

Agenda

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Tuesday 16 September 2025**

Time: **2.00 pm**

Place: **Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough
Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE**

Notes: Please note the time, date and venue of the meeting.

For any further information please contact:

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If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format, please call Simon Cann, Democratic Services Officer on 01432 260667 or e-mail simon.cann@herefordshire.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

Agenda for the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Membership

Chairperson **Councillor Toni Fagan**
Vice-chairperson **Councillor Ben Proctor**

Councillor Frank Cornthwaite
Councillor Clare Davies
Councillor Dave Davies
Councillor Robert Highfield
Councillor David Hitchiner

Mr David Willis

Co-opted Member Diocese of Hereford

Agenda

	Pages
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive apologies for absence.	
2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES To receive details of members nominated to attend the meeting in place of a member of the committee.	
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive declarations of Interests from members of the committee in respect of items on the agenda.	
4. MINUTES To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2025.	9 - 16
HOW TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS	
The deadline for the submission of questions for this meeting is 5pm on Wednesday 10 September 2025.	
Questions must be submitted to councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk .	
Questions sent to any other address may not be accepted.	
Accepted questions and the responses will be published as a supplement to the agenda papers prior to the meeting. Further information and guidance is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/getinvolved	
5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC To receive any written questions from members of the public.	
6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL To receive any written questions from members of the council.	
7. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S QUALITY ASSURANCE To brief the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the development, management and learning arising from complaints and compliments.	17 - 42
8. YOUTH JUSTICE To provide the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with an update on the performance of West Mercia Youth Justice Service.	43 - 100
9. WORK PROGRAMME To consider the work programme for the committee.	
10. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING Tuesday 11 November 2025, 2pm.	

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- Inspect agenda and public reports at least five clear days before the date of the meeting. Agenda and reports (relating to items to be considered in public) are available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings
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- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting (a list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
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www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1597/hereford-city-bus-map-local-services-

The seven principles of public life

(Nolan Principles)

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Tuesday 22 July 2025 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor Toni Fagan (chairperson)
Councillor Ben Proctor (vice-chairperson)

Councillors: Frank Cornthwaite, Clare Davies, Dave Davies, Robert Highfield and David Hitchiner

In attendance: Councillor Ivan Powell (Cabinet Member Children and Young People),
Councillor Aubrey Oliver (observer)

Officers: Simon Cann (Democratic Services Officer/Clerk), Alfie Rees-Glinos (Democratic Services Support), Tina Russell (Corporate Director Children and Young People), Suzanne Sims (Head of Service Safeguarding and Review), Danial Webb (Statutory Scrutiny Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence had been received.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There had been no named substitutes.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest,

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were received.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There had been two questions received from members of the public, which had been published, along with responses, as a supplement to the meeting agenda on the Herefordshire Council website

A record of a supplementary question and a verbal response provided during the meeting, are attached at Appendix 1 to these minutes

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

There had been no questions received from members of the council.

7. HEREFORDSHIRE CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Corporate Director of Children and Young People introduced and gave an overview of the report, the key points included:

Three Ofsted monitoring visits had taken place over the last 12 months. The October 2024 visit had focused on harm to children outside of the home, it was pointed out that the 'Get Safe' team had been praised for its effective partnership working in this area. The February 2025 visit had looked at work being carried out by the assessment teams, with strong performance in referrals, assessments and multi-agency collaboration being noted by Ofsted. The most recent visit had taken place in June 2025 and had focused on children in care, with findings highlighting positive outcomes, along with improved relationships and planning - due to workforce stability.

Ofsted had acknowledged how Phase 2 of the Improvement Plan had seemingly sustained the pace of improvement within the service and resulted in better outcomes.

Regarding Phase 3 of the Improvement Plan the Corporate Director provided details of the continuation of the 'Plan on a page' approach, which incorporated the 'Family First' programme. Engagement with the West Midlands Regional Improvement Alliance, and contributions to regional/national best practice initiatives were also detailed.

The Corporate Director explained that the Quality Assurance (QA) Framework was based on three pillars: case file audits, service user feedback and key performance indicators (KPIs). QA activity had revealed that the voice of the child and diversity considerations had been strong and that families had reported improved participation and engagement with the service.

Areas requiring improvement had been identified, specifically in relation to including the voice of the parent in assessments and the need for more child-friendly language to be used in documents. It had been noted that managerial oversight needed to be more visible in case files and that follow up and recording activity relating to cases needed some improvement.

The report acknowledged that there had been and continued to be challenges with syncing Mosaic (case management) and Power BI (reporting) systems and that a national shortage of skilled analysts had complicated data extraction and tracking within the service. The piloting and adoption of AI tools such as Magic Notes would potentially ease the work burden on staff.

The Corporate Director stressed that Phase 3 could be viewed as more of a Children's Services business plan rather than a reactive Improvement Plan. Emphasis on maintaining improvement would come through: continued QA and KPI monitoring, scrutiny involvement, Cabinet and corporate leadership support and embedding relational practice and think family culture.

In summary, it was explained that the pace of improvement could be attributed to the simplification of plans, fewer and more effective meetings, clearer leadership and decision making, and greater stability within the workforce.

The Corporate Director and Cabinet Member Children and Young People provide the committee with an assurance that the improvement momentum would be sustained post-Ofsted and that there had been cross party agreement in prioritising Children's Services.

The Chair invited comments and discussion from the committee in relation to the report. The key points of the discussion are detailed below:

1. The committee asked for more detail around areas of the service that the QA process had indicated needed more focus.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained that overall the practice was improving, but there was a need for clearer separation between parental views and social work analysis. The QA feedback had indicated that assessments and documents would benefit from more consistent use of child-friendly language. The service was currently developing improved questions to better assess the impact of multi-agency working.
2. The committee enquired as to how elected members would be kept informed and involved on the post-Improvement Board journey of the service.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People stated that the Improvement Board would continue until a new full inspection of the service had taken place. In addition to this, updates on progress would be available through quarterly QA reports, KPI dashboards, which were embedded within analysis from the senior leadership team. An assurance was given that the political leadership team was committed to continued visibility and challenge around the service and that non-public KPI briefings could be presented to scrutiny for deeper understanding of issues.
3. The committee raised concerns about the ability to integrate Mosaic and Power BI and asked how problems around this issue were being addressed and whether there were plans in place for when these systems became insufficient/outdated.
 - It was explained by the Corporate Director Children and Young People that integration issues stemmed from the independent development of both systems, but that coordination between Mosaic and Power BI had improved significantly over the past 12 months. A replacement for Mosaic was not currently required and the focus was on making existing tools more efficient, however the technical capacity of the service was limited due to a national shortage of Power BI developers/consultants. In the meantime, AI tools such as Magic Notes were being piloted in a bid to see if efficiency could be improved.
4. The committee requested detail regarding how the Council was budgeting for the increased demand for data and technology skills.
 - The Cabinet Member Children and Young People stated that the Cabinet fully supported the resource needs of Children's Services. The current focus was on achieving more and maximising the potential of existing resources, such as Mosaic, and exploring transformation/innovation before asking for additional funding.
5. A committee member asked what specific leadership actions had enabled the pace of improvement and why it had taken so long to reach the current level of improvement.

- In relation to what had enabled the pace of improvement the Corporate Director Children and Young People pointed to simplified plans (such as the plan on a page approach) and a reduction and shift away from unnecessary meetings/talk shops towards action-focused leadership, which had empowered managers to make decisions.
 - With regards to why it had taken so long to reach the current level of improvement it was suggested that previous plans had lacked focus, clarity and QA measures. Anxiety and indecision had slowed progress and audit findings hadn't been looped back into practice or used for performance management purposes.
6. The committee enquired how it would be possible to ascertain that relational/restorative practice had been embedded across the service.
- The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained that evidence would come through KPIs, audit findings on relational work and family feedback surveys. It was noted that 73% of looked after children were in family settings and a year-on-year reduction in care proceedings was indicative of better early intervention and family support.
7. The committee asked for an explanation as to why certain children were re-entering the child protection system.
- The Corporate Director Children and Young People highlighted the distinction between repeat referrals ever and repeat referrals within two years. Although repeat referrals within 2 years could be seen as a potential failure of the system, they were driven by necessity and was a sign that the partnership continued to work closely with the families and would intervene if it was felt support might be required again to keep things on track. Re-entry into the system after 2 years could, for example, be driven by the return of risk factors such as a parent or partner to a situation. In both instances it was important that the focus was on understanding the reasons for re-referrals being made and not just the numbers involved.
8. A committee member enquired as to whether non-random cases and flagged problem cases could be involved in audits.
- The Corporate Director Children and Young People stated that not only failed outcomes were audited. Successful cases were handled as case reviews or targeted audits to assess whether outcomes had been achieved efficiently, particularly in instances where new processes had been introduced or staff had raised concerns or identified inefficient processes.
9. The committee asked whether the service benchmarked its improvement against other authorities and whether other authorities learned from Herefordshire.
- The Corporate Director Children and Young People confirmed that Herefordshire Council and partners were active in regional networks around the West Midlands. Learning was shared through collaboration via director-level forums, subgroup meetings, peer reviews and diagnostic meetings. Shared priority plans and regional learning networks ensured Herefordshire had both learned from and contributed to peers.

10. The committee considered how the Council would sustain political and strategic commitment once the 'inadequate' label was removed, and the Improvement Board dissolved.
- The Cabinet Member Children and Young People pointed out that even when the Improvement Board dissolved, the statutory roles within it would be retained. Scrutiny and political oversight would be maintained and the culture of cross-party cooperation and recognition of safeguarding as a priority would remain. The Cabinet member stressed that 'Child-Friendly Herefordshire' remained a strategic priority for the Cabinet.
11. The committee asked whether the 'Child Friendly Herefordshire' approach would be formalised within council policy?
- The Cabinet Member Children and Young People pointed out that currently an informal approach was being driven through practice and culture. There were ongoing discussions across departments as to how implement the child friendly approach and suggestions about developing a formal policy or framework had been noted.

At the conclusion of the debate the committee discussed and agreed the following recommendations.

Recommendations:

- 1. For the executive to ensure that the council's digital, data and technology teams are sufficiently staffed, and properly resourced in the next budget, to ensure that all of the data needs of the children and young people directorate are met.**
- 2. For full Council to debate and commit to the principle of working for a child friendly Herefordshire.**

8. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S QUALITY ASSURANCE BRIEFING

The Chair noted that the papers for the item had been published late and proposed that a vote be held as to whether the item should be deferred to the September meeting - to allow the public and the committee members enough time to consider and respond to the report.

The committee members voted unanimously to defer the item to a future committee meeting:

Resolved: That the 'Children and Young People's Quality Assurance Briefing' item be deferred until a future committee meeting.

9. EARLY HELP TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Chair introduced the proposal to establish a Task and Finish Group to examine Early Help provision across Herefordshire. It was noted that the committee has considered Early Help on several occasions, but formal scrutiny meetings had not provided sufficient time or flexibility to explore the topic in detail. The Task and Finish Group approach was guided by the Council's Scrutiny Review and would enable more in-depth, inclusive and flexible working.

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer outlined the proposal explaining that the group would consider both targeted early help (delivered by the Council and safeguarding partners) and universal/pastoral provision across communities.

The approach would adopt an 'Appreciative Inquiry' model, looking at what worked well and how services could be improved. The group itself would use methods such as roadshows, focus groups, site visits, and provider engagement.

Membership would be limited to a small group of 4-7 councillors, with scope to co-opt members/individuals with expertise or local insight. It was pointed out that all councillors (excluding members of the Executive) would be invited to express interest in the group, with final membership selected by the Chair.

The committee unanimously agreed the terms of reference for the Task and Finish Working Group

The terms of reference and following actions were agreed unanimously by the committee:

Resolved that:

a) The committee agree to form a task and finish group according to the terms of reference attached as appendix 1.

10. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair note that a discussion outside of the meeting would be required to consider if and how the deferred 'Children and Young People's Quality Assurance Briefing' item could be included within the agenda of the committee's September 2025 meeting.

The committee considered the work programme included at item 10 of the agenda and unanimously approved the following recommendation:

Resolved that:

1. The committee agree the work programme for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee contained in the work programme report attached as Appendix 1.

11. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 16 September 2025, 2pm

12. APPENDIX 1 - SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION AND RESPONSE

Supplementary questions from members of the public – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, 22 July 2025

Question Number	Questioner	Supplementary Question	Question to
SPQ 1	Ms Reid Hereford	My public question asked: "How and by when will the Committee appoint ... and (I hope) appoint two non-statutory co-optees [Families' Representative and Families' Representative (SEND) co-optees]?"	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

		<p>However, the response has not answered this.</p> <p>Since Jan Frances was appointed on 14 November 2023 as Families' Representative co-optee, she has attended three (one remotely) of ten meetings she could have attended (last attending in September 2024).</p> <p>The report about the Improvement Plan includes the section entitled "Feedback from Children and Families" highlighting its importance.</p> <p>Will the Committee appoint a Families' Representative co-optee and Families' Representative (SEND) co-optee as soon as possible so that their perspectives can be heard?</p>	
<p>Record of verbal response from CYPSC Chair provided during the meeting: <i>"Thank you Ms Reid for your question, just to clarify that the constitution was amended, so we're not committed to having family co-optees or SEND co-optees, but I take your point on board and we will actually be looking at the situation with our co-optees when we have our work programming session and we will have a discussion around the co-optees. So we will be looking at how we can supplement our committee with some expertise to make it more efficient. Thank you."</i></p>			

The meeting ended at 16:08

Chairperson

Title of report: Children and Young People's Quality Assurance Briefing

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: 16 September 2025

Report by: Complaints Manager and QA Service Manager

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All wards

Purpose

To brief the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the development, management and learning arising from complaints and compliments.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- 1) That the committee notes the content of the reports.**
- 2) For the committee to make any recommendations as to how compliments and complaints management within the council and children's services could be enhanced.**

Alternative options

1. The committee may choose the option not to review the report, however this is not recommended as the report is provided to inform the committee of current quality assurance activity in supporting improvement work within the Children's Services directorate.

Key considerations

2. The attached report at Appendix A from the council's complaints department provides an overview of the management data and learning and data of complaints received in quarter one of 25/26 with relative comparisons to the prior year where appropriate.

3. The attached report at Appendix B from the Children Services Quality Assurance manager provides an overview of the service development in the management and analysis of learning from compliments and complaints.
4. The combined reports provide assurance that the two services are working closely to ensure there is a proactive and joint approach to the management and learning of compliments and complaints within children's services.

Community impact

5. A robust and reliable process for the management of complaints for Children's Services will support the improvement in the practice of the department. Ensuring children, young people and their families feel able to raise concerns and be listened to with resolution to their concerns at the earliest stage is an important part of our engagement and restorative practice approach.
6. The scrutiny function supports community development through robust scrutiny of the council's policy framework, including the Local Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, County Plan and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
7. Scrutiny also supports community issues more directly through the work of the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee.
8. The function also helps to ensure that the council discharges its corporate parent duties effectively, through scrutiny of the corporate parenting board and the council's broader work to support its looked after children and their families.

Environmental impact

9. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
10. All reports to scrutiny committees, as with all council committees, include appraisals of the impact of the report content on climate change. Scrutiny committee work programmes directly link to the Herefordshire Council Plan priorities, including the key priority to "Protect and enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live."
11. Climate change and carbon reduction related issues are directly identified in the remit and therefore the focus of the Environment and Sustainability scrutiny committee.
12. In preparing this information report, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the council's Environmental Policy. Examples include:
 - a. Online meetings, eliminating the need to travel to Hereford for a single meeting.
 - b. Paper-free briefings and informal meetings, eliminating the need for printed paper.

Equality duty

13. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
14. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. As this report is primarily for information, we do not believe that accepting (or rejecting) this report will have an impact on our equality duty.
15. The Children's Services and Council Complaints services pay full regard to the council's responsibilities as set out in the public sector equality duty and ensures all persons are able to use the complaints process being provided with the necessary support as required to address any individual needs identified.

Resource implications

16. Effective scrutiny produces evidence-based recommendations. These can be informed by learning from best practice and an understanding of 'what works' at other similar local authorities, as well as developing a robust picture of what the situation is locally based on data, intelligence and insights. Where adopted recommendations can help with the efficiency and effectiveness of services that can be delivered differently, as well as informing the development of current and new policies.
17. As this report is primarily for information, there are no direct resource implications arising from this report. However, the function may require some funding in order to carry out its work effectively. Requirements may include purchasing training or expert advice. However, it is anticipated that much of the training and development required during the year can be met using existing council resources.

Risk management

18. Effective scrutiny is a feature of the council's governance arrangements, where the council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range of factors that could result in risks to the council of not doing scrutiny effectively. These include the failure to:
 - a. challenge and hold decision makers to account
 - b. link scrutiny work to the delivery of the council's priorities and risk management
 - c. carry out thorough and appropriate research to make evidence-based recommendations
 - d. engage partners and providers
 - e. ensure that structures and models of operation are fit for purpose and match ambition and available resources

- f. ensure that scrutiny can operate as the voice of communities and
- g. draw on member knowledge and experience to inform policy development.

19. To mitigate, tolerate or eradicate these risks, enablers for effective scrutiny include:
- a. operating in an apolitical manner
 - b. clarity of vision and purpose
 - c. scrutiny support availability, capability and capacity
 - d. effective engagement and commitment by members and officers at all levels, including cabinet, opposition leaders, scrutiny chairs and senior officers who play a central role in setting the tone and direction
 - e. robust work programming and prioritisation of topics with clear objectives and expected impacts
 - f. ensuring that scrutiny work will add value to the council and communities e.g. through strong links between work programme topics and the integrated strategic plans that set out the actions and timescales to deliver the priorities in the County Plan
 - g. access to and availability of robust data and intelligence and
 - h. good relationships with partners and providers.

Consultees

20. None

Appendices

Appendix A: Children's Complaints and Compliments Statutory Quarterly Report, Q1

Appendix B: Children's Services report on development, management and learning from complaints

Background papers

None

Children's Complaints and Compliments

Statutory Quarterly Report, Q1

1st April – 30th June

2025 / 2026

Author: Tilly Page, Complaints and Children's Rights Manager

Contents

1	Introduction	
2	Complaints, regarding Childrens Services, processed through the Children's Statutory Representations and Complaints Policy, Stage 1	
2.1	Performance Metrics	3
2.2	Complaints by Month	4
2.3	Complaints by Service Area	4
2.4	Complaints by Category	5
2.5	Outcome of complaint investigations	6
2.6	Timeliness of complaint investigations	7
3	Complaints, regarding Childrens Services, processed through the Children's Statutory Representations and Complaints Policy, Stage 2	
3.1	Volume of complaints escalated in quarter 1	8
3.4	Reason for escalation	8
4	Compliments, regarding Childrens Services	
4.1	Volume of compliments	9
4.2	Category of compliments	10
5	Learning, LGSCO, Financial Implications	
5.1	LGSCO investigations and decisions	13
5.2	Financial implications	13
6	Analysis and Recommendations	
6.1	Analysis and Recommendations	14

Introduction

This report covers the first quarter of 2024-25 reporting and provides an overview of the complaints dealt with through the Complaints Team. It provides an opportunity to reflect on the lessons to be learnt and the subsequent actions to be implemented to improve our services to our communities.

This report will focus on the complaints processed through the Children's Representations and Complaints Policy.

NB: complaints processed through the Corporate Complaints Policy are reported separately.

The Statutory Children's Representations and Complaints Policy covers complaints about:

- Council's services to children in need or in care (children looked after)
- How the council applies to take a child into care
- Complaints about fostering, special guardianship and adoption services
- Complaints about services to children leaving care.

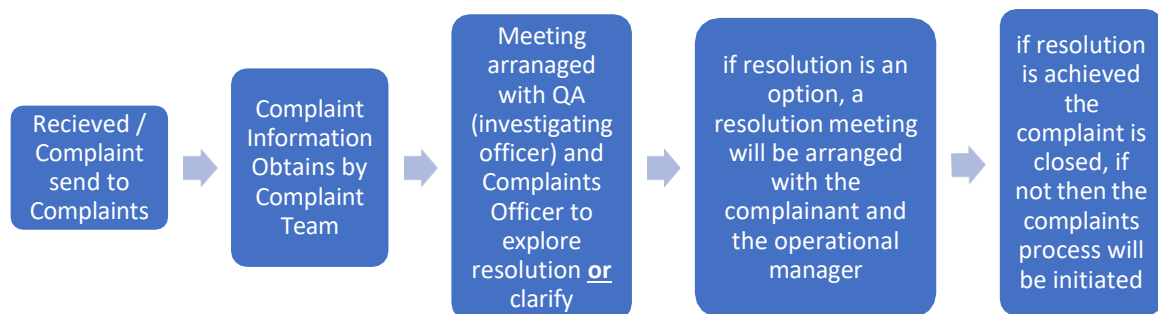
This report also covers the external Compliments received and any learning that has been identified by the Local Authority.

Performance Metrics

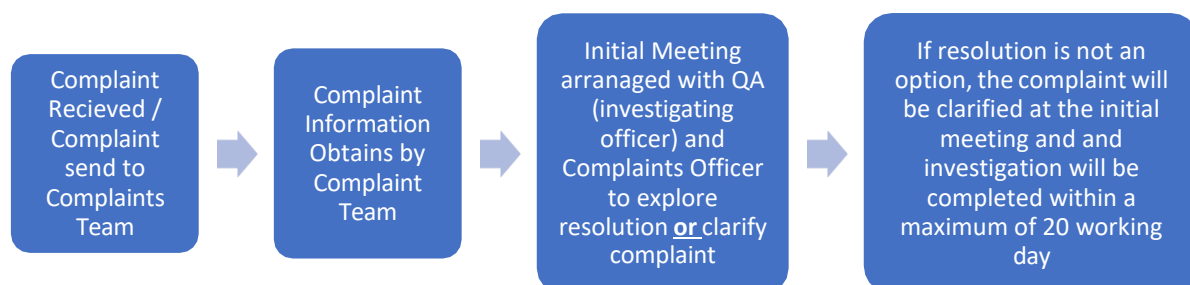
In this quarter, 7 complaints were managed through the Children's Representations and Complaints Statutory Policy. In comparison to the 22 received in quarter one last year this is a commendable decrease in complaints received. The below chart shows the number of complaints received by month.

Of the complaints dealt with, 0 were completed outside of the timescale at the time of this report, meaning 0% of responses went over the statutory timescales. This is a significant, commendable, improvement from the 79% of the response that were last in quarter 1 last year.

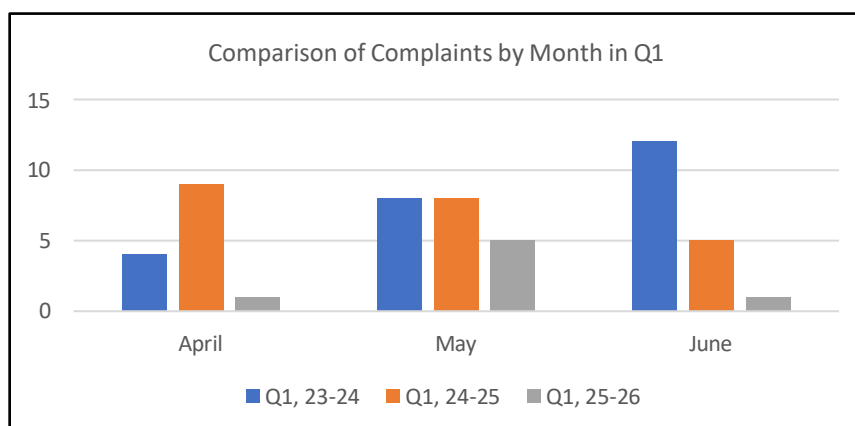
Resolution/Complaints Procedure



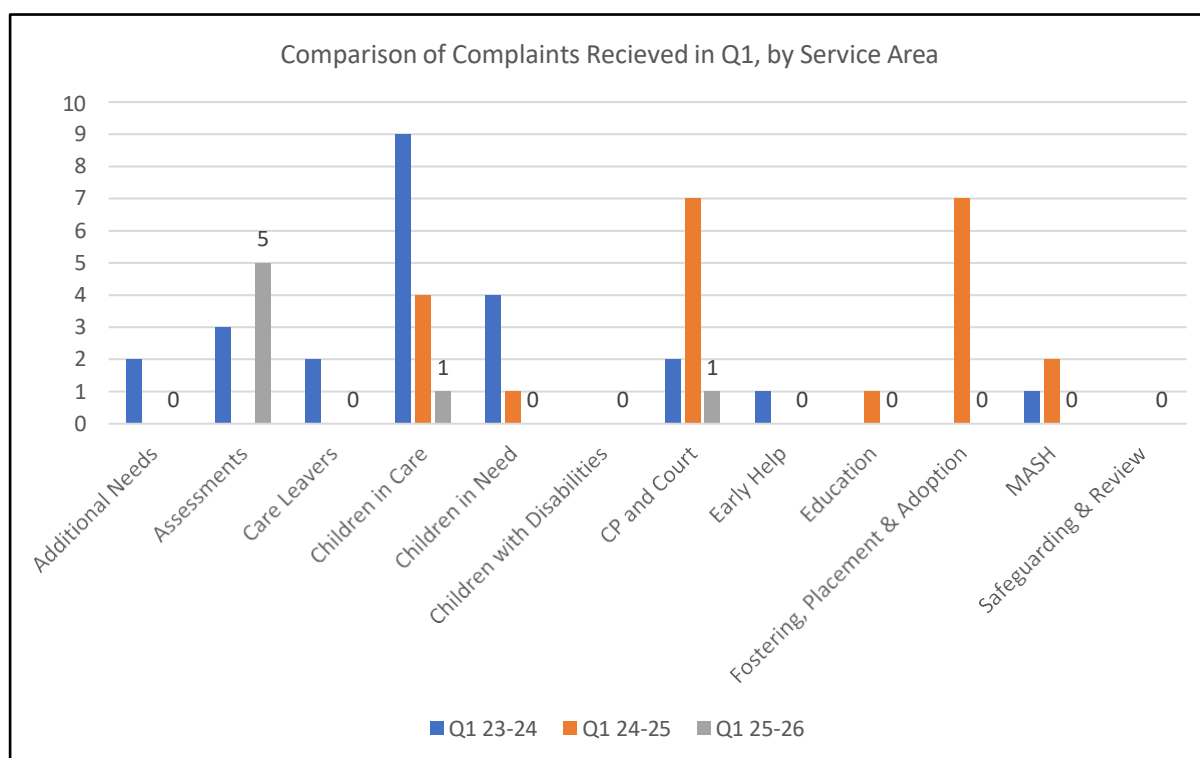
Complaints Procedure



Quarter 1, Children's Complaints and Compliments Report

Complaints by month:**Complaints by Service Area:**

Complaints are reported by service area, this allows us to track, monitor and take necessary action within the relevant service areas.



Unlike with previous years, the Assessment and Support service received the most complaints this quarter. The complaints submitted consistently raise concerns about the content of assessments being written about children and families. Of the 5 complaints, 4 were partially upheld.

It is important to understand the specifics of the individual complaint where it is upheld or partially upheld as in some instances these are upheld as a reflection of the way a service user has felt or experienced a service as opposed to a finding that the service has made a finding that they have done inappropriate or poor practice

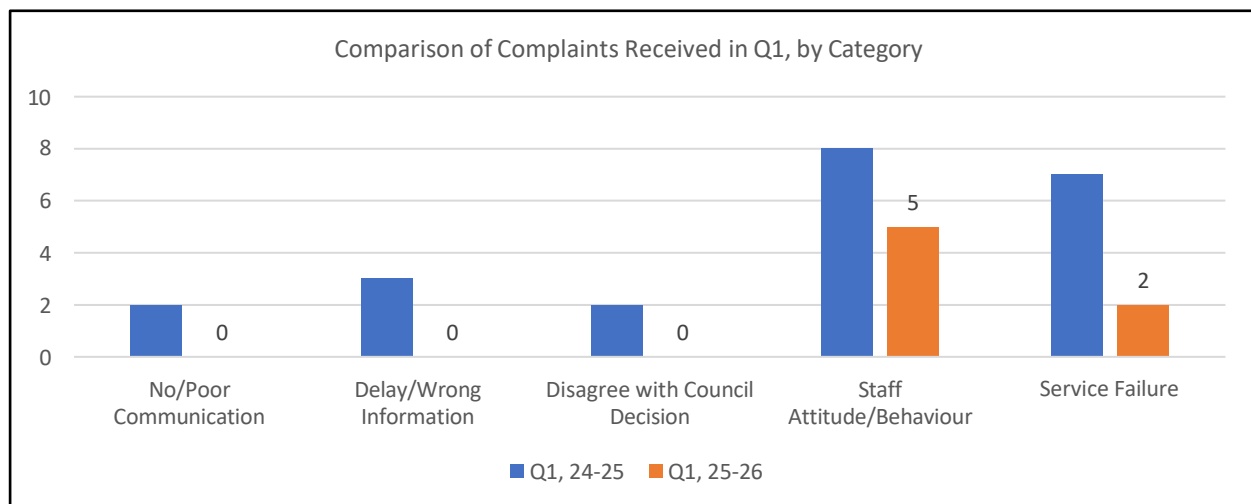
Complaints by category:

Categories of complaint follow the most common categories for complaint identified by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman: service failure to follow procedures, poor communication, negative staff attitudes, giving out wrong or misleading information, and poor decision making.

NB: Service failure is defined by the LGSCO as:

- *A failure in a service which it was the function of an authority to provide, or*
- *A failure to provide such a service*

The graph below shows the volume of complaints received this quarter by category in comparison to reporting year 24-25:



The highest reasons for service users complaining remains around 'staff attitude' and 'service failure', suggesting that the way we are interacting with families is not having the desired positive impact for all families. However it is important to see this small number in the context of the significant volume of new and open cases the service is dealing with each day.

It is, positive that no complaints have been categorised as 'Delay / Wrong Information', 'No/Poor Communication' and 'Disagree with Council Decision', a previously low area of category in the previous year, in comparison, but another commendable point of improvement.

Outcomes:

Of the 7 complaints received and investigated, 5 contained elements that were upheld by the investigating officer. Outcomes of complaint investigations can be defined as;

- **Upheld:**

An upheld complaint is the result of a thorough investigation where evidence supports the complainant's claims and or recognises their experience. The officer investigating the complaint agrees with the complainant and or acknowledges their experience and or practice could be improved..

- **Partially Upheld:**

If a complaint has multiple issues and only some are found to be Upheld and or some Not upheld, the overall complaint is recorded as "partially upheld". The planned service quartile reporting will address the greater detail behind this data in its analysis report.

Quarter 1, Children's Complaints and Compliments Report

Number of Complaints	Upheld	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld
7	1	2	4

Timeliness:

- **0%** of Children's complaints were responded to out of timescale or not at all.

Children's Representations and Complaints Policy Timescales are Statutory.

The timescales in working days for the Children's Representations and Complaints procedure are:

- 10 days at Stage 1 (with a further 10 days for more complex complaints or additional time if an advocate is required)
- 25 days at Stage 2 (with maximum extension to 65 days)
- 10 days for the local authority to respond to the findings by Adjudication letter
- 20 days for the complainant to request a Review Panel
- 30 days to convene and hold the Review Panel at Stage 3
- 5 days for the Panel to issue its findings
- 15 days for the local authority to respond to the findings.

Number of Complaints	Response within 10 days	Response within 11-20 days	Response over 20 days
8	2	5	0

Stage 2: Independent Investigation

At the time of writing this report, **20** complaints are actively open and being investigated at stage 2 of the complaints process.

7 complaints escalated to stage 2 this quarter.

Number of Complaints open at stage 2	Reports sent to complainant	Reports sent for adjudication	Statement of Complaint Meeting Pending	Reports due within 55 working days
20	2	3	9	6

Complainants have the right to escalate their complaint to stage 2 at any point during the stage 1 complaints process. They have the right to escalate their complaint due to a lack of response and they can escalate their complaint regardless of the outcome or finding i.e even if stage one uphold their complaints. Reasons for complaints being escalated to stage 2 can be seen below;

Number of escalations to stage 2	No response at stage 1	Dissatisfaction following mediation meeting	Lack of follow-up action from stage 1 response	Dissatisfied with stage 1 response	Request for stage 2, not stage 1
7	1	0	0	4	2

It is important we understand the quality of stage 1 by cross referencing any differences between findings in stage 2 by the independent investigators against the findings in stage one from the service. Going forward this more detailed analysis will be reported on in the quarterly reports.

Compliments

The below table identifies external compliments that have been received via compliments@herefordshire.gov.uk, these compliments range from being about individual professionals to the whole service.

NB: internal compliments are logged with Employee Appreciation.

There were **31** compliments received from external sources this quarter.

Compliments have been categorised into three areas of compliment; Specific Behaviours or Actions, Individual Skills and Qualities and Impact on Others

1. Specific Actions or Behaviours could include:

Responsiveness:

Compliments focused on how quickly and effectively a team or individual addressed a request or need.

Problem-solving:

Acknowledging the ability to resolve issues or overcome challenges.

Efficiency:

Appreciation for completing tasks or processes quickly and smoothly.

Communication:

Compliments on clarity, transparency, and helpfulness in communication.

Guidance and Support:

Recognising when staff provide helpful advice, training, or assistance.

Professionalism:

Acknowledging courteous, respectful, and ethical conduct.

2. Individual Skills and Qualities could include:

Expertise:

Compliments on specialised knowledge or skills.

Empathy and Compassion:

Appreciation for understanding and caring for others' needs.

Creativity and Innovation:

Recognising original ideas or approaches.

Leadership and Mentorship:

Acknowledging positive influence and guidance.

Patience and Kindness:

Compliments on demonstrating these qualities, particularly in challenging situations.

Dedication and Commitment:

Recognising hard work and going the extra mile.

3. Impact on Others could include:

Positive Influence:

Acknowledging the impact of an individual's work on others.

Confidence Building:

Compliments on helping others feel more confident or capable.

Motivation and Inspiration:

Recognising individuals who inspire others.

Community Engagement:

Compliments on contributions to the broader community.

Creating a Positive Environment:

Acknowledging those who contribute to a positive and welcoming atmosphere

Quarter 1, Children's Complaints and Compliments Report

Compliment Received
"I would just like to thank you for the lovely CLA meeting letter for X. Its really well written up in a way that X can understand whilst still being factual".
I just wanted to say however how full of praise X was for Vanessa. X said how great Vanessa had been in keeping her up to date on attempts to arrange contact and how sorry she was to see her go. It was definitely the most glowing report of a social worker I have received from X. She thinks you are brilliant Vanessa which is all the more impressive based on the journey you have been on together!
When asked what had helped their family the most? "Being listened to and having someone who had good intentions for me and my family".
Is there anything we could do better? "No just being yourself and that makes people feel more safe and trusting".
Hope all is well. I wanted to share some wonderful feedback I received during a complaint meeting yesterday afternoon. The complainant, Mr. X, had nothing but praise for the service he has received from you. He specifically mentioned your responsiveness and how he felt genuinely listened to. This is a stark contrast to his reported previous experiences, and it was really refreshing to hear such positive comments after a long day.
I just wanted to let you know how fantastic Danny has been with my daughter X, myself and my husband through the time we have been working with him. He has understood domestic abuse which has been problematic in the past as some social workers don't fully understand it with it being so complex. He formed a great bond with X and I have valued all his input and help that he has given us. I am thankful that Danny came along and gave us all the help and support with the on going issues that surrounded domestic abuse and commend him for not giving up, as I know X's case has not been easy for him due to behaviours from Mr Y. He should be greatly valued as a member of the Hereford children's services.
As much as we are all over joyed to be moving away from the Local authority with X's care order being discharged, Danny will be very much missed by us. But I am sure he will be changing the lives for the better for other children who need him. He really is an amazing person and social worker so thank you for sending him our way! I just wanted to send this to you so you are aware of how great Danny is which I am sure will be appreciated. And I feel he should have recognition for all his efforts he has made for the sake of X and the family.
"Bonnie is an excellent IRO. I have attended many CLAR's over the years and she is by far one of the best. She is excellent with the children in my opinion. She is approachable and relatable, and I enjoy going to reviews!"

"it was one of the best stage 1 responses I have seen as an Investigating Officer"
"she has been amazing, she's been on it, on the ball, if there's an issue she will speak to you, she works with me, in partnership with me"
Can't speak highly enough of Tanya, she's taken time to understand this case and my daughter.
These are excellent Minutes - a clear and well structured summary and I picked up an additional point we missed in our post panel discussion. Please thank Becks.
I have spoken to a dad today and he shared that you have been a star and he can't sing your praises high enough. You have supported him and the children, and challenged school about using isolation which was having a huge impact on his son.
X shared he has had bad experiences in the past with social workers and family support workers, and he said that working with you has been brilliant.

Quarter 1, Children's Complaints and Compliments Report

I have been encouraged by X (aged 10) and Y (aged 7) at their review to pass on compliments about their social worker Jake. They wondered if he can have a pay rise!!! I told them I wasn't sure about that one, but would certainly tell his managers what they have said.
They said in the review they really like Jake and can not think of anything he could do better. Y repeatedly asked when she could see Jake next and this was really important to her.
I just wanted to pass on compliments from X, I was tasked with completing an audit and X shared the Nana is wonderful and communication is brilliant
I wanted to write to compliment you both on such an excellent Final Report.
I was particularly struck by how strengths-based you were in your writing Debz, and also in turn how Dwayne also identifies the importance of his own strengths based recording in practice.
X has advised that Louise has listened to her request for her biological father Y to be referred to as "Y" not dad. A has advised that Louise is the best social worker so far because "she listens" and "doesn't criticise me".
'The previous young persons SW Tejan Leigh was outstanding. Very supportive of both YP and us. Understood our concerns and worked with us and not against us at all. He supported our ideas and our suggestions on her future.'
We both thoroughly enjoyed reading our report. Zarnain has articulated our reasons for wanting to become foster carers exceptionally well and has provided a detailed and accurate account of our childhood, adolescence, and current lifestyle. Zarnain has fully taken into account our reasons to foster and articulated this clearly in her report. The training that she has provided has been exceptional and delivered in an engaging format both in person and online. Zarnain took into account our working hours with our jobs and was able to fit training in to suit these needs which we were really grateful for. We would like to place on record our thanks and appreciation for the work she has undertaken and how she has supported us on our first steps towards fostering.
I have just obtained some feedback from X regarding the CP conference recently held. As part of this feedback X shared that she cannot thank Lyndsey enough for all her help and support thought the CP process. X wanted to share that both you and Lyndsey have gone above and beyond anything she would ever expect in regard of your input. X believes Lyndsey has everything it takes to be a great social worker.
I just want to let you know that X has shared some lovely feedback with me today following a phone call to the mum of * Mum wanted to thank you both for the support that you offered (last year), which she said that she really appreciated and valued, finding the support really helpful. The family are now stepping down to a TAF in the community!
Hope your well. X is due to finish college this month . He has passed with a merit & I have to say Gloucester college have done wonders for X. He has been accepted at Brighton university I know his EHCP ceases but I just wanted to thank you for everything you have done for X over the years without your help he wouldn't be where he is now so thank you so much . Take care.

Quarter 1, Children's Complaints and Compliments Report

I have just heard the very sad news that Donna Savoury will be moving on. Donna has changed our children's centre for the better. She has made great changes for all our families. Always approachable to myself, colleagues and the clients that come through our door. The opportunities for families and activities at the centre has been outstanding. Donna will be greatly missed by all our team. She will be sadly missed by all.
'Laura really did manage and I can't talk highly enough of her. She had been extremely supportive and helped me manage some very challenging situations with some of the Y/P in particular X in the latter part of last year. I felt very lucky to have such a conscientious, kind, caring and thoughtful social worker and we had a very good connection and she went above and beyond to make me feel supported when times had been particularly challenging and I was very sad to hear she was no longer going to be my social worker.'
'Aisha Aziz, is my new social worker, I haven't been working with Aisha for that long, but we get on well and I've found her very helpful and supportive and always there if I need to talk with her, which is very reassuring for me. I hope she will remain my social worker for many months ahead.'
We would like to thank you for the efficiency, understanding and kindness that the staff has shown during this process.
We truly appreciate all your support. You and Dawn have made our relocation process so much smoother, and we're very grateful for everything you've done.
Testimony to excellent PLO work and I commend Frank and yourself in such regard. Please feel free to share this message with your line manager. I have also copied in X so that she is aware of the excellent work undertaken pre-proceedings.
I look forward to a closure of all proceedings and just being able to enjoy family time with my children as brilliant as children services in Hereford have been I have thoroughly enjoyed working with all staff and have felt supported at all times so I just wanted to say thank you again you have been brilliant
The parent spoke very highly of Claire and described her as amazing; always available when I needed to speak with her; professional but approachable; included our wishes and feelings in the assessment; was able to build a positive relationship with me and the child quickly; always did what she said she would do; was always reliable with appointments and visits & made a positive difference to our family.
"hey ffon its X i just wanted to say thank you for everything you helped me so much you made me realise my worth and i can't honestly be more thankful if it wasn't for your constant check ups and support i honestly dont think id be here today so thank you "
ECHO worker Jane Dunderdale has been "absolutely fantastic- she was my Mary Poppins, checked how we are doing, actually listened and was responsive to our problems, she worked with my kids and seemed to actually care for us – she really was fantastic!"
At the same time, I would like to thank you for your fantastic presentations (on both sessions), which were very meaningful, informative and deep in their meaning, which gave me a lot of material to reflect on. I was also very impressed how skilful you were in creating a very open, safe and creative atmosphere where people were so easy to share their opinions, thoughts and feelings.

Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

There are **2** complaints for this quarter being dealt with by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO); we are awaiting outcomes on all of these, this does not mean they are being investigated.

Financial Implications

Quarter 1, Children's Complaints and Compliments Report

The current spend on stage 2 and 3 complaint investigations this financial year is £11,507.60 This figure has been taken from invoices submitted following the conclusion of stage 2 investigations and stage 3 panel hearings.

Whilst, as explained earlier in the report, we have no control over these escalations, and they are not necessarily indicative of the quality of the stage 1 responses. However we recognize the cost to the LA in these and as such it is important we work together to locally resolve complaints and implement remedies, outlined in LGSCO guidance, in an attempt to resolve complaints and prevent escalation.

NB: the figure spent by the end of each quarter is not indicative of the complaint received that quarter. Due to timescales of the stage 2 and stage 3 procedure more often than not the financial implications of escalations is not seen until a minimum of 4 months has lapsed

Analysis and Recommendations

This quarter's statutory report on Children's Representations and Complaints signals a period of significant positive transformation, particularly in complaint volume and process adherence, yet also highlights specific areas requiring focused intervention. This report presents a mixed but largely positive picture regarding complaint management, demonstrating significant improvements in key areas while highlighting specific challenges requiring focused attention.

A key positive message is the commendable decrease in overall complaint volume this quarter, from 22 to just 7, alongside an exemplary achievement of 100% of responses completed within statutory timescales, representing a dramatic improvement from 21% last year. This indicates a robust and efficient initial complaints handling process, adhering strictly to procedural requirements.

We see "staff attitude" and "service failure" remain the highest categories of complaint,. This suggests ongoing challenges in front-line interactions and adherence to established procedures, impacting service user satisfaction in this cohort of complainants. However as noted overall these are small numbers of service user complaints in comparison to the high volume of service users open and active to the services. Future cross reference with compliments will however put a balanced context to both issues.

Key Recommendations:

1. **Enhance Effectiveness of Stage 1 Resolution:** Joint services work on improving the quality, timeliness and satisfactory outcome of Stage 1 and Stage 2 to reduce Stage 2 and or Stage 3 escalations and associated costs. This could involve empowering investigating officers with greater discretion for immediate remedies, exploring mediation, or providing additional training on effective complaint resolution techniques that fully address and acknowledge issues raised.
2. **Leverage Compliments for Best Practice Dissemination:** Analyse the themes from the 31 compliments received to identify specific positive behaviours, individual skills, and qualities that lead to positive service user experiences. Disseminate these best practices widely across all service areas to foster a culture of excellence and learn from what is working well.



APPENDIX B

Complaints and Compliments in Practice

Complaints process:

We have changed the way we manage our stage 1 complaints. QA Practitioners have been undertaking stage 1 complaint investigations since this was trialled in November 2024, and the process was revised in collaboration with the Complaints Department in March 2025. The new process is provided as appendix 1 to this paper.

This ensures that the complaint is allocated to an experienced social worker who is not directly involved with the case. This provides a certain level of independency from the team in which the complaint originates. Complainants have responded to the involvement of QA Practitioners positively and engaged well in the process.

Staff who are subject to a complaint are now provided with guidance on the process, the expectations of them within the complaints process and welfare information.

If children/young people raise a complaint they are offered an advocate, a face to face meeting with the QA Practitioner and we ensure that any written communication is age appropriate and understandable. They are regularly updated and given the opportunity to have the QA Practitioner meet with them to share the outcome letter, to ensure that they have fully understood.

All final response letters to complainants are quality assured by the Service Manager for QA or Service Director before being sent out to ensure a thorough investigation has been undertaken, robust rationale is included, outcomes are appropriate and proportionate, and recommendations are achievable and realistic.

Any actions or recommendations arising from the stage 1 outcome are tracked by the QA Practitioner to ensure that they are completed within an agreed timeframe. Examples may include recommendations for a reflective supervision to take place to discuss the learning from the complaint between the Team Manager and Allocated Social Worker and/or rectifying an action; so for example, ensuring meeting minutes are provided.

Complaint outcomes

The 24/25 complaints annual report provides an overview of complaint outcomes and learning.

As of 25/26 the service will be producing a Quarterly analysis report which will also be used to understand complaints within our service.

Summary of Learning from Q1 compliments and complaints

- A Quarterly Learning from Complaints and Compliments bulletin is circulated to all staff in children's services. This celebrates our external compliments and raises awareness of our key learning areas for improvement and development from complaints. The quarter 2 report is included as appendix 2 to this paper.
- This report highlights good practice and any learning from our complaints to be addressed through training and development.

- Our current programme of workshops mirror the key learning themes from complaints.
- Workshops are held by the QA Practitioners and are bite size sessions to ensure staff have availability and capacity to attend. Workshops currently on offer:

- Voice of the Child and Purposeful Visits
- Engaging Fathers and Men
- Threshold Training
- SMART Planning and Safety Plans
- Chronology, Genogram and Case Summaries
- Confirmatory Bias
- Professional Curiosity

- Feedback from staff around the workshops has been positive and we report on this separately.
- Bi-monthly meetings are held with the QA Team and the Academy to share learning from complaints and audits to ensure that our training package is robust and we are working collaboratively to develop our Training Needs Analysis.
- We ensure that any actions or recommendations arising from complaints are completed, the Complaints Department track and alert the service to actions outstanding to ensure that we are closing the loop on actions/recommendations.

Financial payments:

- The complaints process is not the route to financial compensation. A claim for this applies only when families believe that the LA has failed to protect a child or convened a child's human rights. However, in some instances, we will make a nominal payment through the complaints process where we think there is a specific financial way to address something to achieve a satisfactory complaint outcome. An example of this is a young requesting that she would like to receive a financial payment for her negative experience, which included not being supported to have her 18th birthday celebration in the way that she wanted to. This was due to the challenge the service faced in providing her with appropriate accommodation to start her young adult life. We acknowledged that we didn't work well with her to agree a positive plan of support as she left our care.

Next Steps:

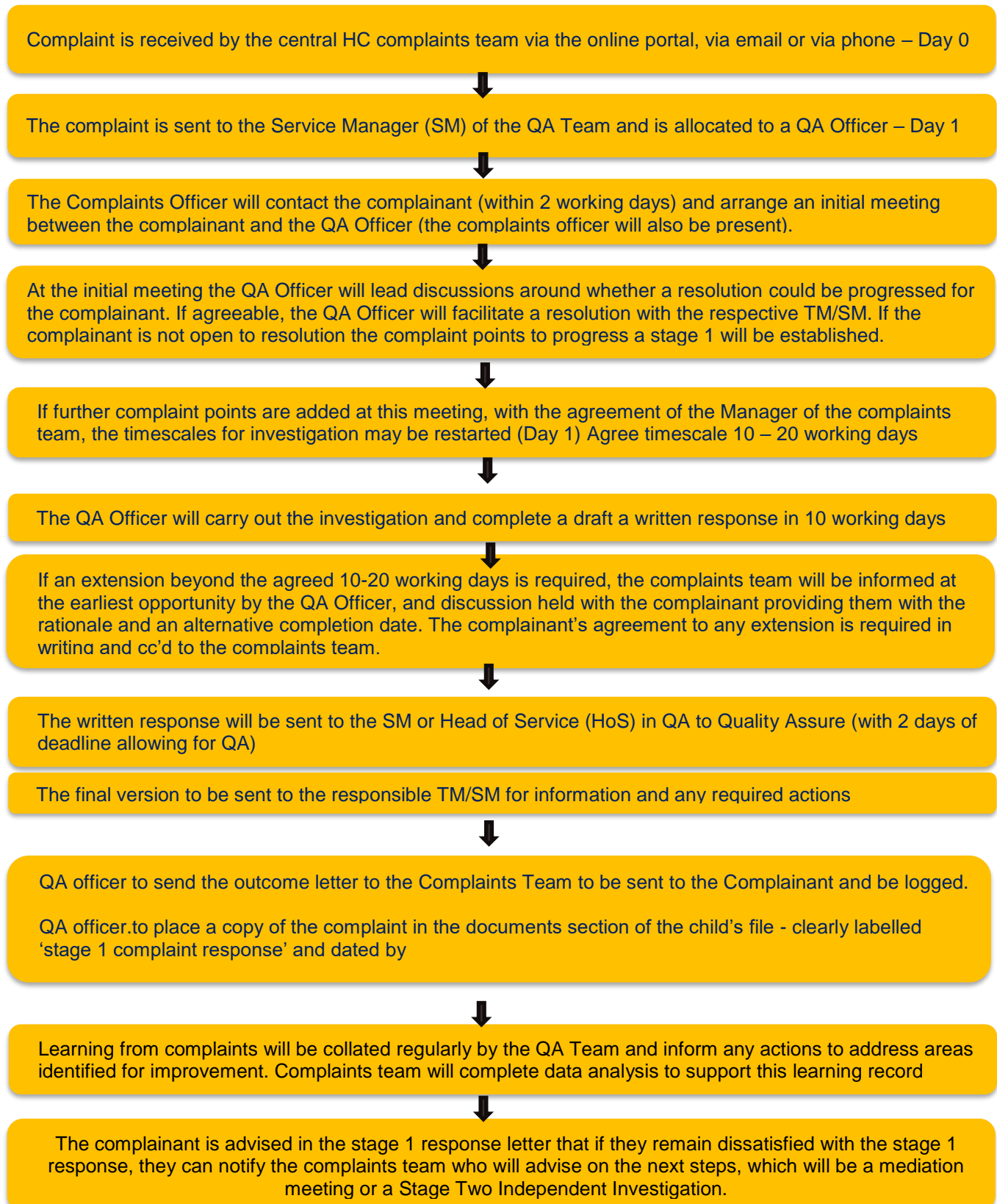
-We will be ensuring that we closely monitor our compliments through the development of categories information, to better understand what parents and young people are finding valuable and positive about the way that we work with them.

-The service user feedback we receive from the monthly case file audits includes compliments and complaints. Complaints we address through the audit process however compliments received also need to be recognised for balance, and these need to be recorded, shared with individual staff and celebrated.

- The complaints service record overall complaint outcomes however complaints can contain several elements which have different outcomes. We will be working with the complaints team to ensure that we are able to track the category of each complaint point so we can better understand the quality of our service.
- The QA Service will continue to produce Quarterly Complaints and Compliments Bulletins for staff to keep momentum of learning and improvement.
- Workshops and training will continue to be informed by complaint outcomes and tailored accordingly.

Appendix 1

Children's Services: Complaints Flow Chart (March 2025)



Appendix 2



Learning from Complaints: Quarterly Bulletin

This bulletin is for **quarter 1 (1st April 2025 – 30th June 2025)** and provides a summary of good practice and learning identified from our complaint investigations at stage 1.

😊 Good Practice Identified:

- Assessments are accurate and interpretation of information is well documented through analysis.
- Phone calls and emails have been recorded and easily located on case files.
- We have seen an appropriate and proportionate response to concerns around domestic abuse.
- There is good evidence of information sharing and joined up working with our partner agencies.
- Work undertaken with partners/fathers is undertaken within realistic timeframes, demonstrating inclusiveness.
- The correct procedures and thresholds have been correctly identified, when responding to referrals (MASH)
- The level of professionalism of our staff can be clearly seen within the complaints process.
- There is evidence of analysis and reflection around children's lived experience, demonstrating impact.

Learning from Complaints:

- Ensuring that we consistently demonstrate professional curiosity.
- To ensure that there is a clear timeframe for children in, or leaving care, to have their belongings provided to them.
- Ensuring that in our assessments/reports we distinguish between facts and allegations.
- Making sure we record how questions from a parent have been responded to
- Consistently engaging fathers/partners throughout our involvement.
- To increase the involvement of multi-agency partners in discussions around housing and sharing information about risks in the local community.
- Ensuring that the language we use is clear and understandable for children and families.
- Making sure that we routinely triangulate information to be clear about its authenticity.
- Ensuring that we are timely in completing our assessments.
- To make sure that we are translating documents when an interpreter is required so that the young person has a written record to refer to that they understand.

- Quality assuring our assessments and reports to avoid factual inaccuracies and typing/grammar errors.
- Making sure managerial oversight is recorded on the case file in a timely way.

Compliments

Our compliments evidence our good practice. We have received 31 external compliments in Q1. Examples of these are:

“I would just like to thank you for the lovely CLA meeting letter for Martha. Its really well written up in a way that Martha can understand whilst still being factual”.
(compliment for Bonnie Tasker; IRO)

“Louise is the best social worker so far because “she listens” and “doesn’t criticise me”.
(Compliment for Louise Welsby from a young person)

“I look forward to a closure of all proceedings and just being able to enjoy family time with my children as brilliant as children services in Hereford have been I have thoroughly enjoyed working with all staff and have felt supported at all times so I just wanted to say thank you again you have been brilliant” (Compliment received from a parent)

“Amazing; always available when I needed to speak with her; professional but approachable; included our wishes and feelings in the assessment; was able to build a positive relationship with me and the child quickly; always did what she said she would do; was always reliable with appointments and visits & made a positive difference to our family.” (Compliment for Claire Hargest; Social Worker)

Resources and Training:

We have a number of workshops which are useful for staff, which address the learning themes identified, and we would encourage practitioners to access these for their own learning and development (CPD) and to ensure that we are continually improving our practice.

15/7/2025 10-12	Safety & SMART Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding what makes a good outcome focussed, child centred SMART plan and developing that plan for families. • Contingency planning • What is a safety plan • Formulating a safety plan
29/7/2025 10-12	Confirmatory Bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the impact of fixed thinking and confirmatory bias in practice, how to recognise and prevent this.
5/8/2025 10-12	Voice of the Child & Purposeful Visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above
7/8/2025 10-12	Chronology, G and CC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To confirm practice expectations about content and use of chronologies, Genograms and Case Summaries • Learning from audits – what good looks like

26/8/2025 10-12	Threshold training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding Thresholds • Applying the Levels of Need using case scenarios • Complex cases/neglect and threshold
28/8/2025 10-12	Professional Curiosity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To strengthen our understanding of what professional curiosity is. • To explore the barriers and enablers to professional curiosity in practice.

Please book through the CYPQA@herefordshire.gov.uk.

‘The Restorative Practice Approach’ is being implemented across our service and will also support practice. Make sure you have completed the training available and consider how you are embedding this approach in practice. Training can be booked on here: [Herefordshire Safeguarding Partnership - Learning Management System](#)

“The relationship between the social worker and the family is the most powerful tool for change. Never underestimate the empowering effect of human connection. All you need is that one person, who understands you completely, believes in you and makes you feel loved for what you are, to enable you to thrive”



Title of report: Youth justice

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: 16 September 2025

Report by: Head of Service, West Mercia Youth Justice Service

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All wards

Purpose

To provide the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with an update on the performance of West Mercia Youth Justice Service.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The committee read the attached report and appendices, and prepare any lines of enquiry and questions for officers attending the meeting.**

Alternative options

1. The committee have requested this report for consideration at this meeting. Therefore no alternative options are presented.

Key considerations

2. As part of its work programme, the have asked to receive an update on the performance of the West Mercia Youth Justice Service.
3. Appendix 1 to this report provides a copy of the West Mercia Youth Justice Service annual plan for the period 2025-2026.
4. Appendix 2 contains performance information on:
 - a. Reoffending rates

- b. First-time offending rates
 - c. Accommodation, housing and homelessness
 - d. Education and training
 - e. Health
 - f. Working with offenders and victims
5. Appendix 3 provides an overview of the service.

Community impact

- 6. The scrutiny function supports community development through robust scrutiny of the council's policy framework, including the Local Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, County Plan and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 7. Scrutiny also supports community issues more directly through the work of the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee.
- 8. The function also helps to ensure that the council discharges its corporate parent duties effectively, through scrutiny of the corporate parenting board and the council's broader work to support its looked after children and their families.

Environmental impact

- 9. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
- 10. All reports to scrutiny committees, as with all council committees, include appraisals of the impact of the report content on climate change. Scrutiny committee work programmes directly link to the Herefordshire Council Plan priorities, including the key priority to "Protect and enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live.
- 11. Climate change and carbon reduction related issues are directly identified in the remit and therefore the focus of the Environment and Sustainability scrutiny committee.
- 12. In preparing this information report, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the council's Environmental Policy. Examples include:
 - a. Online meetings, eliminating the need to travel to Hereford for a single meeting.
 - b. Paper-free briefings and informal meetings, eliminating the need for printed paper.

Equality duty

13. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
14. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. As this report is primarily for information, we do not believe that accepting (or rejecting) this report will have an impact on our equality duty.

Resource implications

15. Effective scrutiny produces evidence-based recommendations. These can be informed by learning from best practice and an understanding of 'what works' at other similar local authorities, as well as developing a robust picture of what the situation is locally based on data, intelligence and insights. Where adopted recommendations can help with the efficiency and effectiveness of services that can be delivered differently, as well as informing the development of current and new policies.
16. As this report is primarily for information, there are no direct resource implications arising from this report. However the function may require some funding in order to carry out its work effectively. Requirements may include purchasing training or expert advice. However it is anticipated that much of the training and development required during the year can be met using existing council resources.

Risk management

17. Effective scrutiny is a feature of the council's governance arrangements, where the council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range of factors that could result in risks to the council of not doing scrutiny effectively. These include the failure to:
 - a. challenge and hold decision makers to account
 - b. link scrutiny work to the delivery of the council's priorities and risk management
 - c. carry out thorough and appropriate research to make evidence-based recommendations
 - d. engage partners and providers
 - e. ensure that structures and models of operation are fit for purpose and match ambition and available resources
 - f. ensure that scrutiny can operate as the voice of communities and
 - g. draw on member knowledge and experience to inform policy development.

18. To mitigate, tolerate or eradicate these risks, enablers for effective scrutiny include:
- a. operating in an apolitical manner
 - b. clarity of vision and purpose
 - c. scrutiny support availability, capability and capacity
 - d. effective engagement and commitment by members and officers at all levels, including cabinet, opposition leaders, scrutiny chairs and senior officers who play a central role in setting the tone and direction
 - e. robust work programming and prioritisation of topics with clear objectives and expected impacts
 - f. ensuring that scrutiny work will add value to the council and communities e.g. through strong links between work programme topics and the integrated strategic plans that set out the actions and timescales to deliver the priorities in the County Plan
 - g. access to and availability of robust data and intelligence and
 - h. good relationships with partners and providers.

Consultees

19. None

Appendices

Appendix 1: West Mercia Youth Justice Service annual plan 2025-2026

Appendix 2: West Mercia Youth Justice Service quarter 1 performance

Appendix 3: An introduction to West Mercia Youth Justice Service: presentation to committee

Background papers

None



West Mercia
Youth Justice Service

Together, preventing offending and improving lives

Our Annual Plan 2025-26



Contents of our 25-26 Annual Plan

Introduction from Gareth Boulton, Chair of our Board	3
Who are We?	- 4 -
Executive Summary	- 5 -
Governance, Leadership and Partnership Arrangements.....	- 6 -
Workforce Development	- 8 -
Financial Resources	- 8 -
Update on the Previous Year: Progress on priorities in previous plan	- 10 -
Performance over the Previous Year	- 11 -
Risks and Issues	- 11 -
Plan for the Forthcoming Year	- 13 -
Child First.....	- 14 -
Standards for children	- 15 -
Service Development.....	- 15 -
Progress Against Inspection Action Plan	- 15 -
Response to Learning: Serious Incident and Learning Exercises	- 16 -
National Priority Areas	- 16 -
Restorative Approaches and Victims	- 18 -
Serious Violence, Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding.....	- 19 -
Detention in Police Custody	- 20 -
Remands	- 21 -
Use of Custody and Constructive Resettlement	- 21 -
Annexure 1: Our Governance Structure	- 22 -
Annexure 2: Our Staffing Structure	23
Annexure 3: Strategy on a Page: Good Health and Wellbeing for Everyone 2023 - 2033	24
Annexure 4: Budget Costs and Contributions 2025/26	25
Annexure 5: Our Progress Against 24/25 Priorities	26
Annexure 6: Our Key Performance Indicators	29
Annexure 7: Our 25/26 Plan on a Page.....	36
Annexure 8: Our Prevention Offer	38

Introduction from Gareth Boulton, Chair of our Board

The wellbeing of children will continue to be at the heart of everything that the youth justice service does in West Mercia during 2025/26.

Having started on a new direction for the service in 2024/25, this year's annual plan seeks to deliver continuity of focus and mission for the YJS. It will continue building on the themes, approaches, and improvements that the service has delivered in the last year for young people, coupled with the need to evolve the service to fit an ever-changing environment.

The annual plan for this year reflects a service that is continuing to embed its Child First approach. The voices of children and victims are increasingly used to shape and co-produce services. This is helping to make those services more effective and is already delivering better outcomes for both young people and the wider communities in West Mercia. There is more to do however, and the annual plan this year reflects the progress made to date, alongside the commitment and belief that even more can and will be achieved.

The operating environment for youth justice is changing. Constituent partners within the sector, such as local authorities, police and health bodies are all subject to significant programmes of national reform on top of the rapid pace at which other parts of society change. The youth justice service will need to strike a balance in the coming



Gareth Boulton

Chair of West Mercia Youth Justice Service Strategic Management Board
Chief Executive Officer,
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner



year of being cognisant of these issues and responding to them, whilst remaining focused on the central and consistent mission of doing the very best for children and local communities. The support and engagement of partners in the system will be important to that approach.

In a changing world, one constant is the passion and skill of the service's staff. Spending time with the YJS team and seeing first hand their drive, determination, patience, compassion and creativity in addressing complex problems is genuinely inspiring. On behalf of the Management Board, I have every faith in them continuing to respond positively to all the challenges that will inevitably occur in delivery of the annual plan in 2025/26.

Who are We?

At West Mercia Youth Justice Service, we believe that every child deserves the chance of a positive future. Our work is about more than systems and processes. It's about people, potential, and positive change. It's about seeing beyond the offence to give everyone affected support, guidance, and opportunities.

We support children, young people and their victims who have encountered the justice system, helping repair the harm and create a positive future for themselves and those affected by their actions.

We take a child-first approach rooted in restorative justice, education, and strong partnerships. We place the needs, rights, and potential of every child and victim at the heart of our work. By building positive identities, empowering families, and promoting early support and diversion, we help young people move away from offending and towards brighter, safer futures.

We See Children as Children

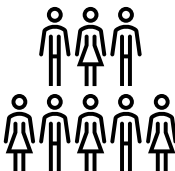


We place the needs, rights, and potential of every child and victim at the heart of what we do. Our work is child-focused, developmentally informed, and responsive to social and structural challenges.



We Build Positive Futures Through Identity

We help children develop a strong, pro-social identity by recognising their strengths and supporting their journey away from offending. Through constructive relationships and future-focused interventions, we empower them to contribute positively to their communities.



We Collaborate with Children and Their Families

Change works best when it's done together. We actively involve children, their family and victims in decision-making, ensuring they are heard, respected, and included every step of the way.



We Promote Diversion and Prevention

We believe childhood should be free from the weight of the justice system. We focus on early support, minimal intervention, and diversion wherever possible- reducing stigma and giving children the best chance to thrive.

We are unique. Our footprint matches our police force; we work across 2868 square miles, with colleagues from four local authorities, two Fire and Rescue Services, two Integrated Care Boards, and two Probation Delivery Units. Our four counties of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin include populated urban areas and sparsely populated rural areas; there are multiple areas of deprivation and affluence.

Executive Summary

Our priorities for the forthcoming year are based on the needs of our children and victims and our commitment to continuous improvement.

In our area



Most children have access to safe and suitable accommodation.



Most school-aged children are engaged in suitable education, training or employment (ETE) at the end of their time working with us.



Around 20% of our children have an identified special educational need or disability; in Q3 and Q4 they all had a formal support plan.



There has been an increase in children getting help and support for their mental health and substance misuse needs.

This has resulted in lower numbers of children entering the criminal justice system in West Mercia than the England and Wales and YOT Family average. Similarly, the number of our children in custody and the reoffending rates of our children are below the England and Wales and YOT Family averages.

Our year-on-year comparisons show slight increases in our rates of first-time entrants and reoffending. This drives our priorities for 2025-26.



Governance, Leadership and Partnership Arrangements

Governance

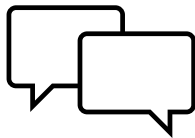
Our uniqueness requires distinct governance arrangements. We are hosted by the Office of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) on behalf of the four Local Authorities within West Mercia and the WMYJS partnership.



We are accountable to the WMYJS Strategic Management Board, who, in turn, are accountable to the four Local Authorities for the commissioning and delivery of youth justice services. Our Management Board has primary membership of senior representatives from the statutory agencies (Local Authorities, Police, Probation and Integrated Care Boards).

Our Board meets quarterly and monitors our performance and quality through regular reporting. In September 2024, the Terms of Reference for our Management Board were updated and in March 2025, the governance structure was further refined ([Annexure 1](#)).

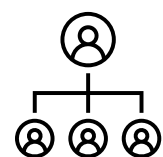
Board Development



In June 2024, we welcomed Gareth Boulton, OPCC Chief Executive as Chair of the YJS Board. During the year, our Board have prioritised hearing the voice of children. The opening agenda item for every Board meeting is *Child-first: The Voice of the Children working with WMYJS*. Over the last year, our Board has heard from our children around their restorative justice activities, their connection to local voluntary organisations, their views on the outside of one of our buildings, how important providing opportunities are through creative arts and how for some children, specialised programmes can make a long-lasting difference. Hosting our Board meetings across West Mercia in our office bases has improved connectivity between our Board and service.

Leadership

Our Head of Service has dual accountability to the Deputy Chief Executive of the OPCC and the Chair of the Management Board. They line manage six Team Managers who lead operational delivery of youth justice services through multi-disciplinary teams including seconded Substance Misuse Workers, Probation Officers and Health Workers ([see Annexure 2](#)). In March 2024, West Mercia Police provided a YJS Police Sergeant on a six-month secondment. Our Sergeant forms part of our leadership team and oversees the work of the five seconded Police Officers.





Partnerships

We are an active partner across multiple local justice strategic partnerships and partnerships related to vulnerable children and families. We seek to maximise these to improve outcomes for justice-involved children and victims; our service aligns its priorities with partnership strategies and resulting priorities.

The Integrated Care Strategy: Good Health and Wellbeing for Everyone 2023-2033 ([Annexure 3](#)) shows how our work connects to the wider

Integrated Care System including improving health outcomes, reducing health inequalities and improving social and economic development. West Mercia Police and the OPCC are members of the partnership that oversees this.

In each of the four local authority areas, we are a member of relevant groups under the Safeguarding Children Partnerships including the children and young peoples' strategic partnerships or equivalent, and the early help partnerships. Connectivity with these groups enables change for justice-involved children. We are members of the Corporate Parenting Boards, SEND meetings and MASH partnership groups.

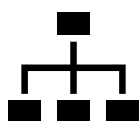
Our Head of Service attends the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships at the unitary or top tier authority level and their relevant subgroups, including reducing re-offending groups. We are an active member of the West Mercia Criminal Justice Board, the West Mercia Crime Reduction Board, the PCCs Victim and Witness Board and the MAPPA Strategic Management Board.

Operationally, we are active participants within the Channel Panels established as part of the Prevent Strategy, the Serious and Organised Crime Joint Agency Groups and the Child Exploitation Operational Groups.

In 25/26 we will

- improve the response to children who may be at risk of radicalisation (Prevent Duty); and
- update our response to children who display sexually harmful behaviours, including work with Police around MAPPA eligible children.

Structure



Our service comprises four multi-agency service delivery teams, aligned to the Local Authority areas, and two centralised teams who provide specialist support across West Mercia ([Annexure 2](#)). In 24/25 the centralised teams expanded to include a Restorative Justice Lead and an Administration Lead. In the coming year we will work with the OPCC Treasurer to ensure our staffing structure reflects the profile and needs of our children and victims.

Our health partnership contribution remains under review, with the aim of creating a single service specification by December 2025. We currently have a Speech and Language seconded (0.2 FTE) and arrangements for priority consultations with psychologists in Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Under the national allocation formula, the Probation Service contribute two posts to our service, a Probation Officer and a Probation Service Officer. The Probation Officer covers Worcestershire, and we are waiting a start date for our Probation Service Officer who will cover the remaining area. Seconded Police Officers are employed in each local authority area and are now line managed by a dedicated YJS Police Sergeant.

We are compliant with the minimum staffing requirements outlined in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. There are six social work qualified members of staff employed by our service.

Workforce Development

We understand the skills and knowledge required by our workforce to effectively address the needs of justice-involved children and victims. We work with key partners including statutory agencies, community organisations, and relevant groups to provide evidence-based training, professional development opportunities, support, and other resources to enhance the skills and knowledge of our workforce.



Throughout 24-25 our “Service-Learning Log” captured the learning from internal reviews, external reviews, feedback and learning through partnership arrangements. This has enabled us to prioritise our development actions and inform future planning for workforce development. As a result, in the coming year we will deliver training on assessment skills, PREVENT awareness, professional curiosity, risk management and MAPPA.

Financial Resources



Our service has a complex budget structure comprising partner agency cash, seconded staff and in-kind contributions and the Youth Justice (YOT) Grant from the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. See [Annexure 4](#) for provisional contributions for 2025/26.

The YJB Youth Justice (YOT) Grant is used for the provision of youth justice services with the aim of reducing the number of children entering the youth justice system, reducing the reoffending rates of children; and improving the safety, wellbeing and outcomes for children in the youth justice system. The grant forms part of our overall pooled partnership budget.

In 25/26 we will receive funding via the MOJ Turnaround Grant which will contribute to the costs of our Prevention Offer which we developed in 24/25.

The grant, partner contributions and available resources will be used to deliver youth justice services across West Mercia, to implement the development plan against the priorities identified for 25-26, to sustain and improve the current performance against the current four national outcome measures and ten Key Performance Indicators.

We outsource the provision of Appropriate Adults for children in Police custody. In September 2024, we commenced a joint contractual arrangement with West Mercia Police. Child Action Northwest (CANW) is now the sole provider of Appropriate Adults for children and vulnerable adults across West Mercia. We hold joint quarterly contract monitoring and compliance meetings.



In 24/25 we made considerable progress against our priorities. (Annexure 5)

The logo for Morse Youth is located in the bottom right corner. It features the word "MORSE" in a bold, sans-serif font, with a stylized road graphic integrated into the letter "S". Below "MORSE" is the word "YOUTH" in a similar bold, sans-serif font.

In January 2025, we commenced a twelve-month pilot with St Giles who have employed 2 FTE St Giles Lived Experience Case Workers; one covers Shropshire/Telford and the other Hereford and Worcester. The Case Workers are embedded within our service and provide child-focused mentoring support for children who are connected to violence (committed an offence, at risk of committing a violent offence, victim of a violent offence) using their own experiences and offering intervention during reachable/teachable moments.



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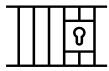
We have developed our early intervention offer (our Prevention Offer) which complements existing provision. Proactively we offer prevention support to all children following an arrest. We were able to present this model to the MOJ which has resulted in the reinstatement of Turnaround Grant funding from 1 April 2025.

Performance over the Previous Year

Our annual performance report is contained in [Annexure 6](#). In summation the key performance measures which show how well the youth justice system is working for children in West Mercia illustrates:



The rate of children entering the criminal justice system (First Time Entrants, FTE) is below the England and Wales and YOT Family average, although there has been a slight increase on the rate from the previous year.



The number of children in custody, as measured by the rate of custody per 1,000 population is below the England and Wales and YOT Family average, although there has been a marginal increase on the rate from the previous year; and



Reoffending rates in West Mercia are below the England and Wales and YOT Family average, whilst there has been a slight increase on previous twelve months there has been a decrease in the number of children reoffending.

In 24/25, we adapted internal processes to enable more accurate data recording. The key performance indicators relating to the needs of justice-involved children in West Mercia and the extent to which their needs have been met shows that:



Most children have access to safe and suitable accommodation.



Most school-aged children are engaged in suitable education, training or employment (ETE) provision at the end of their intervention but around a third of children above school-age were not in suitable education, training or employment at the end of their intervention.



Approximately 20% of children have an identified special educational need or disability; in Q3 and Q4 all these children had a formal plan in place to support them.



There has been an increase in children getting help and support for their mental health needs.



There was an increase in the numbers of children who received targeted support in relation to their substance misuse needs including access to specialist treatment.



90% of children successfully completed their diversionary intervention programme.

Risks and Issues

We hold a centralised risk register which is tabled at quarterly Management Board meetings for oversight, review, and action.

During 24/25 we benefitted from specialist recruitment support through the West Mercia Police Staff Recruitment Coordinator. This enabled us to recruit to our vacancies more quickly and through an arrangement facilitated by our Chair, we were able to use external vetting. This significantly reduced the length of time it took for new recruits to join our service.

The risks and issues for 25/26 are:

<i>Current Risks and Issues</i>	<i>Actions Being Taken to Address Risks and Issues</i>
The emotional and mental health needs of children not adequately met due to no health workers deployed directly in YJS	<p>There are arrangements to access CAMHS in all areas</p> <p>Information, Advice and Guidance provided to children by staff</p> <p>Regular supervision of staff to escalate response to individual needs.</p> <p>Review of health provision – looking at the requirement and consistency across West Mercia area</p>
Inability to meet data reporting requirements due to any unforeseen absence of the information officer.	<p>Utilise the CACI contract to train nominated staff to be able to meet data reporting requirements.</p> <p>Utilise CACI contract technical support for expert system advice</p>

Plan for the Forthcoming Year

We are committed to continuous improvement. Our Plan on a Page ([Annexure 7](#)) outlines how we will address our key priorities.



Child First

In March 24, we updated our Child-First Principles. Child-First West Mercia means:

We See Children as Children



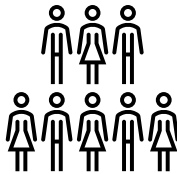
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We help children develop a strong, pro-social identity by recognising their strengths and supporting their journey away from offending. Through constructive relationships and future-focused interventions, we empower them to contribute positively to their communities.

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Change works best when it's done together. We actively involve children, their family and victims in decision-making, ensuring they are heard, respected, and included every step of the way.

We Promote Diversion and Prevention



We believe childhood should be free from the weight of the justice system. We focus on early support, minimal intervention, and diversion wherever possible- reducing stigma and giving children the best chance to thrive.

We hear the voice of children through the self-assessment tool; End of Order Questionnaire and the "Tell Us" Procedure which captures children's comments, compliments and complaints.

Our comments, compliments and complaints procedure is called "Tell Us". Responses to "Tell Us" are made via a form, a dedicated phone number, a dedicated email address or via our website. Responses received are fed through to the leadership team, or if they are a complaint handled under our complaints procedure.

We use self-assessment questionnaires with all children at the start, end, and review stages of their intervention. We ask for specific feedback from children through an end of order questionnaire (EoOQ) which are reviewed by their worker when completed.

Responses are collated locally on a quarterly basis and used by the leadership team to inform service development.

Development of our Child-First approach is led by our Child-First Champions. This dedicated group has commenced reviewing the End of Order Questionnaires and the Screening Tools currently in use.

In 25/26 the Child-First Champions will be

- Implementing the updated EoOQ and Screening Tools.
- Leading children's participation in service development activities.
- Embedding the use of ICT in capturing the voice of children and victims to make capturing and analysis easier.
- Working with children and parents to update the service feedback procedure, including responding to Compliments and Complaints.
- Developing a service-wide collaboration strategy incorporating recommendations from the Child First Collaboration Research Report.
- Working alongside Willowdene and justice-involved women and girls to improve service provision for girls.
- Continuing to review service policies and procedures reflecting Child-first principles, new legislation (Working Together 2023) and evidence-based practice; aligning and prioritising policy reviews with learning from quality assurance activity and national policy.
- Designing a tool to enable working with children and victims to more closely match reparation placements with children's interests and victim's needs.
- Rolling out the updated induction and training for OoCD panel members to include child first/child centred policing and trauma informed approaches.
- Working with partners to create a directory of projects, activities and services available for children and victims; including awareness of third sector organisations working in local communities.

Standards for children

In October 2023, we completed the National Standard 2 – At Court Self-Assessment. The self-assessment evidenced our strengths. Our reporting practice is mostly good; we consistently provide high quality reports, which are child focussed, support desistance and contain the child's views following an up-to-date YJB approved assessment evidencing engagement with parents and carers.



We have progressed in the six areas which were assessed as inadequate.

An Action Plan was developed, outstanding actions from this plan that will be completed in 25/26 including implementing a Disproportionality Strategy and centrally collating Magistrates feedback to inform service development.

Service Development

Progress Against Inspection Action Plan

The outstanding actions from our Inspection Action Plan will be completed in 25/26. We will be

1. Implementing a simplified QA framework which includes sufficient focus on diversity, inclusion and meeting individual needs; ensuring changing circumstances in planning is effective and the involvement of other agencies and alignment of plans.
2. Continuing to review of service policies and procedures to reflect Child-first principles, new legislation (Working Together 2023) and evidence-based practice; aligning policy reviews with learning from quality assurance activity and national policy.
3. Finalising the review of health resources deployed across the service and work with partners to secure appropriate health provision for all children within WMYJS.
4. Embedding the internal scrutiny process for OoCD which complements the existing external scrutiny process.
5. Finalising the review of housing policies/protocols for vulnerable children to ensure they prioritise children coming out of custody.

Response to Learning: Serious Incident and Learning Exercises

Learning aids our continuous improvement; we capture our learning and associated actions in the Service-Learning Log. This central reference point informs our service development activities including our workforce development needs. We participate in learning activities with partners across the four local authority areas, regularly participating in multi-agency case file audits as part of local safeguarding arrangements.

In November 2024, we participated in a rapid review due to the death of a child who was working with us. Our child who was living out-of-area was the victim of a serious violence offence. Other children were involved in this incident. We are implementing the identified learnings from this.

In February 2025, we participated in a multi-agency case file audit in Telford. The audit considered the multi-agency practice with children and young people where the risk of serious violence was an issue. Six children were chosen for consideration in the audit due to their connection to an incident, where a 20-year-old man was stabbed and suffered serious injuries. Two of the children are currently on remand having been charged with attempted murder. The service expects the findings from the audit to be published in June 2025 and will implement the learning from this.

National Priority Areas

We will continue to work within local partnerships to address national priority areas.

Children from groups which are over-represented



We collate and monitor information around children in our area who may be over-represented in the youth justice system, including Black and Mixed heritage children, children known to social care services, and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. In 24/25 we started to gather information around the exclusion rates for justice-involved children.

In 25/26 we will

- Further refine performance data to help understand children from groups which are over-represented.

- Implement a Disproportionality Strategy.
- Work alongside Willowdene and justice-involved women and girls to improve youth justice service provision for girls.

Policing

We have a close working relationship with West Mercia Police. We benefit from in-time sharing of information which enables swift support for justice-involved children. West Mercia Police second five Police Officers to our service; these Police Officers provide coordination between local policing colleagues and the youth justice service.



In 24/25 we benefited from a closer working relationship with senior Police colleagues, including clearer oversight and supervision of Seconded Police Officers. We have worked with Police colleagues to design the Child-First response to children in custody. This is expected to be operational in mid-2025.

In 25/26 we will update our assessment, planning and risk guidance to ensure assessment and plans are future focussed and consider how to keep the child, victim and community safe including work with Police around the role of Seconded Officers as Offender Managers.

Prevention

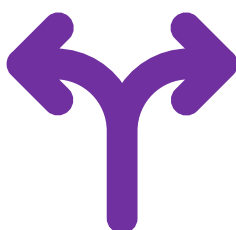


The preventative landscape across West Mercia is complex; preventative services for children are primarily delivered via Children's Social Care Early Help and Police via Intervention and Prevention Officers. In the last year, in response to us losing our Turnaround Grant, we worked closely with our partners to define and develop our preventative offer. We now offer Preventative support via our Proactive, Reactive and Targeted Offers ([Annexure 8](#)).

In 25/26 we will work with

- Partners to improve the response to children who may be at risk of radicalisation (Prevent Duty).
- Strategic leaders to position the service in accordance with reforms associated with the Families First and Young Futures Prevention Partnerships agendas.

Diversion



We deliver diversionary opportunities through our well-established Joint Decision-Making Panel (JDMP) process. The process was updated in 24/25 to be child-first, proportionate and maximise opportunities for diversion; this will be further refined in the coming year through our work with CPS and Police. The Management Board receive a quarterly report relating to diversionary outcomes for children.

In 25/26 we will

- Embed the internal scrutiny process for OocD which complements the existing external scrutiny process.
- Roll out the updated induction and training for OocD panel members to include child first/child centred policing and trauma informed approaches
- Work with CPS and Police to pilot an updated OOCd process to inform CPS work on National Protocol/Guidance; ensuring the YJS response to children in court is more proactive and provides additional opportunities to maximise diversion

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 - Roll out the updated induction and training for OocD panel members to include child first/child centred policing and trauma informed approaches
 - Work with CPS and Police to pilot an updated OOCd process to inform CPS work on National Protocol/Guidance; ensuring the YJS response to children in court is more proactive and provides additional opportunities to maximise diversion

Education

We employ Youth Justice Officers with an Education, Training and Employment specialism. These officers work in partnership with agencies within their local area to ensure all children known to our service are having their educational needs met. The Education, Training and Employment Officers record each child's educational placement; the hours which they attend, whether they have a Special Education Need or a Disability; and whether they have an EHCP. In the coming year, we will work with education colleagues to collate further contextual information regarding children's education including those who are not receiving their education entitlement, excluded, on part time timetables or electively home educated. We will analyse this data to identify any disproportionality including the care status of the child.

In 24/25 we refined the focus of work of the Education, Training and Employment Officers through development of West Mercia Learning Centre, we will embed this over the coming year to provide a consistent educational offer for all children, measured through the number of children receiving accredited outcomes.



Restorative Approaches and Victims

We have dedicated Victim Liaison Officers who support the victims of children working with our service across both diversionary and court pathways. Over the year, 90% of victims have been contacted by our Victim Liaison Officers.



Victim Satisfaction Surveys are completed at the end of support, in Q3

- 😊 91% of victims were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received
- 😊 91% of victims were kept informed and given the opportunity to engage in restorative justice
- 😊 100% of victims thought their views were taken into consideration
- 😊 100% of victims felt safe and secure throughout the process

In 2024 we successfully recruited a restorative justice lead who is leading the restorative offer and providing oversight of the Victim Liaison Officers and Restorative Justice Officers. The service has played a key role in the PCC Victims and Witnesses Board, hosting and facilitating, with partners, two Restorative Justice Mapping Workshops on behalf of the Board.

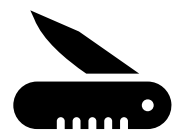
In 25/26 we will

- Develop a service-wide policy and work with partners to develop practice guidance around working with victims who are children including development of a Victim Needs Assessment Tool.
- Work with OPCC, Victim Support and Police in linking the YJS Offer with the development of the West Mercia Victims Hub.
- Undertake a practice review to consider referral order practice, including the Making it Right Approach to panels.
- Upskill all Practitioners to improve their confidence and ability to deliver restorative approaches across all work with children and victims.
- Work with children and victims to more closely match reparation placements with children's interests and victim's needs.
- Standardise the Restorative Justice Officer roles.

Serious Violence, Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding

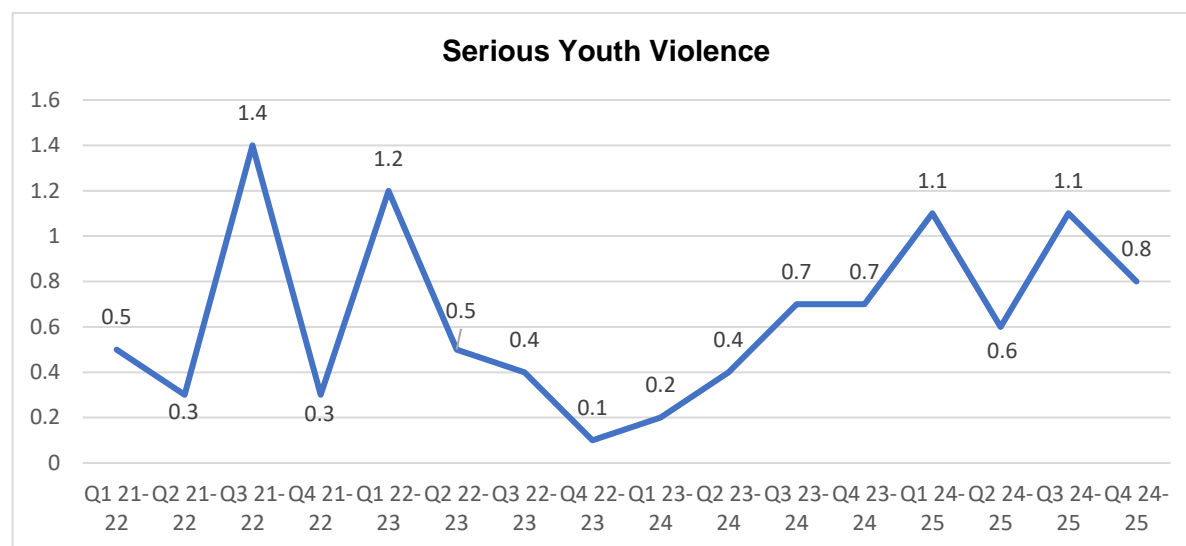
Serious Youth Violence

Across West Mercia the Serious Violence duty is delivered via the five Community Safety Partnerships (CSP). Governance arrangements exist at the local CSP level to support the delivery of the Duty, and West Mercia Office of the Policing Crime Commissioner (OPCC) oversees the delivery via the Crime Reduction Board (CRB). The CRB brings partners together to reduce offending and reoffending by ensuring that adults and children who offend are challenged and supported to desist from crime. We are a partner at each CSP and we attend and report on our service delivery to the CRB.



In 24/25, as a specified authority for the serious violence duty we contributed to the need assessments and strategy. We are fully engaged in the governance arrangements for the duty in each Local Authority area and at the West Mercia level; continuing to advocate for justice-involved children across West Mercia through fully participating in all local authority Serious Violence Duty Sub-Groups. We responded to serious violence with the introduction of VR headsets as a tool to work with children connected to serious violence and commencement of a contract with St Giles for the provision of lived experience mentors to work with children connected to serious violence.

In 24/25 there were 44 serious youth violence offences recorded in accordance with YJB guidelines. The rate of serious youth violence has fluctuated throughout the year.



In response to this, in 25/26 we will

- Continue to use the area-wide and local Serious Violence needs assessments to shape internal practice and delivery of a localised response.
- Implement the learnings and recommendations from the serious violence MACFA.
- Work with partners to update our response to children who display sexually harmful behaviours, including work with Police around MAPPA eligible children.

Contextual Safeguarding

We are part of the child exploitation strategy and operational groups and the Serious Organised Crime Joint Agency Groups (SOCJAG) across the area to address the issues of county lines type activity, organised crime group and gang activities. Exploitation is a priority across all areas; we contribute to the partnership work in all areas, including Get Safe Strategic and Operational Groups in Worcestershire and the Child Exploitation Strategic and Operational Groups in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin.

In 25/26 the service will work with strategic leaders to position the service in accordance with reforms associated with the Families First and Young Futures Prevention Partnerships agendas.

Detention in Police Custody



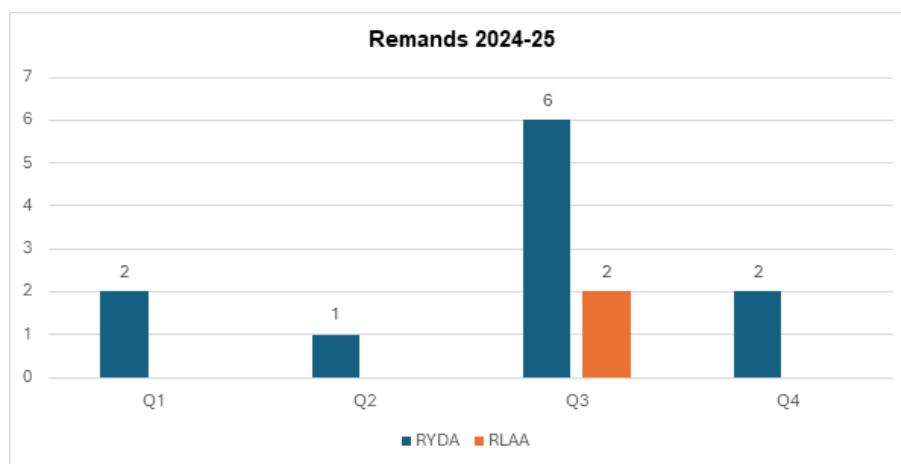
In 24/25 769 children in West Mercia were arrested, this is a significant reduction of 190 children from the previous year. Of the 769 children arrested 60.7% (467 children) were bailed to return to a police station; 39 children (5.07%) were charged and remanded in police custody and 14 children (1.8%) were detained for court. On comparison to the previous year, this represents a significant reduction in the number of children being detained for court.

The length of time that children spend in police custody in West Mercia is lower than the national average. Data relating to children in police custody is regularly scrutinised.

In 24/25 we worked closely with Police colleagues to automate information relating to children arrested, bailed and remanded. This supported the development of our proactive prevention offer ([Annexure 7](#)). We worked with Police Custody colleagues in the development of the Child-First Children in Custody Procedure. This is expected to be operational in mid-2025. We will continue to work with Police colleagues in the implementation of this.

Remands

During the year, 2024-25 11 children were remanded to youth detention accommodation and 2 children were remanded to local authority accommodation. This is an increase from the previous year. In the coming year we will work with Police, Children's Services and partners to develop the West Mercia response to the Bail and Remand Concordat.



Use of Custody and Constructive Resettlement

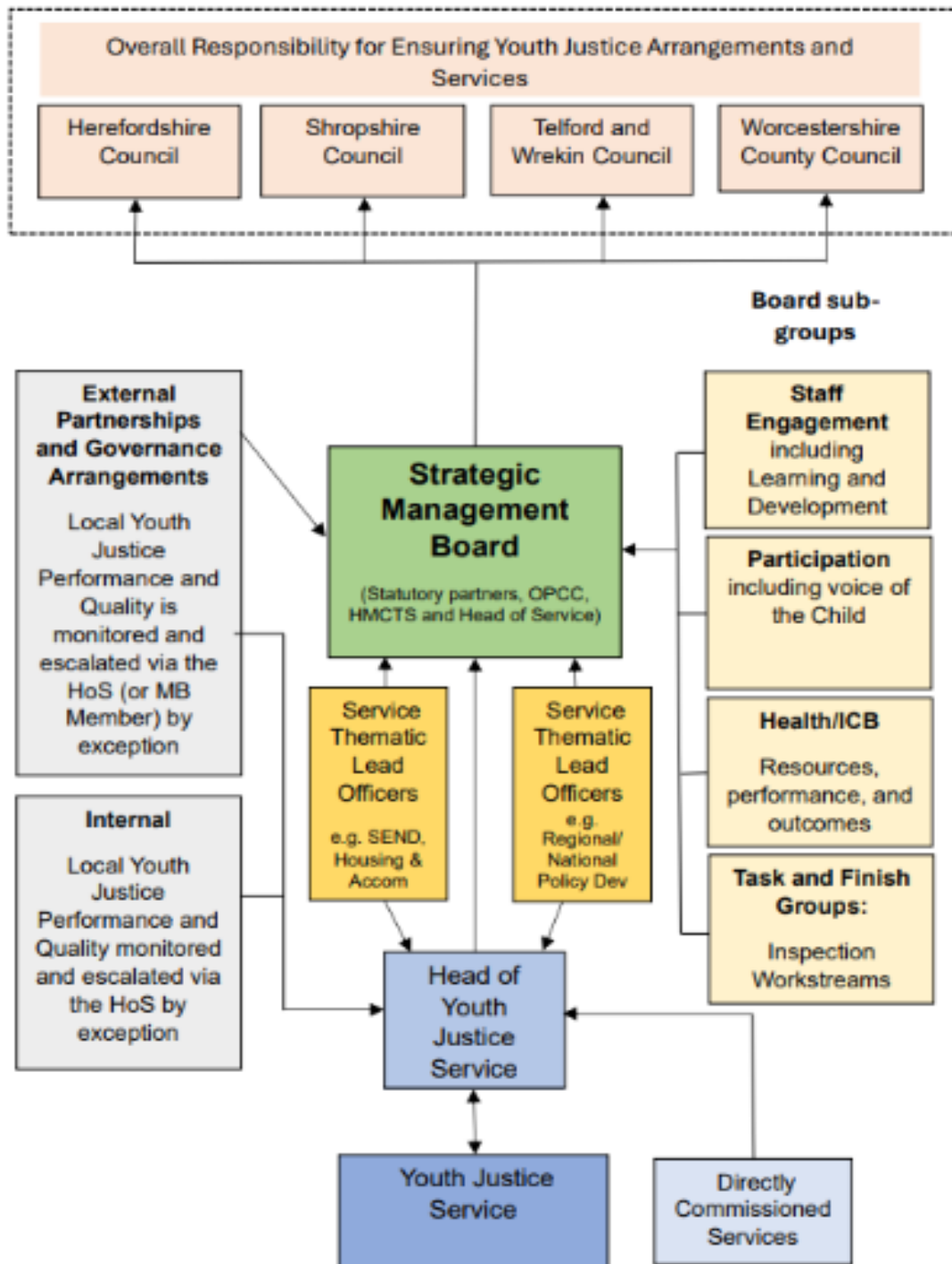
The rate of children in custody from West Mercia remains lower than the YOT family average and the rate across England and Wales. 4 children were released from custody; one of these children was released to an unsuitable placement. The placement was deemed unsuitable on the basis that they were released into Airbnb accommodation.

In 25/26 we will

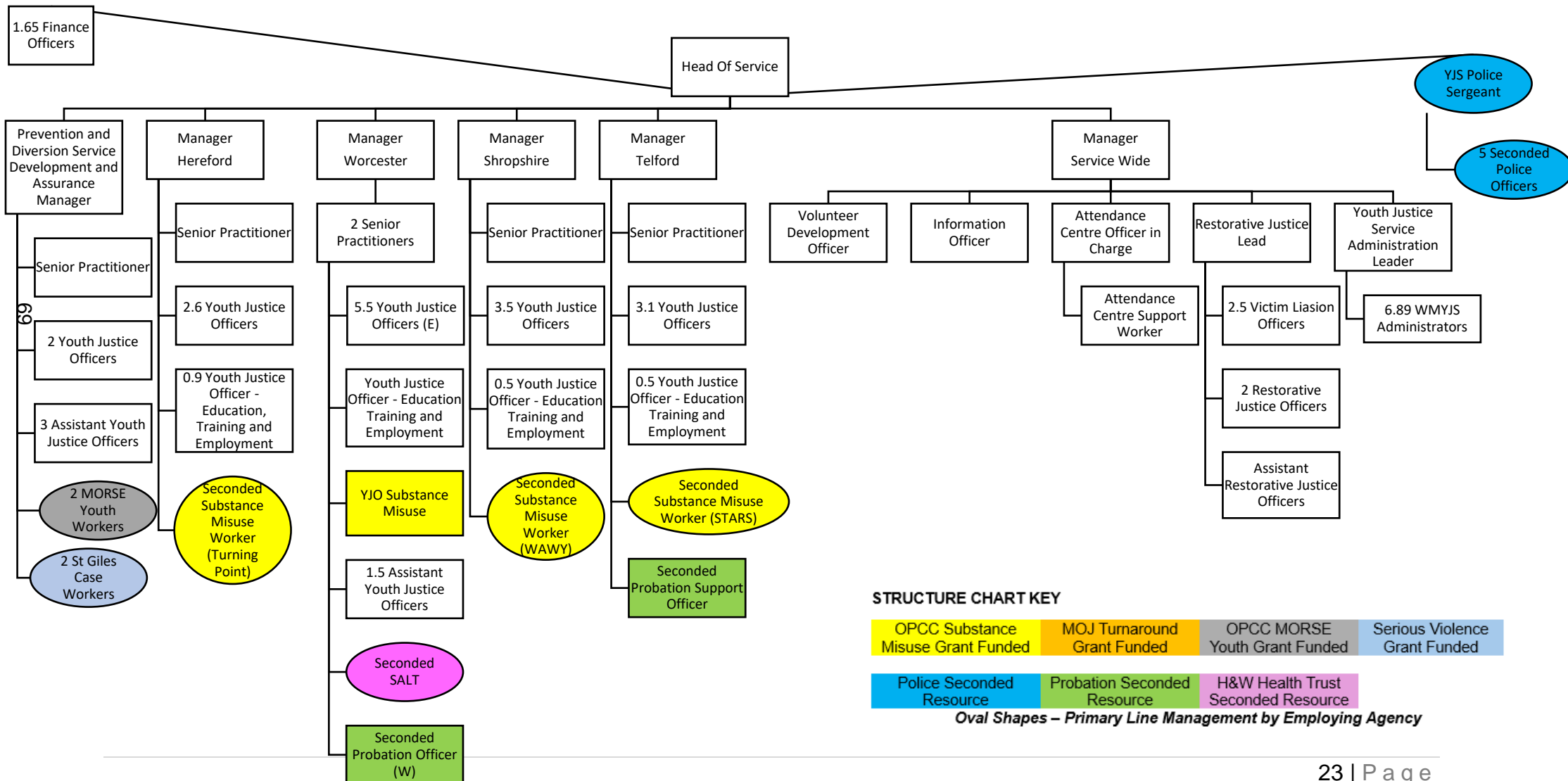
- Work with Probation to finalise the revised transition arrangements into case management
- Review housing policies/protocols for vulnerable children in each area to ensure they identify and prioritise children coming out of custody

Annexure 1: Our Governance Structure

West Mercia Youth Justice Partnership and Service Governance Diagram (From 1st April 2025)



Annexure 2: Our Staffing Structure



Annexure 3: Strategy on a Page: Good Health and Wellbeing for Everyone 2023 - 2033



Annexure 4: Budget Costs and Contributions 2025/26

The Youth Justice Service has a complex budget structure comprising of partner agency cash, seconded staff and the Youth Justice (YOT) Grant from the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. The table below outlines the provisional contributions for 2025/26, as some contributions were still to be confirmed, including some of the seconded staff arrangements, at the point this plan was agreed.

Agency	Staffing Costs – Seconded (£)	Payments in kind (£)	Other Delegated Funds (£)	Total (£)
Local Authorities			1,179,999	1,179,999
Police Service	263,597		63,000	326,597
National Probation Service	69,844		5,000	74,844
Health	143,891		36,894	180,785
Police and Crime Commissioner			201,291	201,291
YJB – Youth Justice Grant			1,567,664	1,567,664
Other- MOJ Grant (Turnaround) & movement from Reserves			241,465	241,465
Total	477,332		3,295,313	3,772,645

Category	Budget (£)
Employee Costs	2,685,245
Other Employee Costs	25,000
Premises	192,453
Supplies and Services	22,552
ICT	137,019
Third Party Payments	183,215
Transport	49,830
TOTAL	3,295,314

Annexure 5: Our Progress Against 24/25 Priorities

Key: Completed (16) In Progress (10) Not Yet Started (3)

Theme	Priority	Inspection Action (where applicable)	Actions	Year End Update
CHILD FIRST	Embedding Child-First		Work with children and staff to develop the service's Child First vision and values.	Completed. Staff have sought feedback around the service vision and values which have been incorporated into the updated draft vision and values.
			Increase the frequency at which the service captures the voice of children and responds to this; utilise ICT to make capturing and analysis easier.	Partially Completed. We are more frequently responding the feedback from children; this is the first agenda item on team meeting and leadership meetings. We are starting to use MS Forms more regularly.
PEOPLE	Supporting staff development, wellbeing and morale		Implement the revised staff supervision policy.	Completed. All staff are expected to receive monthly supervision. Administration staff record children and victim case discussions. Supervision frequency is monitored.
			Complete a dip sample of staff supervision/appraisals; providing a summation report to the Management Board evidencing quality of staff performance and identifying service-wide development needs.	Not Completed. In 25-26 the staff appraisal process needs to be updated and all staff need to have an appraisal. The QA framework and audits should also be included in informing the Board of service-wide development needs.
			Link the Service-Wide Learning Log with the Workforce Training and Development Plan; review our progress and actions quarterly.	Completed. The service-wide learning log is in place which informs the training plan. The L&D group have met quarterly to review this and ensure actions are progressed.
	Understanding and addressing disproportionality within West Merica	2.1	Revise the performance data to capture disproportionality to help understand children from groups which are over-represented to include revised educational data and work with girls.	Completed. The performance reports to Board now include ethnicity and gender. This can be further refined in 25-26 with support from the ICB Board Member.
			Implement a Disproportionality Strategy	Not Completed.
PRACTICE	Ensuring compliance with new legislation and guidance	3.1	Commence review of service policies and procedures to reflect Child-first principles, new legislation (Working Together 2023) and evidence-based practice; aligning policy reviews with learning from quality assurance activity and national policy.	Partially Completed.
		4.2		We have started to review our policies and procedures; this has been led, in part, by the priorities of our partners and learning from their reviews. This will continue in 25-26.
	Strengthening our restorative offer and victim satisfaction		Recruit a Restorative Justice Lead to lead our restorative offer and provide oversight of Victim Liaison Officers and Restorative Officers.	Completed. Our leaders are in post and have completed their induction periods.
			Work with Police, OPCC and Local Authority Partners to deliver restorative practice in accordance with any changes required through the "Immediate Justice" Approach.	Completed. This government approach did not progress.
			Develop a service-wide policy and work with partners to develop practice guidance around working with victims who are children	Partially Completed. The concept for working with victims is in place, we need to update this further and finalise this, including a tool to use to capture Victim Needs Assessment.
			Undertake a deep dive audit focussed on the Making it Right Approach to understand the successful implementation of this.	Not Completed In 25-26 we need to undertake a broader practice review around our referral order practice, this will include the Making it Right Approach to panels.
	Improving the consistency of practice across the service	1.1, 4.3 1.2, 2.1 3.3	Implement the revised management oversight policy; supervision policy and simplified QA framework which includes sufficient focus on diversity, inclusion and meeting individual needs; monitoring that responding to changing circumstances in planning is effective; ensuring the involvement of other agencies and alignment of plans	Partially Completed. The management oversight and supervision policies have been implemented. The QA framework has been drafted and needs a further simplification before implementation. We have implemented a monthly leadership practice reflection session for Senior Practitioner to support practice consistency. We will further refine our practice to be consistency across West Merica in 25-26 including further improvements in relation to responding to risk management, changing circumstances and alignment of plans.
			Implement the outstanding actions from the National Standards 2 – At Court Action Plan.	Partially Completed.

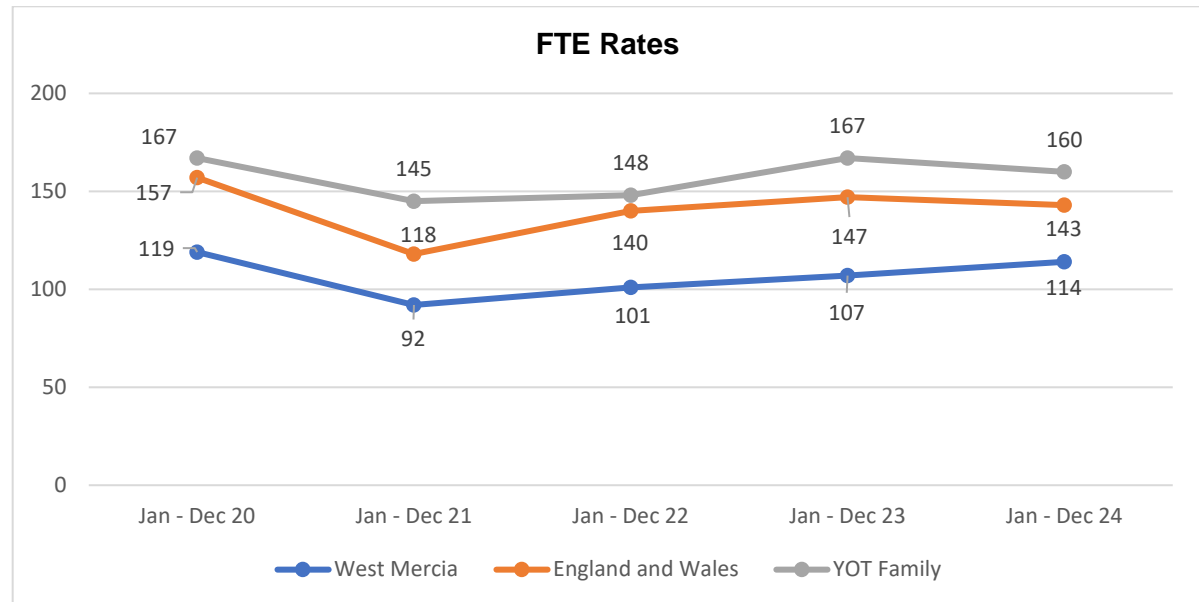
				There are several actions in progress that will be completed in 25-26.
	Improving our diversion and early intervention offer		Deliver training to the service in the use of the new YJB mandated Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool.	Completed All staff in post received training. The training is to be included as a standard module in our induction pack. In 25-26 we will update our induction programme.
			Work with partners (Police, Children's Social Care) to update JDMP processes to be child-first, proportionate and maximise diversion.	Completed In 25-26 we will work with CPS to trial updated processes for diversion from court. This will inform national practice.
		8.2	Establish an internal scrutiny process for OoCD which complements the existing external scrutiny process.	Partially Completed Dip audits have occurred and a draft process is in place; this needs further refinement in 25/26.
		8.3	Utilise the Youth Justice Legal Centre to provide induction process and training for panel members to include child first/child centred policing and trauma informed approaches	Partially Completed Training has been received from the YJLC. A draft training and induction process has been completed and will be trialled for feedback before wider rollout.
			Develop and deliver the Youth MORSE Programme in partnership with the OPCC and YSS to improve the diversionary offer for vehicle crime.	Completed The Programme is operational, and funding has been secured for it to continue until 31 March 26.
			Develop an early intervention offer which complements existing provision (Children's Social Early Help Offer and Police ASB and Intervention and Prevention Offer)	Completed. We have developed a clear prevention offer. Our offer is proactive and complements existing provision.
	Improving the health offer in the youth justice service	7.3	Finalise the review of health resources deployed into YJS teams and work with partners to secure appropriate health provision for all children within WMYJS.	Partially Completed. A draft model has been developed; a single-service specification should be developed by December 2025.
PARTNERSHIP	Improving our work with other agencies	9.1	Probation: Finalise the revised transition arrangements into case management. (18 year old cohort) Police: Work with Police, Children's Services and partners to develop a combined West Mercia-wide remand strategy. Work with Police to implement, monitor and review the new commissioning arrangements for the Appropriate Adult Service. Children's Social Care: Work with Children's Services to align information sharing and recording to improve the interconnectedness of plans for children support by WMYJS and Children's Social Care. Education: Work with education colleagues to collate further contextual information relating regarding children's education including school exclusions children who are not receiving their education entitlement, excluded, on part time timetables or electively home educated. Analyse this data to identify any disproportionality including the care status of the child. OPCC: Work with OPCC colleagues to share analysis, data, needs assessments and commissioning intentions.	Partially Completed <i>Probation:</i> The arrangements have been finalised and are awaiting sign off. <i>Police:</i> The Appropriate Adult Service is operational. Our strategy has been superseded by the Bail and Remand Concordat. <i>Children's Social Care:</i> We have worked with colleagues to improve interconnectedness of plans. This has been helped by WMYJS having access to Children's Social Care records. <i>Education:</i> We are gathering this information more regularly, we need to standardise this approach so that it can be easily reported. <i>OPCC:</i> We now routinely meet with OPCC colleagues and were part of commissioning processes for the CCE contract awarded to Catch 22.
	Addressing disparities in service provision and commissioned services between areas	7.1 7.2	Complete a comprehensive and up-to-date Needs Analysis of Children within WMYJS including a focus on SEND, substance misuse and domestic abuse. Use the needs analysis to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the service model across the areas to identify gaps opportunities to level up and ensure consistency; Ensure the staffing structure of the service reflects the profile and needs of the children; Work with the OPCC Treasurer to undertake a financial review to profile the service's costs of meeting the needs of children; Work with partners to align our processes and practice with Working Together 2023 including better 	Completed The Needs Assessment has been completed. The service model for 25-26 shows a more consistent offer which reflects the profile and needs of children. Work with the OPCC Treasurer has commenced. The first proposals around this have been presented to the Board and a further view and proposal will be tendered in 25-26. Our Processes and Practice with partners continues to improve. The utilisation of specialist workers and work with partners has improved; this has been evidenced in our significantly improved KPI recording.

			<p>information sharing, closer relationships and joined up approaches with partners;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shape WMYJS service delivery and response to children (substance misuse, domestic abuse, serious youth violence) through contemporary practice approaches, utilisation of specialist workers where appropriate and work with partners 	
	Supporting delivery of the Serious Violence Duty across West Mercia		<p>Work with CSPs and the CRB to deliver the Serious Violence Duty.</p> <p>Use the area-wide and local Serious Violence needs assessments to shape internal practice.</p> <p>Work with partners to determine a response to children who are released under investigation (RUI) for serious violence related offences.</p> <p>Undertake a joint review with Worcestershire colleagues in response to a serious youth violence incident; identifying and opportunities for the service learning and development.</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>We have upheld our responsibilities as a specified authority. We attend all CSP and CRB meetings. We have worked closely with the Serious Violence Duty Partnership Manager.</p> <p>Partially Completed</p> <p>We have a greater awareness of the prevalence of violence across West Mercia; we have improved our practice with VR headsets. We need to shape our response to children who demonstrate harmful sexual behaviour.</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Our prevention offer includes children released under investigation. All children RUI are offered support from WMYJS. Support complements existing plans in place.</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>The learning from the review is being used to shape further refinements to the GET SAFE model including WMYJS role as part of the Strategic Group.</p>
GOVERNANCE / LEADERSHIP	Ensuring management oversight of practice and leadership of service development	1.4 5.3	Ensure sufficient capacity to provide management oversight through recruitment of Restorative Justice Lead, Administration Lead and Additional Manager in Worcestershire; Limited Term Prevention and Diversion Manager and review of the supervision arrangements for Seconded Police Officers.	<p>Completed</p> <p>Restorative Justice Lead and Administration Lead are in permanent posts. The Prevention and Diversion Manager role will continue until 31 March 26.</p> <p>The YJS Seconded Police Officers now report to a dedicated Sergeant. In 25-26, the Sergeant will be an operational post based within the YJS.</p>
	Refining internal governance arrangements		Review governance arrangements of WMYJS inclusive of internal reporting procedures and delegations.	<p>Completed.</p> <p>The governance arrangements have been updated included a revised ToR for Management Board and an updated governance structure.</p>

Annexure 6: Our Key Performance Indicators

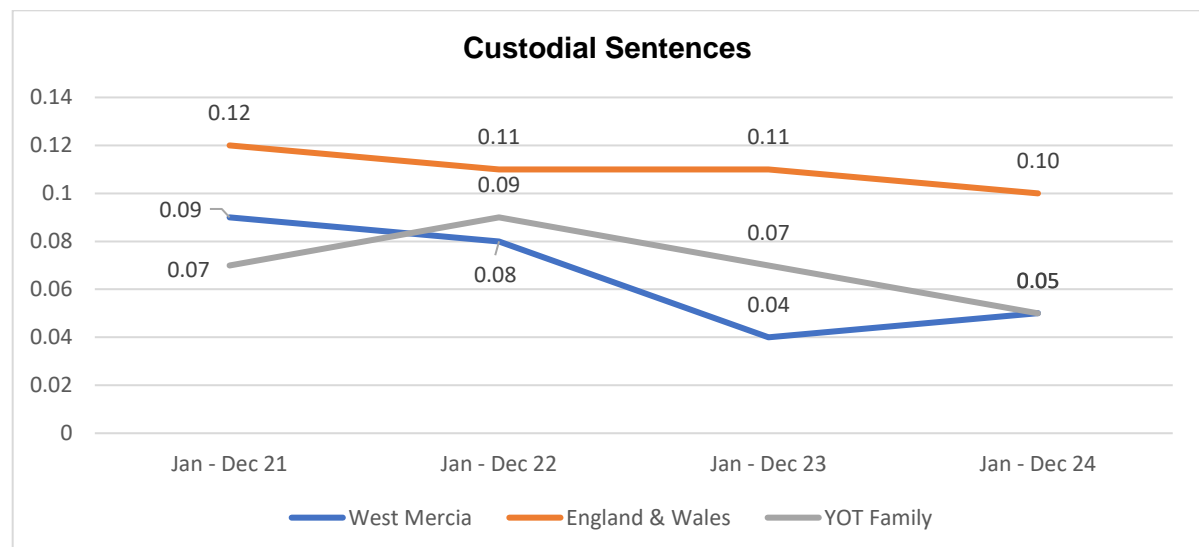
Key Performance Indicators: How well is the system working for children in West Mercia?

Number of children entering the criminal justice system (Rate of First Time Entrants per 100,000)



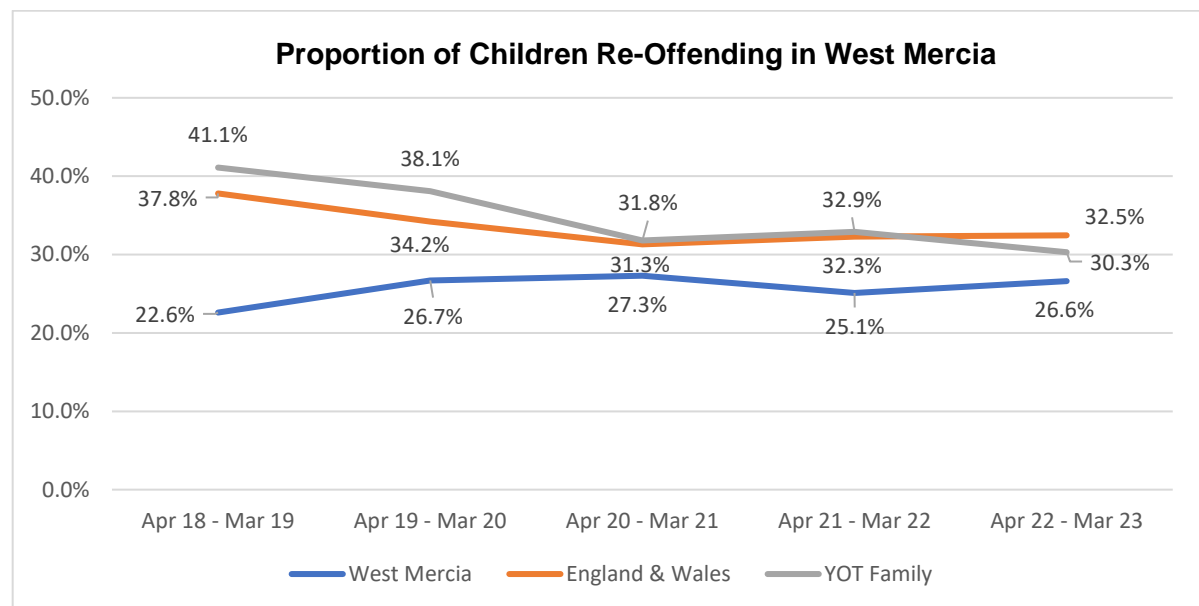
The number of children entering the criminal justice system within West Mercia continues to be below the YOT Family and England and Wales average, although there has been an increase in the last 12 months.

Number of children in custody (Rate of Custody per 1,000 Population)



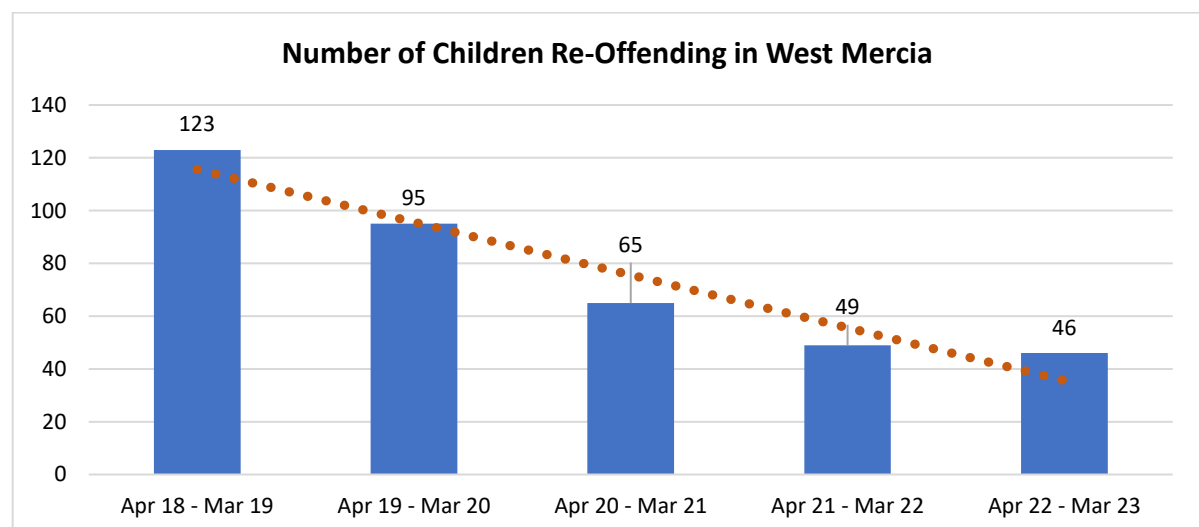
The rate of children in West Mercia is 0.05 which is the same as the YOT Family average and below the England and Wales average, although there has been an increase in West Mercia the last 12 months, whereas the YOT Family has seen a decrease.

Proportion of children in West Mercia who are re-offending



The proportion of children reoffending in West Mercia is 26.6%, which is a slight increase on the previous year. The rate remains below the YOT Family and England and Wales average.

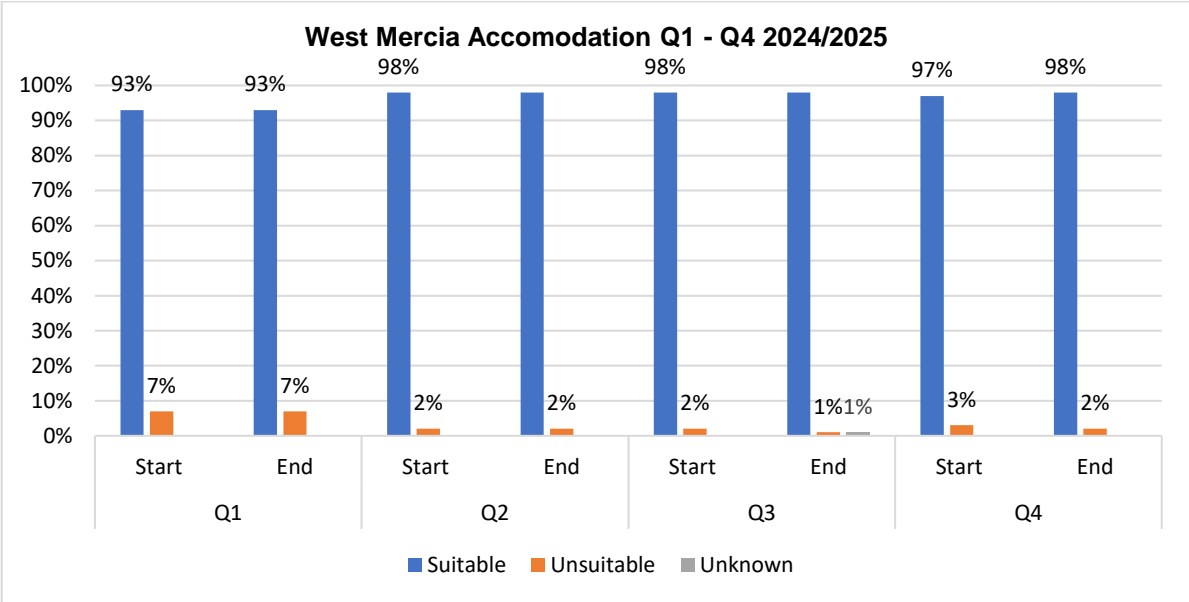
Long Term Trends in the Number of Children Re-Offending



The primary aim of the YJS is to reduce levels of re-offending by children in West Mercia. The chart shows longer term trends in re-offending rates within the context of the number of children re-offending in West Mercia.

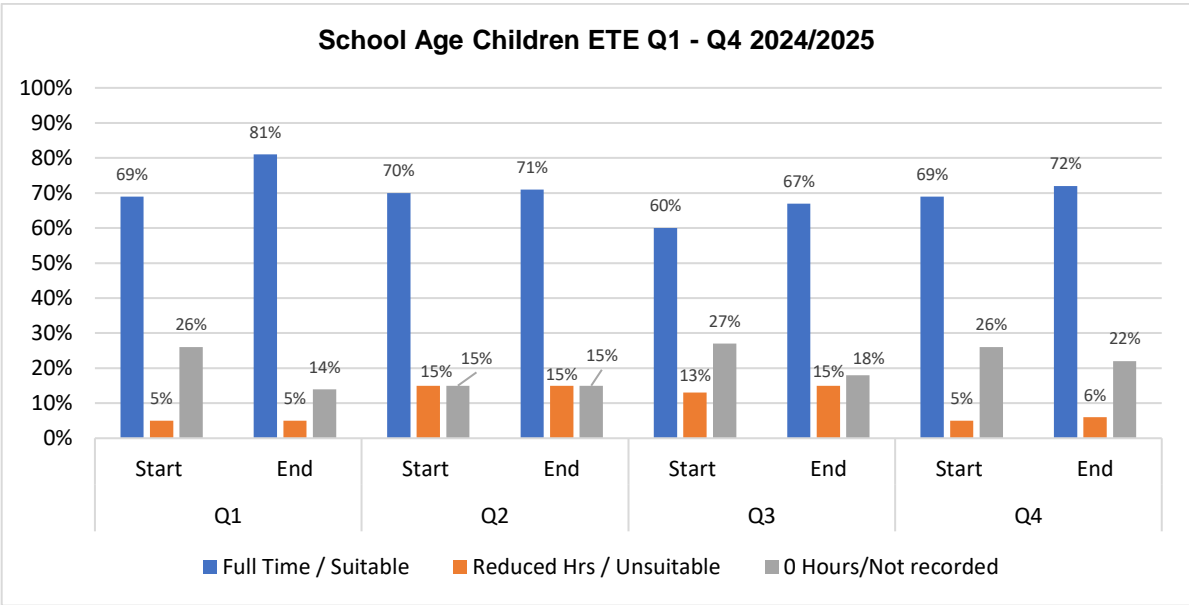
Key Performance Indicators: What are the needs of children the service has worked with? To what extent have these been met?

Accommodation Suitability: Children’s access to safe and suitable accommodation

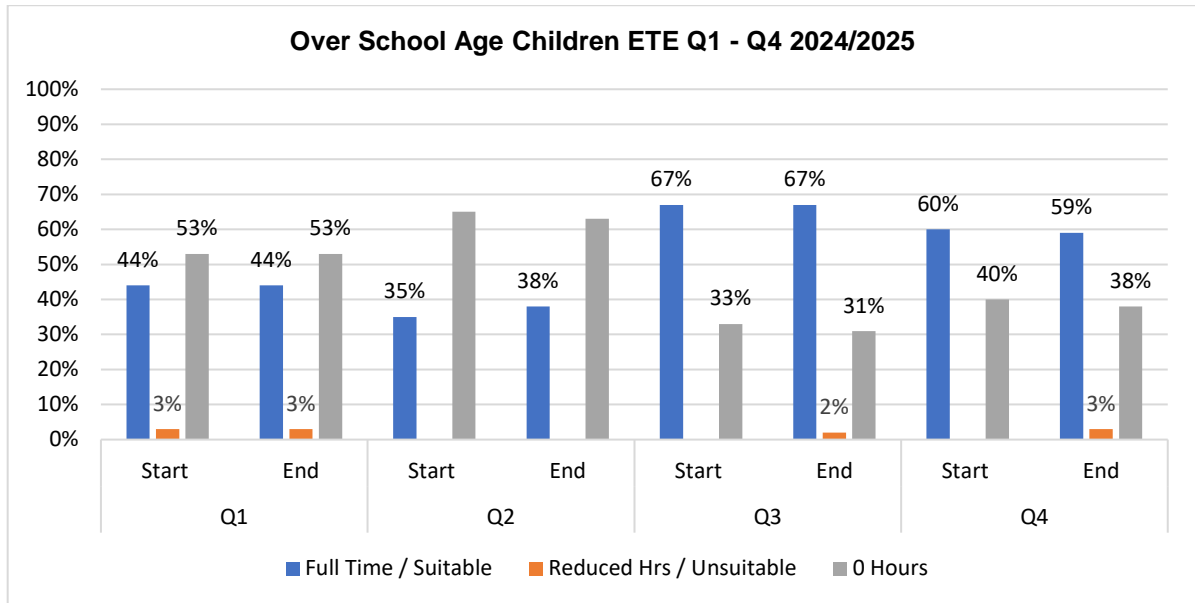


Most children in West Mercia have access to safe and suitable accommodation.

Education, Training and Employment (ETE): The number and proportion of children in suitable ETE by ETE provision type

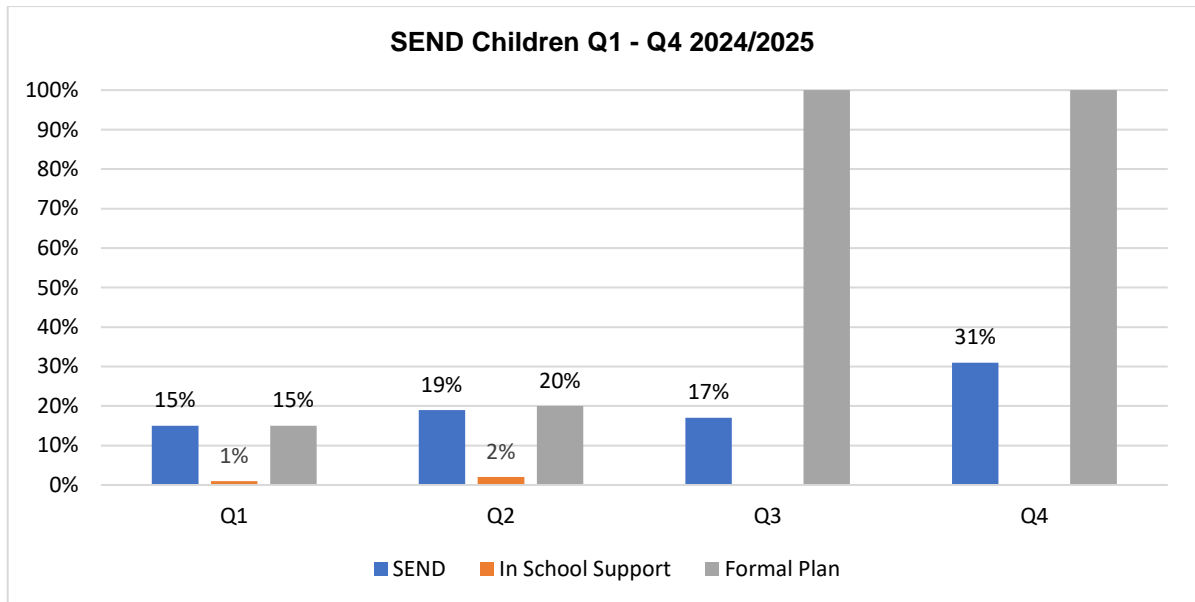


Most school-aged children within West Mercia were engaged in suitable education, training or employment (ETE) provision at the end of their intervention.



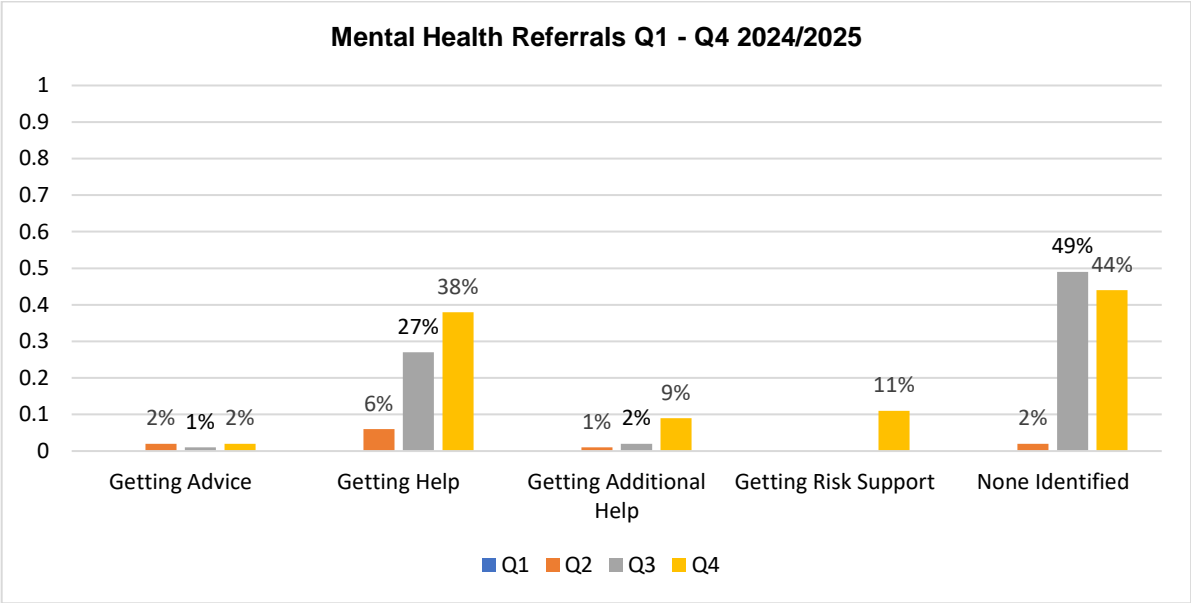
Around a third of children above school-age were not in suitable education, training or employment.

SEND: The number of children with an identified SEND and whether they have a formal plan in place. [A formal plan includes an EHCP and an individual learning/education plan].



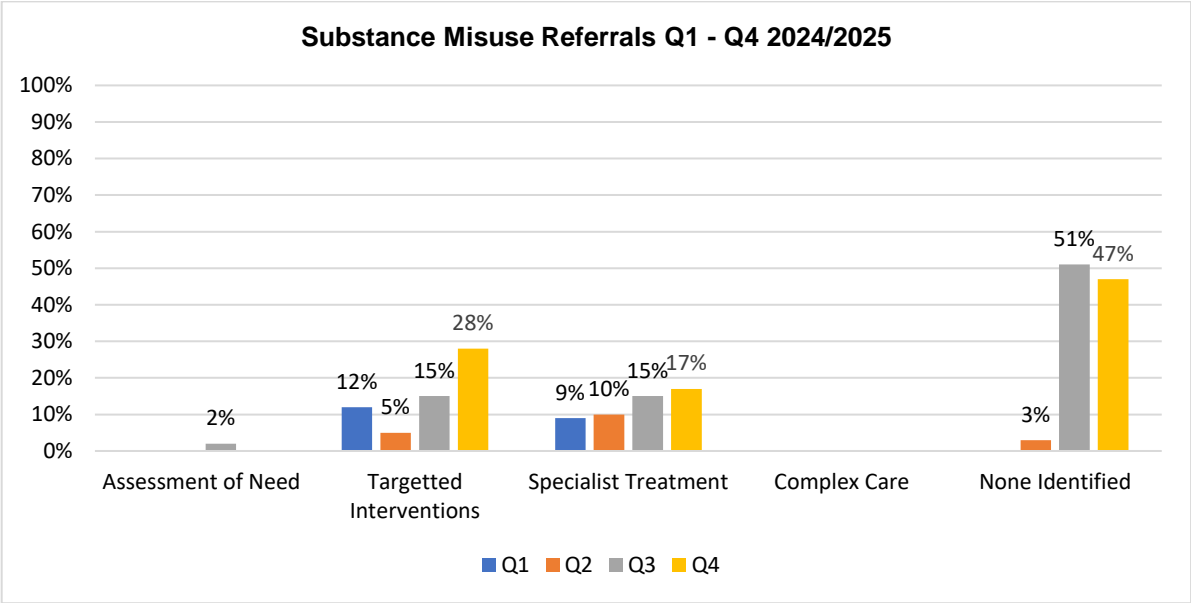
Around 20% of children working with WMYJS have an identified Special Educational Need or Disability. There has been an increase in the number of children who have a formal plan in place to support their needs

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing: The number of children screened or assessed to understand their mental health and emotional wellbeing needs.



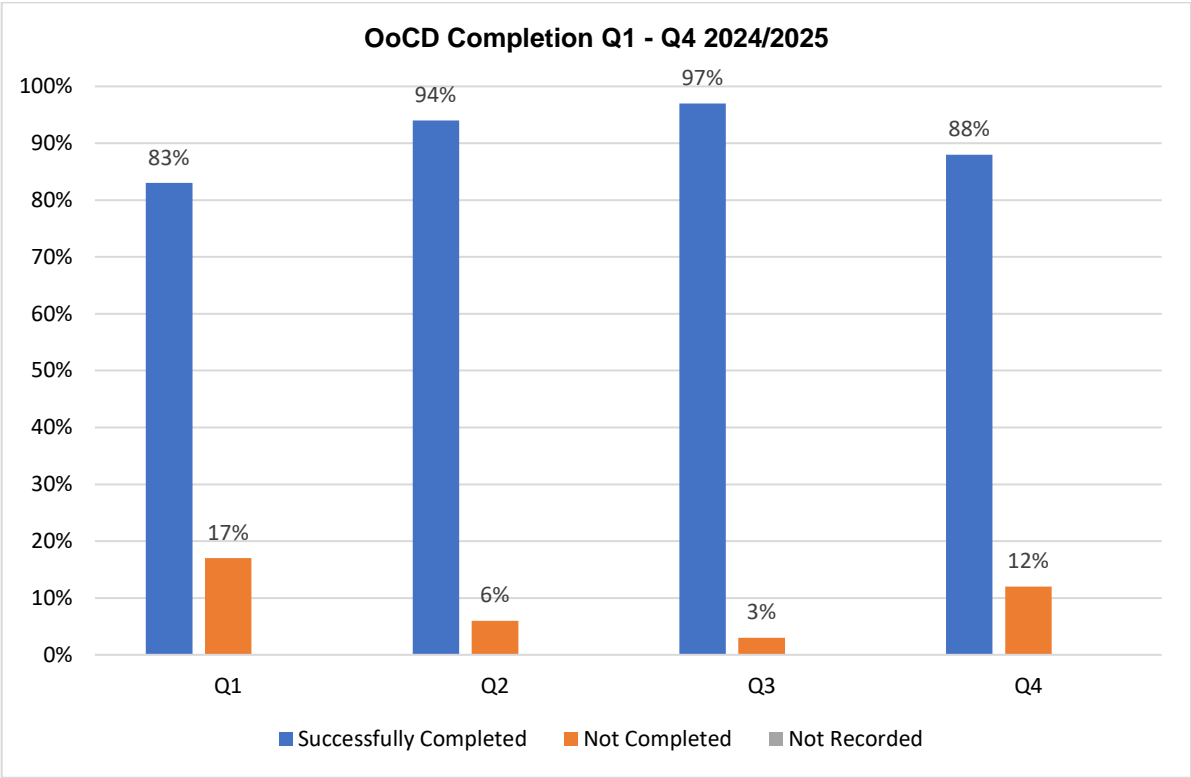
There has been an increase in the number of receiving support for their mental health; this includes an increase in getting help, getting additional help and getting risk support. The numbers of children with no identified mental health need has reduced in the last quarter.

Substance Misuse: The number of children with a screened or identified need for an intervention or treatment to address substance misuse and of that, the number of planned/offered treatment and the number of children attending intervention/treatment.



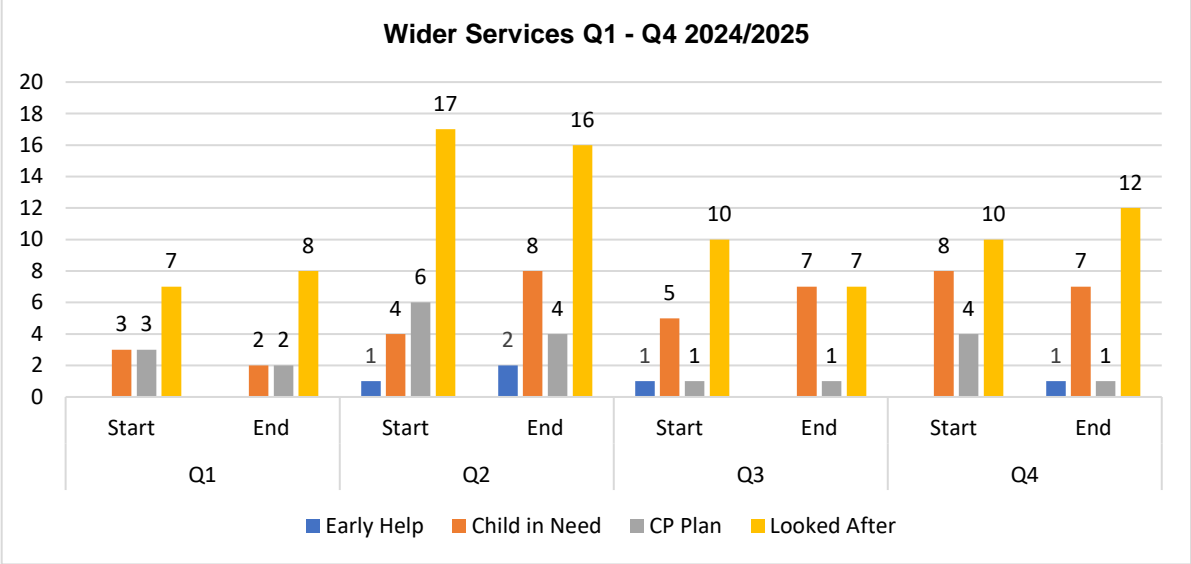
More children are getting support for their substance misuse. There has been an increase in the number of children receiving targeted interventions and specialist treatment.

Out of Court Disposals: Children completing diversionary interventions with WMYJS



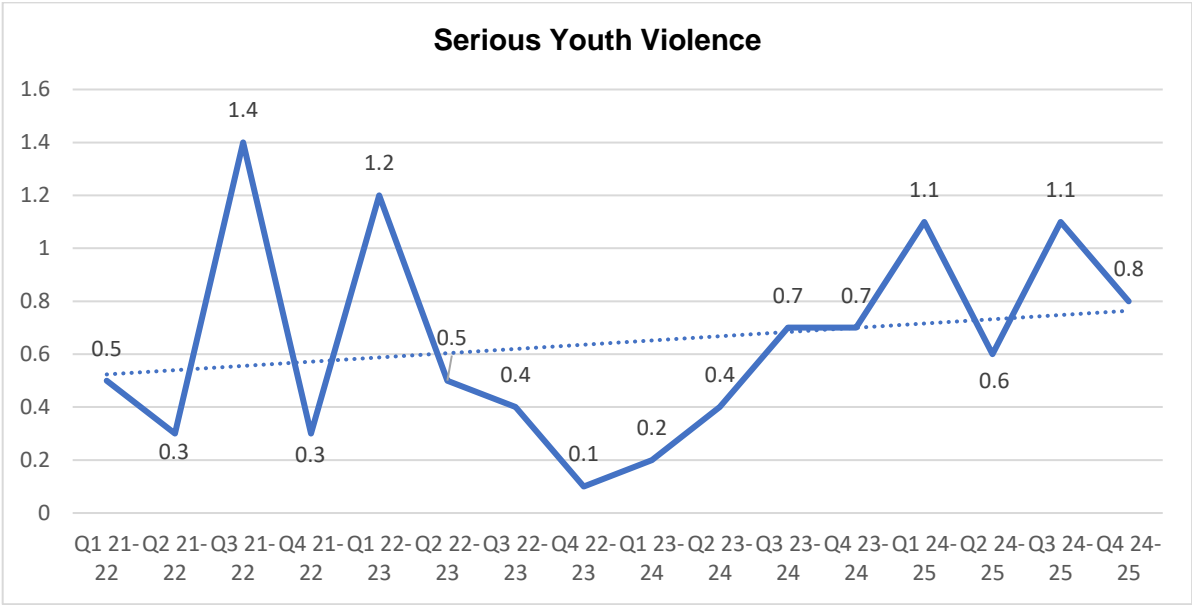
Most children in West Mercia successfully completed their diversionary interventions with WMYJS.

Wider Services: Wider services which children were linked to at the end of their intervention



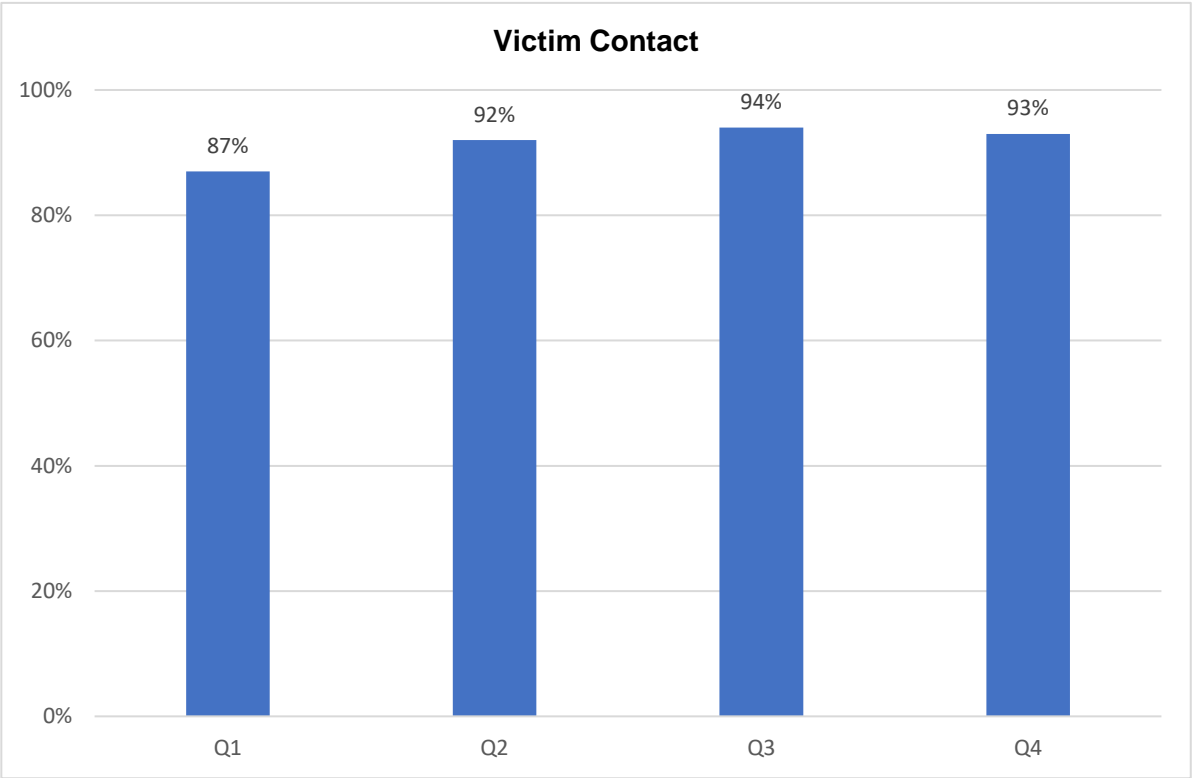
Children remain connected to wider services at the end of their intervention with WMYJS

West Mercia Serious Youth Violence Rate per 10,000: The number of children cautioned or convicted of Serious Violence offences



There were 44 serious violence offences in 2024-25. Serious violence rates have fluctuated in 2024-25; there has been a marginal increase since 2022.

Victims: The number of Victims Contacted by WMYJS



On average, 90% of victims were contacted by the service.

Annexure 7: Our 25/26 Plan on a Page

Theme	Priority	Inspection Action	Actions	Impact Measures
CHILD FIRST	Embedding Child-First		Continue to use the Child-First Champion group to lead children's participation in service development activities.	Audits evidence voice of the child Children's Feedback informs service development. Evidence of You Said, We Did Feedback and Implementation
			Embed the use of ICT in capturing the voice of children and victims to make capturing and analysis easier.	
			Work with children and parents to update the service feedback procedure, including responding to Compliments and Complaints.	
			Develop a service-wide collaboration strategy incorporating recommendations from the Child First Collaboration Research Report.	
PEOPLE	Supporting staff and volunteer development, wellbeing and morale		Work with staff and partners to update the WMYJS Induction Policy and Procedure, including links to lone working, mandatory training and role specific guidance for seconded staff (Police and Probation).	Proportion of staff receiving monthly supervision. Proportion of appraisals completed and % of staff making progress % Positive Feedback from staff following training Annual Staff survey results
			Co-produce an updated Volunteer Policy, Handbook and Induction Programme.	
			Complete a dip sample of staff supervision/appraisals to ensure there is a consistent approach. Provide a summation report to the Management Board evidencing quality of staff performance and identifying any service-wide development needs.	
	Understanding and addressing disproportionality within West Merica	2.1	Further refine performance data to help understand children from groups which are over-represented.	Data reports and analysis evidence an understanding of experience and outcomes for those groups of children over-represented in the youth justice system and a plan for how this can be improved
			Implement a Disproportionality Strategy	
			Work alongside Willowdene and justice-involved women and girls to improve youth justice service provision for girls.	
PRACTICE	Ensuring compliance with new legislation and guidance	3.1	Continue to review service policies and procedures reflecting Child-first principles, new legislation (Working Together 2023) and evidence-based practice; aligning and prioritising policy reviews with learning from quality assurance activity and national policy.	Audits evidence greater consistency in decision making across the service
		4.2		
	Strengthening our restorative offer and victim satisfaction		Develop a service-wide policy and work with partners to develop practice guidance around working with victims who are children including development of a Victim Needs Assessment Tool.	Service user feedback shows improved victim satisfaction Reduction in FTE Reduction in reoffending
			Work with OPCC, Victim Support and Police in linking the YJS Offer with the development of the West Mercia Victims Hub.	
			Undertake a practice review to consider referral order practice, including the Making it Right Approach to panels.	
			Upskill all Practitioners to improve their confidence and ability to deliver restorative approaches across all work with children and victims.	
			Work with children and victims to more closely match reparation placements with children's interests and victim's needs.	
			Standardise the Restorative Justice Officer roles.	
	Improving the consistency of practice across the service	1.2	Implement the simplified Quality Assurance Framework.	Audit/KPI and Service User feedback evidence learning and progress to achieving a consistent quality of practice across service teams Number of children receiving accredited educational outcomes
		2.1		
			Finalise the outstanding actions from the National Standards 2 – At Court Action Plan.	
			Embed West Mercia Learning Centre to provide a consistent educational offer for all children.	
		3.1 3.3	Update assessment, planning and risk guidance to ensure assessment and plans are future focussed and consider how to keep the child, victim and community safe including work with Police around the role of Seconded Officers as Offender Managers.	
	Improving our diversion and early intervention offer		Establish and deliver cross-service development workshops building on the Senior Practitioner practice focus sessions (at least quarterly)	Audits evidence greater consistency in OoCD decision making across the service Data evidences increased Prevention and Diversion outcomes for children and
		8.2	Embed the West Mercia Prevention Offer, ensuring Turnaround Grant Funding requirements are met.	
			Embed the internal scrutiny process for OoCD which complements the existing external scrutiny process.	

		8.3	Roll out the updated induction and training for OocD panel members to include child first/child centred policing and trauma informed approaches	a reduction in children entering the youth justice system
			Work with partners to improve the response to children who may be at risk of radicalisation (Prevent Duty)	
			Work with CPS and Police to pilot an updated OOC process to inform CPS work on National Protocol/Guidance; ensuring the YJS response to children in court is more proactive and provides additional opportunities to maximise diversion.	
			Work with strategic leaders to position the service in accordance with reforms associated with the Families First and Young Futures Prevention Partnerships agendas.	
PARTNERSHIP	Improving the health offer in the youth justice service	7.3	Work with partners to finalise the single service specification for health resources deployed into YJS teams. Work with partners to secure appropriate health provision for all children within WMYJS.	Service offer evidences a consistent health offer to children across West Mercia
	Improving our work with other agencies		Probation: Finalise the revised transition arrangements into case management. (18 year old cohort).	Children leaving custody are released to suitable accommodation Reduction in number of children remanded Audits evidence connectedness of plans between agencies Increase in children with educational needs being met
		9.1	Housing: Review of housing policies/protocols for vulnerable children in each area to ensure they identify and prioritise children coming out of custody	
			Police: Work with Police, Children's Services and partners to develop the West Mercia response to the Bail and Remand Concordat	
			Children's Services: Continue to Work with Children's Services to align information sharing and recording to improve the interconnectedness of plans for children supported by WMYJS and Children's Social Care.	
			Education: Work with education colleagues to collate further contextual information relating regarding children's education including school exclusions children who are not receiving their education entitlement, excluded, on part time timetables or electively home educated. Analyse this data to identify any disproportionality including the care status of the child.	
			Third Sector: Increase awareness of the work of the YJS with third sector partners and improve relationships with local providers.	
	Addressing disparities in service provision and commissioned services between areas		Work with partners to create a directory of projects, activities and services available for children and victims; including awareness of third sector organisations working in local communities.	Service offer evidences consistency across West Mercia Audit/KPI and Service User feedback evidences consistency across the area
			Complete a Needs Analysis of Victims working with WMYJS using the same methodology as the Needs Analysis for children.	
			Work with the OPCC Treasurer to ensure the staffing structure of the service reflects the profile and needs of children and victims.	
	Supporting delivery of the Serious Violence Duty across West Mercia		Use the area-wide and local Serious Violence needs assessments to shape internal practice and delivery of a localised response.	Reduction in Serious Violence Offences committed by children Improved provision for children at risk of serious violence
			Implement the learnings and recommendations from the serious violence MACFA.	
			Work with partners to update our response to children who display sexually harmful behaviours, including work with Police around MAPPA eligible children.	
GOVERNANCE / LEADERSHIP	Ensuring management oversight of practice and leadership of service development		Embed in-time data reporting using metabase to more efficiently further improve management oversight of practice.	Proportion of children with management oversight evidenced on their record Proportion of annual plan and inspection improvement plan tasks completed within timescale
			Establish quarterly performance meetings which triangulates performance reporting with the voice of children and victims to further inform service development.	
			Develop the strategic vision for the service including a longer term strategic plan which is financially viable.	

Annexure 8: Our Prevention Offer

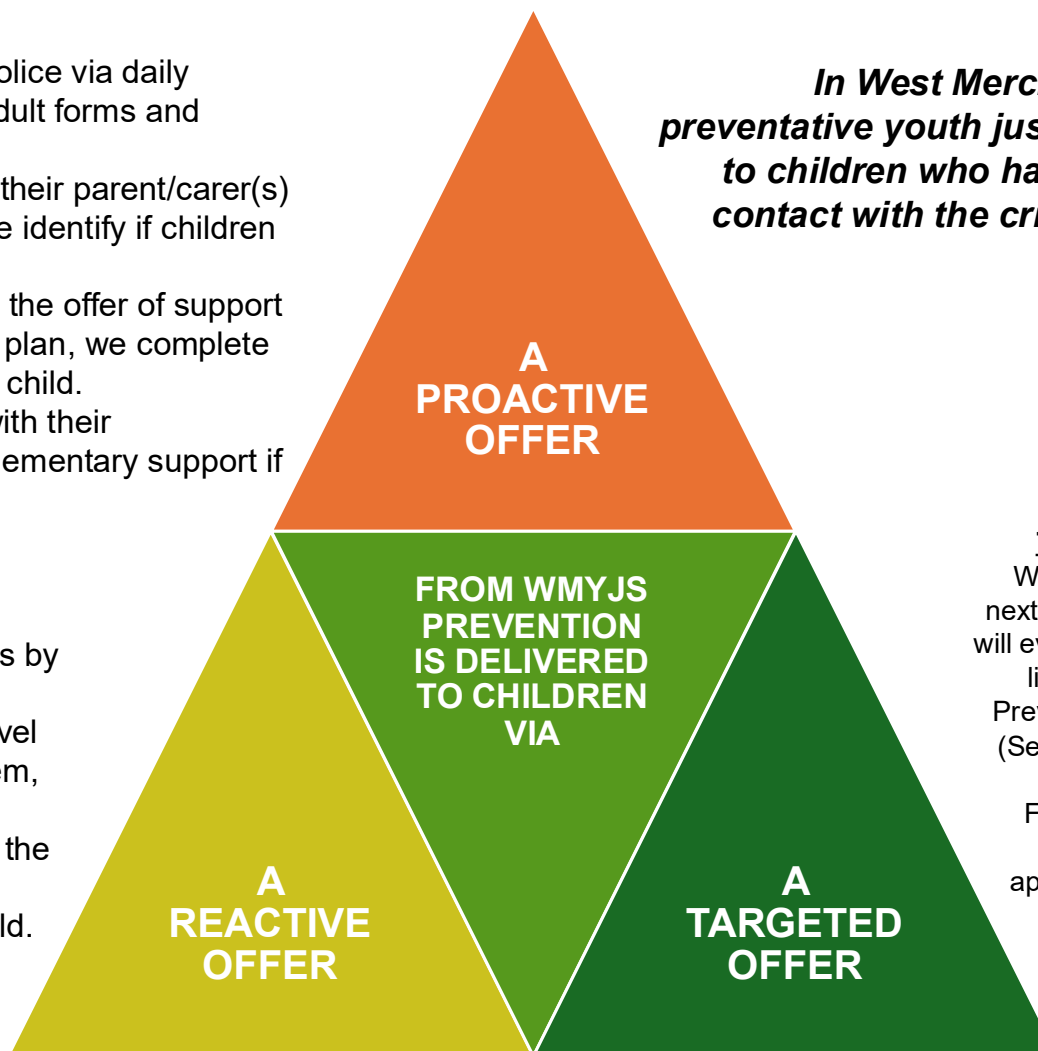
PROACTIVE OFFER

- We receive automated referrals from Police via daily arrests, custody checks, Appropriate Adult forms and voluntary interview data.
- We proactively contact all children and their parent/carer(s) to offer them support. As part of this, we identify if children are already receiving support.
- If a child and their parent/carer accepts the offer of support and they do not have a current support plan, we complete an assessment, plan and work with the child.
- If a child already has a plan, we work with their professional network to offer any complementary support if needed.

In West Mercia, we deliver preventative youth justice services to children who have had some contact with the criminal justice system.

REACTIVE OFFER

- Children are identified and referred to us by someone in their connected network.
- We identify if the child has had some level of contact with the criminal justice system, and, if so, we offer them support.
- If a child and their parent/carer accepts the offer of support we complete an assessment, plan and work with the child.
- Sometimes, we might be asked to do a specific piece of work as part of a plan which is already in place for the child.



TARGETED OFFER

We know that over the next 12 months this offer will evolve and develop in line with West Mercia Prevention Partnerships (Serious Violence Duty) and Focussed Deterrence initiatives. We will apply similar principles as our proactive and reactive offers

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Who are We?

At West Mercia Youth Justice Service, we believe that every child deserves the chance of a positive future. Our work is about more than systems and processes. It's about people, potential, and positive change. It's about seeing beyond the offence to give everyone affected support, guidance, and opportunities.

We support children, young people and their victims who have encountered the justice system, helping repair the harm and create a positive future for themselves and those affected by their actions.

We take a child- first approach rooted in restorative justice, education, and strong partnerships. We place the needs, rights, and potential of every child and victim at the heart of our work. By building positive identities, empowering families, and promoting early support and diversion, we help young people move away from offending and towards brighter, safer futures.



Child First West Mercia



We See Children as Children

We place the needs, rights, and potential of every child and victim at the heart of what we do. Our work is child-focused, developmentally informed, and responsive to social and structural challenges.



We Build Positive Futures Through Identity

We help children develop a strong, pro-social identity by recognising their strengths and supporting their journey away from offending. Through constructive relationships and future-focused interventions, we empower them to contribute positively to their communities.



We Collaborate with Children and Their Families

Change works best when it's done together. We actively involve children, their family and victims in decision-making, ensuring they are heard, respected, and included every step of the way.



We Promote Diversion and Prevention

We believe childhood should be free from the weight of the justice system. We focus on early support, minimal intervention, and diversion wherever possible - reducing stigma and giving children the best chance to thrive.

In West Mercia, we want all children to receive a proactive, place-based service which prevents their offending or reoffending behaviour.

To provide this service:

All children's needs are identified via a YJB **approved assessment**.

After their assessment, **a plan** is developed with the child and the important people in their life. This means that children's plans connect with any existing plans they have with their network. Plans are regularly reviewed.

We work with children by seeing them regularly (at least **fortnightly**).

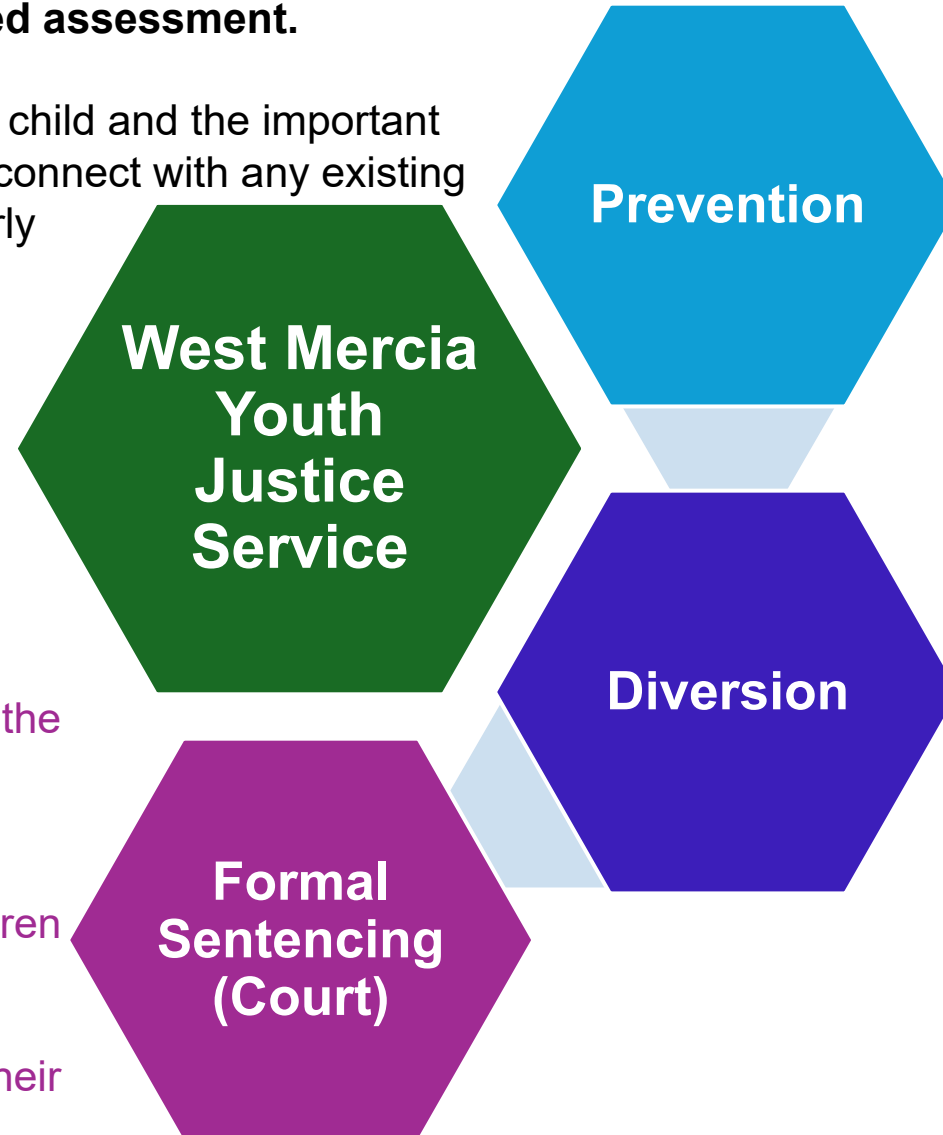
FORMAL SENTENCING

This is our work with children through court.

We proactively offer support to children, their connected network and their victims in navigating the time before, during and after their court appearance.

At court, the judge or magistrate determines and announces the legal consequences for children who are found guilty of a crime.

We work with these children in accordance with their sentence.



PREVENTION

This is our proactive offer of support to children at their earliest contact with criminal justice services.

If children and their connected network would like support, we provide support which complements any plans already in place.

DIVERSION

This is our work with children through our Joint-Decision-Making Panels.

Children can be referred to the Panel by the Police, CPS or the Court.

The Panel determines the diversionary outcome. We work with these children in accordance with their diversionary outcome.

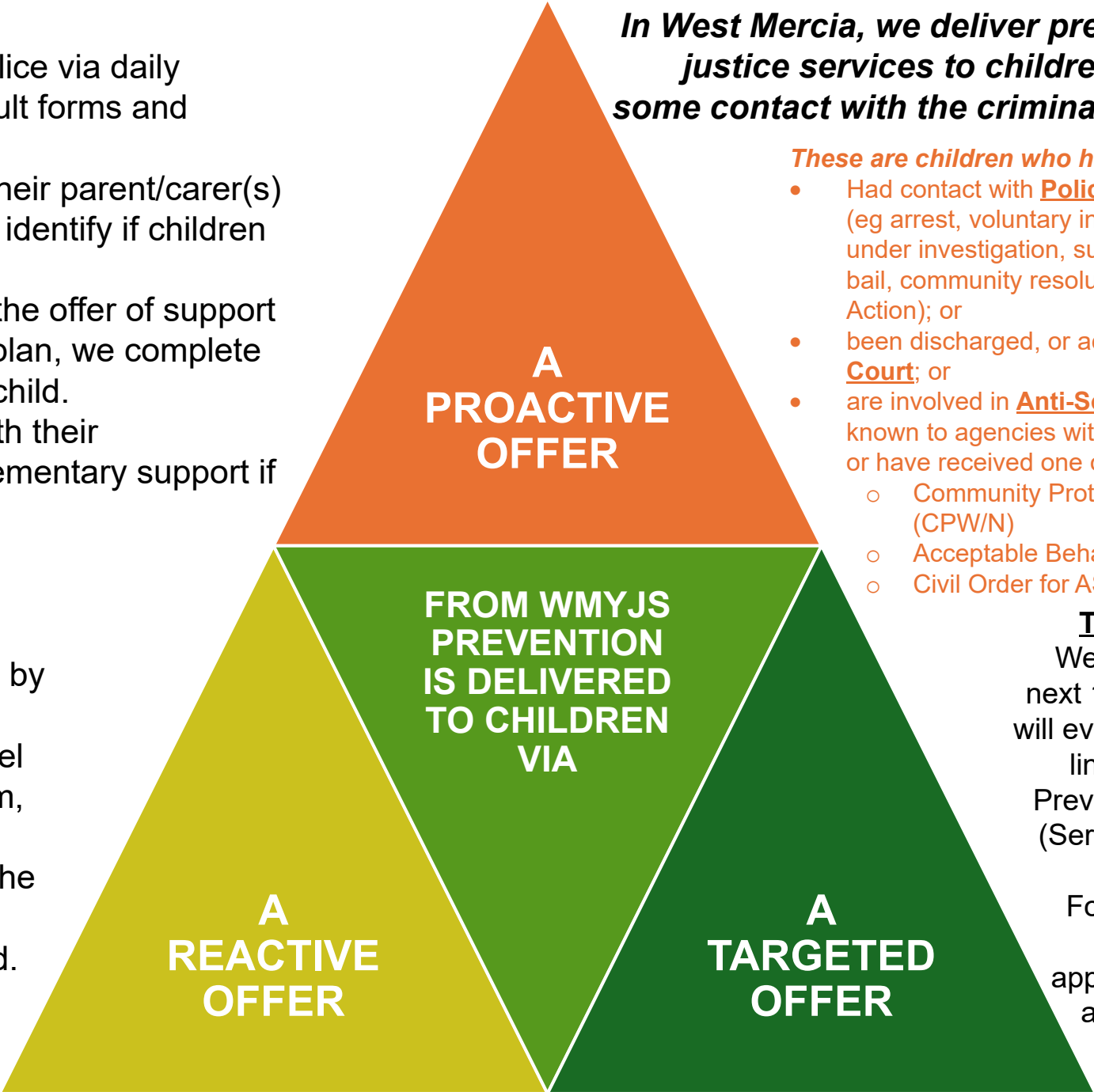
PROACTIVE OFFER

- We receive automated referrals from Police via daily arrests, custody checks, Appropriate Adult forms and voluntary interview data.
- We proactively contact all children and their parent/carer(s) to offer them support. As part of this, we identify if children are already receiving support.
- If a child and their parent/carer accepts the offer of support and they do not have a current support plan, we complete an assessment, plan and work with the child.
- If a child already has a plan, we work with their professional network to offer any complementary support if needed.

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REACTIVE OFFER

- Children are identified and referred to us by someone in their connected network.
- We identify if the child has had some level of contact with the criminal justice system, and, if so, we offer them support.
- If a child and their parent/carer accepts the offer of support we complete an assessment, plan and work with the child.
- Sometimes, we might be asked to do a specific piece of work as part of a plan which is already in place for the child.



In West Mercia, we deliver preventative youth justice services to children who have had some contact with the criminal justice system

These are children who have

- Had contact with Police in the last 3 months (eg arrest, voluntary interview, released under investigation, subject to pre-charge bail, community resolution, or No Further Action); or
- been discharged, or acquitted or fined by a Court; or
- are involved in Anti-Social Behaviour and known to agencies with enforcement powers or have received one of the following
 - Community Protection Warning/Notice (CPW/N)
 - Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC)
 - Civil Order for ASB

TARGETED OFFER

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How is our success measured?

Key Performance Indicators

- First Time Entrants into the Criminal Justice System
- Reoffending rates of Children
- Number of Children in Custody

KPI 1 - Accommodation

The proportion of children in suitable accommodation at the end of their intervention programme/order

KPI 2 - Education, training and employment (ETE)

The proportion of children in suitable ETE at the end of their intervention programme/order

KPI 3 - Special educational needs or disability (SEND)/Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

The number of children with a formal plan in place as a proportion of children with an identified SEND need (or ALN in Wales)

KPI 4 - Mental health and emotional wellbeing

The number of children with a screened or identified need for an intervention to improve mental health or emotional wellbeing at the end of their order as a proportion of children with an order ending in the period

KPI 5 - Substance misuse

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

KPI 6 – Out-of-court disposals

The number of children who completed intervention programmes in the period as a proportion of the number of children with an out-of-court disposal ending in the period

KPI 7 - Wider services

The proportion of children connected to/supported by wider care and support services at the end of their order

KPI 8 - Management board

The number of senior partners attending management boards (out of 5)

KPI 9 - Serious violence

The number of proven serious violence offences as a proportion of the 10 to 17-year-old population

KPI 10 – Victims

The number of victims engaged in restorative justice opportunities as a proportion of the total number of victims who consent to be contacted

How is our success measured?

Key Performance Indicators

- First Time Entrants into the Criminal Justice System
- Reoffending rates of Children
- Number of Children in Custody

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