

Brighton and Hove Adolescent Strategy

| 2026-2029



"In an ideal world we would have the support there when we need it. We won't need to repeat our story over and again- we want everyone to connect and work together so we can be supported to be healthy and happy".

YOUNG FUTURES HUBS WORKING GROUP MEMBER, 16



BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Brighton & Hove is a city alive with energy, character and possibility.

Recently recognised by Time Out magazine as one of the top 50 cities in the world and among the top three destinations in the UK, our reputation as a welcoming, vibrant and creative place to live, work and visit continues to shine. This reflects what those of us who live and work here already know: Brighton & Hove is a city with a bold spirit, a strong sense of community and endless potential. It is a great place for people to grow up in.

We are proud to be the most active and walkable city in the country, a place where diversity is celebrated, independence thrives and our green spaces and iconic seafront offer room to breathe. Our thriving cultural life makes this a place young people can truly call their own.

Yet, like many cities, Brighton & Hove holds complexity alongside opportunity. While relatively affluent overall, significant pockets of social and economic deprivation remain. The city has one of the highest proportions of children living in house holds affected by substance use, mental health difficulties and domestic abuse.

Serious and violent crime is often linked to drug supply and exploitation activity, and the exploitation of adolescents continues to be one of the most urgent challenges faced by partners working across the city.

In recent years, Brighton & Hove has made important strides through its complex adolescent strategy, a coordinated approach designed to support our most vulnerable young people, including those affected by exploitation, substance use, offending or anti-social behaviour. The Youth Justice Plan sits beneath this framework, with a shared commitment to reducing first-time entrants to the criminal justice system, reducing reoffending and avoiding the use of custody wherever possible. This work aligns closely with the city's Drug and Alcohol Harm Reduction Partnership, ensuring our approach to supporting children and young people is holistic, integrated and informed by need.

This is also a moment of transformation. Exciting developments in youth provision, including the Young Futures hubs and a refreshed model of local youth services, are strengthening the foundations of support available to adolescents and their families. This will be delivered alongside the Families First Reforms which will work to ensure every family can access the right help and support when they need it, with a strong emphasis on early intervention to prevent crisis and improved outcomes for children and families. These innovations reflect our collective ambition: to build a city where all young people feel safe, included, supported and empowered to thrive.

This Adolescent Strategy brings together all of this work. It sets out a clear, shared vision for how we will protect, nurture and champion the young people of Brighton & Hove. Grounded in partnership and shaped by the voices of adolescents themselves, it represents our commitment to ensuring every young person, wherever they live, whatever their circumstances and whatever their aspirations, has the opportunity to flourish.

This strategy will use both the terms child and young people. It would be clearer to use one or the other, however we are looking to acknowledge the complexity. Most young people prefer the term young people, so we would be looking to respect this. However, it is also important at times to use language to remind people that we are working with children, particularly within the criminal justice system. We will therefore be using both terms depending on the context.

"Remember that young people are experts in their own lives - and their care should be focussed on the needs they've expressed"

YOUNG PERSON RUOK

VISION

Every child and young person in the city will be supported to achieve their full potential, feel emotionally and physically well, and live safely within their families and communities. They will grow up free from exploitation and discrimination, able to live crime-free lives, and have meaningful opportunities to be heard and make a positive contribution to the society around them.

AIMS

"Young People have more to say than you think, know more than you think and see the world in a different way to older people". YP 15

- Support for all young people, ensuring they receive the right support at the right time.
- Provide an accessible universal offer for all young people including opportunities to participate and influence.
- Ensure all support and services are inclusive, LGBTQ+ affirming and anti-racist.
- Deliver targeted support for young people at particular risk of substance use, offending behaviour, mental health challenges, or barriers to employment and education.
- Support young people experiencing extra-familial harm through a contextual safeguarding informed approach.
- Work collaboratively with partners to disrupt individuals or groups who exploit children and young people.
- Provide an intensive offer for the most vulnerable young people experiencing extra-familial harm.

"Working with teenagers can be hard as a lot of them are going to struggle to regulate their emotions and some might be easier to work with than others & don't take anything personal. I preferred it when I was spoken to like an adult not a child who didn't know what they were doing. It's also good to know one size doesn't fit all with the way a teenager might behave and different approaches need to be taken. They need to be listened to and not brushed off." 18 YR OLD

ADOLESCENT SNAPSHOT 2025/26



32

Children were First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice Service



527

Children were Not in Education, Employment or Training (as at 01/01/2026)



13,303

Children were in Secondary School education



5

Children were sentenced to Custody



3,573 (26.9%)

Children received Free School Meals



135

Children received T3 treatment from ru-ok?



45

Children had a RED RAG rating at AVRМ



547 (4.1%)

Children were excluded from School

VALUES

We believe children and young people should:

- Receive care, guidance and support whilst being allowed to make mistakes and learn in a safe, nurturing environment.
- Be heard and able to participate fully in their communities.
- Have a range of places where they feel safe and have a sense of belonging.
- Be empowered to be involved and included in planning and decision making around their safety and the safety of others.
- Have access to people who encourage safety, kindness and commitment in both their homes and communities.
- Be free from discrimination, be treated with respect and have equitable access to inclusive and representative services.
- Be able to safely access, enjoy and realise their aspirations through their education.
- Deserve to be happy and have fun.

In addition to the values, there is a strong commitment to anti -racist work, reducing disproportionality across the system and increasing meaningful participation, including the voice of the child. Delivery will therefore all be considered through these lenses.

"In recent years, young people have lived through covid lockdowns and experienced complex and stressful living arrangements - from which there was no easy relief or escape. Living with family members who aren't supportive can cause a lot of emotional strain, stress, anxiety and potential trauma for young LGBTQ people. Believing in whatever impact this will have had will be important to gaining their trust"

YOUNG PERSON, SPEAK OUT PROJECT



NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Brighton and Hove City Council has been selected to be an early adopter of the 3-year Young Futures Hub programme. The National Youth Agency facilitated a review of the youth service and city-wide consultation in 2025. This resulted in the development of a co-produced implementation plan for the city, which focusses on improving health and wellbeing, working with young people affected by violence and increasing access to opportunities for young people aged 10-18, 25 with SEND.

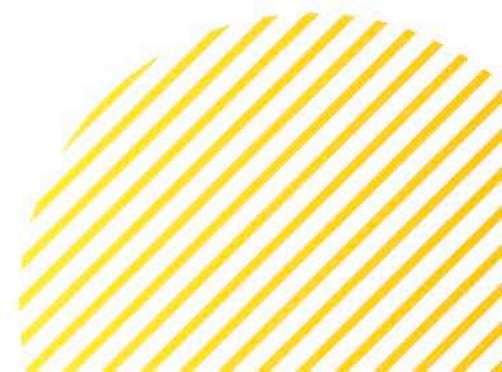


Brighton & Hove's approach to Families First is built on the model of relationship-based practice already embedded in Family Help and Protection, the Family Hubs, and now adopted by all partner agencies signed up to Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Children Partnership. Families First in Brighton & Hove will be an evolution of the model of practice that has led to an outstanding service for children and families in the city. The overall aims of Families First are to refocus the children's social care system on prevention and to ensure that there is a robust multi-agency child protection system in place. As part of this transformation, the youth related services will join the Adolescent Service and the introduction of Youth Keyworkers will enhance the preventative and targeted offer. This will ensure there is a spectrum of support, aiming to provide earlier support, thus reducing the need for complex and intensive support.

Alongside these developments, the Adolescent Service is working in partnership with the Skill Mill to provide young people (16+) in the youth justice system with paid employment, working on local environmental projects, with personalised support and training to help them build better prospects.

The Youth Justice Service is working in partnership with Sussex Police to implement the National Knife Crime policy (April 2026) across Sussex. The Government initiative includes increased police powers and technology, investment in schools (mentoring programmes) and timely and robust diversion pathways.

The Sussex Violence Reduction Partnership has funded the Focused Deterrence Scheme across the county, which provides a bespoke, evidence-based approach to reducing knife crime and serious youth violence. This involves Police and the Youth Justice Service working jointly with children and young people, providing intensive support alongside robust enforcement. The VRP has also funded custody navigators across Sussex to support children in Police custody. Schools are key partners and leaders alongside other partners in developing the best support for adolescents. We will continue to build relationships to ensure they have more influence over how policy and support going forward.



The youth keyworker will work with and in schools, utilising professional judgement in schools to influence decisions and to ensure practice in joined up.

We have successfully submitted a joint bid with East Sussex to develop a Regional Remand Partnership to reduce the need for remands to custody. Work will be ongoing to develop this offer.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

PRIORITY 1

Build a connected, preventative Youth System that provides accessible, joined-up support and growth opportunities for all young people.

PRIORITY 2

Promote young people's wellbeing and strengthen safety, belonging and protection across home, community and wider environments.

PRIORITY 3

Provide youth focused services that actively reflects and responds to the diverse identities, cultures, and needs of the children and young people in our city.





GOVERNANCE

The Adolescent Partnership Board will provide the governance for this strategy.

This board also provides the governance for the youth justice arrangements of the city and the development of the Young Futures Hub.

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. There is work in place to develop the Board to ensure it properly represents the service users. These developments include work on the membership to reflect the community and to ensure there is meaningful youth voice.

DELIVERY PLAN OVERVIEW

Delivery on key priorities

The following activity will be focused on delivering the key strategic priorities:

UNIVERSAL

- City wide open access youth clubs, groups, services, youth voice forums, that form a core function of the externally commissioned youth offer, including Young Futures Hubs and Local Youth Transformation programmes



PREVENTION AND TARGETED SUPPORT

- Reboot and Turnaround provide voluntary interventions for children identified by Police due to anti-social and offending behaviour.
- SHIFT (AudioActive) As part of our early intervention offer, our partnership with AudioActive provides access to SHIFT, a six-month music mentoring programme for young people aged 11–17 at risk of serious youth violence and peer exploitation.
- Drug Alcohol and Sexual Health (DASH) Workers provide drop ins and 1:1 support in schools and colleges, offering advice on sexual health and substance use.
- Engagement and Support (EAS) Workers offer one to one support to children who are at risk of exploitation, youth custody or coming into care.
- Adolescent Service key workers in schools offer support to children at risk of experiencing extra-familial harm.
- The Liaison and Diversion Service (LDS) practitioners work with children in police custody to assess their individual needs and offer support and signposting.
- The Youth Justice Service Diversion Pathway provides Out of Court resolutions for children, including Outcome 22 (deferred prosecution).
- Externally commissioned Youth Service provide targeted clubs, groups, case work and mentoring opportunities. This includes Young Futures Hubs which will develop services with a focus on Health and Wellbeing, Opportunities and Youth Crime and Violence.
- Youth Support and Advice services, groups and drop-ins, including Young Futures Youth, Information, Advice, Counselling Services, (YIACS).
- The development of transition age clubs, groups and services for children aged 10-12 years who are transitioning from primary to secondary school.
- Young Futures Brighton Streets Detached city-wide youth work and youth bus offering youth work where young people spend time in the city.
- Development of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) youth voice clubs, groups and youth voice pathways.
- AudioActive offer interventions that use music to support young people and communities to overcome challenges in their lives.
- Development of Integrated Care Board Health services within youth provision.
- Increased out of hours- after school and weekend youth provision via externally commissioned youth service.
- Hospital Youth Work offer support for children admitted to hospital where there are concerns around exploitation, violence and harm from drugs and alcohol.

INTENSIVE AND COMPLEX SUPPORT

- Tailored support for vulnerable children experiencing exploitation and youth violence, provided by skilled practitioners who work with children and families in a relationship and trauma informed way.
- AudioActive Shift mentoring music focused programme for young people.
- RUOK provide 1-1 support and guidance to young people at risk because of their drug or alcohol use.
- Advice, guidance and training for professionals working with young people affected by extra-familial harm.
- Adolescent Social Work specialise working in a trauma informed and relationship-based way with children and families impacted by extra-familial harm.
- Youth Justice practitioners provide intensive supervision, support, and holistic management of children subject to out of court and court disposals, including community and custodial sentences.
- Skill Mill - provides children in youth justice with paid employment, working on local environmental projects, along with personalised support and training to help them build better prospects.
- Local decision -making National Referral Mechanism (NRM) panel for children affected by exploitation.
- Development work with East Sussex to prevent remand to custody
- Adolescent Mental Health workers offering support and intervention to address young people's mental health needs.



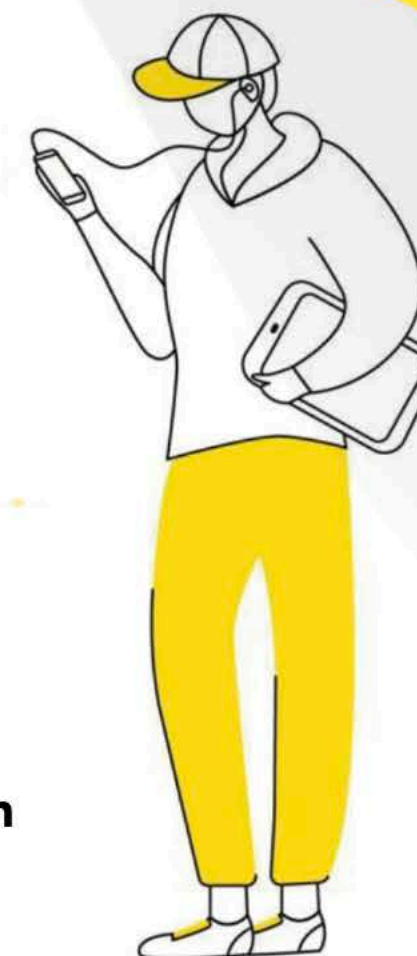
" We want the people who make decisions or have the power change things to involve us from the very start of their discussions. To make sure everyone is asked what they think make sure everyone is heard. Make sure everyone can have a role in making the decision. We have great ideas and our voices matter!"

YOUNG FUTURES HUB WORKING GROUP MEMBER, 17



YOUTH VOICE AND PARTICIPATION

- Citywide youth voice pathway development, providing accessible opportunities for all young people to lead on change, ensuring connected, clear routes from youth voice to decision-makers.
- Youth Participation Planning Tool (Lundy Model) implementation across Local Authority services working with children and young people.



APPENDICES

Youth Justice Plan 2026-2029 • Local Youth Transformation and Young Futures Hub Implementation Plan

