

Youth Justice Board for England and Wales

Strategic Plan 2018-2021

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Foreword

Over the last 6 months the Youth Justice Board (YJB) has moved responsibility for the commissioning of custody to the Ministry of Justice and other former functions have passed to the new Youth Custody Service.

These changes have allowed the YJB to refocus on its core principles as a provider of expert, independent advice to ministers and to support outstanding practice in the youth justice sector.

I am delighted that we have also had a number of new appointments to the board bringing in a wide range of expertise and talent with members with experience from local authorities, youth offending teams (YOTs), the police, the charity sector, academia, health and education. I have invited board members to play a much more active part in the work of the YJB including being the sponsor of each of our six strategic programmes.

With money continuing to be a challenge, I am keen that the YJB seeks to reduce bureaucratic pressures on the system and duplication. In order for YOTs to continue to build on the successes that they have achieved in the last few years, we will support opportunities which provide local authorities the freedom to organise and run services that best suit their own priorities.

I welcome the focus on vulnerable adolescents contained in the new Ofsted inspection framework and I am sure it will provide a springboard for driving even better collaboration and where necessary, integration between services in giving children and their families the support they need to build on their strengths and turn their lives around.

I look forward to continuing to see creative ways that services are working together to bring about change.

Finally, I would like to thank those in the youth justice sector and my colleagues at the YJB for their work in continuing to support some of the most troubled and vulnerable children in our society. It is through your ongoing work that we are able to help children and their communities to be safe.

Charlie Taylor

Chair

Youth Justice Board for England and Wales

Context

The demands on the youth justice system have changed significantly compared to ten years ago. There are far fewer children in the system, including those entering for the first time and those in custody. This is a great success; however new challenges have emerged.

- As the cohort gets smaller it becomes more concentrated with children who have the most complex needs (including health and education needs) and challenging behaviours. This is evident by the high reoffending rate, especially for those leaving custody.
- Having a more complex cohort means that the expectations on youth justice practitioners is greater than ever. There are high levels of violence in the secure estate, with a proportion of this being against staff. This combined with other very serious issues (e.g. high levels of children self-harming) means that staff must try harder than ever to keep children safe.
- The small cohort means that the number of custodial establishments has reduced. This can mean that some children are placed further away from home which causes difficulties for families and services trying to resettlement children when they are released.
- Whilst we have seen such large reductions in the number of children entering the system, the rate of those children from some black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds is not falling at the same pace compared to white children. This means that the proportion of BAME children in the youth justice system is increasing. Those children who have been in local authority care are also over represented in the system.

In 2016, Charlie Taylor, who has since become our Chair, carried out a [review](#) of the youth justice system. Lord Laming completed a [review](#) on protecting children in care from involvement with the criminal justice system. In 2017, the Youth Custody Improvement Board produced a [report](#) on the youth secure estate. David Lammy MP published his [review](#) on the treatment of, and outcomes for BAME individuals in the criminal justice system. These reviews included recommendations for extensive changes to youth justice in England and Wales and the wider criminal justice system.

The Government has recognised that the youth justice system needs reform and is responding by making a number of changes, including:

- A reform programme with a focus on improving custody. This includes: improving safety, building a workforce with the skills needed to work with children with complex needs, piloting Secure Schools – a new approach to custody which focuses on education.

- The creation of the Youth Custody Service, within Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, which has responsibility for the youth custodial estate.
- The transfer of secure commissioning functions from the YJB to the Ministry of Justice¹.

These changes have provided the YJB with the opportunity to revisit how it can best deliver its functions to support the system to improve outcomes for children. We will:

- Focus on our primary role to monitor the youth justice system and provide independent advice to ministers on its performance.
- Define the youth justice 'system' as comprising of all of the bodies who commission and deliver services to children who have committed, or are at risk of committing crime. Therefore, recognising that collaboration is key to bringing about positive change.
- Understand our position within the system and focus our efforts on the areas where we can enable the greatest positive impact.
- Make sure that we represent the needs of children in both England and Wales, recognising those services which are devolved in Wales and the importance of our close partnership with the Welsh Government.

We must also ensure that we are flexible to adapt when future challenges present themselves. We will be looking for what these may be so the system can prepare itself. We understand there are currently the following challenges which could impact our work:

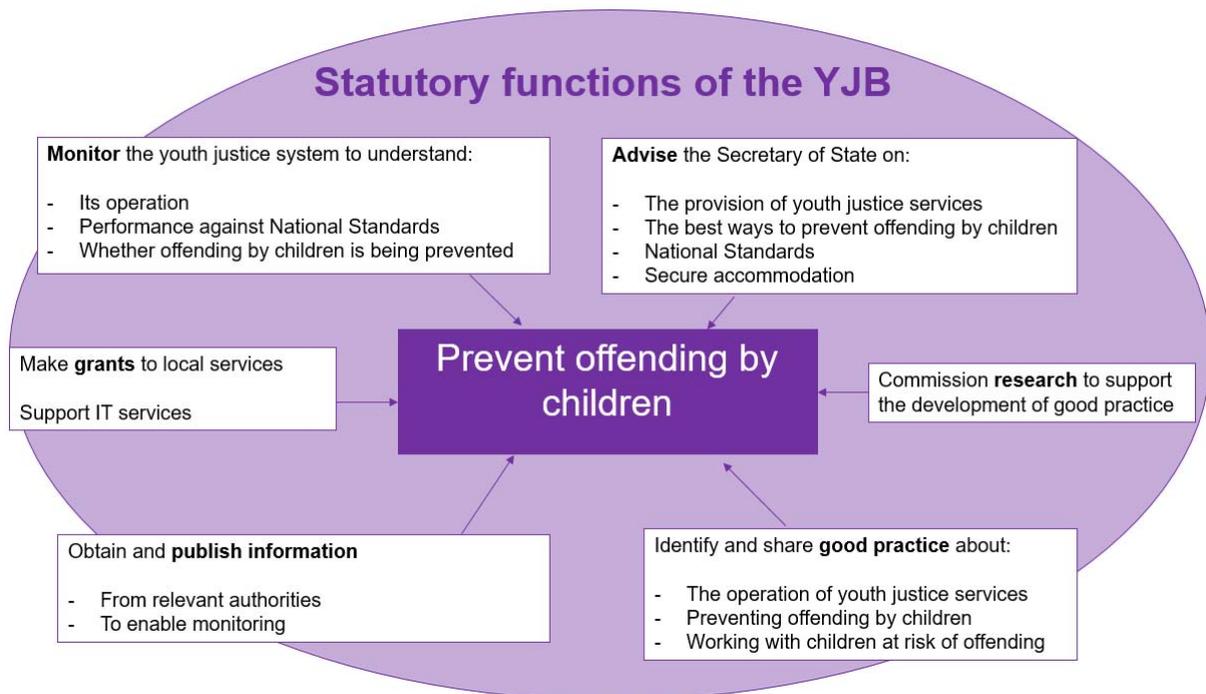
- Central government funding is tight which has implications for our budget and therefore the activities we are able to undertake. Government departments we work closely with will experience financial pressures which may impact their activities within youth justice. One area we will need to monitor is the impact on frontline services which will include, for example, if any changes to policing or the courts service affects outcomes for children.
- Local authorities are experiencing financial pressures. This means significant changes are taking place to the local landscape and how local services are delivered. Funding decisions of Police and Crime Commissioners is also key for local youth justice services.
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduces multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to replace Local Safeguarding Children Boards, and changes to the framework for learning from serious incidents (Serious Case Reviews).
- The disproportionate representation of people from some BAME backgrounds is a priority across government. This provides an opportunity to work with others to tackle this important issue.

¹ In discharging its responsibility to assess future demand for youth detention accommodation, the YJB will continue to advise the Ministry of Justice

Who we are and what we do

The YJB is a non-departmental public body established by the Crime and Disorder Act (1998)². It monitors the operation of the youth justice system and the provision of youth justice services³. It advises the Secretary of State on matters relating to the youth justice system, identifies and shares examples of good practice and publishes information about the system: reporting on how it is operating and how the statutory aim of the system ('to prevent offending by children and young people') can best be achieved.

The YJB is the only official body to have oversight of the whole youth justice system and so is uniquely placed to guide and advise on the provision of youth justice services.



² The YJB's unique functions are set out in section 41, part III of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

³ As defined by section 38, part III of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

YJB Values

Through the YJB Values the YJB aspires to be:

Child-centred

- We see children first and offenders second. We make every effort to champion the needs of children wherever they are in the youth justice system and ensure we give them a voice.
- We strongly believe that children can, and should be given every opportunity to make positive changes.

Outcome focused

- We are outcome focused in fulfilling our statutory functions. We provide leadership and expertise and promote effective practice across the youth justice workforce to maximise positive outcomes for children and their victims.

Inclusive

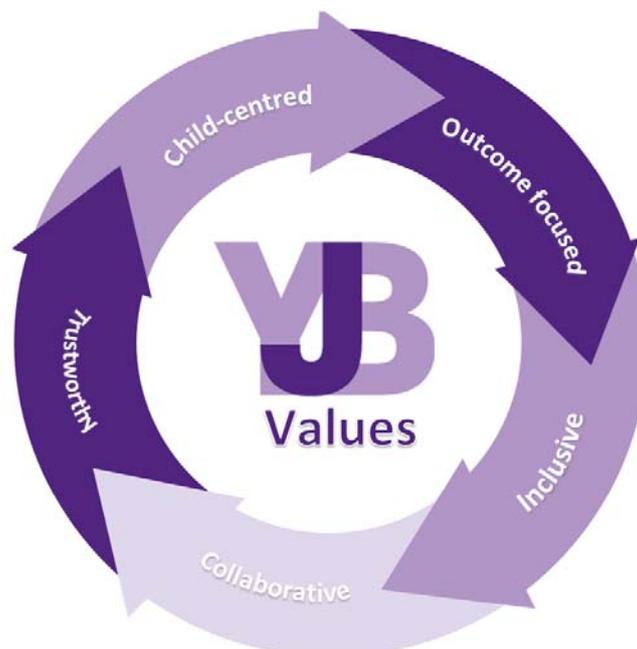
- We strive to challenge discrimination and promote equality, and we work with others to try to eliminate bias in the youth justice system.

Collaborative

- We encourage system-led change, and are enablers to innovation. We actively encourage, facilitate and engage in partnership working to help meet the needs of children, their victims and their communities.

Trustworthy

- We endeavour to act with integrity in everything we do.



Our strategic approach

YJB Vision

Every child should live a safe and crime-free life and make a positive contribution to society

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Youth Justice System Aims

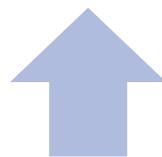
Reduce the number of children in the youth justice system

Reduce reoffending by children in the youth justice system

Improve the safety and wellbeing of children in the youth justice system

Improve outcomes for children in the youth justice system

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Work to achieve the Youth Justice System Aims

Listening to children and practitioners

Collaboration between the YJB, Ministers, strategic partners

Strategic programmes

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YJB Vision

The YJB's strategic direction is set by the Board⁴, which is formed of experts in areas which are vital for effective youth justice: education, health, youth offending teams (YOTs), policing, and the voluntary sector. The Board is supported by a chief executive and other employees⁵ who are responsible for delivering the YJB's business activities.

The Board has established our Vision and Mission statements.

YJB Vision

Every child should live a safe and crime-free life and make a positive contribution to society.

YJB Mission

The YJB is an independent public body with responsibility for monitoring the youth justice system in England and Wales.

We gather information and assess the effectiveness of the system and form an expert view of how the system can prevent offending, and deliver the best outcomes for children who offend and for victims of crime. We advise ministers and those working in youth justice services about how well the system is operating, and how improvements can be made. We share best practice, support information sharing and listen to what children have to say.

⁴ Members of the Board are appointed by the Secretary of State

⁵ As allowed by section 4, Schedule II of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Youth Justice System Aims

The Board has established the Youth Justice System Aims which are not only for the YJB to work towards but for the youth justice community as a whole.

Youth Justice System Aims

Reduce the number of children in the youth justice system

Reduce reoffending by children in the youth justice system

Improve the safety and wellbeing of children in the youth justice system

Improve outcomes for children in the youth justice system

Children within the youth justice system are often from some of the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Many have complex needs including learning and mental health difficulties, and are often themselves, victims of crime. In addition, within the youth justice system there remains a disproportionately high number of children from BAME backgrounds and children who have been/are in the care system.

The solutions to reducing youth offending and disproportionality amongst certain groups do not lie in the justice system alone. In order to transform the lives some of the most troubled children in England and Wales, and to reduce the number of victims of youth crime, there needs to be close collaboration between English and Welsh governments, local government and services.

The YJB, the Ministry of Justice, the Youth Custody Service (within Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service), other government departments in England and the Welsh Government have agreed to work towards these newly established aims. It will be crucial to work with partners across the system to deliver the aims.

We have established a cross-government Youth Justice System Oversight Group to review the performance of the youth justice system against these aims. We will use the outputs from this new Group and other intelligence to provide regular updates to Ministers on the performance of the system, including any actions we believe the Government should take to address specific issues.

Work to achieve the Youth Justice System Aims

Work to achieve the Youth Justice System Aims

Listening to children and practitioners

Collaboration between the YJB, Ministers, strategic partners

Strategic programmes

To deliver the Youth Justice System Aims, partners from across the system will play individual roles as well as needing to work together. The YJB will focus its efforts on the areas where it can make most impact, recognising our position as an organisation which enables others to deliver successful services. The following outlines how the YJB will contribute to achieving the Youth Justice System Aims.

Listening to children

We will continue to facilitate an advisory panel where we meet children on a regular basis to:

- listen to their experiences
- seek their views on specific topics
- discuss ideas they have on how the system can be improved
- provide opportunities for them to participate in projects
- consider the views of families/ carers.

We recognise there are participatory initiatives facilitated by partners across the system which we will also draw learning from.

Drawing on intelligence from various sources to understand how the system is performing

We will gather and interpret information and data from a range of sources to make assessments of how local services and the system as a whole is performing.

We will use these assessments to work with local leaders and other government departments to escalate concerns about performance so that they can take action to improve.

We will work more closely with inspectorates and strategic partners to pool and maximise understanding between stakeholders to enable decisions to be taken based on evidence.

We will use intelligence to identify future opportunities and challenges.

Working with local services to improve practice and promoting innovation

We will develop strategic relationships and engage partners to enable services to innovate.

We will incentivise operators of high performing services to support others to improve.

We will identify and share good practice across the system.

Focusing on strategic programmes which have most impact

We will consider evidence to identify programmes we can work with and support the sector on to deliver the Youth Justice System Aims. The following programmes have been identified. These will be kept under review so we can respond to changing priorities across the system:

- National Standards for youth justice
- Local services practice
- Resettlement and transitions between services
- Safety in custody
- Secure Schools
- The disproportionate representation of children from some BAME backgrounds in the youth justice system

We are currently in the process of working with partners to develop the business plan activities for 2018/19. Our 2018/19 business plan will be published in the summer.

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