

# Brighton & Hove Youth Justice Plan 2025-2026

## Introduction, vision and strategy

Brighton & Hove is a unitary authority, bordered by the larger county councils of East and West Sussex. It is a vibrant seaside city with a population of around 276,300K (2021 Census), of which approximately 47K are children and young people. With high student numbers, many visitors from surrounding areas and tourism, the population is transient and quite diverse. There is a large LGBT+ community and while residents are predominantly white British/ European (89%), more than a quarter of the population (26%) identify as racially minoritised (all other groups except White/ British). More than a quarter (27%, 21,775 households) of multi- person households in the city are multi- ethnic households. The data shows that households in Brighton & Hove are among the most ethnically diverse in England. While the overall population of the city has increased by 1%, the number of Black and Racially Minoritised residents has increased by 35% since the last Census (BHCC website). From the 2025 school census, 23% of 10- 17 year olds are Black, Asian or mixed heritage and 22% are learning English as an additional language. Therefore, demographic data shows ongoing changes in the diversity of the city population.

Brighton & Hove is a relatively affluent city but has areas of social & economic deprivation and a higher than average rate of drugs deaths. It has the highest number of children living in households where there is substance use, mental health issues and domestic abuse are experienced (191.51 per 1000, compared to 182.1 nationally). A large proportion of serious and violent crime is linked to the drug trade and county lines activity and the associated exploitation is one of the biggest challenges for services working with vulnerable children in the city.

Brighton & Hove has a well established multi-disciplinary Adolescent Service, in which the Youth Justice Service sits. This service brings together the key teams that support the adolescents with most complex needs in the city, including children involved with the criminal justice system, experiencing exploitation, using substances or alcohol and those on the edge of coming into care. The teams work closely together whilst still retaining their distinct identities. The management structures, processes and staff recognise the need to work differently to meet the needs of this complex cohort of young people.

The Adolescent Service works closely with other key partners to deliver on the priorities of this plan. These priorities have been agreed and are led by the Brighton & Hove Adolescent Strategic Partnership Board, which has good attendance and participation from all of the key partners. There is a keen commitment to jointly own the vision to ensure we meet the needs of this cohort.

The Complex Adolescent Strategy (2023-25) is owned and governed by the Brighton & Hove Adolescent Strategic Partnership Board. The Youth Justice plan sits beneath this strategy. The partnership is committed to reducing first time entrants into the criminal justice system; to continue to improve practice to reduce reoffending; and to avoid the use of custody wherever possible. There is also a strong commitment to anti racist work and reducing areas of disproportionality across the system. The Brighton & Hove Adolescent Strategic

Partnership Board has also prioritised increasing participation and the voice of the child and continuing to develop contextual safeguarding practice.

We were extremely proud of Outstanding HMIP inspection in 2021. Since then we have also achieved a level 1 SEND inspection in 2023, and an Outstanding Ofsted ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) in 2024. We feel this was a result of our strong partnerships and dedicated staff team, and the shared ambition to provide the best services possible for our children, their families, and the community. Whilst being really proud of this achievement, we are clear that we will not be complacent. We have continued to strive to make improvements and will do so until we get it right for all our children.

**Deb Austin, Corporate Director, Chair of the Brighton & Hove Adolescent Partnership Board.**

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

The Adolescent Service, with the Youth Justice integrated, sits within Children's Safeguarding and Care branch of Families, Children & Wellbeing (FCW) Directorate of the city council. This promotes a good operational and strategic fit with the wider services for children, young people, and their families.

The key principle of the service is that we show young people we care for them, even when at times we do not condone their behaviours. We never give up trying to engage with young people, using reflective group supervision to explore new ideas when things feel stuck.

The service also strives to work with the wider community, for example we are aware young people are being exploited within some local hotels, so we are working with them to address this with an offer of advice and training for their staff.

The Adolescent Service has enabled teams to work in a child centred way focusing on how best to engage with this often-disaffected cohort. We aim to reduce the number of professionals working with each child, removing the need for the young person to have to tell their story several different times to different professionals. We have worked to ensure our office is a welcoming place for young people and they often spend time there with their friends talking with the adolescent workers. This has been a successful way of encouraging young people to engage with the service who were previously reluctant to do so.

The remit of the previous Youth Offending Service Management Board was extended to include the needs of the wider complex adolescent cohort, and therefore better support the local model. The Brighton & Hove Adolescent Strategic Partnership Board has recently been reviewed and is now called the Adolescent Partnership Board. It sits quarterly and is co-chaired by the Corporate Director for Families Children and Wellbeing and the Director of Youth Work for Trust for Developing Communities. All relevant statutory partners are represented at a senior level as well as a representative from the voluntary sector and a headteacher representative. The Board retains a strong focus on youth justice and sets the direction and priorities for the service, as well as overseeing youth justice performance and development. Likewise, in agreement with the Youth Justice Board, the Youth Justice Plan has been incorporated into a Complex Adolescents Strategy. We have ensured that this continues to give appropriate attention to the development of Youth Justice arrangements in the area, setting vision and direction to the service.

The Head of Service (Adolescents) sits within the Senior Leadership Team in FCW. She actively champions the needs of young people and Youth Justice within the relevant partnerships and strategic boards, including the Sussex Criminal Justice Board, the Community Safety Partnership Board, The Sussex Violence Reduction Partnership, and the Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Children Partnership. Along with other Adolescent Strategic Partnership Board members, she raises the needs of this particularly complex and vulnerable cohort of children and young people, and ensures others see them as “child first.”

Partnerships are strong in Brighton & Hove, and there is a genuine will to work together to address issues associated with youth crime and support desistance and prevention of crime through provision of services for children, for example strategic partnerships with the police to promote contextual safeguarding and working arrangements with community projects AudioActive (outreach music project) and Brighton Streets (targeted youth work).

The Youth Justice Service has a good reputation internally with the Local Authority, being embedded in social work structurally and aligned with social work practice & policy. Externally, the Adolescent Service has well established and strong strategic and operational partnerships with Police, Probation, and courts, dealing with issues of risk and public protection in a robust manner. Strategically the Youth Justice Service is therefore well placed to meet the demands of welfare & justice.

## **5.1 Update on the previous year:**

### **Progress on priorities in previous plan:**

The Youth Justice Team is fully integrated into the Adolescent Service. The Adolescent Strategic Partnership Board has set 3 main priorities for 2023-2026:

- To increase participation and the voice of the child;
- To continue the anti-racist journey and address disproportionality; and
- To continue to develop contextual safeguarding practice to better meet the needs of this cohort.

In addition, there were Youth Justice specific outcomes, reducing First Time Entrants (FTEs), reducing reoffending and reducing the use of custody.

- **To increase participation and the voice of the child**

In the last year, the Participation Worker within the Adolescent Service has worked on developing the social media presence to engage with children and young people. We are engaging with young people through Instagram and the number of Instagram followers has increased to 732. Young people have been providing feedback via media about their experience of the service. Things that young people stated were important to them about the service included “Having a safe space to talk”, “receiving information [about drugs/ services]” and “emotional support” during difficult times. Parents stated they appreciated “having a reliable and consistent worker”.

In respect of Youth Justice, we fund (via vouchers) young people with lived experience to be part of all Youth Justice recruitment processes, for example by being part of the interview

panel. Young people are provided with advice and guidance, are asked to write their own questions for candidates and encouraged to take a full part in the interview process. They contribute to scoring and discussions about candidates at the end of interviews.

We regularly seek children's views throughout and at the end of their disposals and their views are shared with the team as part of developing practice. This has been particularly important as part of relationship -based practice. For the majority of children, their relationship with their Youth Justice worker is central to their experience of the system, and especially that they can trust their Youth Justice worker. We have had feedback from children and their parents/ carers about the quality of their relationships with their Youth Justice workers and what has helped. Young people have reported that they felt "listened to" and understood, and feedback about their Youth Justice workers and the relationships have largely been very positive.

We have recently developed a new feedback process for young people and parents/ carers, which can be completed in person, in writing, online or via text message. The information is being collated and used to inform service development. The majority of conversations have happened as part of the supervision process and we have found that children are honest and open in their responses. Young people were also engaged in the evaluation of the new YJB Diversion Assessment tool this year.

Below are some quotes from young people and parents received this year:

17 year old white male (DTO):

"the knife crime intervention was really good but was too late for me as I was too far into it. This needs to happen for younger kids, like 11 or 12"..." The thing that most helped me was my [Adolescent Support] worker, taking me out and showing me different things to do" ...."When you come from poverty, you need to be shown a different way and other things to stimulate your mind".... "What I would say to others? Getting involved in dealing drugs was all about trying to get money quick...but that it wasn't worth it".

Parent of YP in transition:

"[YJ worker] has been amazing. Coming from someone who has had services involved for many years, I have to say what an asset you have representing your service. My son has been very fortunate to have [leaving care worker] supporting him as well so thank you for ensuring that my son has the highest standard of service. When you have people like this on your team that's where positive impact and change is achieved for young people and families. I feel very blessed and appreciate the work you do".

Parent of a young person who was exploited:

"I would like to give my thanks and the upmost praise for the whole team... Without all your help and support I don't think we [family] would be in the position we are now, which is so far removed from where we were a few years ago. The time that you have been able to give [young person] has been invaluable, and the understanding that you

have of how young people's lives work is incredible. I will always be grateful to the team helping and supporting me to get through what was an incredibly difficult and challenging period in our lives, and the confidence and perspective my son has now is amazing. Not only is he actively helping to recruit the next wave of social workers but he has even expressed his gratitude to me for the past couple of years! Thank you for listening, and for not judging".

Parent:

"[Daughter] has made huge steps and seems so much happier. I want to thank you for all your support. She is at present feeling sad and a little anxious, maybe vulnerable about the fact she's no longer officially on the books but she's aware its actually a positive thing and a merit to her. You're all a wonderful team and I wish you all the best. Thank you so much."

Parent:

"Thank you so much for seeing [son] the way I see him. You have been the most perfect support he could've asked for. You've been wonderful and helping him understand the choices he makes, and impact that it has as well as finding ways to resolve his problems. I can't thank you enough. I know [son] is a truly wonderful boy.... He has a bright future in front of him. I know School is difficult but I'm so proud of the resilience that he shows....he could've continued along the path that made you guys meet in the first place and he hasn't. You are a wonderful support worker you do an amazing job thank you so much for your support and service and I know [son] has enjoyed working with you".

In December 2024, young people were invited to the Adolescent Strategic Partnership Board meeting development session, where they spoke about their experiences growing up in Brighton & Hove and what it is like for young people in the city. The discussion covered their views about bullying, discrimination, crime and serious violence. The young people expressed their views about services, what had been helpful and what they felt young people needed to stay safe and succeed. This feedback has been taken into account in planning for the service. Notably, being listened to, having workers they could trust and opportunities to learn and achieve were highlighted by the young people as most important to them.

We had funding from Healthwatch to seek to engage a group of LGBTQ young people; gathering their views about how substance misuse services, sexual health services and therapeutic support services could better engage this often marginalised community. Surveys of young people within schools (e.g. School Safe and Well at School Survey) in Brighton & Hove have consistently identified that LGBTQ+ young people under the age of 18 have often felt there are barriers to accessing support from support services such as drug and alcohol services.

The aim of the sessions was to encourage co-design of tools that can enable service managers, social workers, frontline workers in drug, alcohol and sexual health services and commissioners of local health and social care services to better understand and serve this community of people. Young people were engaged in co-producing a guide that seeks to help services better engage and serve LGBTQ+ young people. Young people from this group have been actively involved in the delivery of training & awareness sessions for the Adolescent Service about gender and sexuality and the impact of their experiences.

Sussex Police have increased their engagement with children and young people across the county. This has been done in several ways, through face-to-face contact by visiting schools, colleges, and youth groups and through online survey. Questions were asked about how safe children feel, what would make them feel safer, what are the barriers in speaking to Police and what needs to change, whether they would report crime and what Police priorities should be. There were 540 respondents aged between 12 and 24. The results showed that while 1 in 2 children felt Police do a good job, ratings for Police respect and treatment were lower in the Black, Asian and mixed -race cohort. The report included recommendations for Sussex Police.

- **To continue the anti-racist journey and address disproportionality.**

The Youth Justice Service is part of the Children's Safeguarding and Care Anti Racist Action Plan. The plan has been produced by the project board, including senior managers and practitioners and has three main workstreams, staff support, how we are working with children and families and the voices of families, children and carers. We have seen significant improvements in practice in the last year, including staff feeling more confident talking about race and the impact of discrimination, as well as significantly more examples of good practice seen in audits.

Last year, we convened joint training between the Police and the Adolescent Service to support the difficult conversations required to challenge and address examples of racism and to encourage better joined up work in this area. There have been some very successful in person training and arrangements being put in place to continue the conversations.

We continue to scrutinise the performance data and this is shared and discussed at the Adolescent Strategic Partnership Board. We continue to see disproportionality within the cohort of mixed heritage boys in the statutory cohort and we continue to look at ways to address this.

As part of the BHCC Anti-racist pledge, the Adolescent Service are committed to learning and development of best practice in anti-racism to improve outcomes for children and families and to creating a diverse workforce that feel safe and supported. Following completion of Me & White Supremacy workbook across the Adolescent Service (including all staff and managers) we have continued learning and reflection using books and media. This learning continues through the monthly Anti-Racist Forum, which involves learning across wider Children's Services, sharing best practice and discussions of topical issues affecting staff and local communities. Also, learning continues through themed group supervision discussions in teams and manager's meetings.

More detail on disproportionality and measures to address this are included in the Performance section below.

- **To continue to develop contextual safeguarding practice to better meet the needs of this cohort.**

The Safeguarding Children Partnership ([bhscp.org.uk](http://bhscp.org.uk)) continues to have Safeguarding Children from Violence and Exploitation as one of its strategic priorities. Our model of Relationship Based Practice, shared across the partnership, aligns with our focus on Contextual Safeguarding. We have systems in place, such as Contextual Safeguarding Strategy Meetings to help provide structure to the work alongside AVR and our specialist Adolescent Services. BHSCP has completed recent thematic audits on exploitation and children who go missing which has helped drive best practice in these areas and acknowledged the good systems and joint working already in place. This has seen further developments of our work with the NRM Pilot and work with the Police to disrupt and support investigations into perpetrators of exploitation in the city. This activity is overseen by the Exploitation Sub Group that sits under the BHSCP safeguarding arrangements.

The multi-agency thematic audit conducted by the Brighton & Hove Children's Safeguarding Board (BHSCP) identified some key strengths around partnership practices, effective systems and processes to safeguard children and the use of contextual safeguarding. It was acknowledged that even though the multi-agency arrangements and practice was strong, there remained inconsistency in the improvement of the lived experience for some of these children. The findings of this were shared through a learning event. We will use these findings to inform and continue to develop the work in this area.

There is ongoing partnership work with Police in relation to ASB, vulnerability/ exploitation and children at risk of perpetrating serious violence and/ or carrying weapons in the city. For example, Op Safety is a strand of Sussex Police strategy to intervene early to disrupt and reduce serious youth violence by identifying children known to carry or at risk of carrying knives and ensuring they are receiving appropriate intervention. With increasing concerns about knife crime in Brighton & Hove in recent years, Op Safety has developed into a multi-agency oversight meeting, chaired by the Youth Justice service manager and involving key partners in Trust for Developing Communities (TDC), Access to Education, Community Safety and the Police Exploitation team. AVR (Adolescent Vulnerability and Risk Meeting) is a weekly multi-agency oversight meeting which focusses primarily on children at risk of or being exploited in the city. AVR also reviews children who present a significant risk to the safety of others.

Brighton & Hove city council is part of a joint National Referral Mechanism (NRM) decision making panel with East Sussex County Council. The panel has been established for over two years now and we are seeing more timely decisions being made in respect for the vulnerable cohort of children. Another positive outcome is that this has enabled the voice of the child to be heard as part of the process.

- **To reduce First Time Entrants**

In B&H we have been working closely with partners with the aim of increasing the number of children safely diverted from the youth justice system, improving support for children and their families in the community and preventing the harmful impact caused by the criminalisation of children. As shown by the data below, the number of FTEs in B&H has reduced comparatively in the last 12 months.

The Adolescent Service is designed to enable appropriate support and intervention for vulnerable children and those coming to notice, and their families, with a range of services delivered by skilled and experienced professionals. The Youth Justice Service has established diversion pathways that respond to the needs of the child and family. Police referrals are triaged, with diversion pathways including specialist drugs diversion via ru-ok? (substance misuse service), Immediate Justice, Turnaround (where appropriate) and Youth Justice intervention. Children open to the YJS have direct access to services such as Family Functional Therapy, support from Psychologist & MH practitioners and Engagement & Support service (bespoke mentoring).

We have continued to develop and strengthen the OOCR offer in partnership with Police. In January 2025, the YJS delivered 5 training sessions for Sussex Police CPD, which focussed on Youth Justice work and OOCRs, specifically the new Child Gravity Matrix and diversion pathways. This has led to better understanding of youth justice work in the Police and we have already seen increased numbers of referrals since January.

There are regular pan -Sussex meetings to ensure alignment of the Child Outcome Pathway across Sussex and share and develop best practice. In 2024, a pan-Sussex audit of OOCR was undertaken to examine decision-making and outcomes. The YJB were involved in advocating for the use of Outcome 22 as deferred prosecution in Sussex. Unfortunately, this is yet to be approved by Sussex Police senior management but the discussion is ongoing.

Turnaround is delivered in partnership with The Trust for Development Communities (TDC). The Turnaround worker is also part of Brighton Streets outreach team, which has facilitated trust and relationships with young people at risk of offending, leading to better outcomes. The Turnaround partnership includes Police, FDFF, Reboot team, YJS and TDC.

The Immediate Justice offer has been funded for a further 12 months (until March 2026) based on the positive outcomes achieved in B&H. There are dedicated RJ workers who work with a range of community projects to encourage children to repair the harm caused by their behaviour.

An Early Intervention initiative has been developed, bringing together local partners involved in crime prevention, including Youth Policing team and NPT, Community Safety and Exploitation team, Trust for Developing Communities and Youth hubs, BCRP (Brighton Crime Reduction Partnership) and YJS to identify children involved in ASB and offending and ensure there is an appropriate response.

- **To reduce reoffending**

Our core aim is to reduce re-offending, to protect victims and communities from harm and to improve outcomes for children within Youth Justice. As noted above, the integration of Youth Justice into Children's Services and as part of the Adolescent Service provides a sound basis for a ChildFirst approach, enabling joined up multi-agency intervention suited to meeting children's complex and diverse needs. The co-location of services facilitates close collaboration between professionals and children's networks. There is similarly close connection between service managers, joint planning and development of the service.

The Trauma Informed model is embedded into practice across the service, with specialist CAMHS practitioners attending reflective group supervision to support staff. In house MH practitioners also provide individual consultation, clinical supervision and advice. Youth Justice practitioners use the five Ps case formulation for assessing young people and have a good understanding of the children they work with. We have a strong partnership with the

local F-CAMHS team, who provide forensic assessment, clinical consultation for staff and networks and direct intervention when violence and risk to others is a particular concern.

There is multi-agency oversight of young people who present a significant risk of re-offending and harm to others via Op Safety and AVR. Alongside this, there is a strong partnership with local Police and we have an experienced and child centred Police Officer embedded in the YJS, so there is good information and intelligence sharing.

In the last year, we have focussed on developing the offer to victims and increase victim safety. We aim to keep RJ at the centre of our practice and take victim's views into decision making wherever possible.

There has been close liaison with probation to continue to develop Transitions work in the service. We have a seconded Probation Officer in post, who has a split role with YJS and VERU (18-25 adult team) as part of the local arrangement. This role has significantly improved transitions for young people turning 18, providing continuity and access to adult services.

We have a full time Education Advisor, who works directly with schools and the B&H Inclusion Support Service (BHISS) with the aim that all children open to Youth Justice are offered suitable education provision where their needs are met.

- **To reduce the use of custody**

We have continued to work in partnership with local courts to embed a ChildFirst approach whereby custody is only used as a last resort. There is a high congruency rate with PSR proposals and disposals, which demonstrates the credibility the YJS holds with magistrates and judges.

Custody cases are discussed with the Strategic Management Board and deep dives of the data completed when issues are highlighted. Where children reach the custody threshold, there is consultation with the HoS regarding PSR proposals, to consider public protection concerns, risk management and the YJS offer to children at this level. Children and young people are offered robust community disposals in all cases unless the risk to the public is considered to be unacceptably high (i.e. could not be safety managed in the community) and/ or all other options have been tried.

Children identified as at risk of custody are offered an enhanced multi-agency package via the provisions of Youth Rehabilitation Orders, which can include a range of specialist adolescent services, such as Engagement and Support (mentoring), specialist Adolescent Social worker, Ru-OK? (substance misuse); FFT (Functional Family Therapy); support with emotional & mental health via seconded CAMHS practitioner and 1:1 support with education, training or employment. Programmes are bespoke, tailored to individual needs and wishes, with a balance of statutory appointments and activities to enhance engagement. This includes ISS programmes as part of a YRO or Bail Support programme.

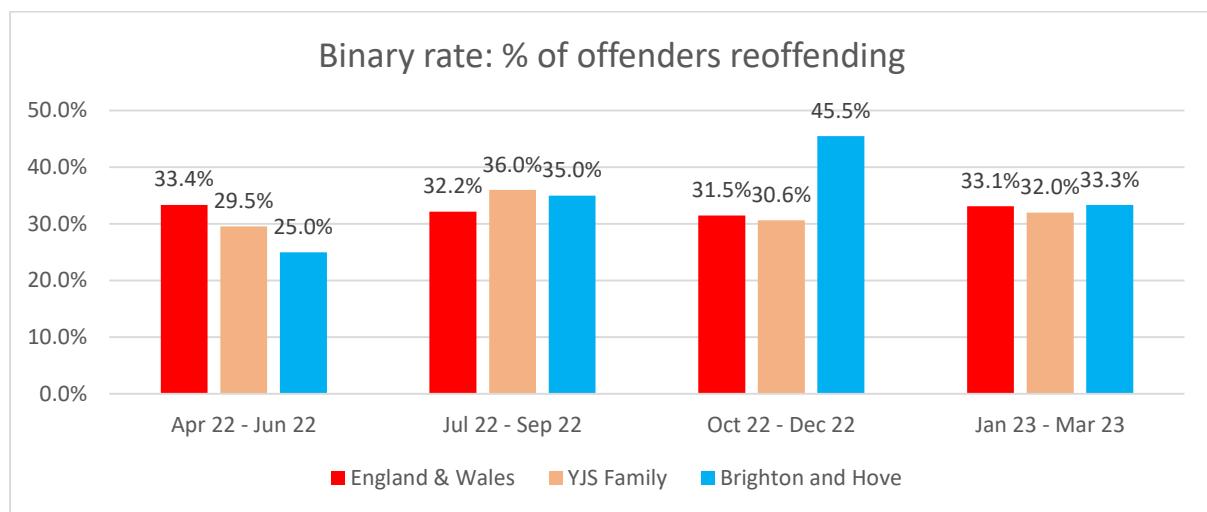
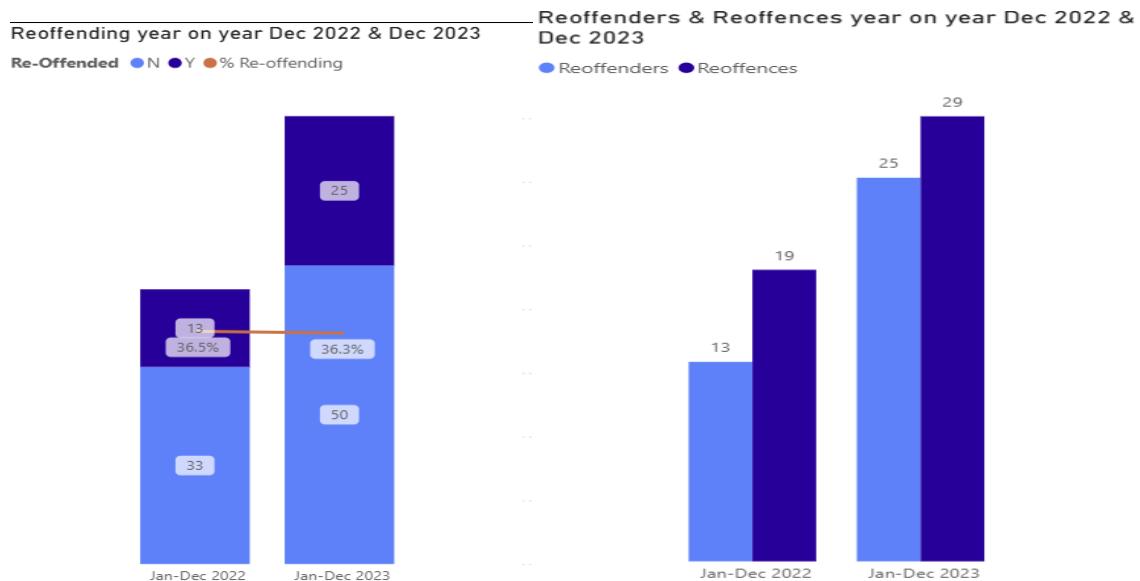
Youth Justice practitioners are experienced, qualified and highly skilled, providing a daily service to the local courts to reduce the use of custodial remand.

In respect of children being held overnight in custody, there is a protocol in place to prevent this wherever possible, which is monitored and upheld by Police.

## Performance over the previous year:

### 1. Re-offending rate

Annual re-offending rates for B&H 2025-2026 with national comparison



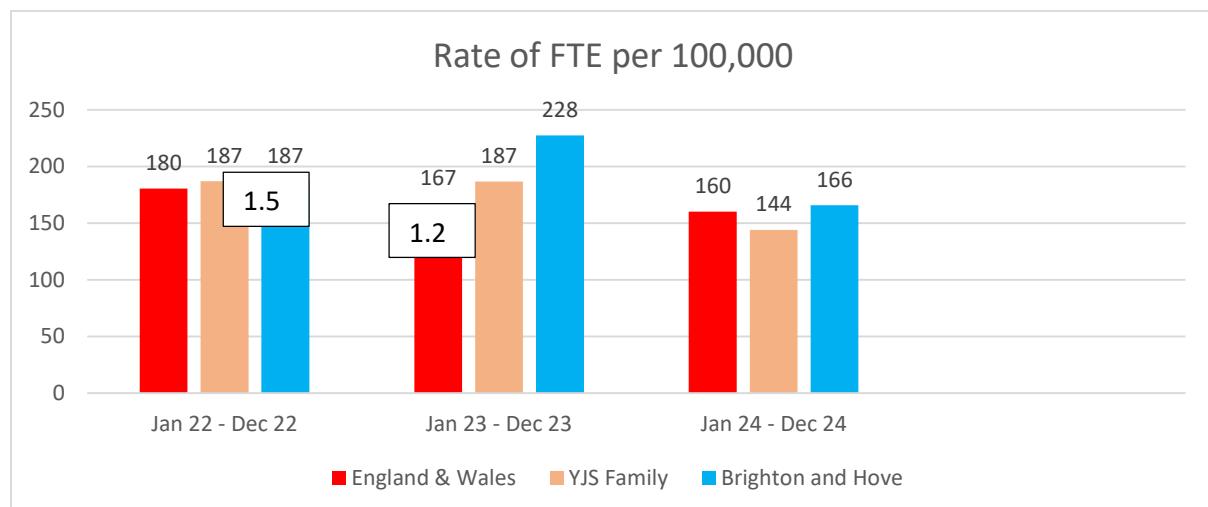
Data shows the binary rate for re-offending (substantive outcomes) in B&H remaining at around 36% a very slight reduction since the previous year. The frequency rate has reduced to 1.16 offences per young person for the 2023 cohort (25 re-offenders committing 29 re-offences) compared to 1.46 in for the 2022 cohort. Overall, this shows some reduction in the re-offending rates, alongside an increase in the Youth Justice cohort.

B&H re-offending rates have overall not been significantly over national or YJS family rates, with the exception of Q3 - and by Q4, rates were in line with the national rate. The quarterly re-offending rate shows considerable variation, which can be explained by the relatively

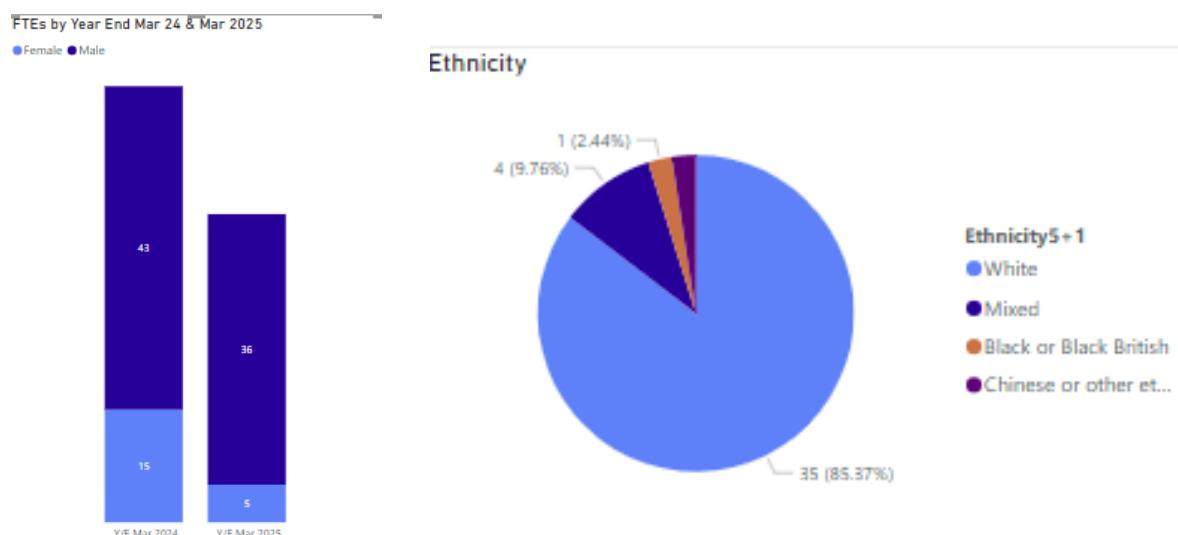
small cohort. Analysis shows that within the high-risk cohort, behaviour can be entrenched and take time to address. These children have typically experienced significant adversity, are impacted by developmental trauma, educational needs and neurodiversity while facing structural barriers. In addition, they are often criminalised through exploitation, which is particularly relevant for children committing knife related and violent offences. Working to reduce the re-offending rate and improve outcomes for this vulnerable cohort continues to be a key priority for the service.

## 2. First Time Entrants

FTE rate for B&H compared to national and YJS family:



FTEs: Local data (annual) showing gender and ethnicity



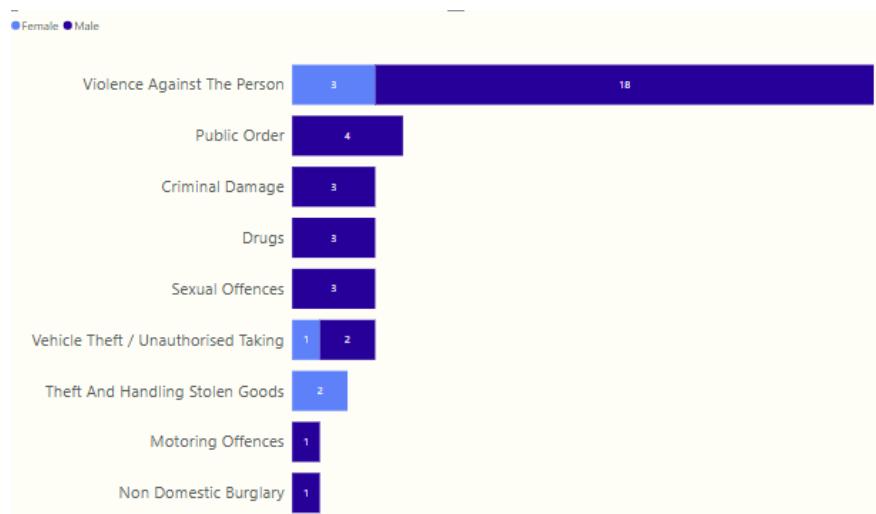
## Local FTE data: Outcomes with gender



The data shows that FTEs in B&H have reduced from 58 in the year ending 2024, to 41 in the year ending 2025, a reduction of 17, or 29%. The chart shows a significant drop in female FTEs, from 25% in 2024, to 12% of all FTEs in 2025. The majority of FTEs (22) are Referral Orders, followed by YCCs (18).

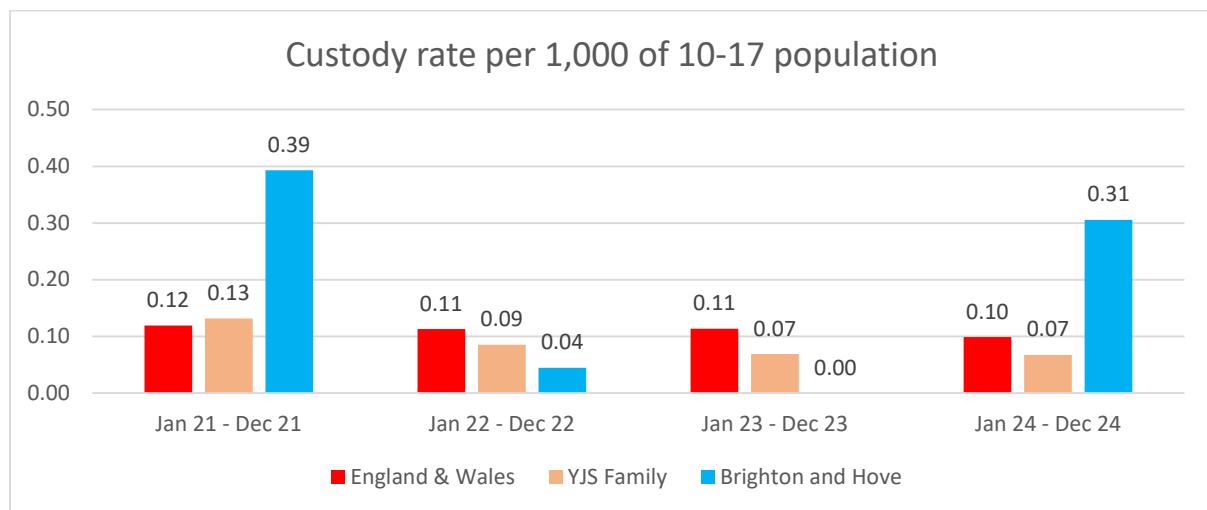
The ethnicity chart shows that black and mixed heritage children are not over-represented in FTEs (mixed race children make up 10.4% of the school age population and Black children make up 2.1% of school age population from 2025 school census). The latter relates to only 1 child in 2025 data.

The chart below shows FTEs by offence type, with violence against the person (including knife crime) being the most common offence for young people. 13 out of the 21 violent offences (65%) were knife related crimes. Of these, 11 were simple possession and 2 were threaten with a knife. The remaining 6 were ABH (3) and assault emergency worker (3). In relation to the drugs offences, one related to the charge of possession with intent to supply Class A drugs and the other two were not the main offence but linked to more serious offences of ABH and Burglary. The analysis of Referral Order FTEs suggests children are not being unnecessarily prosecuted for offences that could have been diverted and most of these children have received an informal OOCR prior to being charged to court (e.g. CR).



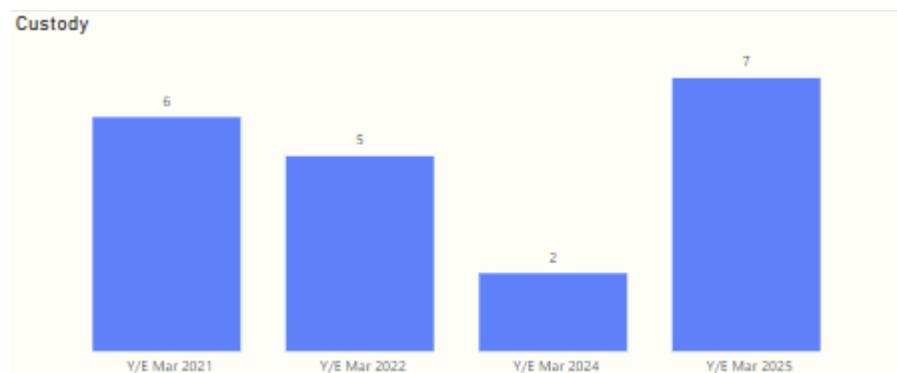
### 3. Custody

#### a) Custody rates per 1,000 of child population



In comparison to the national and YJS family rates, the B&H rate for 2024 looks high in certain years, although there is significant variation. For example, very low custody rates in 2022 and 2023 followed by a spike in Jan- Dec 2024. Some of the variation can be accounted for by delays in court proceedings but this may also be due to small cohort numbers.

#### b) Local data: B&H custodial sentences over 4 years



In the year 2024-2025, seven custodial sentences relate to seven boys, aged from 15 to 17 years. Three are white British, one Arabic (Egyptian) and three are mixed race (Spanish/ Chilean and British/ Black Columbian), showing some disparity in the custody cohort. Index offences include Arson with intent, GBH (S 18), repeat knife offences and breaches of statutory orders. All of these children were known to services prior to their sentences and had received YJS intervention.

The pattern of custodial sentences shows variation over a 5 year period, with an average of 4 custodial sentences per annum. This is within our local target of maintaining custodial outcomes at less than 7 per year, albeit there has been a spike in numbers in 2024-2025.

b) B&H Remand data over 5 years:



As shown in the chart above, there has been an increase in the use of Remand to LAA and secure remand in the year ending 2025. The five RLAA relate to four young people, who were part of a known high- risk offending group in B&H. One young person was subject to RLAA on two occasions, having been released from secure remand to RLAA and subsequently remanded to custody due to breaching RLAA conditions and further offences. After a period on remand he was again released subject to RLAA (via OOA placement).

The nine secure remands in the period relate to seven young people, as two of these young people were remanded twice. The majority of offence types for these young people were GBH S 18 (wounding with knives) and persistent knife related offending, with one for Rape (later acquitted). In 2024- 2025, we saw an increase in violent and knife related offending, mostly committed by a particular high- risk group of young people known to the YJS. Of the 9 secure remands, 6 resulted in custodial sentences, with one acquittal and two community sentences. Of the seven, two young people were mixed race, one Arabic, one Asian (Afghan) and three white.

This represents a spike in numbers compared to the preceding years. The pattern is affected by the fact that the Youth Justice cohort in B&H is relatively small but complex with vulnerabilities highlighted in other sections, especially related to criminal exploitation and contextual risks in the city.

### **Risks and issues**

The main risks to the delivery of Youth Justice services relates to funding. Any reduction in the level of funding to the service would result in a reduction in the level of service provision for this cohort. Reductions to funding to key voluntary sector partners is also likely to have an impact on this cohort as the provide addition support and support desistence related activities. Families are also struggling with the cost of living crisis, causing more pressure on families. This management board is cognisant of these pressures and this is regularly discussed at board in order to work together to find solutions, rather than retreating into silos.

The sufficiency concerns regarding residential placements for those that require it can also be a potential risk to Youth Justice service. This is particularly relevant where secure placements are required from police custody or where a robust care package is required to avoid a custodial sentence for children. The integrated model helps support this challenge,

as the Youth Justice services works in partnership with social care to find creative solutions where possible.

There are times when so lack of understanding between the different partners can create some tension in the system, for example frontline Police being so concerned about particular children that they cannot understand why social care do not seek welfare secure placements for them. It may in fact be that this would not be the best long-term plan for the child, or they may not meet the criteria. The relationships at a senior level are robust enough to have challenging conversations about these cases and agree on a plan on how to resolve such issues.

## **Plan for the forthcoming year**

### **Child First**

The Brighton & Hove Adolescent Partnership Board are fully committed to the Child First principle. The multi-disciplinary model of the Adolescent Service, in which the Youth Justice Service is fully integrated supports this principle. Under this model, children's needs are considered in a holistic way, with Youth Justice being one of the teams in the service and not treated as a separate service. This means that each child's particular needs, strengths, skills and potential are recognised and their best interests are prioritised. The model fully supports the treatment of children coming to the attention of Police as children first and offenders second, with their behaviour viewed through a trauma informed lens, as a symptom of unmet need. Some elements of the Youth Justice work sit within the wider Adolescent Service, for example, including family work, substance misuse, mentoring, mental health and wellbeing.

Partner agencies have committed to the child first approach and work hard to keep children out of the criminal justice system. We try to involve children and young people and work with them to develop and improve the service. We regularly hear the child's voice through their workers or through them attending the board.

The partnership is keen to work collaboratively with children and are seeking a young person to co-chair the board meeting. There are arrangements in place locally in which the Corporate Parenting Board is chaired by young people. This is working well, and we plan to learn from this model. The key partner agencies also have demonstrated a commitment to this, for example Sussex Police has Youth Ambassadors, supporting and promoting child centred policing. There have been specific pieces of work commissioned to ensure we gain the views and experiences of children and young people from global majority communities.

The Youth Justice team are trained in and practice the ChildFirst approach. For example, trauma informed practice is embedded in Youth Justice work. Assessments include a case formulation and young people and their families are discussed through the trauma -informed lens in group and 1:1 supervision. This facilitates exploration of the underlying issues and structural barriers affecting children, with a strong focus on supporting the practitioner and network to manage children's complex needs. Mental health specialists (seconded from CAMHS) provide oversight and clinical supervision, consultation and advice to the Youth Justice Team to support best practice. We also work closely with the Forensic CAMHS team, who offer case consultation, support and direct involvement where required. F-CAMHS offer oversight of SAVRY assessments and consultation where violence/ risk to others is a particular concern.

## **Resources and services**

The Youth Justice Service is integrated into the Adolescent Service. This provides value for money as it ensures that the children and young people get the right support from the right professionals. The YJS budget is a pooled budget; the Youth Justice Board grant provides approximately 10% of the total budget. This grant is sent in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant and is used to achieve the outcomes and priorities as detailed within this plan.

In addition to this we have received funding for specific areas of work. This has included Turnaround funding from the MoJ and PCC funding for Immediate Justice and Reboot mentoring. Whilst these funding pots are used to deliver discreet areas of work, this contributes to the delivery within this plan.

The majority of the funding goes on staffing which is our biggest resource. Any reduction in funding would result in a reduction in post, and therefore a reduction in service offer. In addition to this funding there are some contributions in kind, such as the seconded Probation Officer and the seconded Police Officer. We have attempted in the past to compare the resource allocation with local or similar demographic Youth Justice Services. This however has proved impossible, as every area has a very different set up and model.

## **Board development:**

The Strategic Adolescent Management Board incorporates the functions of the Youth Justice Management Board. The board is well attended, and Board members play an active role in setting direction and vision for the Youth Justice Service. The Board meets quarterly, and in addition to this there is a yearly extended meeting to review progress and set priorities for the upcoming year. All Board members receive an induction, so they are clear on their roles and responsibilities. Membership is reviewed regularly.

We have recently held a board development workshop to review the priorities and develop this plan. We also reviewed the arrangements and functioning of the board. It was agreed that going forwards the name of the board will change to the Adolescent Partnership Board. The meetings will have themed sessions each quarter, along with a case study which reflect the issues in the themes. The Corporate director for Work will continue to move towards a co-chairing arrangement with young people.

## **Workforce Development**

Brighton & Hove is committed to the continuous development of staff through training, supervision, mentoring and coaching, to support staff progression and retention and offer a high quality service to our children & families. As a learning service, we provide placements to Sussex & Brighton University social work students, offering opportunities for staff to enable the learning of others and develop their own skills.

Youth Justice staff have mandatory BHCC training as part of their initial induction to the service and continuous development is tailored to individual needs via the Personal Development Plan. There are further opportunities for staff to learn through consultation,

shadowing and co-working with partnership staff in the Adolescent Service. Learning is disseminated at team meetings, whole service events, from thematic audits and feedback from children, parents/ carers and victims, as well as stakeholders (Courts, Police, Education, etc).

A wide range of training courses are accessible to Youth Justice staff, volunteers and partnership staff via the Brighton & Hove City Council Learning Zone. This includes courses specific to working with children & families & social work CPD modules. The Brighton & Hove Children's Services Training Plan includes Youth Justice practitioners.

### Staff Induction

New staff have an induction for the first 4 weeks, including mandatory training, shadowing, peer mentoring, meeting partners and learning about the service, as outlined below. They are assigned a peer mentor, or 'buddy' to support them, alongside their line manager. An example of this is set out below:

- Meeting your line manager, buddy and team
- Attending Adolescent Service team meetings (Ru-ok?, FFT, SW Pod, Health team);
- Visits to the wider service, FDFF, Family Hubs, etc.
- Shadowing Youth Court, Reparation & Diversion Panel
- AssetPlus & risk management training;
- Child Safeguarding training;
- Shadow AVR (Adolescent Vulnerability & Risk Meeting)
- Mandatory training (e.g. Child Exploitation, Fair & Inclusive Practice, Health & Safety, Prevent/WRAP, etc).
- Substance Misuse Training
- Familiarisation with Youth Justice policies and protocols, Youth Justice Board case management guidance & National Standards.

### Ongoing Professional Development

The B&H Learning Zone provides the core training for practice with children & families and supports continuing professional development of staff. Youth Justice staff can request additional bespoke training relevant to their role or career progression.

The Adolescent Service practices the trauma-informed approach. All Youth Justice staff have received training & consolidation to embed the approach. Seconded MH practitioners and Forensic CAMHS practitioners offer consultation and advice.

Staff can refer to Partners in Change (PiC) for consultation, learning and advice. Through PiC, we also provide consultation and learning for social workers regarding children with sexually harmful behaviour.

Bespoke CPD inputs for the Youth Justice Team completed in 2024-2025:

- Young People, Groups and Gangs: the use of Police Intelligence
- Prevention & Diversion Assessment Tool training (2024)
- MH screening (Anxiety, depression & PTSD)
- Mental Health and TIP
- Neurodiversity and working with parents
- AMBIT model: theory and application to practice (2 days)
- Understanding & supporting LGBTQ+ children;
- Coaching for managers (senior staff)

BHCC aims to become an anti-racist council and a core part of the anti-racist plan is to increase awareness through training, consultation and open forum discussion. Families, Children & Learning (FCL) provides a monthly forum on Anti-Racist practice, which includes seminars led by the Lead Anti-Racist Practitioner. These sessions are designed for all staff and managers to reflect openly on the issues and improve practice with black, Asian and dual heritage children & families. This learning is included in PDPs as part of ongoing professional development.

Planned training for 2025-2026

- AMBIT within Adolescent Service
- Neurodiversity and ADHD in young people
- Child to Parent control & abuse
- Emotion coaching
- Substance Misuse and Young People
- Supporting Trans and gender
- Anti-racist Practice & Allyship conference
- Trauma informed approaches

### Supervision & Support

Under the B&H Children's Services Supervision Policy, the service provides weekly reflective group supervision as part of the Relationship -Based model. Alongside this, one to one line management supervision is provided (every 4-6 weeks). Group supervision uses a reflective practice model to enable staff to explore case issues and reflect on the impact of Youth Justice work, with support from their peers. As mentioned above the trauma informed approach is used including consideration of secondary trauma on staff. Individual supervision is focussed on staff development and support, with space for case discussion and oversight of complex or high- risk cases as required.

Managers have an 'open door' policy, whereby they are available to staff at all times for support and guidance. In the YJS there are two senior YJ practitioners, who provide mentoring and support to new or less experienced staff. The senior staff also line manage the RJ workers and Turnaround worker in the team.

### Evidence-based practice and innovation:

#### AMBIT

The Adolescent Service has rolled out AMBIT training since 2024 and this model is being embedded in practice across the service. There is ongoing staff development, including wider services regular training events and team workshops delivered by experts in AMBIT within Children's social work.

AMBIT is an approach to support teams to develop systems of help around particularly vulnerable and excluded children & families. Some receiving services may have little confidence or trust in 'help' being helpful or experience many different teams and professionals around them due to multiple difficulties, making it complicated to coordinate who does what and overwhelming to those receiving support.

AMBIT applies mentalization theory and practice not only to direct work, but to teams, wider multi-agency networks and teams' capacity to learn and adapt. AMBIT assumes that

working alongside people who are experiencing significant distress can (and should) at times cause powerful emotions in workers, impacting in turn on the effectiveness of the help we provide.

Specifically in the Adolescent Service, this means that the teams have focused on their own mentalizing capacities. A focus has then been on how they can strengthen their mentalizing of families and networks and how they can build epistemic trust (with families/young people and also with multi-agency network colleagues).

In the Youth Justice Service, the AMBIT model “Thinking Together” is being used effectively in weekly group supervision to reflect on complex situations and support practitioners with “stuck” cases. Staff are keen to continue to use this model to support case management. Their feedback is captured below:

**AMBIT...**

“helps with mentalizing ourselves and each other in the team (using the mind check principle and the Yale energy/feeling grid)”

“has been incredibly useful in bringing the team together and people like the task- based focus”

“has helped team cohesion for multiple roles within team (e.g. RJ and caseworkers) and helping created a way to build on being ‘well-connected’ and how to support each other within the emotive nature of this work”

### **VR Knife Crime programme**

The YJS delivers a structured knife crime programme to all young people referred for knife or weapons offences, as well as those committing other forms of violence, who are suspected to have carried weapons or associate with peers known or suspected to carry weapons. The Virtual Reality knife crime programme includes a short film developed by a London filmmaker with lived experience and consists of three structured sessions, including the legal framework, the VR film and a session to reflect on learning and decision-making. The programme focusses particularly on the impact and consequences of knife crime from different perspectives, including the victim, perpetrator, parents, police, medical staff and friends. The programme is delivered with up to three young people in a group setting or on a 1:1 basis, depending on individual need. It has been designed to be accessible to children who are neurodiverse or have learning needs and is delivered in a way that is tailored to individuals.

In the past year, we have continued to develop the delivery of this programme, based on feedback from young people. For example, a report on young people’s views found that 75% of those completing the knife crime programme stated that they carried weapons due to fear of being seriously harmed in the community, believing that having a knife would protect them. The remaining 25% (15+ group) stated they carried a knife to prevent conflict or targeting by their rivals, believing if they had a knife that would de-escalate the situation. We have therefore placed specific emphasis in the programme on safeguarding, with the aim of re-educating children about the increased risk to themselves when carrying weapons.

Knife crime makes up a relatively small proportion of all offending in Brighton & Hove and in line with the national picture, the vast majority of weapons related crimes are simple

possession. However, an analysis of weapons related crime showed that 43% of children who were initially referred for a weapons offence in a 24 month period (2022-2024) went on to re-offend, with 29% committing further weapons related offences in the period, albeit very few involved violence. It remains a concern that knife crime is directly linked to the exploitation of children in the city. The 2024 analysis showed that 5 of the 6 young people in the cohort who committed serious violent offences had an NRM conclusive grounds decision and evidence suggested they were being exploited at the time they were carrying knives and prior to committing serious violence. Op Safety (as outlined above) provides multi-agency oversight of knife crime and violence in the city with an emphasis on providing intervention, appropriate external controls and disruption where appropriate.

### **VRP & Brighton Streets Project**

Brighton Streets is a citywide, coordinated detached (street-based) youth work project providing 6 sessions per week across Brighton & Hove in an effort to provide contextual safeguarding to thousands of young people. It is delivered by a partnership of three local charities, who are all long-term providers of local youth work. The project links closely with different parts of the local system in support of young people who are at-risk of coming to harm, or engaging in criminal activity. For example, it delivers joint operations with Sussex Police, attends and informs Adolescent Vulnerability Risk Meetings (AVRM), targets provision with intelligence from Joint Action Group (JAG) meetings (assessing crime/anti-social behaviour hotspots), and supports the local Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP) by targeting interventions to those young people identified as engaging in risky behaviour through their intelligence gathering. In the external evaluation of the Brighton Streets project, evaluators heard directly from young people on how they had changed their behaviour as a result of the intervention.

Hospital Youth Work has been delivered in the Children's A&E at the Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital since May 2023. In that time, Hospital Youth Workers have supported hundreds of young people who attend A&E where there is social harm as a factor in their attendance (e.g. fights/violence, substance misuse, poor mental wellbeing).

### **Other developments**

The Engagement and Support Service (EAS) has developed an offer for children discharged from mental health wards under Section 117 of the Mental Health act. We are working closely with colleagues from health and social care to ensure that we have robust plans in place to support those children and their families to reduce the risk of a return to hospital. The work involves providing the family with respite support and reintroducing the child or young person back into the community and their networks. We support them with a return to education and activities that improve their emotional well-being.

EAS are also looking at developing a group for young men at risk of criminal exploitation the plan is to engage them with activities and using positive male role models to explore risks linked to drugs, gangs, and exploitation. The idea will be to use peer influence to explore the risks and to try and change some of the behaviours. The group is informal and will be led by young people in terms of developing the programme content.

## **Priorities for the coming year:**

The priorities of this plan align with those of the Complex Adolescent Strategy 2023-2026. These were agreed at the Strategic Adolescent Board, and are 3 year priorities, as it was agreed that focus of these needed to be for a three year period in order to have the time for the achieve the desired change.

The Priorities are therefore as follows:

- To increase participation and the voice of the child;
- To continue the anti-racist journey and address disproportionality; and
- To continue to develop contextual safeguarding practice to better meet the needs of this cohort.

A workplan will outline how the service will achieve this, and how the Youth Justice Team will contribute to this. In addition, there will be the Youth Justice specific outcomes, reducing first time entrants, reducing reoffending and reducing the use of custody. The work plan will contain the following actions:

- To increase participate and the voice of the child.
  - Work to support a couple of young people to be part of the management board.
  - Work with young people to develop the service offer through the service user group.
  - Review of the website
  - Work with partners in the voluntary sector to look at ways to better understand the views and experiences of young people, particularly those of the global majority.
- To continue the anti-racist journey and address disproportionality
  - To the ambition to recruit a more diverse staff team
  - To continue the anti-racist work with the team, including attendance at the anti-racist drop ins.
  - Head of Service and Service Manager to be part of the Safeguarding and Care Allyship model.
  - To analyse data and bring issues of disproportionality to the board's notice for action.
  - To undertake some joint training with partners, such as the police.
- To continue to develop contextual safeguarding practice to better meet the needs of this cohort.
  - To continue to develop contextual safeguarding practices including location reviews.
  - To use the AMBIT model and tools to develop clear processes to further implement working within a contextual safeguarding context.
  - To use contextual safeguarding principles to address the needs of the Youth Justice cohort

## **YJS Evaluations & Self -Assessment**

The YJB Prevention & Diversion Assessment Tool is used for all Out of Court Disposals. B&Y YJ team were involved in the PDAT evaluation this year.

The YJS has undertaken audits of case work in 2024-2025 using the updated HMIP standards as the basis for the audit tool. Results from the HMIP self- assessment are shown below. Overall, the results showed consistently good practice, albeit with some comments regarding recording and timeliness. There was evidence of staff adapting well to the YJB Diversion assessment tool and overall delivery/ intervention was assessed as excellent. The audit plan will be further developed in September when more audits have been completed. We are also planning an audit of victim work in the next year.

Out of Court Disposals:		Community Disposals	
Assessment	Good- Outstanding	Assessment	Good- Outstanding
Planning	Good	Planning	Good
Delivery	Outstanding	Delivery	Outstanding
		Review	Good

Strengths	Areas for development	Plan - 2025
Assessment quality in PDAT and Asset is high. Include comprehensive detail, trauma informed with case formulation.  Assessments child friendly, contain the voice of the child and are written “to the child”	Some assessments lacked in-depth analysis in ROSH assessment because writing ‘to the child’  Need to balance child friendly assessments with professional analysis and risk/ safety assessment	Provide guidance to YJ workers on relevant sections of PDAT and Asset  Bring to Team meeting for learning
Plans individualised, focussed on strengths.  Referral Order contracts well written and include referrals for specialist work (e.g. MH, substance misuse).	Plans need to be clearly sequenced, especially in complex cases.  Ensure plans consistently address needs not included in panel/ RO contract (e.g. In Ps & Ps)	Share audit outcomes with YJ workers.  Support YJ workers to manage competing priorities / sequence work effectively via management supervision.  Further audits to check on progress.
Assessment of safety of children and risk to/ safety of others is strong.	Improve timeliness of assessments in line with 20 working days guidance.	Management oversight
Victim perspective taken account of in decision -making in the majority of OOCR cases at panel (where known)	Needs & wishes of victim not in assessments, as not always known at assessment stage.	Victim contact process being reviewed & new victim policy to be written
Risk management plans on high ROSH cases are thorough and robust, include YPs' perspective	Details of victim protection not included in assessment/ plan in some cases.	Provide guidance to staff on where to include victim safety plan.  Victim safety to be included in new victim policy

Contingency plans completed in Asset P&P and PDAT overall robust.		Share good practice examples at YJ team meetings
Excellent joint working & partnership, joined up plans. Good relationship- based work & child centred practice.	Recording in some cases not up to date.	Management oversight/ address in 1:1 supervision
Overall there are regular reviews of Referral Orders, with young people and parents/ carers involved in the plan  On YROs Assets, plans and RMPs show regular review with management oversight.	For YROs, 3 monthly reviews of progress with the young person / parents are not always clearly recorded.	Management oversight of YRO cases.  Share audit results with YJ team.

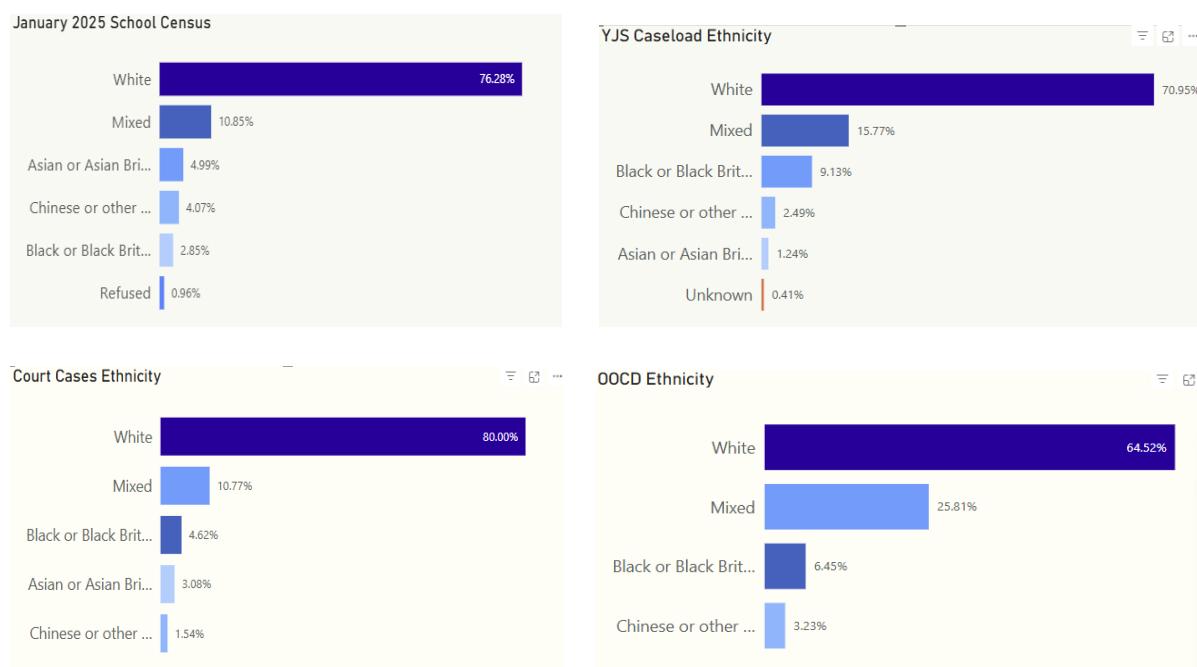
There have been two specific audits of OOCR in respect of decision-making. As noted above, a pan-Sussex audit of OOCR was undertaken in 2024 to examine decision-making and outcomes across the three Sussex Youth Justice areas. Each area provided 4 cases for audit and audited four cases from the other areas. Youth Justice Managers and senior Police involved in the OOCR process met to moderate the audit and discuss the results. The YJB Head of region attended to review the findings and was involved in advocating for the use of Outcome 22 as deferred prosecution in Sussex. This led to discussions with the Chief Superintendent regarding force policy towards the use of Outcome 22.

In April 2025, a pan- Sussex Youth Justice Services and Police Scrutiny of Knife Crime Offences was undertaken, with a focus on joint decision-making and adherence to Sussex Police knife crime policy. Each YJS area provided examples for audit and scrutinised cases from the other two YJ areas. The panel included Youth Policing operational and strategic managers, Youth Justice service managers from Brighton & Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex and Youth Justice seconded PCs and Youth Sergeants. For each case, the panel made a judgement as to whether the outcome was proportionate and in line with policy, appropriate but with reservations, or inappropriate/ not in line with policy, reviewed deviations from policy and management oversight of decision-making. Resulting discussions included Child Centred Policing, trauma- informed approaches, the understanding of "Exceptional circumstances" and routes of escalation. There was an agreement that YJ teams could escalate cases for consideration of deviation from the knife crime policy where there are issues relating to age, trauma, neurodiversity, MH and / or circumstances relating to culpability. From the results, Sussex Police have appointed a pan -Sussex Inspector to moderate and oversee decision-making across Sussex to ensure consistency of practice. This is with a view to avoiding the criminalisation of children wherever possible whilst ensuring a robust approach to knife crime in Sussex through appropriate intervention and oversight.

## 5.3 National priority areas

### Children from groups which are over-represented:

The charts below show some over-representation of Black and mixed- race children (by 3% each) in the Youth Justice cohort, with other ethnic groups including Asian and Chinese children being under- represented, based on the 2025 school census. This remains a concern, although it is notable that there are relatively higher numbers of mixed- race children in the out of court cohort, which indicates a greater proportion of these children are being diverted from the formal Youth Justice System.



Tackling disproportionality in the Youth Justice System is one of our key priorities, as outlined in the Complex Adolescent Strategic Plan, fully endorsed and supported by the Board, partners and senior leaders in the council. An analysis of caseload data in respect of ethnicity is shared on a quarterly basis with the Management Board.

Practical measures in place include the PACE non-admissions diversion pathway, which is a route for Police to refer children making no comment interviews, where offences are in line with the Child Gravity Matrix for an OOCR. This provides the opportunity for children to receive intervention without pressure to admit the offence formally. Provided the child engages with the assessment process and are willing to complete intervention, they will receive an Outcome 22 (informal disposal). This is monitored by Police in terms of effectiveness and numbers of referrals across Sussex.

The anti-racist pledge includes challenging racism/ discrimination when this is experienced either from partners, staff, children or families in a way that is constructive, non-confrontational and facilitates learning. Any concerns and issues around racism can be

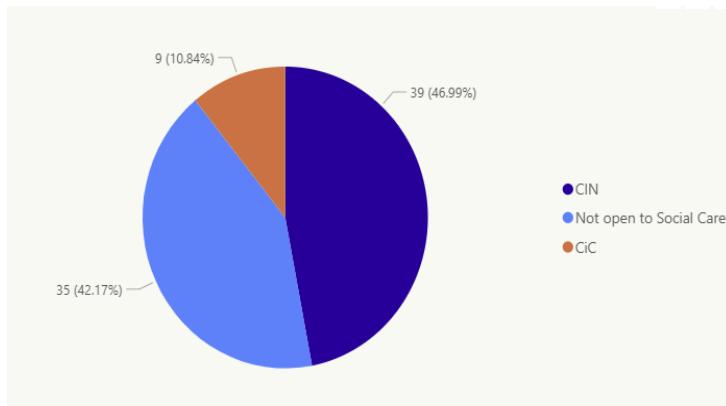
referred for consultation to the PiC (Partners in Change) hub and / or the Anti-racist lead practitioner. This strategy is designed so that children who are within the Adolescent service receive a high quality service and feel safe to talk about their experiences, that they are supported to be empowered and develop their skills and confidence. We seek feedback from Black, Asian, Arabic and mixed- race children on their experiences within the Youth Justice System and their views on what would improve things for them.

We are committed to increasing understanding and awareness of racism and discrimination to ensure that the child's experiences and impact on their social and emotional development can be taken into account in decision-making and plans. There is good management oversight via supervision and a QA process in place, with an emphasis on anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice, with attention to language and outcomes.

In terms of recruitment, we have pledged to have at least one person from a black or mixed - race background as part of the interview panel across the service. Selection processes include anti-racist practice as part of the essential criteria, for example on application forms and interview questions.

### **Children in Care**

The chart below shows the numbers of Children in Care in the Youth Justice cohort for 2024-2025 including OOCR and court disposals. Two were RYDA, two were subject to full Care Orders, the rest were S 20 accommodation, with two being from out of area LAs. Therefore in terms of B&H Children in Care in the YJ cohort, the number was lower, at 5 young people.



In B&H we remain committed to reducing the numbers of Children in Care (CiC) entering the Youth Justice and continue to work jointly with Police to ensure that CiC are not unnecessarily criminalised. We have an agreement with Sussex Police via the pan- Sussex Joint Policy to Reduce Criminalisation of Children in Care and CiC status is taken into account in decision-making at Police level, the OOCR Diversion Panel and at Court (highlighted in Court reports). CiC in the Youth Justice caseload data is regularly monitored and shared with the Board, which unfortunately continues to show some disproportionality for this very vulnerable cohort. However, it is notable that the numbers over the year remain low, with 9 children & young people receiving Cautions or court outcomes.

## **Policing:**

Sussex Police are key members of the Youth Justice Partnership locally. We have senior level representation on the Adolescent Partnership Board, and at other relevant partnership boards such as the Brighton & Hove Children's Safeguarding Board, The Sussex Criminal Justice Board, The Combatting Drugs Partnership Board, The Prevent Board and the Community Safety Partnership Board. The Head of Service for Adolescents attends the Police led Children and Young People Board. These governance arrangements promote a strong and well-established partnership. The effective partnership at both strategic and operational level has enabled joint working and appropriate challenge to resolve potential issues where required, for example to joint cultural competence training.

In the past year, we have continued partnership work with Sussex Police through Op Safety, Joint Action Group, AVR and the Early Intervention Group. The Youth Justice Service is active in submitting Partnership Intel forms and this has enabled our Police colleagues to recognise the importance of relationship-based practice.

The Youth Justice Service has a full time PC seconded to the Youth Justice, with the role split between OOCR/ diversion and oversight of high-risk cases. We also have a dedicated Youth Sergeant (not seconded) who oversees decision-making at the OOCR panel and promotes child centred policing in the force.

## **Prevention**

The integration of Youth Justice within the Adolescent Service and sitting under the umbrella of Families, Children and Learning in BHCC means that we are well positioned within children's services, with strong links to Family Hubs (Early Help) and access to relevant information databases.

An Early Intervention initiative has been developed, bringing together local partners involved in crime prevention, including Youth Policing team and NPT, Community Safety and Exploitation team, Trust for Developing Communities and Youth hubs, BCRP (Brighton Crime Reduction Partnership) and YJS to identify children involved in ASB and offending and ensure there is an appropriate response.

## **Reboot**

Sussex Police have commissioned the three Youth Justice services, Brighton, East Sussex and West Sussex to deliver prevention work via Reboot mentoring. The success of this work from 2024-2025 has led to an increased offer from Police for Brighton YJS for 2025-2026, with increased numbers of children being offered the service. This partnership arrangement brings crime prevention services under the Adolescent Service, so that children can access services appropriate to their needs. To date, feedback collated from families has been extremely positive about their experience of Reboot mentoring, examples below:

Young person:

Score: 5/5 (Fantastic): "We did some bike rides and played pool. I've enjoyed the session. Spending time to be myself with someone was nice..... I can control my anger a lot more. If I hadn't had you and I had the kick off on Thursday I probably would have killed [friend]. I feel like [YJ worker] understands what's going on for me".

Parent:

"From the start, mentoring with [YJ worker] went brilliantly. He [young person] came home after the first sessions stating that [YJ worker] 'got him' and 'knows how to talk to him' and [young person] has never said that about anyone before.... There was never any resistance in attending the mentoring sessions, and [young person] is resistant to most things!"

Parent:

"Mentoring was just amazing for him, he really looked forward to the sessions with [YJS worker] and she really knew how to get him to talk to her. Even in his lowest times when he was pretty much refusing to engage with anything he would always still be open to seeing [YJ worker] and I think this says a lot. He would come home happy and settled from the sessions with her and he took part in a few activities he absolutely loved such as Audio active which he is continuing to go to even after mentoring stopped".

### **Drugs diversion via ru-ok?**

Within the Adolescent Service, the ru-ok? substance misuse service offer a point of arrest pathway via Police and Sussex Liaison & Diversion Service. ru-ok? also have skilled practitioners based in secondary schools in B&H, who offer a more informal drop-in service to children with advice about drugs and sexual health. Referral pathways have been established via the NHS A&E departments, paediatric hospital, Youth Justice Service, Front Door For Families (FDFF), Social Work teams, GPs and via self-referrals.

There has been discussion with Police to consider drugs diversion referrals in B&H. A concern has been raised formally with senior Police that 16 and 17 year olds are being referred to an online course Drugslink instead of being referred to ru-ok? where they would receive 1:1 support from an experienced and qualified ru-ok? worker. The ru-ok manager is liaising with Police to promote referral to ru-ok? for 16 and 17 year olds. He is also working with police as part of the local Combatting Drugs Strategy, which seeks to disrupt local drug supply chains and drug related crime. The need for police to refer via drugs diversion into ru-ok? will be promoted within these strategy meetings. This has also been highlighted through the Youth Policing and Neighbourhood teams, including Sergeants, Inspectors and up to senior levels in operational and strategic divisions, as well as via Training sessions delivered to response teams.

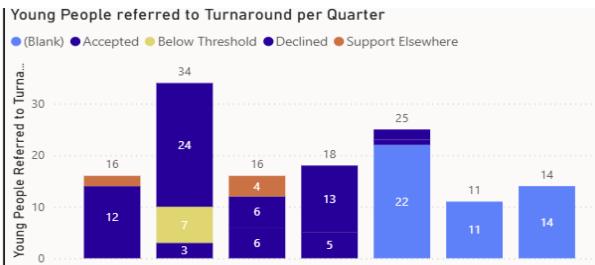
### **Turnaround**

The partnership with TDC (Trust for developing Communities) has continued into 2025, with improved results in the past year. This has also led to improved connections, information sharing and joint working between Youth Justice and TDC, which has helped to identify vulnerable children, those involved in ASB and offending and at risk of exploitation. With the Turnaround programme, we have been able to target children in this cohort and gain a better understanding of particular localities where children are at risk.

The Turnaround worker is a Youth Worker who is involved in outreach support for children via the Youth bus (evenings), so has been able to establish trust and relationships with children in the local area, improving the level of engagement with the Turnaround programme.

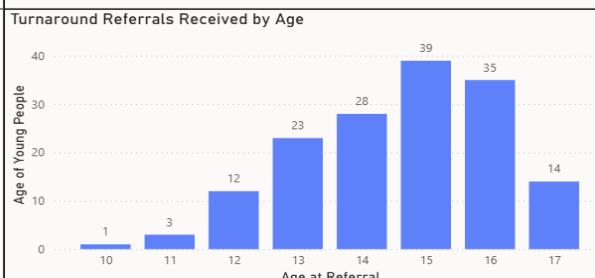
Young People opened to Turnaround  
March 2023 to March 2025

38



Young People who have Successfully Completed Turnaround

34



## Diversion:

Brighton& Hove YJS is part of a pan-Sussex Joint Out of Court Disposal process, now known as the Child Outcome pathway. The OOCR pathway is well established in B&H and there is consistent partnership and joint working with Police to divert children from prosecution wherever possible and appropriate. The new Child Gravity Matrix has been fully implemented across Sussex and adherence to policy and guidance.

All children referred via this pathway are screened and assessed using the YJB Prevention & Diversion Assessment tool prior to decision-making at the joint panel. Victims' perspectives are a key part of decision-making as far as practically possible, with a clear restorative offer (see RJ section).

Children subject to both formal (YCC) and informal (CRs/ Outcome 22) out of court disposals are offered a comprehensive programme of intervention based on the assessment including safety concerns. They can access wrap around support and provisions of the Adolescent Service, including intensive family therapy, 1:1 emotional & mental health support, tier 2 or 3 substance misuse service and outreach support from the Engagement and Support Service (EAS), which specialises in working with children affected by exploitation. In addition, they can access support with their education/ schooling via the Adolescent Education Advisor, or advice with Education, Training & Employment through the local Youth Employability Service (YES). Engagement with OOCRs is high, with very few cases being returned to Police for enforcement.

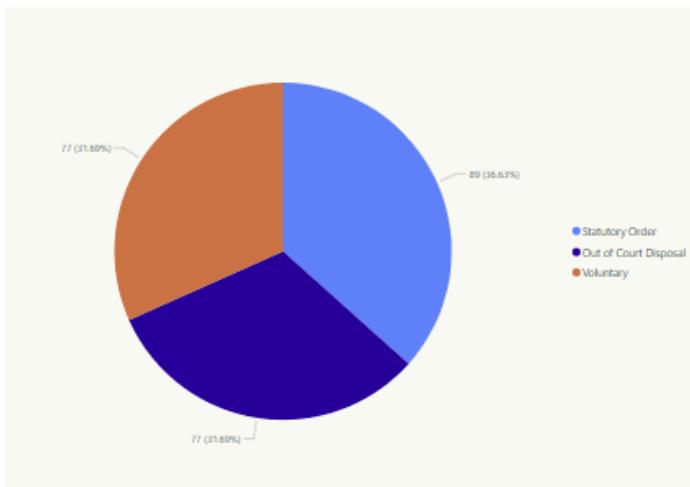
Outcomes for children are overseen via the pan- Sussex Multi-agency Scrutiny Panel, which is attended by the YJS manager. Feedback from this panel is shared with the Youth Justice team and used for learning & development.

The drugs diversion pathway is well established and involves direct referrals from Police or custody suites to Ru-ok? substance misuse service (point of arrest). Children referred by Police for simple possession of Cannabis/ Class B drugs are diverted directly to the Ru-ok? substance misuse service for assessment and focussed intervention. Ru-ok workers are sufficiently trained and qualified to work with children with all levels of risk and vulnerability, including those vulnerable to exploitation.

As shown in the charts below, children accessing prevention and diversion programmes make up a large proportion of the B&H Youth Justice cohort. A significant percentage of Out

of Court disposals are informal outcomes. Voluntary disposals include Immediate Justice, Reboot and Turnaround.

Prevention and Diversion local data 2025:

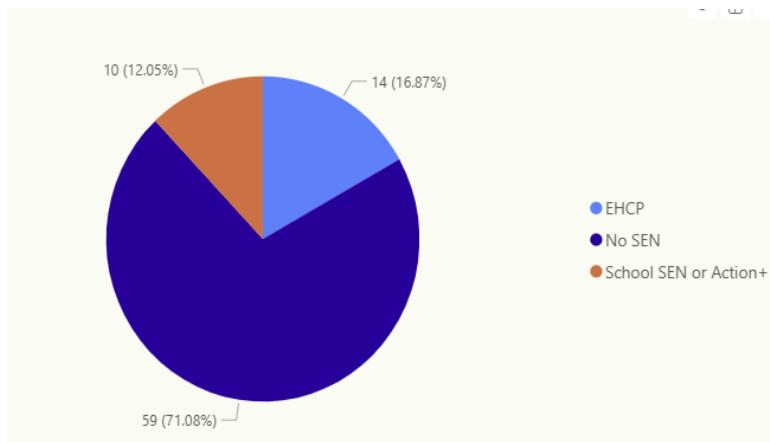


## Education

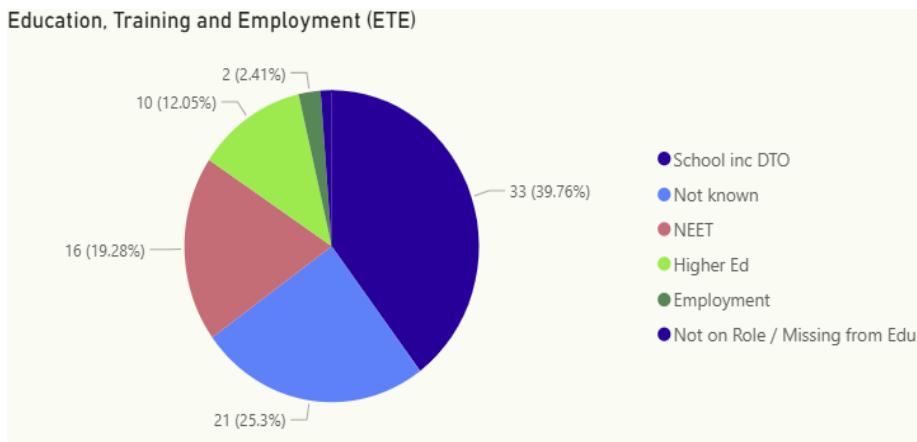
The Partnership has strong links with Education providers in the city through representation both on the Adolescent Strategic Management Board and at the Adolescent Vulnerability and Risk Management (AVRM) meeting. The former has both the Access to Education Manager and a Secondary School Headteacher as key members and the latter includes regular attendance from an Education Lead who chairs the local Behaviour & Attendance Partnership (BAP) meetings, with representation from all Secondary schools (including Academies) the Police, and key Primary schools. The Access to Education Manager is responsible for the prevention of school suspensions and exclusions, school attendance, those who are electively home educated, as well as children with health needs not in school, Children Missing Education (CME) and the regular monitoring of all the children on part time timetables in the city and challenge to all schools regarding their use.

The Adolescent service includes an Education Advisor role, who acts as a conduit to all secondary schools in the city, meets regularly with the Education Adviser for all children with

a Social Worker from the Virtual School and is part of the BAP which meets twice monthly. They also attend the joint agency suspension and exclusion meetings which strategically manages the reduction of suspension and exclusion across the city.



Education, Training and Employment (ETE)



Data taken from ChildView Youth Justice cohort 2024-2025, including court and out of court disposals, shows about 30% of children in the YJ cohort have special educational needs identified. This continues to be closely monitored at quarterly board meetings.

According to the data, 19% of the cohort were recorded as NEET. At the time this data was shared with the management board and added to the YJ Plan, there were a number of 'unknowns' (ETE not recorded) but since this time, ETE records have been updated (some of the unknowns were in the process of assessment, others were NEET) and the current number of NEET young people open to the YJS is 12 (20%). We are working with the data team to understand this cohort better, with the aim of improving outcomes for young people.

Youth Justice has a good partnership with the Youth Employability Service and all young people rising 16 are offered this service where needed.

## Restorative approaches and victims

The YJS has a strong commitment to Restorative Justice practice and ensuring the victim's voice is heard. The partnership with Police at strategic and operational levels supports Youth Justice work in this respect, for example, commitment of a full time PC embedded in the

YJS, a quarterly multi-agency OOCR scrutiny panel and close links to the Restorative Justice Police team. All Youth Justice staff are trained in Restorative Justice practice and there is close management oversight of RJ and victim work. We have three full time RJ workers, who are trained in restorative practice and able to deliver effective practice in terms of victim work and community reparation.

In the past year, we have focussed on developing the RJ offer, using feedback victims, community reparation projects, staff and young people. We are currently reviewing the offer to victims to ensure our practice is in line with the HMIP standards and will be completing victim work audits in the next year. There is oversight of victim work and data from the PCC.

We deliver RJ within a ChildFirst and Trauma Informed approach, keeping in minds the best interests of both children and victims of crime. We are committed to listening to children's experiences but also ensuring that they are held to account for harmful behaviour. This is particularly important because many of the children we work with are victims in their own right, whether due to adverse childhood experiences or being victims of crime in their communities. A high proportion of violent crime for example, is perpetrated against children and young people.

There is a clear process in place to ensure that all identified victims of youth crime are contacted where possible, offered support and consulted about their wishes in respect of involvement in restorative justice. Victims are contacted at the earliest opportunity, prior to the joint decision-making panel, Referral Order panel or where possible prior to PSRs being completed. For all young people subject to disposals, a Restorative Plan is created based on the victim's wishes and any risk or safety considerations. This may include direct or indirect mediation, letters of apology and/ or community reparation. We seek feedback from victims, especially those involved in direct mediation or reparation.

Some quotes from victims are shown below:

Parent of child victim of assault (feedback to RJ worker):

"You've been amazing... Friday afternoon, after you spoke to [daughter]... she was more talkative... You helped her realise, it's not just her... Thanks for your support, I really appreciate it"

Adult victim:

"Thank you, I really appreciated [RJ worker] spending so much time on this matter and talking me through the process"

The Youth Justice Service is committed to making Community Reparation meaningful to young people, by having individualised plans and matching children to community placements based on their offence and strengths or interests wherever possible. Projects include the Forest Garden, where young people maintain the allotments and pick and prepare for local community groups. We work with charities, community cafes and local food banks, helping to organise donations and prepare food for vulnerable or elderly people. AQA's have been attached to community projects, to develop skills and portfolios for young people.

## **Serious violence, exploitation and contextual safeguarding**

There is currently a 3 year Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) strategy in place that builds on previous annual VRP strategies. It uses evidence from our strategic needs assessment to set out the current picture of serious violence in Sussex and what collective action partners are undertaking.

The strategy includes an explanation of our Public Health approach and our model of delivery, which is a devolved structure, allowing each of our three VRP areas to make their own decisions on where funding and resources are best placed.

We explain how we use and share data to understand the risks and drivers for serious violence and how this, combined with robust evaluation, also helps shape our intervention activity. Our performance indicators and how we continually measure our success are also included.

Central to our approach is our commitment to engaging and consulting with the individuals and communities most affected by serious violence. Our forward plan includes more work to ensure that their voices are represented in our VRP, and that they are informing everything that we do.

Our delivery plan will be reviewed and revised annually, and this highlights the breadth of activity going on across Sussex aimed at reducing individual and community vulnerability to serious violence, exploitation, and other criminal behaviour.

Much progress has been made in the five years since the inception of the VRP, and sustaining this momentum remains a priority for the partnership. This involves all partners working together to embed the response to serious violence in their day-to-day organisational delivery.

This is already happening through the creation of dedicated officers, teams, and structures and through additional funding sources. Over the next 12 months we will be collectively developing our plans to mitigate against the potential 'cliff edge' of intervention for those individuals and communities most at risk, ensuring that they continue to receive the support that they need.

This year, the Youth Justice and Adolescent Service attended a Serious Violence Duty Youth Participation event : How to create conditions for Youth Voice in the SVD (Serious Violence Dut. This event focused on building collaboration across statutory organisations. Young people were involved in co-producing this event with TDC (Trust for Developing Communities- local Youth Service) and were part of the design and delivery of the event. The discussions explored how agencies were implementing their duty to actively engage children and young people in planning and delivering services.

## **Detention in police custody**

The Pan Sussex Protocol on Transfer of Young People to Local Authority Accommodation from Police Custody is well established. We have seen a significant decrease in the numbers of young people being held overnight after charge. The process is scrutinised on a quarterly basis with senior members of the police, the HoS and the EDS duty Manager. There is also a process to discuss any cases more immediately where appropriate.

## **Remand to Youth Detention Accommodation (RYDA) & Remand to Local Authority Accommodation (RLAA)**

Avoiding the use of secure remands unless absolutely necessary for reasons of public protection remains one of the Youth Justice Service core aims and priorities.

We have a joint protocol with local magistrates courts (pan- Sussex Courts Agreement 2024), which details operational guidelines for Youth Justice Services and Courts. For example, children at risk of remand are dealt with as a priority by courts and consideration for RLAA is given prior to secure remand, as per legal guidelines. The agreement covers provision of services to the local courts (including Saturday & Bank Holiday courts) to ensure children's welfare and rights are maintained and reduce unnecessary remands. This agreement highlights the child's right to Bail and the principle that all children at risk of secure remand are assessed for bail and offered a robust bail programme unless the risk of harm to the community/ victims is deemed unacceptable. This principle is supported by Senior Leadership Teams and Management Boards.

Brighton & Hove have small but experienced, skilled and dedicated team of court officers. The co-location of the Youth Justice service within the Adolescent hub enables provision of intensive wrap around individually tailored programmes for children subject to bail as an alternative to custody. Supporting this, there is a strong partnership between Youth Justice and Children's Services and arrangements in place with Children's Placement Team (CPT). For example, all children at risk of remand are notified immediately to the Social Worker and CPT. B&H YJS holds credibility with the courts in terms of assessments, risk management planning and the offer to children & families, and there is a high congruency rate with Youth Justice proposals. Across Sussex, we have developed relationships and lines of communication with youth leads for Legal Advisers, CPS, magistrates and district judges and there are regular pan Sussex courts meetings where court issues and YJ developments can be discussed. This provides a forum for feedback between the Courts and YJ services and oversight of emerging court issues.

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

It remains a key priority to minimise the use of custodial sentences. In principle and practice, we will offer community disposals (including bail supervision and support) to all children, even those committing serious violent offences, where we believe that the safety of the child and others can be effectively managed in the community by appropriate intervention, monitoring and controls.

There is a strong strategy in place to support this commitment to preventing children from entering secure settings. Rates of custody are regularly monitored by the Board as part of quarterly performance data and deep dive analysis completed where custody rates increase. Through the use of Intensive Referral Orders, ISS or alternative intensive programmes, the Youth Justice Service offers individualised wrap around programmes for children at risk of custody, based on their needs and abilities. This may include intensive social work support, mentoring constructive activities (via Engagement and Support team), substance misuse work, family therapy, MH & wellbeing support, community reparation and support with education, training & employment (via partner agency YES).

The YJ workforce are qualified and highly skilled, with the expertise to manage children presenting a high level of risk to others in the community in liaison with partners. There is good collaboration with Police and regular multi-agency oversight via Op Safety and AVR. For example, all children assessed as presenting a high level of risk to others are discussed

at the Adolescent Vulnerability and Risk Meeting (AVRM), a weekly multi-agency forum with a focus on Exploitation. Risk management and safety plans receive multi-agency and HoS oversight.

The YJS has a strong relationship with wider Children's Services, who recently received an Outstanding Ofsted rating for the service to children and families in B&H. There is close collaboration and joint working with Children's Services, given the Youth Justice Service integration within Children's Services, and lines of accountability being direct to the AD and director via the Head of the Adolescent Service.

In respect of Resettlement, there is also good partnership work with the Probation Service and Children's Services (including Leaving Care team) to optimise opportunities for children on release from custody and those transitioning to adult services. The Probation Lead (Advanced Practitioner for Youth Justice) manages the seconded probation officer and attends regular meetings regarding transition. The seconded Probation Officer is the allocated PO for 17-18 years olds transitioning to probation. The PO has a split role between the Youth Justice and in VERU (18-24 team). This promotes relationship-based practice and continuity for young people transitioning to the adult estate or to probation when subject to Licence.

Youth Justice practice follows YJB case management guidance, using constructive resettlement and the identity shift model, focussing on developing pro-social identity, identifying and building on the young person's strengths and skills, with a strong desistance focus. YJ practitioners are well sighted on evidence based practice in resettlement in respect of the above models of practice. There is a strong focus on relationship-based work and maintaining a high level of contact with young people via regular visits to secure facilities, phone calls and virtual contact. Youth Justice workers prioritise the child's safety and wellbeing throughout their detention.

There is close management oversight of all custody cases, with escalation processes in place for safety concerns. We have good connections with the leads for resettlement and safeguarding at YOIs (e.g. Feltham), STCs (Oakhill), SCH (e.g. Vinney Green) and Oasis Secure School.

## **Working with families**

It has been emphasised in the plan that the integration of the Youth Justice Service within the Adolescent Service and wider Children's Services provides strong strategic and operational links to the Family Hubs (Early Help) and enables the YJ team to work closely with partners, particularly around ensuring a joined up working with whole families. All YJ workers and managers have direct access to Children's Service database (which is the same as Family Hubs- Early Help). With the Transformation of Children's Services imminent, it is hoped this will improve further connections between early help and statutory services. The Head of Adolescent Service is part of the Senior Leadership Team in the Safeguarding and Care branch of the Families, Children and Wellbeing Directorate. On strategic and operational levels, whole Family working is therefore embedded in Youth Justice practice in Brighton & Hove. These working arrangements are further supported through the developments of the AMBIT model of practice, which has been rolled out throughout the Adolescent Service and wider Children's Services with ongoing service wide training and practice workshops.

Within the Adolescent Service, there is an experienced and trained team of family therapists, who offer Family Functional Therapy (FFT) to all families in need. This offer is focussed on preventing children entering care or custody by strengthening parent-child relationships and building resilience within families. The model is proven to help reduce offending behaviour

by giving children more stability and attachment to their families. The pathway to FFT is via Front Door for Families or Children's social work, with families screened for specific criteria, which include children coming to notice of police, exploitation concerns and family breakdown. The FFT team have been co-located with Youth Justice since prior to the 2018 restructure of the service, so there are well established relationships between Youth Justice and FFT, at both management and practitioner level. The FFT manager attends weekly AVR (exploitation & risk) meetings and Adolescent Service manager's meetings, so has oversight of the most vulnerable children and young people in B&H. FFT practitioners have attended YJ team meetings to provide training and advice. Overall, this ensures that family therapy is well understood in the service and accessible to families meeting the criteria.

Signed



Designation: Co-chair Brighton & Hove Adolescent Partnership Board; Corporate Director Families, Children & Wellbeing, Brighton & Hove City Council

Date: 30 June 2025

# Glossary

ABH- Actual Bodily Harm	PC- Police Constable
AMBIT- Adaptive Mentalisation Based Integrative Treatment	PDP- Personal Development Planning
<b>AQA</b>	PiC- Partners in Change
ASB- Anti-social Behaviour	PO- Probation Officer
AVRM- Adolescent Vulnerability and Risk Meeting	PSR- Pre-Sentence Report
B&H- Brighton & Hove	PTSD- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
BAP- Behaviour & Attendance Partnership	QA- Quality Assured
BHCC- Brighton & Hove City Council	RJ- Restorative Justice
CAHMS- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services	RLAA- Remand to Local Authority
CiC- Child in Care	Accommodation
CME- Children Missing Education	RO- Referral Order
CPD- Continuing professional development	ROTL- Release on Temporary Licence
CPR- Childrens Placement Team	RYDA- Remand to Youth Detention
CR- Community Resolution	Accommodation
CSE- Child sexual exploitation	SAVRY- Structured Assessment of Violence
CV- Childview	Risk
DJ- District Judge	<b>SV</b>
DTO- Detention and Training Order	SW- Social Worker
EAS- Engagement and Support	TDC- Trust for Developing Communities (
<b>EDS</b>	VR- Virtual Reality
ETE- Education Training Employment	VRP- Violence Reduction Partnership
FCAHMS- Forensic Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services	YC- Youth Caution
FCW – Families, Children & Wellbeing	YCC- Youth Conditional Caution
FDFF- Front Door For Families	YCS- Youth Custody Service
FFT- Functional Family Therapy	YES- Youth Employability Service
FTE- Full Time Equivalent	YJAF- Youth Justice Application Framework
GBH- Grievous Bodily Harm	YJS- Youth Justice Service
HMIP- His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons	YOS- Youth Offending Service
HMYOI- His Majesty's Young Offender Institution	YRO- Youth Rehabilitation Order
HoS- Head of Service	
JAG- Joint Action Group	
KPI- Key Performance Indicators	
LGBTQ+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and more.	
MASH- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub	
MH- Mental Health	
NEET- Not in Education Employment Training	
NHS- National Health Service	
NRM- National Referral Mechanism	
OOCR- Out of Court Disposal	
OPCC- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner	
PACE- Police and Criminal Evidence	

## Appendix 1: Staffing Structure

### BHCC Adolescent Service Staff Breakdown

Male	19
Female	51
	70
Black British	4
White British	62
African/Chinese Malay	0
Black African	1
White European	3
	70
Disability (neurodiverse)	17
Disability "other"	4
	21

## Adolescent Service Structure Chart February 2024

