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Youth Justice Board  
Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuencid

## Applies to England and Wales

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## 1. Context and legal framework

Local authority partnerships have a statutory duty to submit a youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services (YJSs) [\[footnote 1\]](#). Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth justice partnership's responsibilities in producing a plan. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, in consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out how YJSs in their area are to be provided and funded, how they will operate, and what functions will be carried out.

The plan should address the functions assigned to a YJS, including how services will prevent offending behaviour and reduce reoffending<sup>[footnote 2]</sup>.

Whilst the Act refers to an annual plan, we recognise that planning over a longer period may be more effective. Local partnerships may, if they choose, produce a plan over multiple years; in this case an annual update will be required, covering progress against priorities, a summary of performance, any changes in demographics and legislation, and any additional reporting requirements.

Whilst these statutory requirements state the minimum information required within the youth justice plan, this guidance sets out further considerations for partnerships on both the content and structure of your youth justice plan; and asks for reflection on how the service takes a strength-based approach towards delivering a Child First justice system.

The YJB recommends that partnerships engage their YJB leads in reviewing the content of plans and seek timely feedback before formal submission.

Youth justice plans should be submitted using the headings set out in the '[Youth Justice Plan Structure](#)' section below. The data and information contained within the plan is used by the YJB as an intelligence source to provide support to the sector through our oversight function. Analysis of the information identifies good performance and can provide focus on regional and national themes. The aggregated data on priorities, risks and practice is used to provide advice to ministers and inform the YJB's strategic influence across government.

We recognise that local areas will have their own governance arrangements in place. The policy context will be different depending on whether your YJS is in England or in Wales (for example in relation to education, health or social care). Your plan should reflect the relevant legislation and policy for your country. We encourage the practice for plans to be developed in consultation with children and their families, staff and volunteers, statutory and non-statutory partnership organisations and board members.

The plan must be submitted to the YJB by 30 June each year to ensure timely payment of your Youth Justice Grant, you can submit prior to this date if you wish. Please e-mail your plan to [CBU@yjb.gov.uk](mailto:CBU@yjb.gov.uk), copying in your YJB lead.

Youth justice plans, in England only, must be signed off by the full council in accordance with Regulation 4 of the 'Local Authorities (Functions and

Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000'. This regulation does not apply to Wales.

If you have not been able to achieve full sign off by the 30 June, your plan can be submitted with the approval of the Board Chair with confirmation of full sign off submitted at a later date. The 'sign off' by the Chair is an indication that the wider management board have approved the submitted plan and all sections outlined in the [Youth Justice Plan Structure](#) have been covered.

There is a requirement for YJSs to publish their youth justice plan<sup>[footnote 3]</sup>.

At the end of this document is a [summary outline of grant requirements against terms and conditions](#) to support services understanding of minimum compliances.

## 2. Child First

You will be aware that the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) vision is of a Child First youth justice system.

The evidence supports this as the best approach to achieve better child outcomes. [A guide to Child First](#).

The content of plans should reflect your activity in working to achieve the above vision.

## 3. How to produce your plan

Your [youth justice management board](#) should govern and own the process of producing the local youth justice plan; it is their opportunity to collectively shape the direction of the delivery of youth justice so that it best meets the needs of the locality, children, families, victims and communities.

Opportunities for wider participation, significantly where children and their families can themselves shape and influence the delivery of your service, are also strongly encouraged.

## 4. Youth justice planning process – what might it include?

The management board (led by the Chair) should take the lead for planning and should include the following:

### 4.1 Reflect and plan

- Look back and learn from the past to recognise achievements and consider plans based on what is known now as well as looking to the future.
- Consider current performance, including performance data against local and national indicators over the previous 12 months, information on serious incidents in the area and learning from these, self-assessment against the [standards for children in the youth justice system](#) and other existing improvement plans.
- Identify and understand the needs of children in the justice system and the areas for prioritisation to support good outcomes.
- Consider the key risks, issues and challenges.
- Involve input from [children](#), their families and carers, enabling the voice of the child and user feedback and participation.
- Consult with staff and volunteers, particularly regarding improvements to service delivery and identifying learning and development needs of the workforce to support performance improvement and better outcomes.

### 4.2 Engage wider strategic partnerships

- Consider the regional and national context in which the partnership is operating. For example, 'what is the strategy and vision of key stakeholders within which the youth justice plan will 'sit'?'
- Take on board relevant wider strategic plans, (including perhaps your Police and Crime Plan, local authority plans (Children and Young People Plan for example), Violence Reduction Unit/Community Safety Partnership/Local Criminal Justice Board/Public Health Plans).
- Share with wider strategic partners who have not been involved in the development of the plan for feedback and amendments.

The youth justice plan should set out the direction and strategy of youth justice services (YJSs), describing how in particular, quality services will be provided to ensure positive outcomes for children and improvements in performance.

It is important to understand the needs and diversity of the local children's population, to devise and deliver appropriate individual and personalised services.

### **4.3 Audience, design and length**

Your youth justice plan should be available and accessible to local leaders and the local community, to understand and be aware of services delivered to children in the justice system in your area. Please visit the [Youth Justice Resource Hub](#) for examples of accessible plans and plans designed for children to read.

The length of the plan is very much determined locally. The YJB provides a template for the structure, but the level of detail should be determined by the local partnership, according to local need.

## **5. Youth justice plan structure**

To aid youth justice partnerships in the production of the youth justice plan, commentary against the structure has been provided below.

Please use this structure as your template, ensuring each section is covered in your plan.

### **Introduction, vision and strategy**

A foreword or statement introducing the plan from the Chair, or a senior representative of the local authority, confirming that the plan has been developed and agreed with youth justice partners and offers evidence of governance of the plan.

You may wish to provide information about the local context of both the service and local delivery environment. This can include information about the known demographics of the local population or any issues and

concerns that impact on children in maximising their potential such as ethnicity, poverty and social deprivation, and children who have experienced care.

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

This section should provide an overview of how the partnership is meeting statutory requirements for the oversight of youth justice services (YJS).

An account of the local governance arrangements for YJSs should be included, outlining how the youth justice management board links in with other partnership and local governance arrangements with relevant oversight responsibilities and shared aims.

A description of the partnership arrangements, at both an operational and strategic level, that contribute to support for children in the justice system should be outlined. As a multi-agency partnership, YJSs must contain specialists, or access to specialist provision for children being supervised, this includes the police, health, education, social work and probation as a minimum. A description of operational partnerships should include confirmation that this is the case. This should also include details of the relevant partnership provision, in staffing, financial contribution and how those arrangements work in practice, in addition to describing the workforce available to deliver statutory youth justice work. This section should include information on:

- Where the service is located within the local authority, or otherwise, and the rationale.
- The seniority of the YJS Head of Service role, including any other lead responsibilities.
- The full staffing structure showing details of the staff roles in the YJS and the reporting arrangements for the Head of Service should be included as an appendix within the plan. A separate table should also be included as an appendix recording the ethnicity, sex and known disability of staff.

Please include in this section a description of the partnership arrangements you have locally with the voluntary and community sector.

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

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

This section should include a commentary on performance on the key activities identified in the previous plan. Information should be provided on what activities and objectives were achieved in the preceding year. Progress should be reported on those actions that are still outstanding, or partially achieved. Any barriers to the successful completion of activities should be identified, and if still appropriate, what actions are planned to mitigate or overcome any barriers to achievement.

### **Performance over the previous year**

This section should contain a summary of performance against national indicators describing what current performance looks like, what has contributed to good or poor performance, and what the partnership is aiming for in the future. You should refer to performance against the national Key Performance Indicators, and any recent inspection outcomes.

Local performance targets are encouraged, and you may wish to include local data to measure these targets.

### **Risks and issues**

Here we are defining a risk as a potential or emerging factor which may impede the delivery of positive outcomes for children in your area. An issue is something which has already occurred or is currently happening which is affecting outcomes.

This section should include:

- an outline of current risks and issues to local youth justice services (YJSs)
- what actions are being taken to address existing issues
- what proposed action may be needed to address potential risks should they emerge.

## 5.2 Plan for the forthcoming year:

### Child First

The YJB is committed to ensuring that we understand and promote across the youth justice system what the evidence tells us works best with children. Our focus on the principle of [Child First](#) is routed in this commitment. This section should be used to demonstrate how the partnership plans to implement the four tenets of the Child First principles into practical service delivery:

- Prioritise the best interests of children and recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.
- Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their prosocial identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
- Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
- Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

In this section please include information on how the partnership works collaboratively with the child and how their [voice is heard](#). This section should include:

- what has been done with that information or feedback
- any tangible examples of how feedback from children has been used to make changes in service delivery
- information about the process undertaken to gather the feedback, and how that is analysed for service development.

You may wish to include individual quotes from children and their families and carers.

However, the principle of Child First is not limited to this section and the plan should also demonstrate how this ethos is woven throughout other elements of service delivery. You may wish to use case examples, or individual quotes from children and their families and carers.

## **Resources and services**

Your youth justice plan will need to provide assurance that the youth justice core grant will be used appropriately (as described in the Terms and Condition of Grant).

In this section you are required to include details of:

- how the youth justice core grant will be used
- partnership resources that contribute to the aims and expected outcomes of the plan, adding Table B5: Budget Costs and Contributions as an appendix if available (please refer to the YJB Data Recording Requirements for Youth Justice Services in England and Wales).

A description of effective and efficient use of resources should be linked to performance and outcome measures set out in the plan. e.g.

we use our grant, partner contributions and available resources to deliver these services and we believe they produce the following benefits and outcomes. Our performance will be improved next year by...

## **Board development**

The YJB expects local management boards to take responsibility for all aspects of youth justice service governance; to lead strategically across relevant partners and to ensure a high-quality service is provided to all children. In 2021 the YJB provided updated guidance on [youth justice service governance and leadership](#) to support this. Your youth justice plan should set out what are the plans for partnership improvements and board development.

## **Workforce Development**

Please provide information on what activity will take place for workforce in the next year. This should include an analysis of the workforce development needs of the staff in the service and the plans to deliver training and development. You may wish to reference training or development delivered in the past year and how this has impacted on service delivery.

Identify ways in which the workforce is supported, providing specific examples for promotion of the resilience and wellbeing for staff such as clinical supervision, peer to peer mentoring, etc.

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

Please give us examples of interesting local practice or innovation. This can include practice that has been developed in response to the specific needs of a group of children, responses to support prevention and diversion, build strengths, engage children in services, or meet specific needs.

### **Evaluation**

In this section examples of practice should be included that meet the definition of evidence-based practice. If there has been any evaluation, either in-house, or externally validated, this should also be included.

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

It is important during the preparation of your youth justice plan that you consider and capture detail around the following:

### **Standards for children**

Your youth justice plan should include information on:

- the findings from your most recent [standards](#) for children in justice self assessments
- actions completed to address gaps found in internal audits
- planned activity for the coming year.

### **Service development**

Please summarise your plan for ongoing improvement and development of your service. You should include progress against key findings from any relevant local inspection action plans, HM Inspectorate of Probation thematics, serious incident review or learning exercises that have taken place in the last 12 months; and how the [Youth Justice Board for England and Wales Strategic Plan](#) will influence your local plan.

Note: the 2024 to 2027 plan will be published in the coming week.

### **5.3 National priority areas**

We are keen to understand how your youth justice plan addresses the following priorities. If these have already been covered in previous sections, it is not necessary to repeat information here.

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

Children from a range of backgrounds are over-represented in the youth justice system. Your youth justice plan should offer commentary on and analysis of data or intelligence you have about children who may be over-represented in the youth justice system in your area.

This may include Black and Mixed heritage children, children known to social care services, children excluded from school and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. There should be an action plan in place, and tackling over-representation should be a concern across the partnership, therefore this should not be limited to the activities of the youth justice service (YJS) and can include wider activities led by partners.

If there is no data to indicate any groups of children are over-represented, this should be acknowledged.

Whilst there are fewer girls in the youth justice system, they do have a specific set of needs, and services should be adapted to meet the needs of the girls supervised by the service. If there are specific services or programmes that have been developed for girls, this should be included in this section.

#### **Policing**

Policing plays an important role in the delivery of outcomes for children in the justice system. It is important to understand how policing in your area is supporting and contributing to national practice. Please outline the strengths of your partnership and examples of positive practice and any challenges and risks.

#### **Prevention** [\[footnote 4\]](#)

Many partnerships are delivering early and/or targeted prevention work with children (together with their families/carers) who may be identified as vulnerable to influence or exploitation, in order to safeguard children and promote positive outcomes to stop them entering the justice system. Please give us an outline of how these services are delivered in your area, data on delivery and any practice examples.

## **Diversion** [\[footnote 4\]](#)

Diversionary work is distinct from preventative intervention. Many partnerships deliver diversionary work with children (together with their families/carers) who have committed an offence(s) to support them to avoid a criminal record and escalation into the justice system. Please tell us about your strategy and processes for diversion, how children are identified for diversion, how the service is delivered, by whom, how success is evaluated and what scrutiny is in place with any practice examples and any supporting data.

In both prevention and diversion, it is recognised that some of this work may be delivered outside of the YJS; this activity should be included in these sections.

## **Education**

Please tell us how the partnership is working to ensure all children known to the service are having their education needs met. This should include information on the education staffing provision in the service, and how this links with other partnership arrangements, such as voluntary sector organisations, academy trusts and the local authority and links to education representation on the board.

Please provide information on any children who are not receiving their education entitlement, are excluded, on part time timetables or electively home educated. This data should be analysed to identify any disproportionality, and care status of the child.

## **Restorative approaches and victims**

Restorative approaches empower victims and support children to develop a 'pro-social' identity, and to help them to make a positive contribution to their community. Please provide information on the services delivered to victims and how you are delivering the rights to victims as required under the [Victims Code](#).

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

Services are invited to provide a local picture on serious violence and exploitation according to the [Home Office Serious Violence Duty](#) (December 2022). This should include any strategic links to wider partnership arrangements and learnings from past [serious incidents](#).

Please comment on partnership work to address child criminal exploitation, including the service's interaction with the National Referral Mechanism or

equivalent local arrangements. Any work being completed as a result of, or to prevent, radicalisation or extremist activity should be included in this section.

Whilst not applicable to all children who are subject to release under investigation (RUI) arrangements, a number of these investigations will relate to serious violence. This section should address what work is being completed across the partnership in relation to children subject to RUI.

### **Detention in police custody**

Please provide information on children who are detained in custody, including how the service have addressed any local challenges, compliance with the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(PACE\)](#) and any examples of good practice. Include information around appropriate adult arrangements in your area, such as who provides the service, any local processes and the support of the Emergency Duty Team.

### **Remands**

Children subject to 'Remands to Local Authority Accommodation' and children subject to remands to 'Youth Detention Accommodation' should be covered in this section, and if data is available this should be included. Information should be included on any strategic plans being delivered across the partnership to reduce the use of remands.

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

The use of custody has decreased significantly over the past ten years and this is rightly a success in the youth justice system. When children do go to custody it can have a damaging effect on their lives, disrupting education and straining family relationships. Children in custody are likely to be amongst the most complex and vulnerable children in society. Therefore, even in services where custody rates are low, reference should be made to strategic planning, including work across the partnership for these children and any analysis completed on their needs.

Children leaving custody often face particular challenges in relation to suitable accommodation and this section can include what work the partnership has achieved in implementing the principles of constructive resettlement in practice, maximising where possible the use of temporary release and how they plan to implement the constructive resettlement approach in the future. Case examples can be included.

### **Working with families**

Please tell us about how you work with the whole family or support network of children involved in the justice system. Please include details of your service's interface with Supporting/Strengthening Families services. Please also tell us (where relevant) about services to families in the Welsh language.

## **6. Sign off, submission and approval**

Youth justice plans can be submitted to the YJB at any point, but we request that approved plans are submitted by 30 June at the latest.

Youth justice plans, in England only, must be signed off by the full council in accordance with 'Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000'. This regulation does not apply to Wales.

If you have not been able to achieve full sign off by the 30 June, your plan can be submitted with the approval of the Board Chair with confirmation of full sign off submitted at a later date. The 'sign off' by the Chair is an indication that the wider management board have approved the submitted plan and all sections outlined in the [Youth Justice Plan Structure](#) have been covered.

To submit your youth justice plan you should e-mail [CBU@yjb.gov.uk](mailto:CBU@yjb.gov.uk) and copy in your YJB lead.

The YJB lead covering your region/Wales are available to review and consult on locally approved plans. Should feedback from them be sought, we advise consultation on a draft version take place as early as possible and before formal submission.

While the YJB provides grant to local areas, it is neither a signatory to the plan nor directly responsible for its contents. Consequently, neither the YJB nor the Ministry of Justice logo should appear on the document.

## 6.1 Appendix 1: Staffing Structure

The full staffing structure showing details of the staff roles in the YJS and the reporting arrangements for the Head of Service should be included as an appendix within the plan.

A separate table should also be included as an appendix recording the ethnicity, sex and known disability of staff.

## 6.2 Appendix 2: Budget Costs and Contributions

Budget Costs and Contributions should be supplied as an appendix if available (please refer to the [YJB Data Recording Requirements for Youth Justice Services in England and Wales](#))

## 7. Summary outline of grant compliances

The below replicates Annex 3 within the youth justice core grant terms and conditions. Grant payment is made to the local authority as one lump sum when all the compliances set out below have been met. Payment will be made on condition that the following information will be provided by the timescale indicated. A failure to provide this information could result in the YJB on behalf of the Secretary of State for Justice requiring that the grant payment be returned.

If youth justice services (YJSs) are experiencing delay/difficulties with any of the below, contact with their relevant YJB lead is essential.

Date	Activity	Contact
31 May	Submission of the signed audit certificate for the previous year's Youth Justice Grant	Send to: <a href="mailto:YJBGrants@yjb.gov.uk">YJBGrants@yjb.gov.uk</a>

Date	Activity	Contact
30 June	Youth justice plan	Send to: <a href="mailto:CBU@yjb.gov.uk">CBU@yjb.gov.uk</a> and copied to your relevant YJB lead
30 June	Submission of a signed agreement of Conditions of Grant (e-signatures are now acceptable) – an email submission to the YJB must be copied to other signatories and state explicitly that the other signatories have agreed to the conditions	Send to: <a href="mailto:YJBGrants@yjb.gov.uk">YJBGrants@yjb.gov.uk</a>
31 July	Submission of the planned overall income and workforce data for the YJS through the youth justice application framework	Contact: <a href="mailto:InformationandAnalysis@yjb.gov.uk">InformationandAnalysis@yjb.gov.uk</a>
As per Data Recording	Submission of quarterly case management and AssetPlus data via Connectivity	Contact: <a href="mailto:InformationandAnalysis@yjb.gov.uk">InformationandAnalysis@yjb.gov.uk</a>

1. The statutory definition of a local youth justice service is contained in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In statute these are known as youth offending teams. However, as services have evolved, they have become known by different names. We use the term youth justice services to acknowledge the evolution of services in all their

guises and to move away from the stigmatising language of 'offending'. ↵

2. [Crime and Disorder Act 1998, \(Section 40\) \(3\)\(a\)\(b\)](#). ↵
3. [The requirement is set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 \(section 40\) \(4\)](#). ↵
4. [Final Report: Prevention and Diversion Project – Youth Justice Board for England and Wales \(February 2023\) - Youth Justice Resource Hub \(yjresourcehub.uk\)](#) ↵ ↵<sup>2</sup>