition back into the community.

When ROTL is being considered it is important we liaise with and keep the victim updated so they are fully aware of where and when the child may be in the community. .

All relevant services are involved from the outset of a custodial sentence and the 7-point plan is instigated from the beginning of every custodial sentence and followed throughout their sentence ensuring Constructive Resettlement.

### **7 Point Plan:**

**1. Case Management and Transition:** Ensure that young people serving custodial sentences receive effective, end to end service provision based on a thorough assessment of need and risk, in order to reintegrate them into the community

**2. Accommodation:** To ensure that all young people leaving custody can access suitable accommodation and support where appropriate.

**3. Education Training and Employment:** Provide all young people with suitable and sustainable Education, Training and Employment through their sentence and beyond.

**4. Health:** Ensure that all young people in custody have access to suitable and sustainable general and specialist healthcare services, based on individual need, so that problems are assessed and treated at the earliest opportunity and in the most appropriate manner.

**5. Substance Misuse:** Ensure that all young people entering custody are screened for substance misuse, with recognition of previous interventions. Those with identified needs should receive specialist assessment access to appropriate interventions and treatment services, with their aftercare needs met on return to community.

**6. Families:** Ensure that families of young people in custody receive timely, high quality support and information, from the point of arrest and throughout the young person's sentence.

**7. Finance, Benefits and Debt:** Ensure young people leaving custody and their families are provided with information and advice so that they are able to access appropriate financial support.

A multiagency approach is embedded to ensure each area of the above plan is monitored and every child receives the best and most timely support available from all services involved. The service has direct links to all partners in relation to accommodation, health, education, finance/budget, substance misuse and children's services such as Social Care and Early Help who are brought together at the point of sentence.

### **Working with families**

Engaging and working with families is paramount to ensure the child is supported throughout their period of involvement with the YJS. Where parents are separated, we endeavour to seek the views of all parents, unless it's not in the interests of the child.


We continue to offer parents the opportunity to attend the Talking Teens programme, the programme supports parents/care givers, and how to effectively communicate with their child, taking into consideration the teenage brain and influence on behaviour, listening skills, plus non-verbal communication and positive approaches to boundary setting and problem solving. The programme also offers parents an opportunity for parents to share their experiences and if appropriate, peer support.

Turnaround has also allowed the YJS to offer whole family support, giving parents an opportunity to raise concerns with siblings and if appropriate, the option for further support will be considered to support the wider family. For siblings of children working with the YJS, who may be younger than 10 years, the YJS can also offer universal provision provided by Children's Services or signpost to local voluntary services.

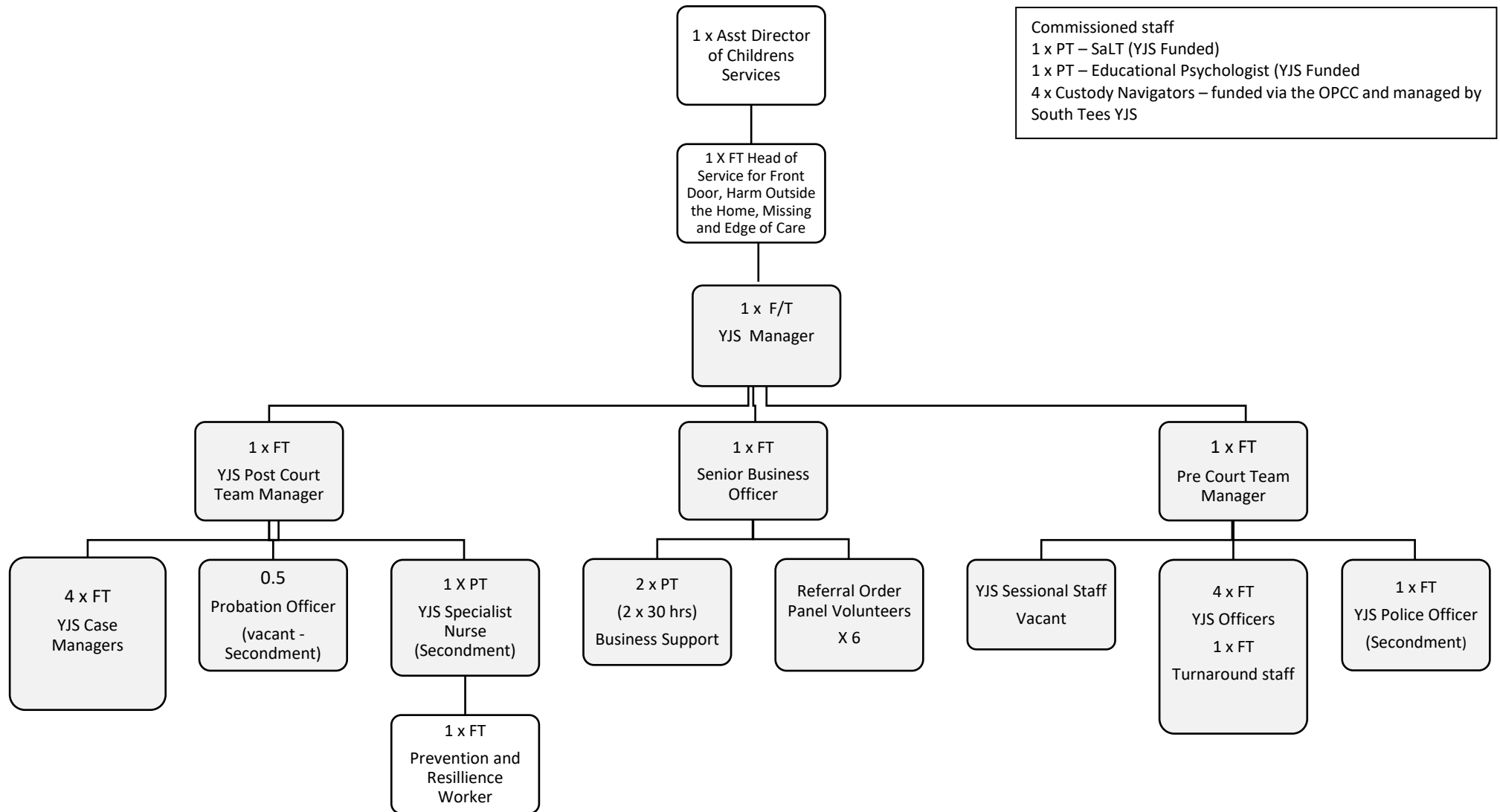
Families can be complex, often with significant levels of need, some of which can be generational. When the YJS are invited to complex case discussions, the team around will determine who is best placed to support the family and provide wrap around support.

If we identify issues with compliance and engagement, it's important this is addressed and discussed with the child along with their parent/carer, whilst the disposal is primarily the responsibility of the child, we encourage parents to support their child to engage. The reforms refer to parenting orders for those parents who fail to engage and address the child's behaviour. Whilst the majority of parents are supportive, sadly we see a number of parents who wilfully refuse to engage, or they do not have the skills or experience of being a parent who is actively engaged and wants what is best for their child. This can be inter-generational, and parents need support to understand their approach and how to change their style of parenting. Whilst punitive measures are not always necessary, the introduction of Parenting orders with clear expectations and consequences for non-engagement will be a welcome addition to our current offer. However, it is unclear at the time of the plan being written, how this will look, how it will be funded and who will be responsible for the Order.

## 7. Sign off, submission and approval

Management Board Chair	Emma Rutherford
Signature	
Date	9 <sup>th</sup> June 2026

## Appendix 2 – Hartlepool YJS Service Structure, May 2026



## Appendix 2 – Budget costs & Contributions 2025/26

<b>B5: YOT budget</b>
Costs and Contributions

### 2026/27 Budget - Hartlepool Youth Justice Service

	Staffing	Non-Pay	In-Kind	Total
Agency	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Youth Justice Board	367	122	0	489
Hartlepool Borough Council	211	86	120	417
Cleveland Police	0	0	59	59
Police & Crime Commissioner	19	0	0	19
Probation Service	0	5	28	33
Health (Integrated Care Board)	0	0	6	6
Turnaround Grant	38	39	0	77
Reserves	101	84	0	185
<b>Total</b>	<b>736</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>1,285</b>

<b>'In-Kind' Contributions</b>
<i>Hartlepool Borough Council - 0.6 FTE Specialist Nurse &amp; Overhead Costs (eg. Management, accommodation, finance, legal etc)</i>
<i>Cleveland Police - 1 FTE Police Officer</i>
<i>Probation Service - 0.5 FTE Probation Officer</i>
<i>Integrated Care Board - 0.1 FTE Clinical Psychologist</i>

\* - 2026/27 pay award will be funded by the Council once agreed; the Employees budget and HBC Contribution will both then be increased by the corresponding amount

## Staffing tables

Count of individuals		Ethnicity					Total	Welsh Speakers
Role	Sex	Asian/Asian British	Black/Black British	White	Any other ethnic group	Not Recorded		
Managers	Male			1			1	
	Female			3			3	
	Not recorded							
Practitioners	Male			3			3	
	Female			11			11	
	Not Recorded							
Sessional	Male							
	Female							
	Not Recorded							
Students/Trainees	Male							
	Female							
	Not Recorded							
Volunteers	Male			1			1	
	Female			2			2	
	Not Recorded							
Total	Male			5			5	
	Female			16			16	
	Not Recorded							

Contract Type		Full-time equivalent			
		Directly employed	Secondees	Outsourced	Total
Core YJS – all staff	Permanent	13			13
	Fixed term/temporary/agency	3			3
YJS Partners	Children's services				
	Probation				
	Police	1			1
	Health	0.5			0.5
	Education/Training/Employments			2	2
	Other				
<b>Total</b>					<b>19.5</b>
	Vacant	1			

## Common youth justice terms

<b>ACE</b>	Adverse childhood experience. Events in the child's life that can have negative, long-lasting impact on the child's health, and life choices
<b>AIM 3</b>	Assessment, intervention and moving on, an assessment tool and framework for children who have instigated harmful sexual behaviour
<b>ASB</b>	Anti-social behaviour
<b>AssetPlus</b>	Assessment tool to be used for children who have been involved in offending behaviour
<b>CAMHS</b>	Child and adolescent mental health services
<b>CCE</b>	Child Criminal exploitation, where a child is forced, through threats of violence, or manipulated to take part in criminal activity
<b>Children</b>	We define a child as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and civil legislation in England and Wales. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.
<b>Child First</b>	A system wide approach to working with children in the youth justice system. There are four tenants to this approach, it should be: developmentally informed, strength based, promote participation, and encourage diversion
<b>Children in Our Care (CIOC)</b>	CIOC, where a child is looked after by the local authority
<b>CME</b>	Child Missing Education
<b>Constructive resettlement</b>	The principle of encouraging and supporting a child's positive identity development from pro-offending to pro-social
<b>Contextual safeguarding</b>	An approach to safeguarding children which considers the wider community and peer influences on a child's safety

<b>Community resolution</b>	Community resolution, an informal disposal, administered by the police, for low level offending where there has been an admission of guilt
<b>EHCP</b>	Education Health and care plan, a plan outlining the education, health and social care needs of a child with additional needs
<b>ETE</b>	Education, training or employment
<b>EHE</b>	Electively home educated, children who are formally recorded as being educated at home and do not attend school
<b>EOTAS</b>	Education other than at school, children who receive their education away from a mainstream school setting
<b>FTE</b>	First Time Entrant. A child who receives a statutory criminal justice outcome for the first time (youth caution, youth conditional caution, or court disposal)
<b>HMIP</b>	Her Majesty Inspectorate of Probation. An independent arms-length body who inspect Youth Justice services and probation services
<b>HSB</b>	Harmful sexual behaviour, developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour by children, which is harmful to another child or adult, or themselves
<b>JAC</b>	Junior Attendance Centre
<b>MAPPAs</b>	Multi-agency public protection arrangements
<b>MFH</b>	Missing from Home
<b>NRM</b>	National Referral Mechanism. The national framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery in order to gain help to support and protect them
<b>OOCD</b>	Out-of-court disposal. All recorded disposals where a crime is recorded, an outcome delivered but the matter is not sent to court
<b>Outcome 22/21</b>	An informal disposal, available where the child does not admit the offence, but they undertake intervention to build strengths to minimise the possibility of further offending
<b>Over-represented children</b>	Appearing in higher numbers than the local or national average

<b>Prevention and Diversion assessment</b>	YJB mandated assessment tool for all OoCR and diversion referrals and is aligned with the Child First principles.
<b>RHI</b>	Return home Interviews. These are interviews completed after a child has been reported missing
<b>SLCN</b>	Speech, Language and communication needs
<b>STC</b>	Secure training centre
<b>SCH</b>	Secure children's home
<b>Young adult</b>	We define a young adult as someone who is 18 or over. For example, when a young adult is transferring to the adult probation service.
<b>YJS</b>	Youth Justice Service. This is now the preferred title for services working with children in the youth justice system. This reflects the move to a child first approach
<b>YOI</b>	Young offender institution

# Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Guidance for completing this form is available in the “Single Impact Assessment: Toolkit for Officers”, available from the Single Impact Assessment page on the intranet at <https://hbcintranet/Pages/Single-Impact-Assessments.aspx>.

## Section 1 – Details of the proposed action being considered

<b>1.1 Lead Department:</b>	Council
<b>1.2 Lead Division:</b>	Hartlepool Youth Justice Service (YJS)

<b>1.3 Title of the proposed action:</b>
Implementation of the 2026/27 Youth Justice Plan

<b>1.4 Brief description of the proposed action:</b>
The Youth Justice plan will be the basis of delivering services to children and victims of youth crime in Hartlepool.

<b>1.5 Who else is involved:</b>
The Youth Justice Service will work alongside Children’s Social Care, Early Help and Education. The YJS also commission a part-time Speech and Language Therapist and a part-time Educational Psychologist to provide additional support to the children open to the YJS.

<b>1.6 Who will make the final decision about the proposed action:</b>
--

# Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

The YJS strategic plan will be presented to the Children’s Services Committee, Audit and Governance Committee, Safer Hartlepool Partnership, and will also be ratified by the Youth Justice Board. The plan will be presented at Full Council for final signoff.

## 1.7 Which wards will be affected by the proposed action? Tick all that apply

All wards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hart	<input type="checkbox"/>	Seaton	<input type="checkbox"/>
Burn Valley	<input type="checkbox"/>	Headland & Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Throston	<input type="checkbox"/>
De Bruce	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manor House	<input type="checkbox"/>	Victoria	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fens & Greatham	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rossmere	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A - Internal council activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foggy Furze	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural West	<input type="checkbox"/>		

## 1.8 Completed By:

Name	Job Title	Date Completed
Laura Gough	Assistant Director Children's Services	June 2026

1.9 Version	Author	Summary of Changes	Date

## Section 2 – Explaining the impact of the proposed action

# Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

## 2.1 What data and evidence has informed this impact assessment?

Data from the YJS has been used to identify our key priorities.

## 2.2 If there are gaps in evidence or not enough information to assess the impact, how have you addressed this or how will you address it?

Gap(s) Identified	How it / they have or will be addressed
No gaps identified	

# Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

## 2.3 Risk Score

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
<b>Age</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact x	Likelihood score: 1 Impact score: 1 Overall score: 2	The YJS have a statutory duty to work with all children (aged 10-17) who have been arrested and referred into the service for support. In addition to this, we also have a duty to support victims of youth crime; inevitably, the ages of the victims will vary. Regardless of age, we contact all victims plus their parents/carers if the victim is a child or deemed vulnerable.
<b>Disability</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input type="checkbox"/> No Impact <input type="checkbox"/> x	Likelihood score: 1 Impact score: 1 Overall score: 2	Regardless of the child/victim's physical health/disability, we will offer support and seek advice from the YJS Nurse.
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: 1 Impact score: 1 Overall score: 2	We are sensitive to the needs of the child and how they identify. This also applies to the victims whom we support.
<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact	Likelihood score: 1 Impact score: 1 Overall score: 2	Unlikely to have any impact as we predominantly work with children. There may be victims who we support who are married or in a civil partnership.

# Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
<input type="checkbox"/> No Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

Impact	Negative Impact Score	Explanation – what is the impact?
<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Likelihood score: 2 Impact score: 2 Overall score: 4	The YJS may work with children who are pregnant, where pregnancy is confirmed, services are adjusted accordingly, and separate risk assessments are completed to mitigate potential risk.
<b>Race (Ethnicity)</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Likelihood score: 1 Impact score: 1 Overall score: 2	Regardless of a child's or a victim's race, services will be provided.
<b>Religion or Belief</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1	Likelihood score: 1 Impact score: 1 Overall score: 2	Regardless of a child or a victim's religious beliefs, services will be provided. We are sensitive to religious beliefs, and plans will be adjusted to meet their individual needs.
<b>Sex</b>		

# Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact x	Likelihood score: 1 Impact score: 1 Overall score: 2	We work with children/victims regardless of their sex, whether this is the same as their registered sex at birth.
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Negative Impact Score</b>	<b>Explanation – what is the impact?</b>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact x	Likelihood score: 1 Impact score: 1 Overall score: 2	We support children/victims, and their sexual orientation is taken into consideration. There may be occasions when a child/victim discloses their sexual orientation, and additional support may be required. Children may be referred to the service after committing a hate crime based on the victim's sexual orientation. The YJS have a dedicated victim worker who will provide support to victims of youth crime where a hate crime has been committed.
<b>Care Leavers (Local)</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact x	Likelihood score: 1 Impact score: 1 Overall score: 2	Children open to the YJS who are care leavers will have the same level of support. We work closely with the Child In Our Care (CIOC) team and have a dedicated Personal Advisor to provide ongoing support. The number of CIOC fluctuates.
<b>Armed Forces (Local)</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Impact x	Likelihood score: 1 Impact score: 1 Overall score: 2	At the time of the impact assessment being produced, we are not working with any current/ex armed forces personnel. It would be unlikely that any child we work with was in the armed forces. If there was a victim who was a current or ex-armed forces personnel, this would not affect our offer of support.
<b>Poverty and Disadvantage (Local)</b>		

# Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

<input type="checkbox"/> Positive Impact x <input type="checkbox"/> Negative Impact <input type="checkbox"/> No Impact	Likelihood score: 4 Impact score: 1 Overall score: 5	The YJS work with both children and victims who may be disadvantaged or affected by poverty. Where there is a need identified, the YJS will aim to support the child and/or victim into Universal Services to access support. The YJS will also provide financial support/supermarket vouchers to ensure families/victims can buy food, clothing etc.
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## Section 3 - Mitigation Action Plan or Justification

Group(s) impacted	Proposed mitigation	How this mitigation will make a difference	By when	Responsible Officer

<b>Justification</b> If you need to justify your proposed action explain this here

## Section 4 - Sign Off

<b>Responsible Officer sign off:</b>	
Name	Laura Gough
Job title	Assistant Director

# Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

Assistant Director / Director sign off:	
Name	Alison Sutherland
Job title	Director

Once the Single Impact Assessment is completed please send to [impactassessments@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:impactassessments@hartlepool.gov.uk).

## Section 5 - Review (To be completed after implementation)

5.1 Review completed by:		
Name	Job Title	Date review completed

5.2 Did the impact turned out as expected?

5.3 Were the proposed mitigations the correct ones and were they successful in reducing any negative impacts?

# Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

## 5.4 Were there any unexpected outcomes?

--

## 5.5 Following the review please identify next steps here (Select one)

- Additional mitigation required (give details below - 5.6)
- Original proposed course of action needs to be revisited
- No further action required

## 5.6 Additional mitigation(s) or justification

Group(s) impacted	Proposed mitigation	How this mitigation will make a difference	By when	Responsible Officer

# Hartlepool Borough Council – Single Impact Assessment Form

**Justification** If you need to justify your proposed action explain this here

Submit form with completed review to [impactassessments@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:impactassessments@hartlepool.gov.uk)



**Hartlepool**  
Borough Council

# Hartlepool Local Area SEND Reform Plan 2026

30 June 2026

**Report of:** Executive Director of Children’s Services

**Subject:** Hartlepool Local Area SEND Reform Plan 2026

**Decision Type:** For information

**1. Council Plan Priority**

<b>Hartlepool will be a place:</b>
- where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
- that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
- with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of its community. (Organisation)

**2. Purpose of Report**

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the how the council plans to respond to the Schools White Paper and proposed SEND Reforms.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 In February 2026, the Government published both the Schools White Paper- ‘Every child achieving and thriving’ and the SEND Reform Consultation- ‘Putting Children and Young People First’, setting out a national vision to improve outcomes for children and young people, particularly those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The proposals emphasise earlier intervention, stronger inclusion within mainstream education, improved accountability, and greater consistency across local areas. A key focus is on strengthening partnerships across education, health and care systems, alongside ensuring financial sustainability within the High Needs Block.
- 3.2 The consultation further outlined expectations for local areas to develop integrated, evidence-based reform plans that address systemic challenges in SEND and Inclusive Practice. This includes a stronger emphasis on co-production, clearer pathways of support, improved data use, and alignment between strategic commissioning and financial planning.
- 3.3 On 9th March 2026, Hartlepool Borough Council, along with all Local Authorities, received formal direction to formulate a Local Area Reform Plan. This requirement included three core components:
- The Local Area Reform Plan template
  - A Maturity Matrix
  - Data and Finance return
- 3.4 Each local authority was allocated two advisors (one SEND Advisor and one Financial Advisor) to support development. All local authorities are required to submit a first draft to the Advisor’s by 19th May 2026, with feedback to be provided to us by 2nd June 2026.
- 3.5 Following this stage, the plan must be formally approved and signed off by:
- Local Authority Chief Executive
  - Executive Director for Children’s Services
  - Local Authority Chief Financial Officer
  - North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board Chief Executive
  - North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board NHS Place Director
- 3.6 Each local area is also required to appoint a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO); for Hartlepool this is Fiona Stobbs, Interim Assistant Director- Education.

- 3.7 The final plan must be submitted by 19th June 2026 which will then enter a robust quality assurance and moderation cycle on both a regional and national level.
- 3.8 The plan carries significant financial implications for the Authority. If successful, the Council will receive £7.914m in High Needs Stability Grant funding: this is 90% of the DSG Deficit as of 31 March 2026. This grant will be transferred to a usable reserve and applied to offset the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit as of 31 March 2028. The Authority is required to earmark £0.879m to fund the remaining 10%.
- 3.9 In addition, the authority is proposing to earmark sums for 2026/27 and 2027/28 for the equivalent 10% requirement, based on our latest forecast position.
- 3.10 If approved, we will also gain access to Experts at Hand funding in subsequent years (with Year 1 funding expected in June 2026).
- 3.11 Each local authority will also be required to provide quarterly data and finance returns throughout the next 3 years, and the plan will be an iterative document, being continuously shaped as we move forward.
- 3.12 The purpose of this report is to share a high-level summary of Hartlepool's Local Area Reform Plan and the work carried out to date.

#### **4. SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Change Programme**

- 4.1 Since 2023, Hartlepool Borough Council has acted as the Lead Authority for the North East Change Programme Partnership within the national SEND and Alternative Provision Change Programme. This leadership role has enabled the local area to test innovative approaches and develop infrastructures which places Hartlepool in a strong position to respond to the Local Area Reform Plan requirements.
- 4.2 Through Change Programme funding, Hartlepool has established an Inclusion Service, including:
- Recruitment of Senior Specialist Teachers for Inclusion, supporting schools to develop inclusive practice
  - A team of Education Officers supporting:
    - Parents and carers to navigate the SEND system

- Pupil voice and advocacy
- Reduction of in-year school admissions

4.3 In addition, the local area has successfully piloted several multi-agency delivery models, including:

- PINS (Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools)
- ELSEC (Early Language Support for Every Child)
- APST (Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce – locally known as HIST – Hartlepool Inclusion Support Team)

4.4 These initiatives have strengthened collaboration across education, health and care, and provided valuable learning to inform system-wide reform.

## **5. Actions Undertaken to Date**

5.1 The SEND, Alternative Provision and Inclusion Operational Group had previously developed a Maturity Matrix as part of the SEND and Alternative Provision Change Programme. This originally captured progress and achievements, however, it has now been refined to reflect a whole-system perspective, identifying both strengths and areas for development across the SEND and Inclusion system.

5.2 Significant progress has also been made in relation to data and financial planning. The Data and Finance teams have worked closely with SEND, Inclusion, Commissioning and Integrated Care Board (ICB) colleagues to:

- Model pupil projections over the next three years
- Assess financial pressures and sustainability
- Align this work with both the Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan and the SEND Sufficiency Plan

5.3 A programme of co-production activity has been undertaken to inform the development of the Local Area Reform Plan and associated action plan.

## **6. Co-Production and Stakeholder Engagement**

6.1 Consistent with national expectations, the local authority has acted as a system convener, with delivery shared across partners including education settings, health services, and the Integrated Care Board.

6.2 Engagement activity has included:

- Ongoing young people’s engagement, facilitated through the Education Officer for Pupil Voice and Advocacy. Young people have also developed a video to share their experiences and aspirations, please click on the following links:

- [School-Ambitions | Videos & Movies on Vimeo](#)
- <https://vimeo.com/1174448275/0245b2c291?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>

- The Education & Inclusion Summit held on 6th March 2026 - where stakeholder feedback has directly shaped the development of the plan.

- Alignment with the Best Start in Life Local Plan, ensuring a coherent and joined-up approach across early years and SEND priorities.

- [hartlepool-best-start-in-life-local-plan-2026](#)

- A structured programme of 8 co-production sessions during the week commencing 20th March 2026, including:

- Early Years
- Schools
- Post-16-25 years provision
- Parent and Carer groups

- Approximately 200 stakeholders participated across these sessions, contributing to the development of priorities, identifying system challenges, and shaping proposed solutions.

- Please find an image in **Appendix 1** of the detail captured in the parent/ carer sessions which will be a core focus of how direction of travel.

## 7. Proposals

7.1 We want to build a 0–25 years system where Children and Young People achieve and thrive through inclusive settings and strong partnerships.

7.2 Hartlepool’s inclusion system has undergone significant development in recent years, shaped particularly by participation in the Change Programme. This enabled us to test and refine inclusive models, strengthen relationships and align a shared moral purpose: ensuring children and young people can access the support they need to thrive. Hartlepool benefits from strong partnerships, with embedded multi-agency collaboration through clusters, inclusion panels, early intervention initiatives and shared workforce

development. There is evidence of strengthened early identification, collaborative problem solving and growing inclusivity, alongside investment in broader continuums of provision spanning early language, mental health support and expanded specialist and mainstream capacity.

7.3 However, inclusivity is not yet experienced consistently. Variation in confidence and capacity, alongside increasing complexity of need, continues to affect families' experiences. While ambition is shared, there is a clear need to stabilise, align and consolidate practice before scaling further system change. It is from this position of emerging strength and recognised pressure that Hartlepool's reform journey is intentionally shaped.

7.4 By 2029, the system will operate as a coherent 0–25 years partnership where inclusion is everyone's responsibility, strong relationships underpin decision making, and children and young people experience a genuine sense of belonging within their local community.

**7.5 Improve the capacity and capability of the mainstream and specialist workforce:** Workforce capacity and capability will be a defining strength of Hartlepool's future system. Professionals will be confident, skilled and well supported, with access to strong specialist input, effective coaching and modelling. Inclusive practice will be consistent across 0-25 years settings, underpinned by a clear and trusted local offer that families and professionals understand and value. Improved post-16 years pathways will strengthen transitions and destinations for young people with special educational needs, reducing fragmentation and improving long term outcomes.

**7.6 Improve confidence of children, families and stakeholders in reform and system readiness:** Confidence in the system will be reflected in improved lived experience. Families will report that engagement is constructive and no longer relies on "fighting" language to secure support. Children and young people will experience needs identified earlier and met accurately, reducing escalation, crisis, permanent exclusions and breakdowns in provision. A clear and shared Hartlepool Promise, subscribed to by professionals, will underpin consistent everyday practice and transparent decision making.

**7.7 Stabilise finances and improve value for money:** Current performance shows rising EHCP demand, pressure on timeliness and increasing financial strain, reflecting national trends. By 2029, Hartlepool expects a more stable EHCP growth rate, improved timeliness, reductions in exclusions and elective home education linked to dissatisfaction, and a gradual improvement in the high needs block position as mainstream capacity and early intervention strengthen, with a financial sustainable Experts at Hand offer.

7.8 Progress will be evidenced through improved value for money, strengthened QA, increased ability of mainstream settings to meet a broader range of needs, a more even distribution of children with SEND across schools, and fewer children needing out of area provision.

7.9 By 2029, Hartlepool will have achieved a calm, equitable and sustainable inclusion system where professionals are confident, families trust the system, and children and young people are supported to thrive.

## **8. Vision and Goals**

8.1 Hartlepool's local area partnership is committed to building a confident, inclusive and sustainable 0–25 years system where all children and young people are supported to achieve, belong and thrive in their local communities.

8.2 Over the next three years, we will focus on three clear, measurable goals:

- Improve outcomes for children and young people
- Build confidence and trust in the local system
- Secure value for money and sustainability

8.3 These goals will deliver a calmer, more equitable and resilient inclusion system, where improved experiences, stronger outcomes and sustainable finances are achieved in parallel for Hartlepool's children, young people and families.

## **9. Local Blueprint for the Next Three Years**

9.1 Over the next three years, Hartlepool will deliver a coherent, inclusive and financially sustainable 0–25 years system rooted in early intervention, strong partnerships and a confident workforce. Central to this transformation is the Experts at Hand model, which will become the core infrastructure underpinning system delivery.

## **10. Experts at Hand as Core Infrastructure**

10.1 By 2029, the learning and capacity created through the Change Programme will be embedded as a permanent system, with a phased transition to sustainable roles. A single, integrated Experts at Hand offer will bring together education, health (including Speech and Language Therapy and

Occupational Therapy), educational psychology and specialist teaching expertise. This will provide clear, accessible routes into support without reliance on diagnosis or crisis, ensuring earlier intervention and more consistent support. Practitioners will benefit from embedded coaching, supervision and outreach through clusters, while parents will access a clear and trusted front door to advice and support.

10.2 We have set out our local blueprint across the 4 core building blocks:

**Strengthening inclusion across education settings**– organising places and provision to meet as many needs as possible, as close to home as possible, with all settings and providers moving towards a shared understanding and consistent practices around inclusion.

**System leadership, local partnership collaboration and co-production** – putting in place the enabling conditions across a local area that ensures planning and provision reflects the local area & is joined up, including strategic co-production with parent carers and children and young people.

**Access to specialist support and local placements** – improving collaboration between settings and deploying expertise from a range of specialist and expert sources, to support schools and settings to meet the needs of children and young people earlier and locally.

**Encouraging inclusive culture & behaviours** – using funding and shared accountability towards a system that works for children and families while achieving value for money.

**11. The Local Road Map and Our Strategic Intent**

11.1 2026/27 represents a foundational year in which we deliberately slow down to strengthen the core of the Hartlepool inclusion system. Year 1 focuses on building a cohesive, well-understood and evidence-informed system that is trusted by families, schools, and professionals, and capable of delivering consistently high-quality inclusive practice.

11.2 This year is explicitly about creating the conditions for sustainable improvement: clarity of offer, strength of governance, alignment of services, confident inclusive leadership, and shared ownership of system change. Year 1 is successful if the system is calmer, clearer, more aligned and better prepared to improve outcomes sustainably in Years 2 and 3.

11.3 Rather than introducing multiple new initiatives, we will consolidate, align and embed what we already know works, while improving coherence and consistency across the system.

11.4 Year 1 delivery model: Engage, Unite and Reflect

**12. The Local Delivery Plan (2026/2027)**

12.1 The following information sets out the activities we will undertake to move towards our vision and goals across the first year:

<p><b>Clarifying the Local Inclusion Support Offer Outcome</b></p> <p>A single, Local Inclusion Support Offer that is co-produced and clearly sets out thresholds, roles, pathways and support.</p>	<p><b>Front Door: The Nest Outcome</b></p> <p>Establishing The Nest – SEND, Inclusion and Early Years Centre as a single front door for families and professionals.</p>	<p><b>Experts at Hand Outcome</b></p> <p>Transitioning the Experts at Hand offer from Change Programme delivery into a sustainable, system-wide model.</p>
<p><b>Inclusive Leadership Programme Outcome</b></p> <p>Working closely with new and established strategic leaders across the local area to ensure shared vision and ownership.</p>	<p><b>Consistency in Inclusion Bases Outcome</b></p> <p>Developing a shared ethos, practice framework and quality standards for inclusion bases. Ensuring inclusion bases are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consistent in intent and delivery,</li> <li>• effective in supporting inclusion,</li> <li>• not operating in ways that inadvertently exclude children by default.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Culture of Emotional Safety Outcome</b></p> <p>A system wide culture of emotional safety is embedded across Hartlepool, inclusive practice enabling it to be sustained for children and young people with diverse and complex needs.</p>
<p><b>Early Years Strengthening Outcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing the inclusion team through the appointment of a Senior Specialist Teacher for Early Years Inclusion.</li> <li>• Supporting early years practitioners to deliver confident, inclusive teaching.</li> <li>• Ensuring early years intelligence meaningfully informs wider system visioning and strategic planning.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Hartlepool Promise Outcome</b></p> <p>To have a town-wide Hartlepool Promise to all children and young people across education that drives excellence and inclusion.</p>	<p><b>Governance Review Outcome</b></p> <p>Completed a full governance review to ensure structures are robust, transparent and responsive to recent leadership changes in Hartlepool.</p>

<b>Education, Support and Overview Panel (ESOP) Outcome</b>	<b>Data Intelligence and Baselines Outcome</b>	<b>Quality Assurance and Evaluation Processes Outcome</b>
<p>Further developing our ESOP process to strengthen the system’s monitoring, oversight and planning for children and young people accessing alternative provision and Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) packages.</p>	<p>Developing a robust SEND and inclusion data dashboard that brings together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand</li> <li>• Access</li> <li>• Outcomes</li> <li>• workforce intelligence</li> </ul>	<p>Schools and settings consistently use high quality self-evaluation and robust assurance processes to strengthen inclusive practice and ensure High Needs Block funding is targeted effectively to improve outcomes for children and young people.</p>
<p><b>Specialist Provision Planning and Alignment Outcome</b></p> <p>Increased local capacity and reduced out-of-area reliance</p>		

**12.2 The ‘Experts at Hand’ Offer in Year 1**

12.3 The ‘Experts at Hand’ offer underpins this vision by shifting Hartlepool from a referral and diagnosis-led system to a needs-led, relational and preventative model of support, shaped directly by stakeholder feedback gathered across the local authority through co-production discussions. This will include specific views on how ‘Experts at Hand’ should operate in practice.

12.4 Our aim is that:

- All settings (including early years, schools, alternative provision and post-16) can access timely, practical advice without waiting for diagnosis or crisis, addressing current barriers such as long waiting times, lack of capacity and unclear follow-up.
- Experts at Hand prioritises working alongside staff in daily practice, focusing on coaching, modelling, supervision and environmental design rather than one-off training that is not embedded.

- Specialist expertise is coordinated and aligned, reducing variation in advice and strengthening multi-agency working.
- The model builds capacity and sustainability by training key staff within settings to champion inclusive practice and retain expertise within settings.

**12.5 Delivery Team Structure:** The ‘Experts at Hand’ delivery model will be underpinned by a multi-disciplinary team bringing together education, health and family support expertise:

<p><b>Senior Specialist Teachers (Inclusion):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Emotional Mental Health (APST Lead)</li> <li>• Communication &amp; Interaction</li> <li>• Lead SENDCo, Transition &amp; Inclusive Mainstream Provision</li> <li>• Early Years</li> </ul>	<p><b>Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce (APST):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 x Lead Social Emotional Mental Health Practitioners</li> <li>• 2 x Lead SEND Practitioners</li> <li>• 1 x Assistant Psychologist</li> <li>• 1 x Family Support Worker</li> <li>• 1 x Parenting Support Worker</li> </ul>	<p><b>Educational Psychology:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 x Senior Specialist Educational Psychologist</li> <li>• 1 x Assistant Psychologist</li> </ul>
<p><b>ELSEC (Early Language Support for Every Child):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 x Speech &amp; Language Assistants</li> <li>• Band 8A equivalent Speech &amp; Language Therapist (3 days per week)</li> <li>• 1 x Band 6 equivalent Speech &amp; Language Therapist (3 days per week)</li> <li>• 1 x Specialist Teacher (4 days per week, term time only)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Wider Inclusion Support:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 x Education Officer – SEND Navigator</li> <li>• 1 x Education Officer – Pupil Voice &amp; Advocacy</li> <li>• 1 x Education Officer – In-Year Admissions</li> <li>• 1 x Administrative Assistant</li> </ul>	

12.6 The ‘Experts at Hand’ model will complement and be strengthened by existing services, including, but not exclusively, the Educational Psychology Team, Small Steps, Early Years Team, Mental Health Support Teams, STARS (Hearing Impairment & Vision Impairment Service) and the Best Start Family Hubs.

12.7 **Year 1 Implementation Approach:** During the summer term, services will work collectively to streamline processes, align delivery models and evaluate existing approaches across different programmes, ensuring a clear, coherent and unified system.

12.8 The model will be structured around clusters, ensuring that all elements of the offer are accessible to early-year settings, schools and post-16 providers.

12.9 Throughout 2026/27, the focus will be on embedding this integrated approach, identifying gaps in provision and strengthening the offer iteratively, ensuring it remains responsive, sustainable and aligned to the needs of children, young people and families across Hartlepool.

**13. Conclusion: Building a Stronger Inclusive System**

13.1 In summary, Hartlepool is well-positioned to respond to the national SEND reform agenda, building on the strong foundations established through the Change Programme, existing good practice already evidenced across schools and settings, and extensive co-production with partners, families and young people. The Local Area Reform Plan sets out a clear and ambitious, yet realistic, three-year journey focused on strengthening inclusion, improving outcomes and ensuring financial sustainability. Through a deliberate focus on Year 1 as a period of alignment and consolidation, the council and its partners will create the conditions for long-term, system-wide improvement, ensuring that children and young people with SEND and their families are supported to achieve, belong and thrive within their local community.

**14. Other Considerations/Implications**

<b>RISK IMPLICATIONS</b>	At this point the plan is subject to Department for Education approval. To implement and embed the proposed reforms, we require town-wide collaboration.
<b>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	Approval of the plan by the Department for Education will release £7.914m of funding to the council, representing 90% of the existing Dedicated Schools Grant deficit that is held on the council’s balance sheet. The council has set aside the remaining 10% deficit and 10% of the forecast deficit for 2026/27 and

	2027/28 to ensure we are able to meet our funding requirements.
<b>SUBSIDY CONTROL</b>	N/A
<b>LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	At the time of writing, the proposals set out in the Schools White Paper and the SEND Reform Consultation do not give rise to any immediate statutory changes to the Council’s duties in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The existing legal framework, including duties under the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of Practice (2015), and associated secondary legislation, remains in force.
<b>SINGLE IMPACT ASSESSMENT</b> (IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED AS APPROPRIATE.)	N/A
<b>STAFF CONSIDERATIONS</b>	There are a number of employees on fixed-term contracts due to short-term funding.
<b>ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS</b>	The plan is to open a physical front-door space.
<b>ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS</b>	N/A
<b>CONSULTATION</b>	Co-production of the plan has taken place, as set out in this report.

## 15. Recommendations

15.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

## 16. Reasons for Recommendations

16.1 The report is presented to ensure that Members are kept informed of emerging national policy developments in relation to SEND reform, and the

Council’s proposed approach to responding to these changes through the Local Area Reform Plan. At this stage, the report is for information only, as the Plan remains subject to Department for Education review and does not require formal approval by the Committee.

**17. Background Papers**

17.1 [SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First](#)

**18. Contact Officers**

Fiona Stobbs- Interim Assistant Director - Education

Sign Off:-

Chief Executive	Date: 11.06.2026
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 10.06.2026
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 10.06.2026

7.1 Appendix 1

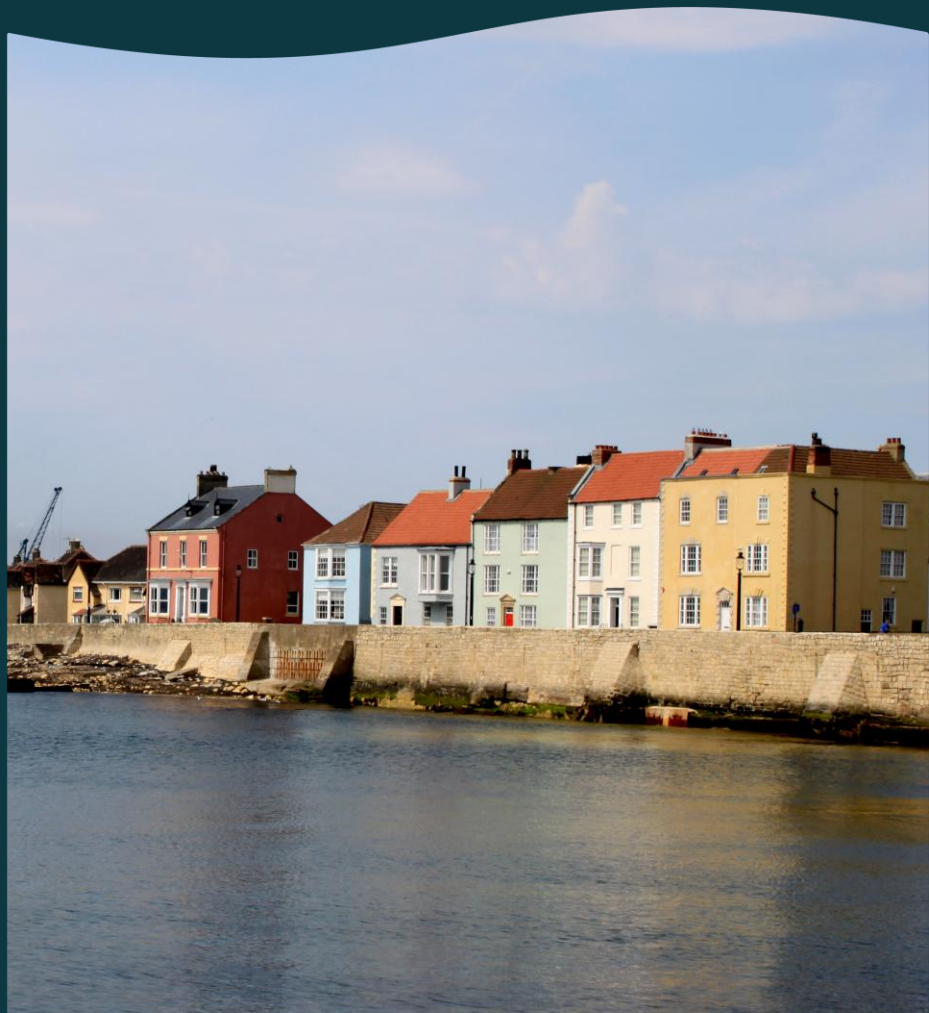




# Hartlepool Local Area SEND Reform Plan 2026

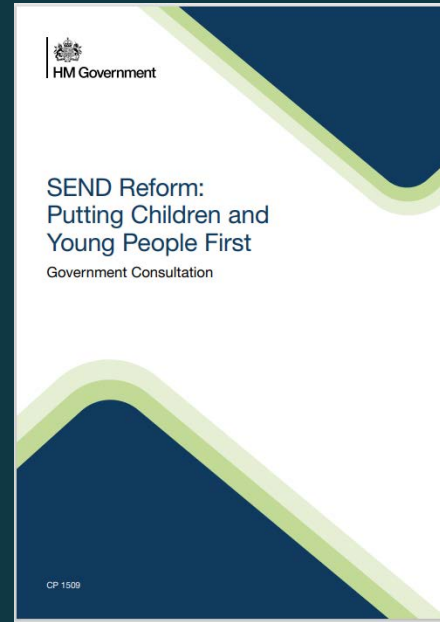
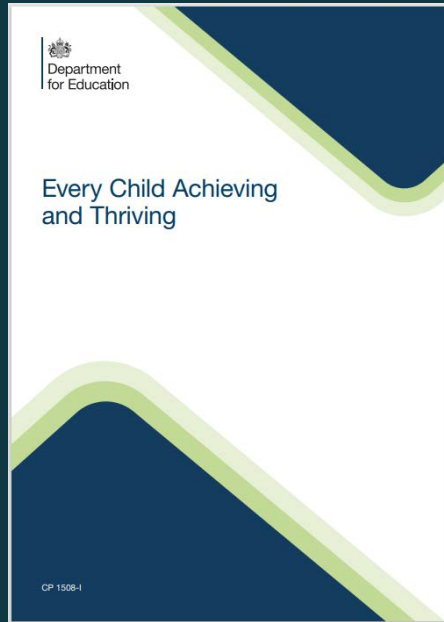
Fiona Stobbs

Interim Assistant Director- Education



# Schools White Paper & SEND Reform

On 23 February 2026, the government published two documents- Schools White Paper, 'Every child achieving and thriving', and a consultation on 'SEND reform: Putting children and young people first'



# Key messages and the case for change:

- Build a genuinely inclusive education system
- Redesign SEND pathways around early intervention and outcomes
- Rebalance investment towards prevention and family support
- Position schools as public services and community anchors
- Tackle attendance, behaviour, disadvantage and narrow the attainment gap
- Stabilise and support the workforce and rebuild parental confidence, developing school capacity and skills
- Bring expertise together into mainstream settings to get support to children early
- Stronger multi-agency collaboration
- Supporting inclusion, prevention and early intervention



# Submission of the Local SEND Reform Plan (Deadline: 19 June 2026)

All local areas must submit a completed Local SEND Reform Plan to the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England by 19 June 2026.

The plan must:

- Set out the area's **vision, strategic priorities, governance, monitoring and evaluation framework.**
- Demonstrate **clear actions** to strengthen early intervention, inclusion, pathways and specialist support.
- Show how the area will meet the expectations of **system-wide SEND reform.**

The Local Authority is designated as the **system convener**, responsible for coordinating all partners (ICB, MATs, schools, early years providers) and ensuring full co-production and alignment.



# Immediate Implementation of SEND Reform Expectations

The DfE and NHS England have already instructed councils **not to wait for further guidance** and to begin implementing reforms immediately.

Local areas must:



Assess existing SEND systems and pathways

Identify gaps and priority areas

Strengthen mainstream inclusion and early support

Begin redesigning systems in line with the five principles: **Early, Local, Fair, Effective, Shared**

# Timeline



This needs to include:

- Vision
- Partnership Maturity Matrix
- A detailed implementation plan – Year 1 (+ high level Years 2-3)
- Experts at Hand model
- Proposed governance and accountability arrangements
- Detailed financial and cohort level data- with predictions for future cohorts



# Governance of Local Area Reform Plan

Each local area, must be formally approved and signed off by:

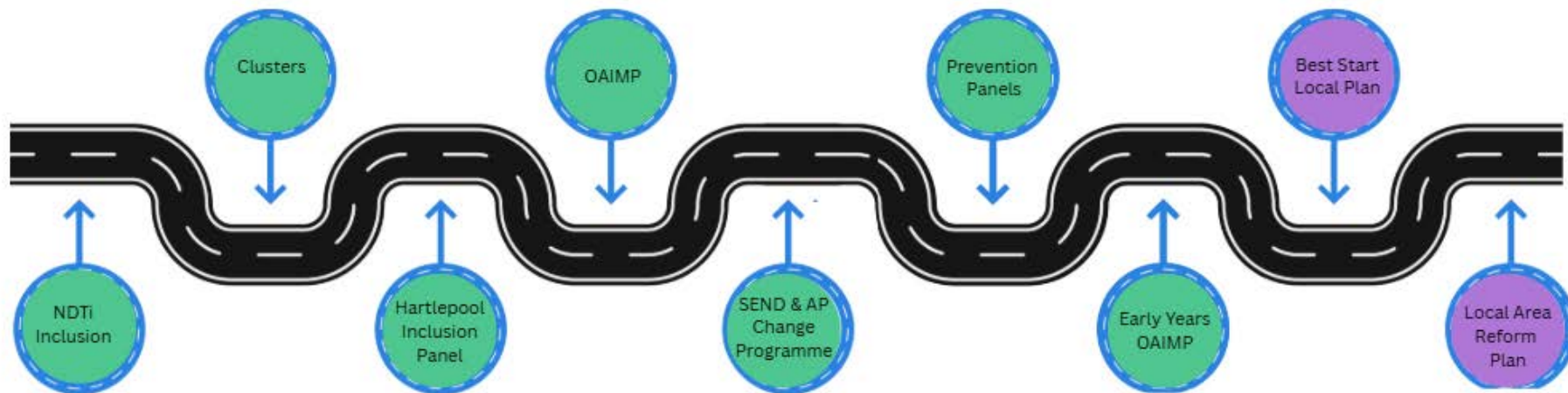
- Local Authority Chief Executive
- Executive Director for Children's Services
- Local Authority Chief Financial Officer
- Northeast & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board Chief Executive
- Northeast & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board NHS Place Director

Each local area is also required to appoint a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO); for Hartlepool this is Fiona Stobbs, Interim Assistant Director- Education.

Each local authority were allocated two advisors (SEND Advisor and Financial Advisor) to support development.



# SEND & Alternative Provision Change Programme



## Change Programme Progress:

- Mainstream Inclusion Team
- Assistive Technology Lending Library
- Partnership in Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS)
- Early Language Support for Every Child (ELSEC)
- Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce (HIST)
- 3- Tier AP Model

Have strengthened collaboration across education, health and care and provided valuable learning to inform system-wide reform.

# Co-Production and Stakeholder Engagement

The local authority has acted as a system convener, with delivery shared across partners including education settings, health services, and the Integrated Care Board.



- Young People Engagement
- Education & Inclusion Summit- 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026
- Best Start in Life Local Plan
- 8 co-production sessions- WB 20<sup>th</sup> March 2026



# Executive Summary

Build a 0-25 years system, where Children and Young People achieve and thrive through inclusive settings and strong partnerships.

Improve the capacity and capability of the mainstream and specialist workforce

Improve confidence of children, families and stakeholders in reform and system readiness

Stabilise finances and improve value for money

By 2029, Hartlepool will have achieved a calm, equitable and sustainable inclusion system where professionals are confident, families trust the system, and children and young people are supported to thrive.



# Vision & Goals

Hartlepool is a place where every child gets the best start in life, so that they can grow up **healthy, safe and secure and able to fulfil their potential**. As part of this, we aim to build a seamlessly connected system where education, health, social care, and community partners work in partnership with parents—removing barriers, reducing disadvantage and **unlocking every child's potential**

# Over the next three years, we will focus on three clear, measurable goals:

Improve outcomes for children and young people

Build confidence in the local system

Secure value for money and sustainability

Hartlepool will deliver a coherent, inclusive and financially sustainable 0–25 years system rooted in early intervention, strong partnerships and a confident workforce. Central to this transformation is the Experts at Hand model, which will become the core infrastructure underpinning system delivery.



# Experts at Hand

Workforce development

Solution Circles

Advisory Clinics

Signposting

Projects

Parental Interventions and Programmes

Staff Supervision

Research

Designing & delivering interventions

Coaching & Modelling

Setting/ environment support

Supporting embedding of strategies in settings

Driving 'champion' networks

Screening and supporting early identification



# The Local Road Map and Our Strategic Intent

2026/27 represents a foundational year in which we deliberately slow down to strengthen the core of the Hartlepool inclusion system. Year 1 focuses on building a cohesive, well-understood and evidence-informed system that is trusted by families, schools, and professionals, and capable of delivering consistently high-quality inclusive practice.

This year is explicitly about creating the conditions for sustainable improvement: clarity of offer, strength of governance, alignment of services, confident inclusive leadership, and shared ownership of system change. Year 1 is successful if the system is calmer, clearer, more aligned and better prepared to improve outcomes sustainably in Years 2 and 3.

**Year 1 delivery model: Engage, Unite and Reflect**



# The Local Road Map- Year 1



In summary, Hartlepool is well-positioned to respond to the national SEND reform agenda, building on the strong foundations established through the Change Programme, existing good practice already evidenced across schools and settings, and extensive co-production with partners, families and young people.

The Local Area Reform Plan sets out a clear and ambitious, yet realistic, three-year journey focused on strengthening inclusion, improving outcomes and ensuring financial sustainability.

Through a deliberate focus on Year 1 as a period of alignment and consolidation, the council and its partners will create the conditions for long-term, system-wide improvement, ensuring that children and young people with SEND and their families are supported to achieve, belong and thrive within their local community.



## Conclusion