

# **Croydon Youth Justice Plan**

**2024-25**

Contents:

1. Introduction, vision and strategy
2. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements
3. Update on the previous year (progress on priorities, performance over the previous year, risks and issues).
4. Child First Approach
5. Resources and Services
6. Board Development
7. Workforce Development
8. Evidence-based practice and innovation
9. Evaluation
10. Priorities for the coming year
11. Standards for children
12. Service development.
13. National priority areas
14. Children from groups which are over-represented.
15. Policing
16. Prevention
17. Diversion
18. Education
19. Restorative approaches and victims
20. Serious violence, exploitation and contextual safeguarding
21. Detention in police custody
22. Remands
23. Use of custody and constructive resettlement
24. Working with families
25. Sign off – Youth Crime Board Chair



## **Foreword by Debbie Jones**

### **Youth Crime Board Chair**

As the Chair of the Youth Justice Crime Board, it is my pleasure to introduce the Croydon Youth Justice Plan 2024/25. I would like to thank staff, Managers and Board Members, working within and supporting the Youth Justice Service in the creation of this plan and for the ongoing commitment to improve outcomes for children at risk of offending behaviour or in contact with the Youth Justice System.

It is recognised that Croydon's partnership arrangements, both statutory and with the voluntary community sector, have promoted effective development, embedding child-first principles, to ensure children are provided with opportunities to avoid further contact with the Youth Justice System. The 2024/25 plan looks back at achievements made in 2023/24 whilst marking ongoing areas of improvements which will be a focus of the Board for the forthcoming year.

The Youth Justice Service has continued to see a reduction in re-offending rates, first time entrants and children in custody, comparative with National and London measures. The 2024/25 Plan will detail how the partnership continues to work on progress made, deliver innovative and evidence-based practice to support the diversion of children and young people away from the Youth Justice system.

Finally, the plan ensures that core to our objectives are the voices of the children and their families whose experience of the Youth Justice System has been integral to the plans development.

I hope that Croydon's Youth Justice Plan reflects both our challenges and ambition for the upcoming year.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Debbie Jones".

**Debbie Jones**

**Corporate Director Children Young People and Education and Chair of the Youth Justice Crime Board**

## **1.Introduction, vision and strategy**

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a responsibility on all Youth Justice Services to create an annual plan, the 'Youth Justice Plan'. The Youth Justice Plan details how the Youth Justice Service operates with both statutory (Police/Probation/Social Care/Health/Education) and non-statutory (Housing/Community Safety/Voluntary Community Sector) partners, to deliver services to prevent and reduce the offending behaviour of 10–17-year-olds, its overall statutory objective.

Croydon Youth Justice Plan 2024/25 has been compiled in discussion with all key-stake holders but most importantly has been shaped by the voices of children and their families in addition to staff and Manager's and the community. The plan intends to look back at the year 2023/24 marking any learning and highlighting achievements, but also noting ongoing improvements. The plan will detail the current delivery structure of the service but also detail challenges posed using Key Performance Indicators, self-assessments, and auditing activity to measure outcomes. The plan will provide local context, data and outline set objectives for the forthcoming year.

To note the plan is aligned with several other strategies in existence given the multi-agency context in which it operates including: the Youth Safety Plan (detailing a multi-agency response to Serious Youth Violence), Community Safety Strategy and Mayor's Business Plan which aims to enhance positive outcomes for children. The plan is also guided by the Youth Justice Board Strategy (24-27) which focuses on Child-First principles underpinning the delivery of Youth Justice Services nationally, by promoting and encouraging positive outcomes for children but also ensuring services contribute towards keeping communities safe.

Useful links:

[Mayor's business plan: 2022 to 2026 | Croydon Council](#)

[Youth Safety Delivery Plan.pdf \(croydon.gov.uk\)](#)

[05a Appendix 1 - Community Safety Strategy.pdf \(croydon.gov.uk\)](#)

### **Local Context -**

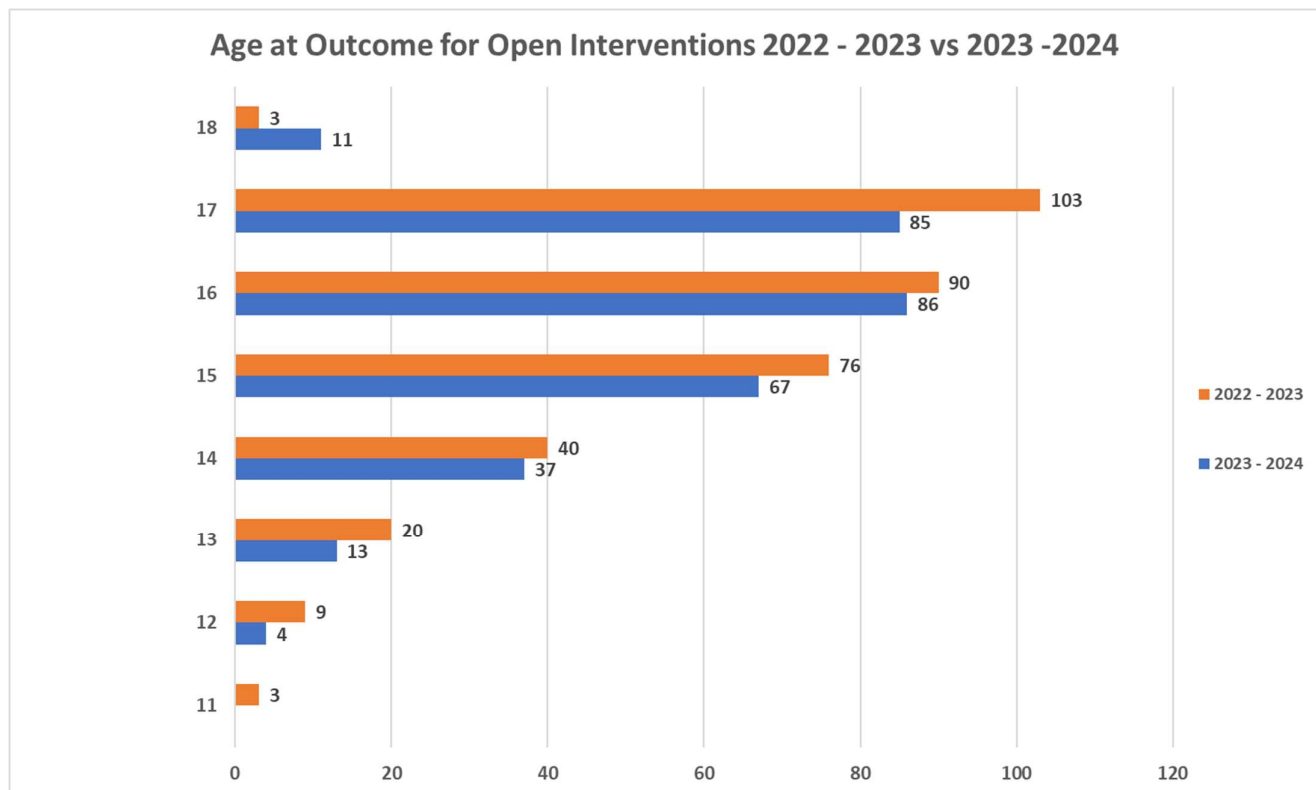
Croydon is located in South London (Greater London) with a population of 390,719, making it the largest London borough and sixteenth largest English district. Nationally Croydon is one of the most densely populated areas falling within the top 15% nationally. The Office of National Statistics shows 33.8 per cent of households have at least one deprivation indicator (low education, unemployment, poor health, overcrowding, access to housing and crime). It is estimated that of the population, 93,000 are under the age of 18. Census data confirms that one in four of Croydon's population is aged 0-17 and is ranked as having the highest Youth Population in London. The borough is diverse with 2021 data showing 53% of the population aged 0-24 are from minority backgrounds.

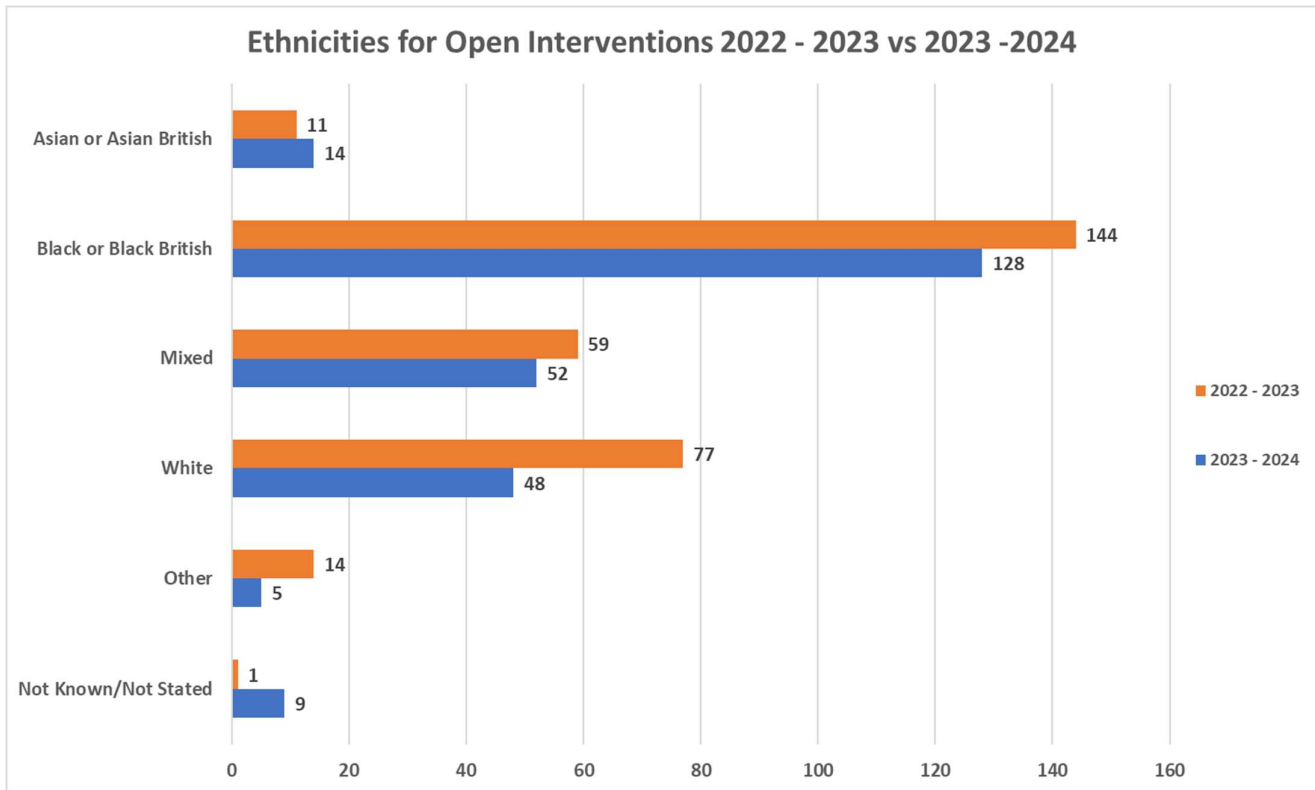
There are 99 primary schools and 34 secondary schools within the borough. Despite the large number of schools permanent exclusions from both primary and secondary provisions are lower than regional and national averages and there are other signs of positive outcomes within education including an increased percentage in children achieving foundation stages.

Croydon has one of the highest Children Looked After populations in London although the rate of children in care is on a par with statistical neighbours. 2023/24 data obtained show there were, 520 Children who were looked after, 622 children who had a Child Protection Plan and 4816 children were subject to a Child In Need Plan during this period. At the time of writing 1158 Children were actively deemed a Child In Need (receiving some form of Social Care intervention). To note Croydon Youth Justice Service are responsible for all Children Looked After by Croydon Local Authorities known to the Youth Justice Service regardless of location. Similarly, when Children Looked After are placed in the London Borough of Croydon by other Local Authorities they will 'caretake' on behalf of others termed 'host Youth Justice Service'.

During the year 2023/24 Croydon Youth Justice Service worked with 256 children. During this period there were 413 interventions, this meaning certain children could have had more than 1 sentence/intervention in a year or had multiple interventions open at any one time for example a child could be serving a sentence but also receive a caution alongside this sentence. Of the 256 children 210 were boys and 46 girls.

The ages of the children within the 2023/24 year are detailed below and a comparison is made to the previous year. The data shows a reduction in all age ranges, other than 18-year-olds who are transitioning between services. This is explained by the Service holding a high number of Referral Orders, a type of sentence that Probation does not oversee and therefore transfer not applicable. Data below shows that 16–17-year-olds continue to be the highest age range. More significantly the service has seen a reduction in under 12's with no 10- or 11-year-olds being present in the cohort.





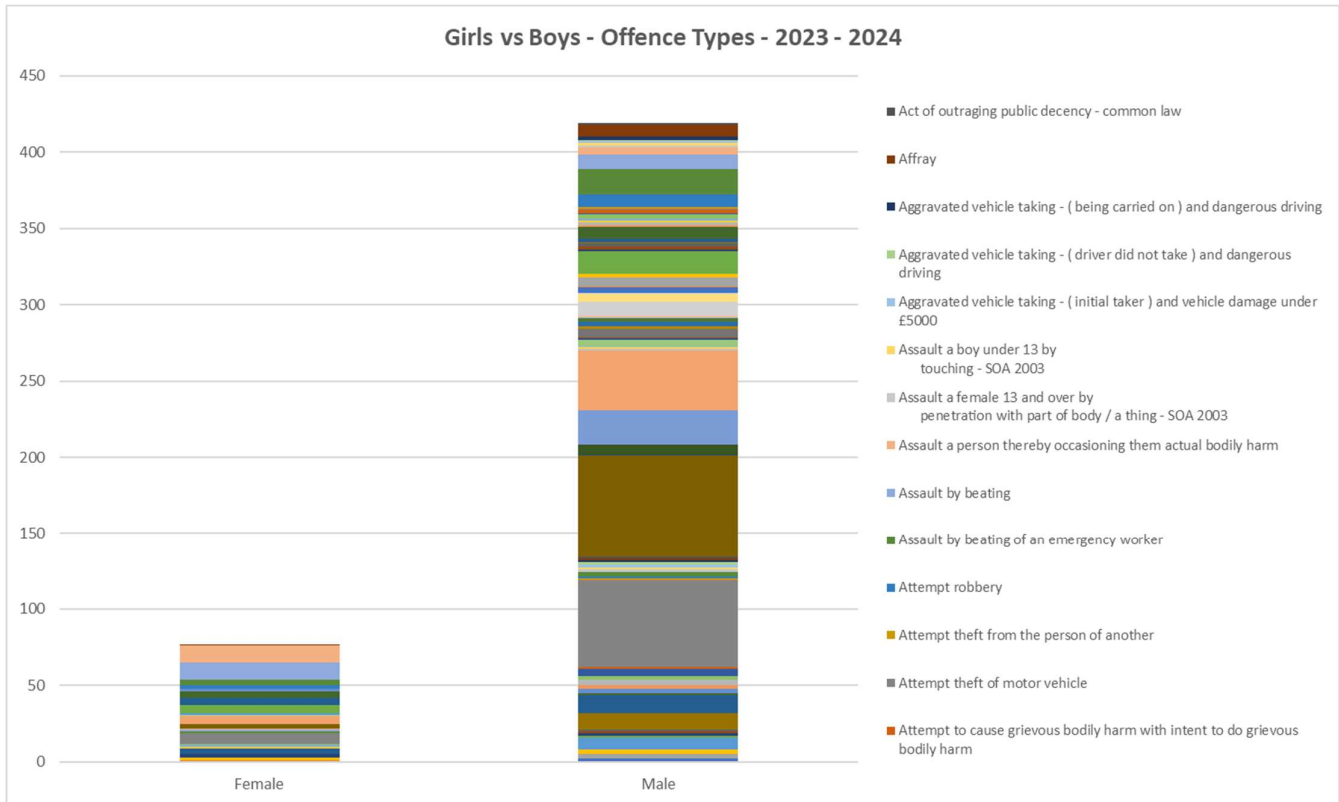
The Youth Justice Service continues to see an over-representation of ethnically diverse children. As noted in the above graph there has been a moderate increase in Asian children entering the Service and whilst reductions for all other groups the over-representation of black and mixed children remains a challenge for the partnership.

**A breakdown of interventions:**

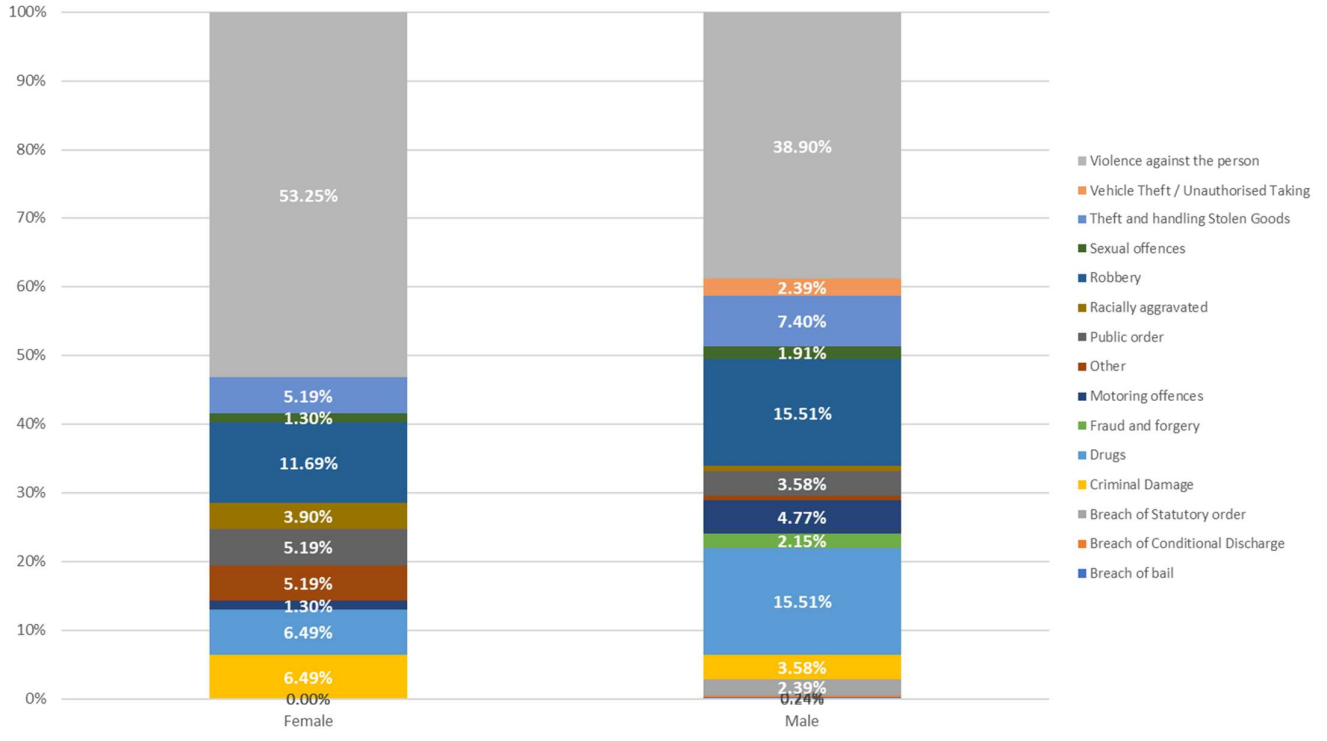
Intervention Type	Female	Male	Grand Total
Pre-Sentence Report	1	45	46
Bail	0	30	30
Remand	0	23	23
Voluntary	2	20	22
Community Resolution	0	7	7
Diversion	10	26	36
Caution	16	44	60
Referral Order	25	103	128
Youth Rehabilitation	1	44	45
Custody	0	16	16
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>413</b>

\*The numbers above do not account for preventative work undertaken by the Service.

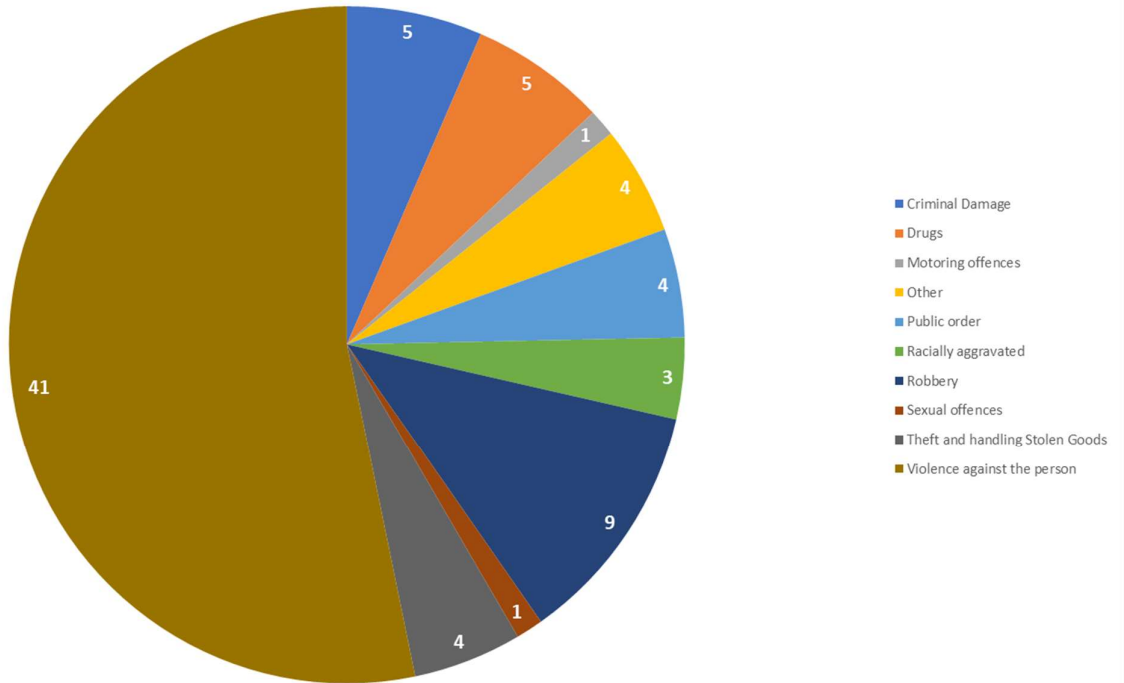
Analysing intervention data there are clear differences between females and males with females equating to 13.28% of the overall intervention delivery, and all custody work (inclusive of remands) being male. Many of the interventions delivered to females were done so via out of court disposals or lower-level tiered sentences from Court, with more onerous community sentences being imposed on the male cohort.

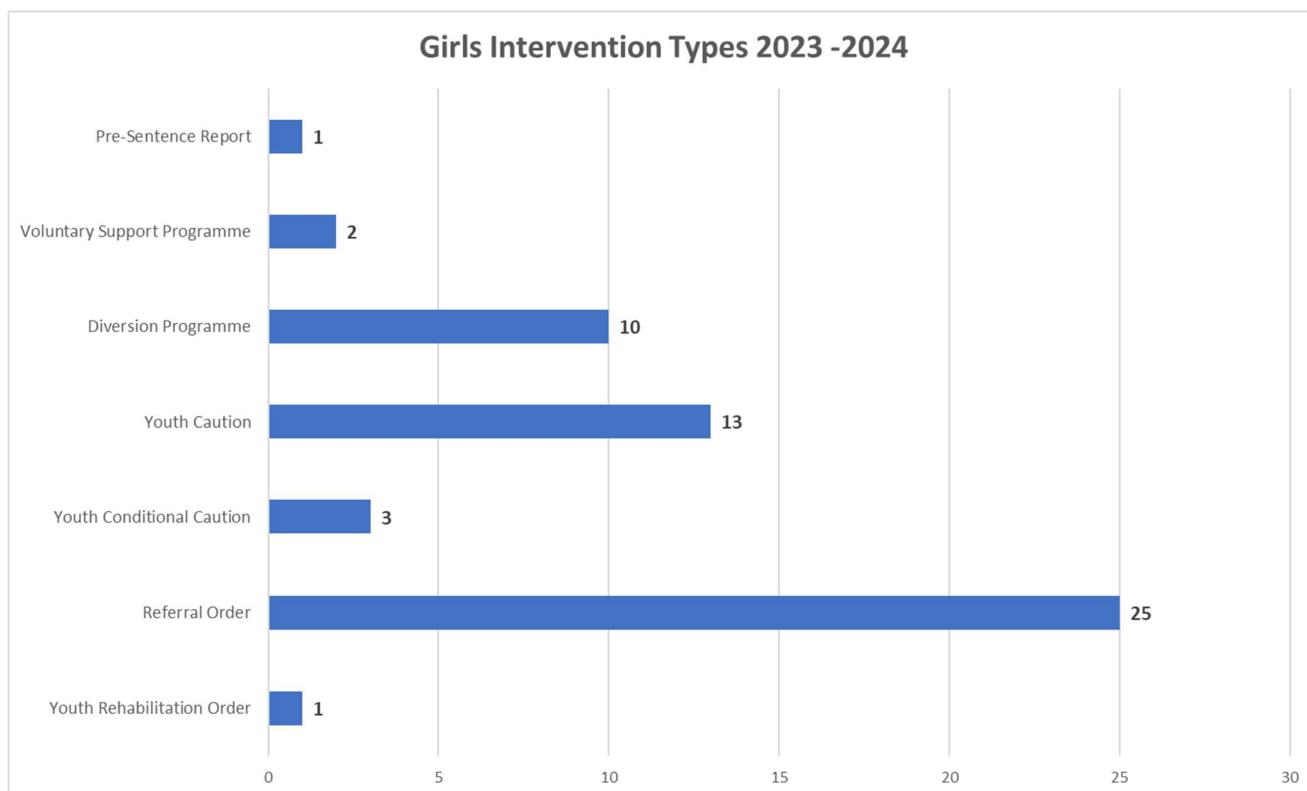


Girls vs Boys - Offence Category - 2023 - 2024



Girls - Offence Category - 2023 - 2024





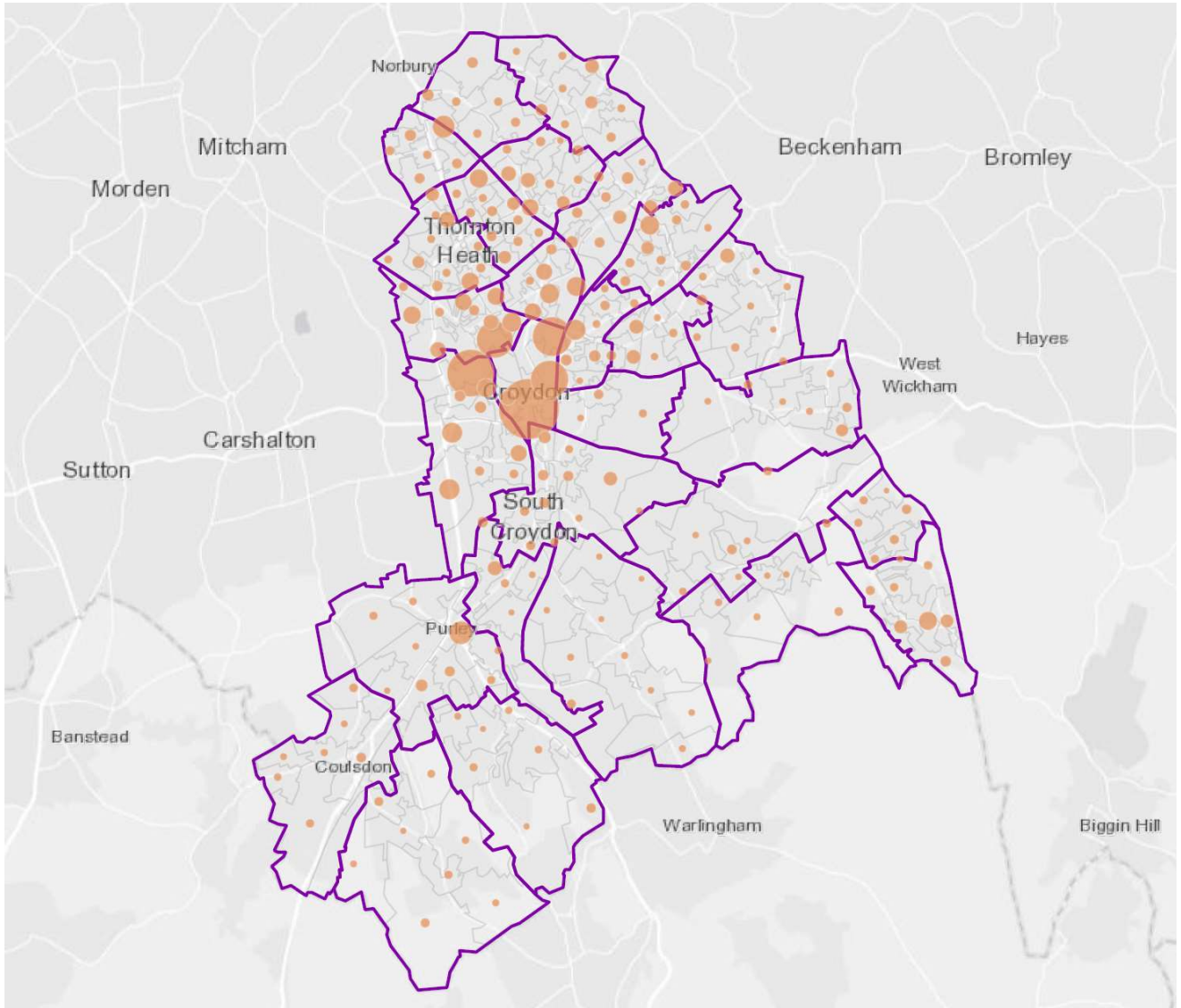
Many of the children open to Croydon Youth Justice are also known to Croydon Social Care and are in receipt of some form of intervention linked to safeguarding. Detailed below is a table that compares 2022/23 to 2023/24. The data shows that children open to the Service subject to Child Protection plans remains roughly the same, with a slight increase for Children Looked After, with a reduction in Child In Need, which does not corroborate with the departmental increase seen. To note the table below does not include Children placed in borough by other Local Authorities, who are under the supervision of Croydon Youth Justice via care-taking arrangements. During the year of 2023/24 63 children worked with were deemed as 'other local authorities', this being a reduction from the previous year where the service worked with 69 children on behalf of other local authorities who had placed children within the borough.

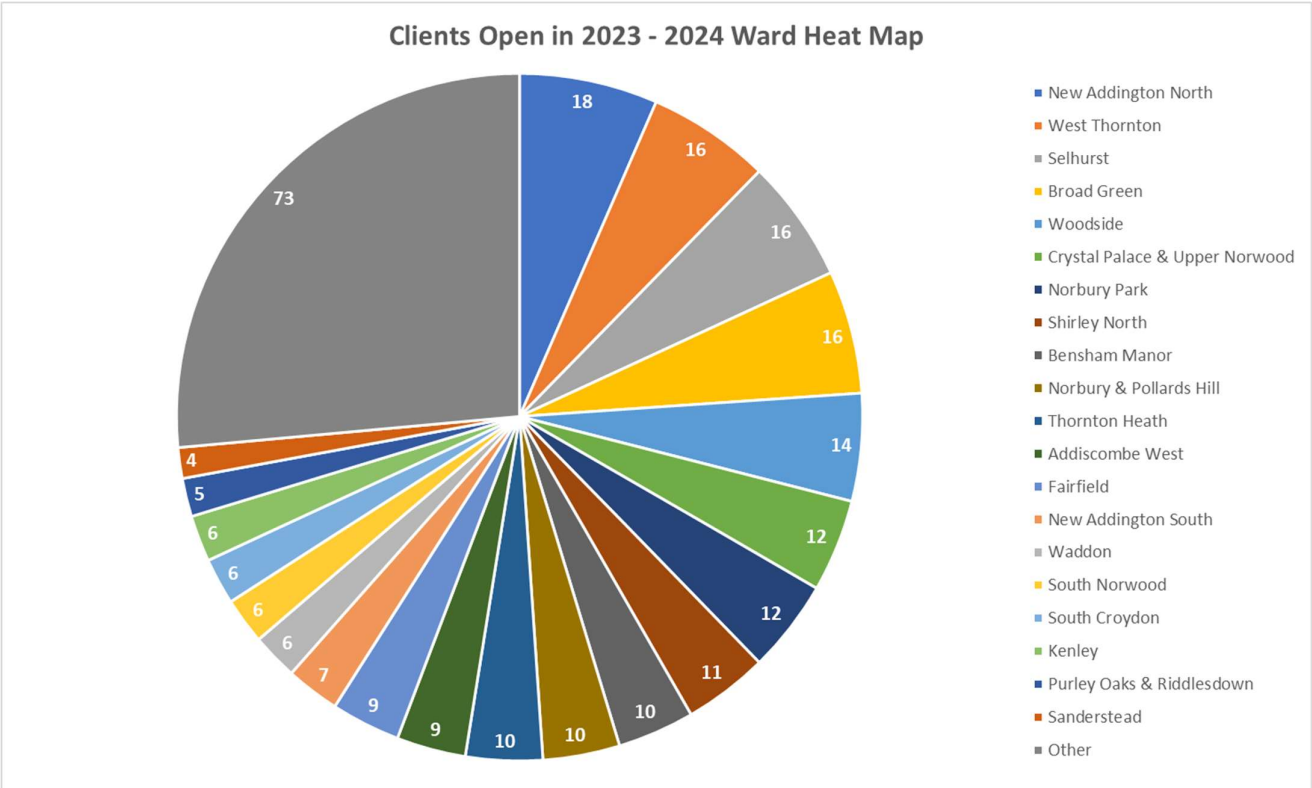
Intervention Type	2022 – 2023			2023 - 2024		
	Child In Need	Child Protection	Croydon Looked After	Child In Need	Child Protection	Croydon Looked After
<b>Pre-Sentence Report</b>	11	9	11	11	10	15
<b>Bail</b>	6	7	8	5	6	8
<b>Remand</b>	6	7	14	8	4	16
<b>Voluntary</b>	8	7	2	7	5	2
<b>Community Resolution</b>				1		1
<b>Diversion</b>	10	7	10	5	6	4
<b>Caution</b>	14	8	8	12	11	6



<b>Referral Order</b>	31	18	27	24	20	29
<b>Youth Rehabilitation</b>	13	9	10	9	10	14
<b>Custody</b>	3	3	9	4	3	10
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>105</b>

Detailed below is a map of the borough illustrating where criminal activity has occurred. Using the map activity appears more concentrated around the Town Centre and West Croydon, and north of the borough with some hotspots emerging in the South of the borough including wards such as Purley and New Addington.





\*To note other is compiled of multiple wards where 1-2 children may reside.

The above chart breaks down the cohort and their residence within the borough. The 2023/24 data has differed from previous years showing 18 children from the ward of New Addington North. Contextualising this change is difficult but has been responded to with locality work, particularly with organisations such as Play Place, based in this area. Higher numbers of children continue to reside in the northern part of the borough.

## **Vision -**

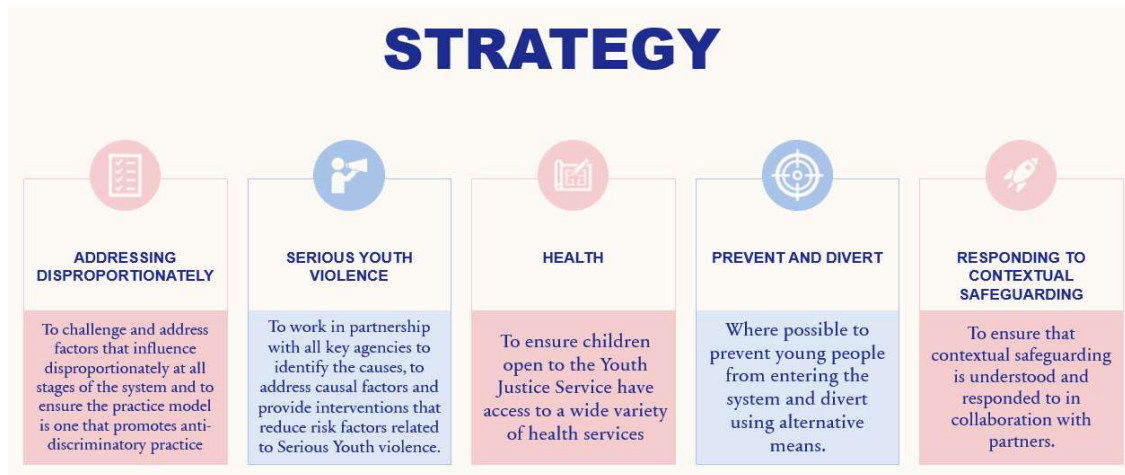
Croydon Youth Justice Service is a 'Child First' service. The service vision is very clear that children open to the Service will be treated respectfully and as individuals, understanding the complexity surrounding why children enter the Criminal Justice System. The vision accounts for personal need, diversity and ensuring the voice of the child is heard and at the forefront of the work the service undertakes. The vision also maintains an expectation that the Service will work in a trauma informed way, in recognition that many children arrive in the system having been subjected to adverse childhood experiences.

The vision requires a diverse workforce representative of the community it serves, a workforce whose knowledge and expertise are underpinned by evidence-based practice (what works?) and practice is sophisticated in securing positive outcomes for children. The vision requires use of practice methods such as trauma-informed practice (understanding how trauma shapes behaviour) and a relational approach that is non-judgemental and fosters anti-discriminatory practice.

The vision also recognises that many of the victims known to the service are also children and, in many instances, children open to the service have experienced victimisation. The vision looks to ensure victim(s) voices are also heard and advocated for. The framework ensures that Restorative Justice principles are applied, and the workforce understands its dual role and where possible protects with partners those at risk. The service strives to be victim-centric in its thinking and delivery.

## **Strategy -**

The overall strategy is summarised below and will be expanded upon throughout the plan.



## 2. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements

The Youth Justice Service structurally sits within the Local Authorities division of Children's Social Care. In 2023/24 the Youth Justice Service was moved to the departments newly created 'Specialist Services' alongside the specialist Adolescent Social Care Team also known as Young Croydon (inclusive of Missing Children & Edge of Care), Fostering and Children with Disabilities.

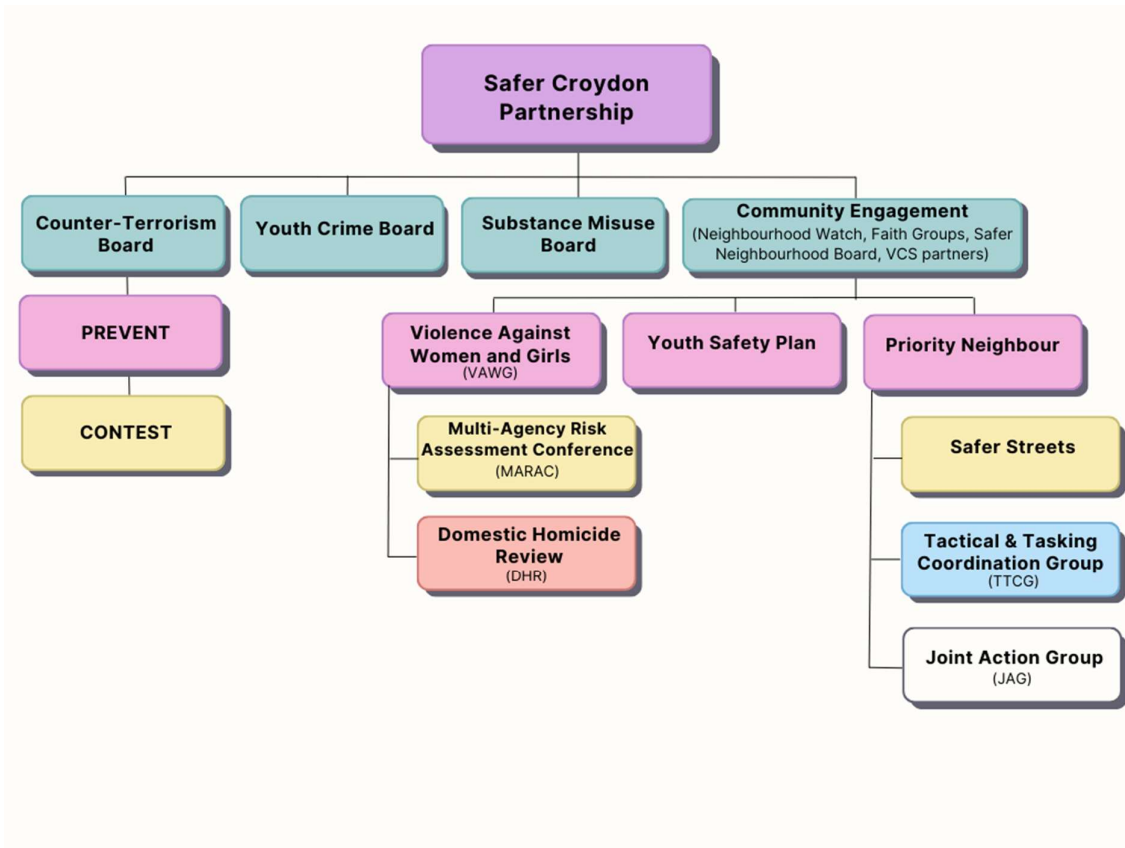
The Youth Justice Service Manager reports to the Head of Specialist Services who reports to the Director of Children's Social Care.

Strategically the Youth Justice Service is governed by what is known as the Youth Crime Board, a statutory board, the membership made up of Senior representatives from partners including: Health, Education, Social Care, Police, Housing, Probation, Community Safety, Voluntary Community Sector, Court, Commissioning. The Board is chaired by the Corporate Director for Children, Young People & Education. The overall responsibility of the Board is to ensure that all partners are working in collaboration to reduce and prevent offending behaviour of children and the Youth Justice Service is delivering on all key statutory functions and priorities as identified within the annual Youth Justice Plan. Board members must ensure they understand the operational delivery of the Youth Justice Service and contribute to this delivery in line with the Service's vision of promoting positive outcomes for children. The Board is held quarterly, with each meeting looking at Service performance using the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as a measure. The Board also looks at key issues and invites partners and Youth Justice Staff to present on practice that supports positive outcomes for children. The Board ensures that the characteristics of children known to the service are understood – including gender, age, education status, where children live, which schools they attend and information on children subject to Child In Need Plans, Child Protection Plan, Children who are Looked After, Children placed in the borough of Croydon by other Local Authorities subject to Youth Justice, Children open to the National Referral Mechanism (children identified as being exploited). The Board is required to consider patterns, themes, and data. **Appendix 3 – Youth Crime Board Terms of Reference**

A further focus for the Board is addressing the overrepresentation of young black males predominately between the ages of 15-17 and the percentage of children open to the Service who are looked after. The multi-agency make-up of the Board looks at ways over-representation can be challenged and collectively addressed. This will be explored further and in more detail within the plan as this is a key area of work for the Youth Justice Service and Partners. **Appendix 4 Disproportionately Action Plan.**

To summarise the Board must ensure that it has effective oversight of the Youth Justice Service for children in Croydon, that its delivery contributes to multi-agency strategies including the safeguarding of children.

The Youth Justice Board is one of several Boards that feeds into the Safer Croydon Partnership Board – full structure detailed below.



**3. Update on the previous year (progress on priorities, performance over the previous year, risks, and issues).**

Priorities 2023/24	Actions completed	Actions not completed.
<p><b>Addressing overrepresentation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-revised disproportionately action plan to ensure all aspects of YJS operational delivery is considering the challenge of addressing overrepresentation.</li> <li>-continued partnership work with the community sector and programmes such as My Endz promoting positive re-integration into the community children reside.</li> <li>-delivery of positive male group. Looking at male self-image and identity and encouragement of future aspirations.</li> <li>-delivery of bespoke girls' group.</li> <li>-delivery of Stop and Search programme.</li> <li>-advocacy of children, diverting children away from Court, creation of bail packages to ensure the over-representation of black and mixed heritage males is considered.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-further work required acknowledging the high percentage of Children Looked After within the cohort.</li> <li>-continued representation of young black males seen in data. Further exploration required.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Prevent and Respond to Serious Youth Violence (SYV)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-delivery of locality risk management strategies jointly with partners.</li> <li>-knowledge and understanding the Local Authorities Youth Safety Plan</li> <li>-oversight and risk management of children known to the Service for SYV in addition to appropriate use of external controls</li> <li>-enhance factors for desistance by offering bespoke individualistic interventions including specialist services who commit SYV.</li> <li>-Where a child is open to Social Care partaking in joint supervision.</li> <li>-Involvement in delivery of local Pupil Referral Unit Serious Youth Violence Taskforce Group.</li> <li>-Continued joint work with the Serious Youth Violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-to evaluate prevention work in this area.</li> <li>- to evaluate programmes to reduce SYV including work with the community sector.</li> </ul>

	Unit and Robbery Squad (MET Police). Co-location.	
<b>Contribute as part of wider partnership tackling domestic abuse.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-All staff have attended training on processes related to Domestic Abuse (including MARAC)</li> <li>-Presentation offered to Team by Family Justice Centre.</li> <li>-Increase use of consultation with the Family Justice Centre.</li> <li>-referrals into specialist programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-ongoing development within partnership</li> <li>-training on sexual violence</li> </ul>
<b>Youth Justice Health Offer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Recruited into Speech and Language vacancy</li> <li>-Physical Health Nurse in post</li> <li>-All staff are trained in both the assessment and intervention of AIM (tools to work with children who sexually harm)</li> <li>-Continued delivery of the Your Choice Programme jointly with the Local Authorities Clinical Team.</li> <li>-Recruited into Mental Health Practitioner Post.</li> <li>-continued partnership work with local counselling services</li> <li>-Continued offer of clinical consultation for staff</li> <li>-Forensic CAMHS attendance at Youth Justice Risk Management Panel.</li> <li>Delivery of Sexual Health Clinic at YJS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Evolve newly appointment mental health post.</li> <li>-Bring counselling services closer into the service.</li> <li>-Adapt and evolve partnership work with CAMHS.</li> </ul>
<b>Prevent and divert</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Embedded delivery of Engage Project (Youth Work in local Police custody suite)</li> <li>-Continued delivery of Turnaround Project offering voluntary interventions for children granted a Community Resolution (on the spot caution) and released under investigation.</li> <li>-Continued work with partners to prevent and divert from system including joint work with MASH/Early Help/Police/Voluntary community Sector.</li> <li>-Continued reduction in first time entrant numbers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Evaluation of projects and effectiveness.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Responding to contextual safeguarding</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Home Office training delivered to all YJS Managers on National Referral Mechanism (NRM)</li> <li>-continued representation by YJS at NRM Panel.</li> <li>-All staff trained on contextual safeguarding and extra familial harm.</li> <li>-YJS representation at Complex Adolescence Panel (MACE).</li> <li>-continued work with Rescue and Response (specialist work in county-lines)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ensuring NRM data is understood by Youth Justice Service</li> <li>-Improve mapping and understanding of contextual safeguarding within cohort. This to also include joint work with Probation &amp; Police.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reduce the number of children deemed NEET (Not in Education or Employment/Training)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Post 16 Worker in post (MOPAC funded)</li> <li>-Completed final year of Skill Mill Employability Programme.</li> <li>-Continued joint work with SEN Team and Post 16 Participation Team to ensure briefed on local education/employment provisions</li> <li>-Ensuring provisions and opportunities made known are regularly circulated to wider team</li> <li>-Building relationships with local colleges</li> <li>-Obtained Lead Marker working with Children with SEN needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Continue to search for further education providers and employment opportunities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Promote a victim centric service</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Input from Victim Worker into discussions on children open to Service to ensure victims wishes heard.</li> <li>-All staff had victim objective incorporated into appraisal</li> <li>-Delivery of VRAP (Victim Awareness programme)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Refresher Restorative Justice training overdue.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resettlement Offer</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue to hold YJS resettlement forum to discuss the release of children. Meeting attended with partners including education and SEN Team.</li> <li>-Creation of Released on Temporary Licence Policy to ensure children are provided with opportunities before release date.</li> <li>-Presentation to Board detailing resettlement challenges particularly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Embed Resettlement evaluation process to hear from children who have experienced resettlement planning and delivery.</li> </ul>



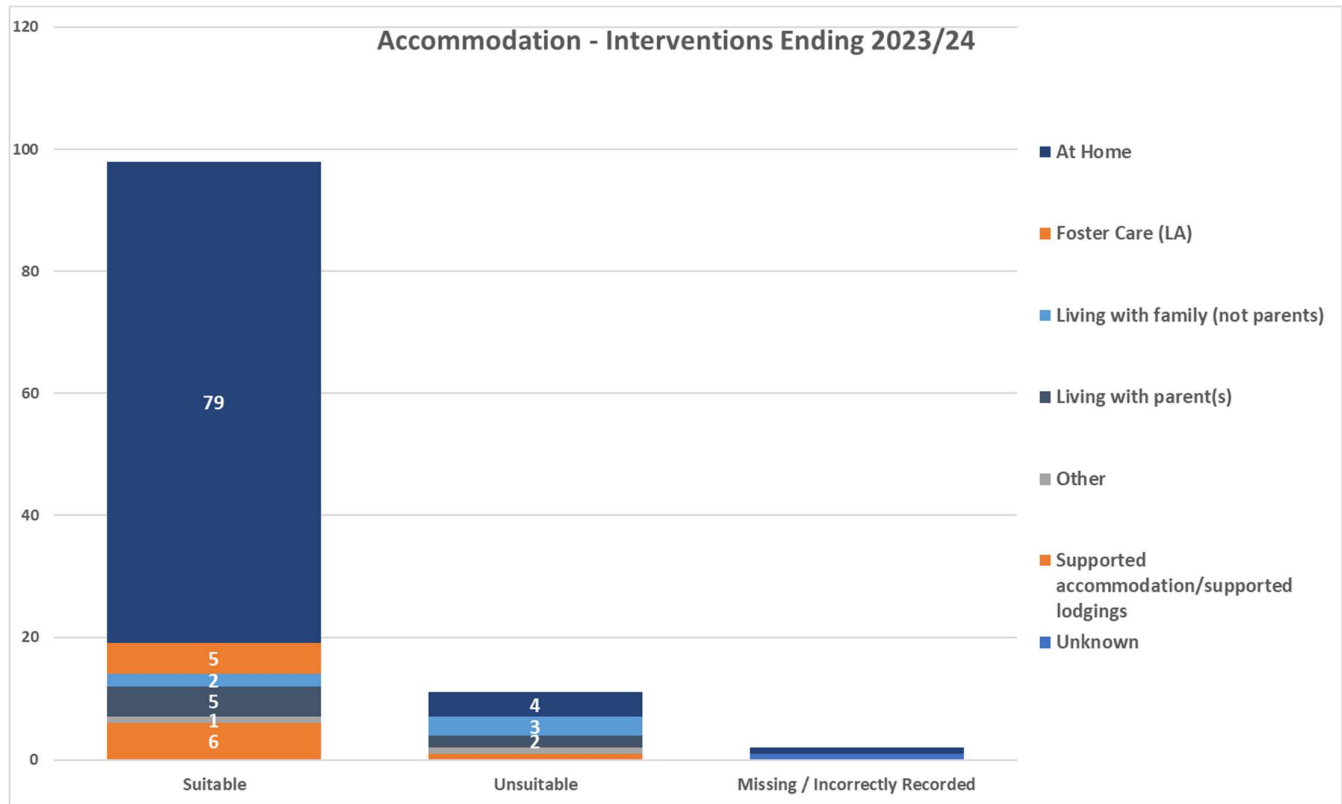
	relating to placements and transition into Probation. -Ensure consideration of health and education has been met for those coming out to the community requiring services.	
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Youth Justice Services (nationally) are measured by 14 key performance Indicators (KPI), 10 of which came into effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2023. Each Youth Justice Service is required to submit data to the Youth Justice Board on a quarterly basis. The key performance indicators include:

1. Suitable accommodation
2. Education, training and employment
3. Specialist educational needs and disabilities/additional learning needs
4. Mental Health and emotional wellbeing
5. Substance misuse
6. Out of Court disposals
7. Links to wider services
8. Management Board attendance
9. Victims
10. Serious youth violence
11. Binary -Re-offending
12. Frequency of re-offending
13. First time entrants
14. Use of custody.

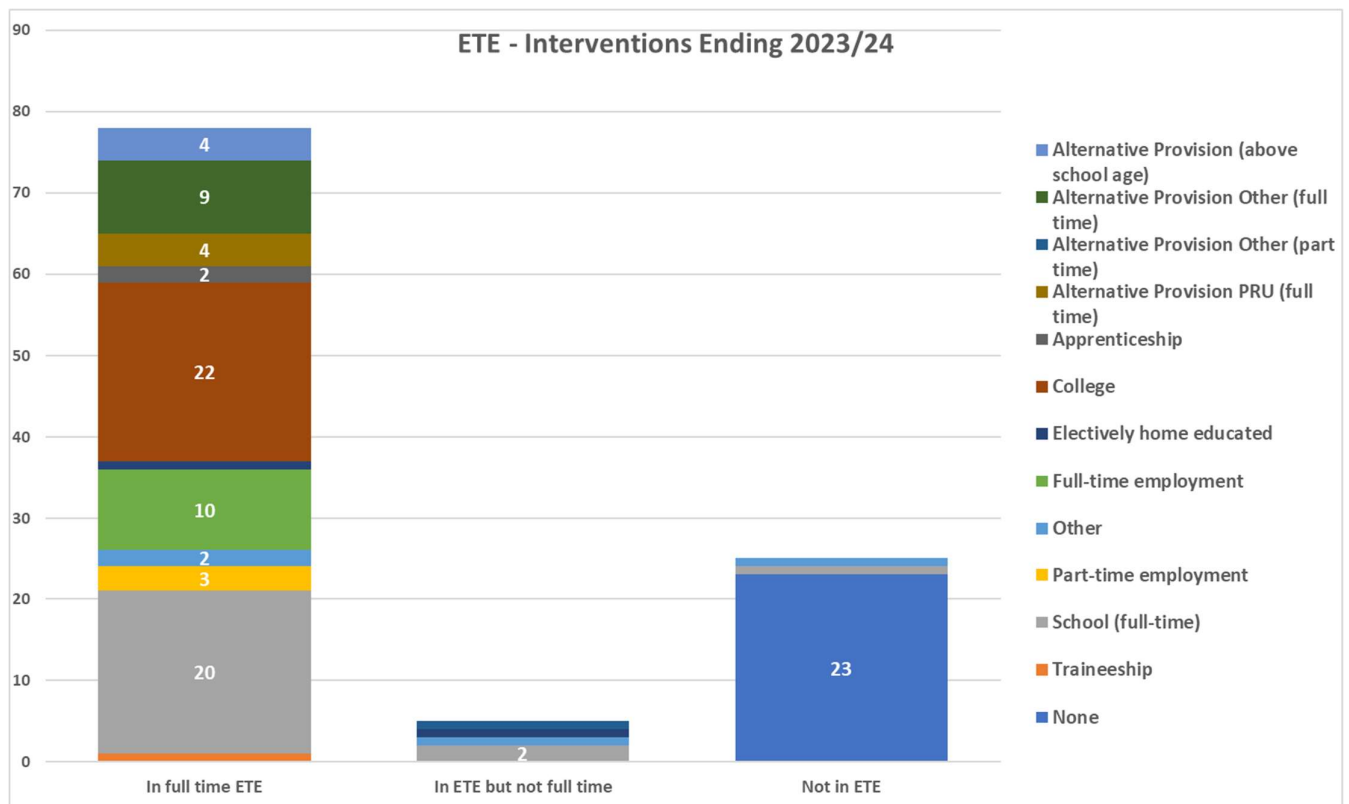
Detailed below are graphs/data related to 2023/24 performance using the above KPIs.

### Accommodation 2023/24 –

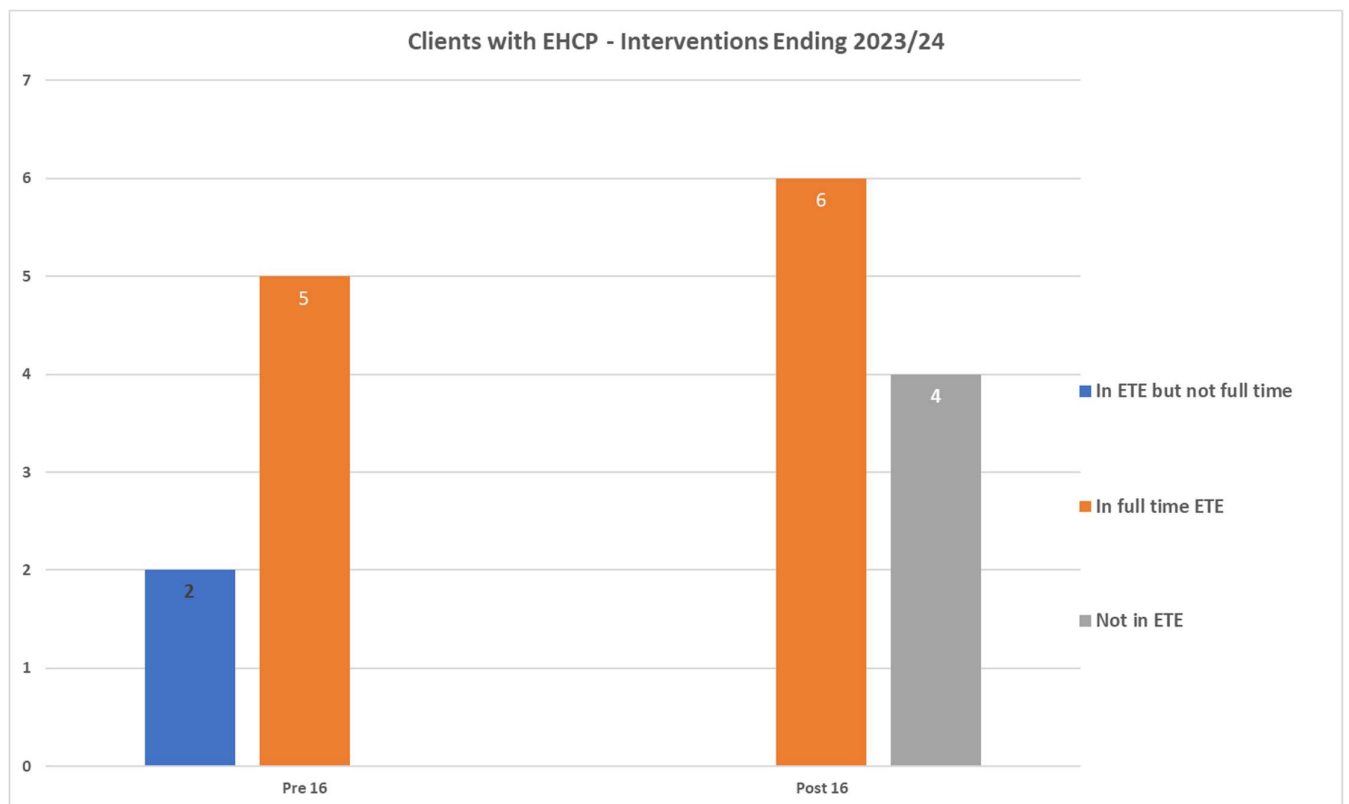


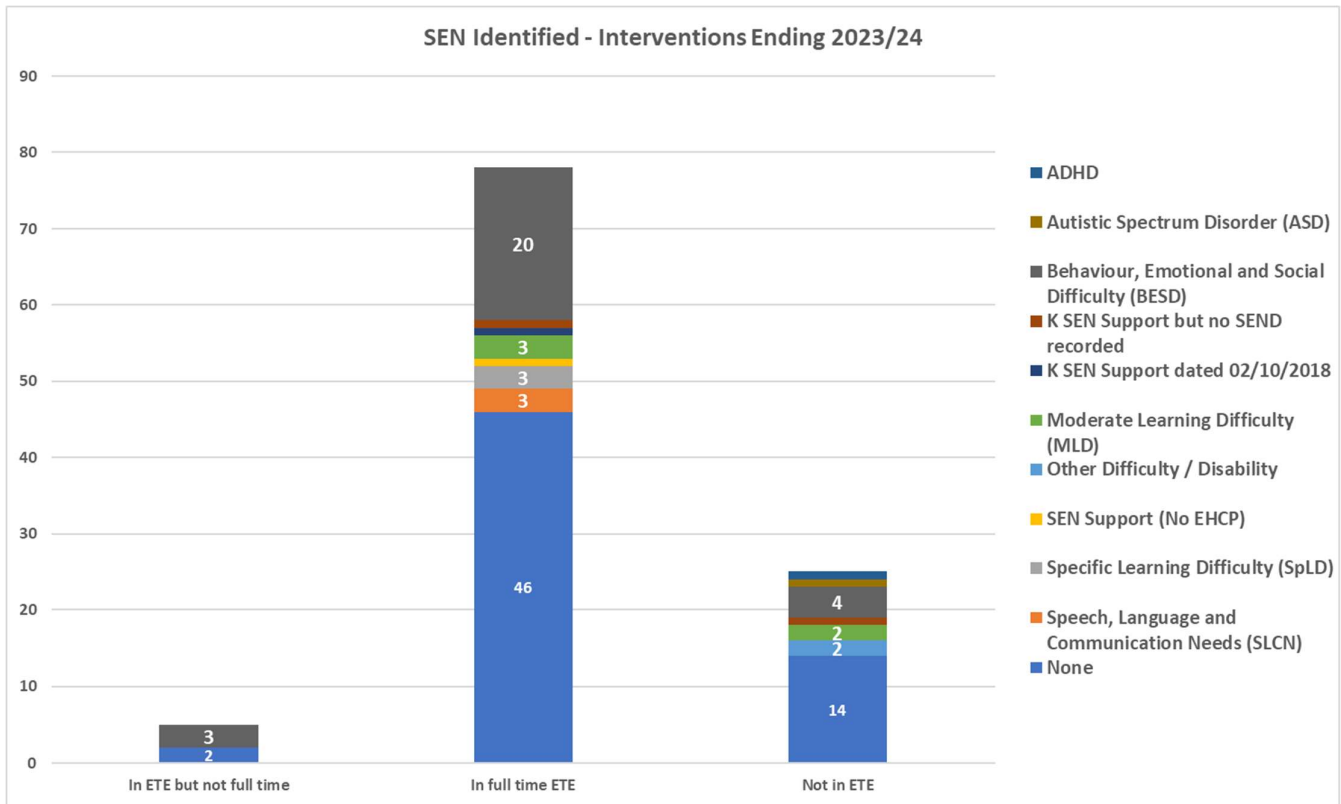
Whilst generally children known to the Service were in suitable accommodation during 2023/24, there were a variety of reasons a small number of children had been deemed as having 'unsuitable' accommodation. Often overcrowding, instability, family tensions and/or family criminality were identified. In all instances the Youth Justice Service had made attempts to improve accommodation suitability including joint work with Children's Social Care and Housing.

## Education, training, and employment data 2023/24 –



## Children with EHCP 2023/24 -



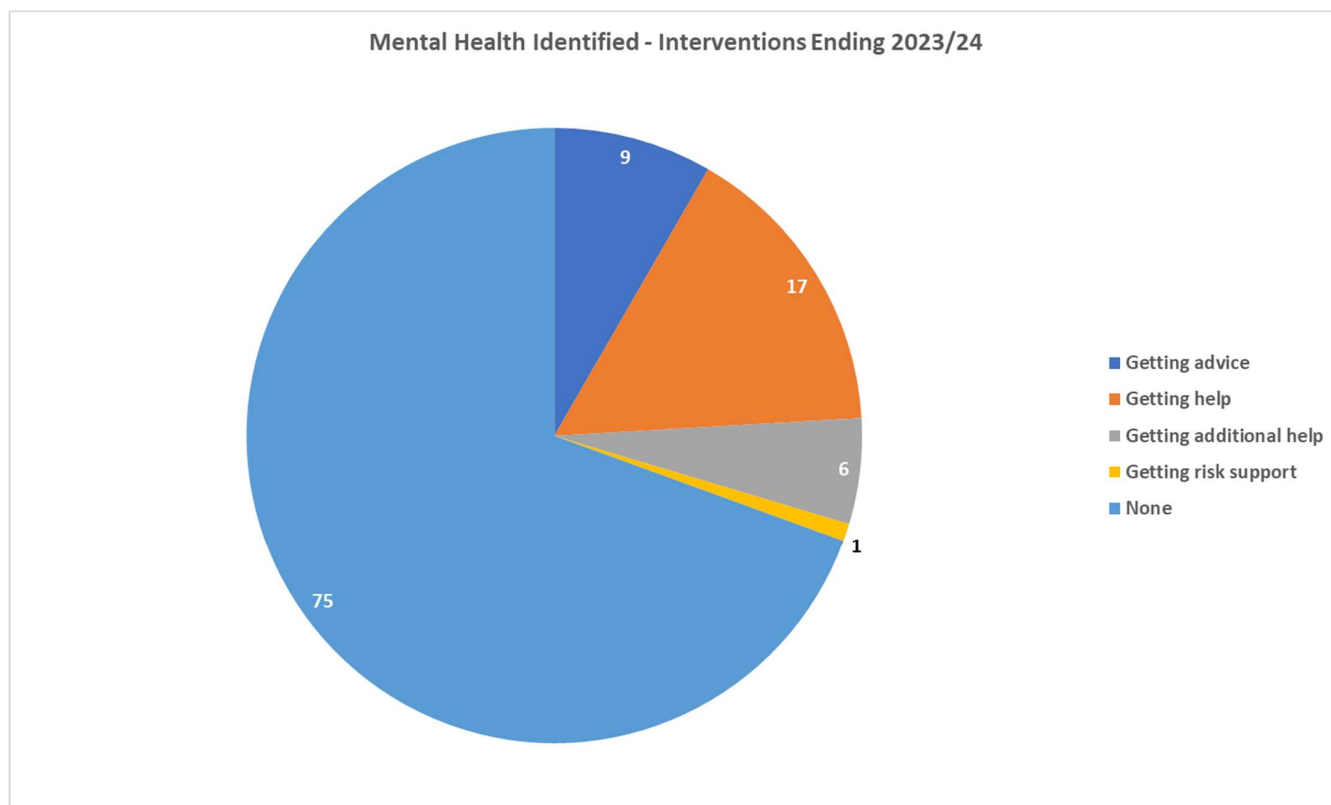


Each child entering the Youth Justice Service has their education status checked and enquiries are made with the SEN Team to ensure there is full knowledge of Educational Health & Care Plans and specific needs. Education work is led by an Education Manager who supervises the Post 16 worker and the Speech and Language Therapist. Any child who is not attending school, not enrolled in school or is 16 and not in further education or employment is allocated to the Education Team. Every child entering the Youth Justice Service is screened for speech and language needs. Where needs are identified these are actioned, including liaison with Schools, SEN Teams and CAMHS. Whilst education data is not static, improvements have been made particularly securing further education and employment for those who are aged 16 and above. A number of challenges remain including child readiness to enter into further education or employment and school refusers for children who are statutory school age. Education will be explored in further detail within the plan.

### Mental Health and emotional wellbeing 2023/24 –

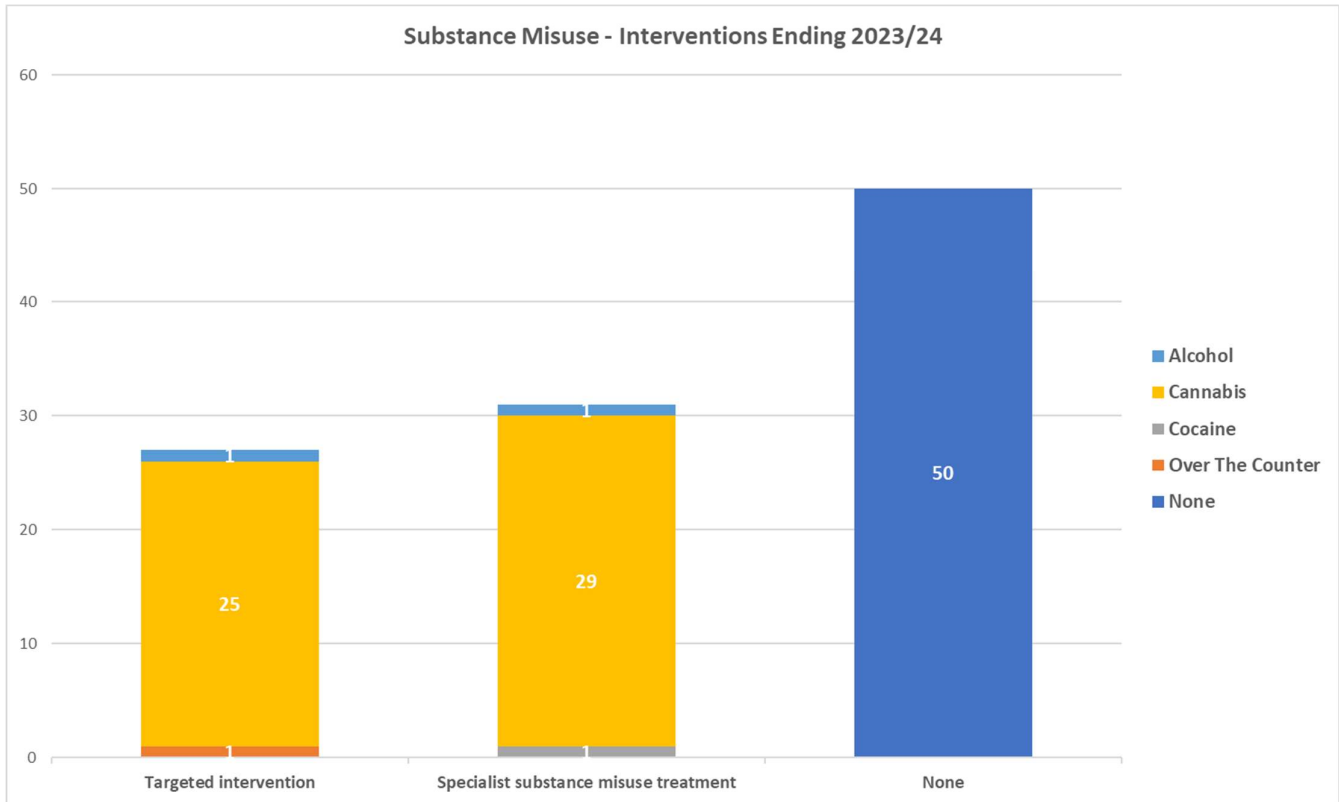
Referrals to Children Adolescent Mental Health Services along with lower tier referrals to local Counselling services are made by Croydon Youth Justice Service. In many instances children are simply not ready to engage with therapeutic interventions and the Service will encourage and support children as they consider engaging with therapy. Staff are trained in mental health first aid and the Service delivers 'Your Choice' a cognitive behavioural programme which provides a form of containment for children not yet ready to engage in more structured forms of therapy. The Service, inclusive of Manager's, are also trained in trauma-informed practice, promoting the ability to recognise how trauma shapes behaviours and how to engage in the delivery of interventions without unintentionally causing further trauma and igniting past trauma.

Since January 2024 the Service has had an in-house Mental Health Practitioner, who has begun to break-down some of the barriers linked to engagement. At the time of writing 'Off the Record' a local counselling provider had begun to co-locate on a weekly basis with the Service in anticipation to increase contact and reduce perceived stigma attached to accessing mental health support. Many reasons for children's resistance to engage is linked to stigma and fear of further emotional upset and/or re-traumatisation.

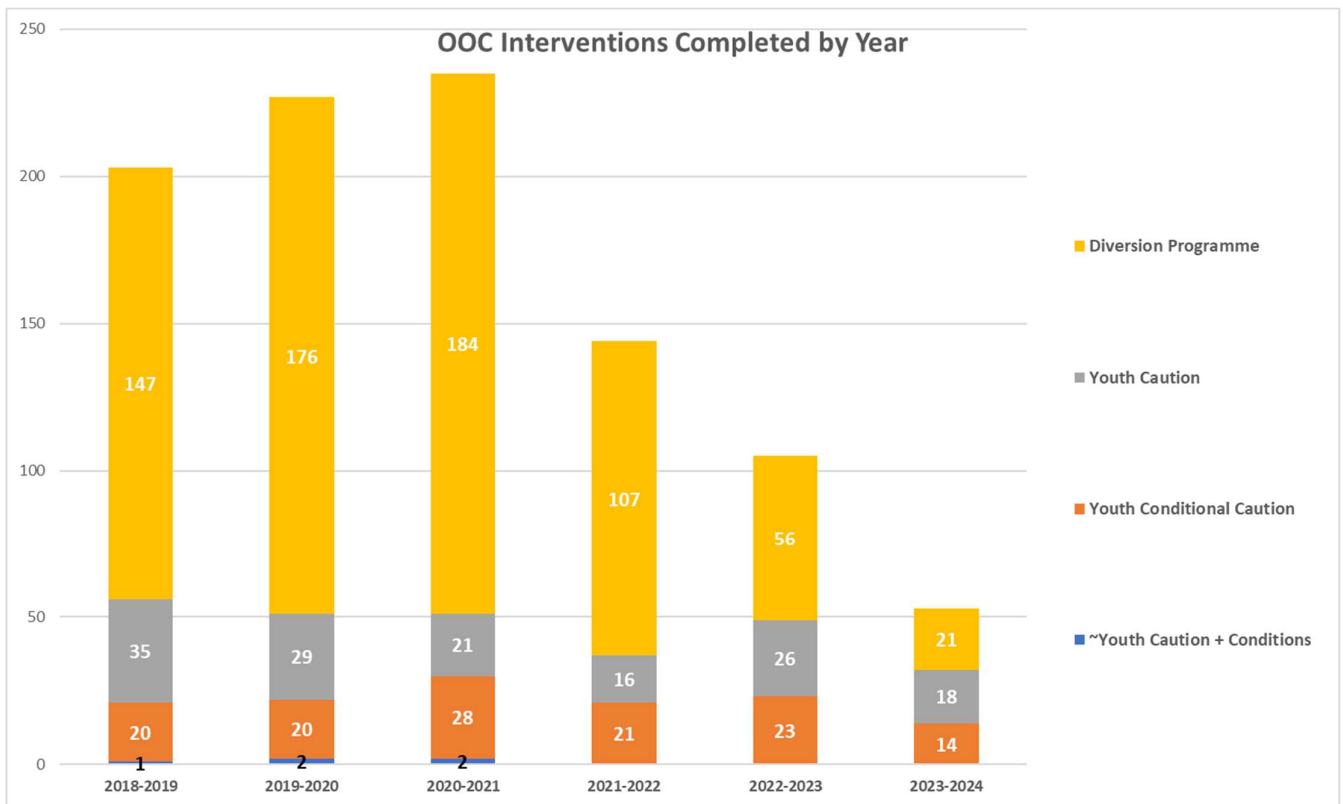
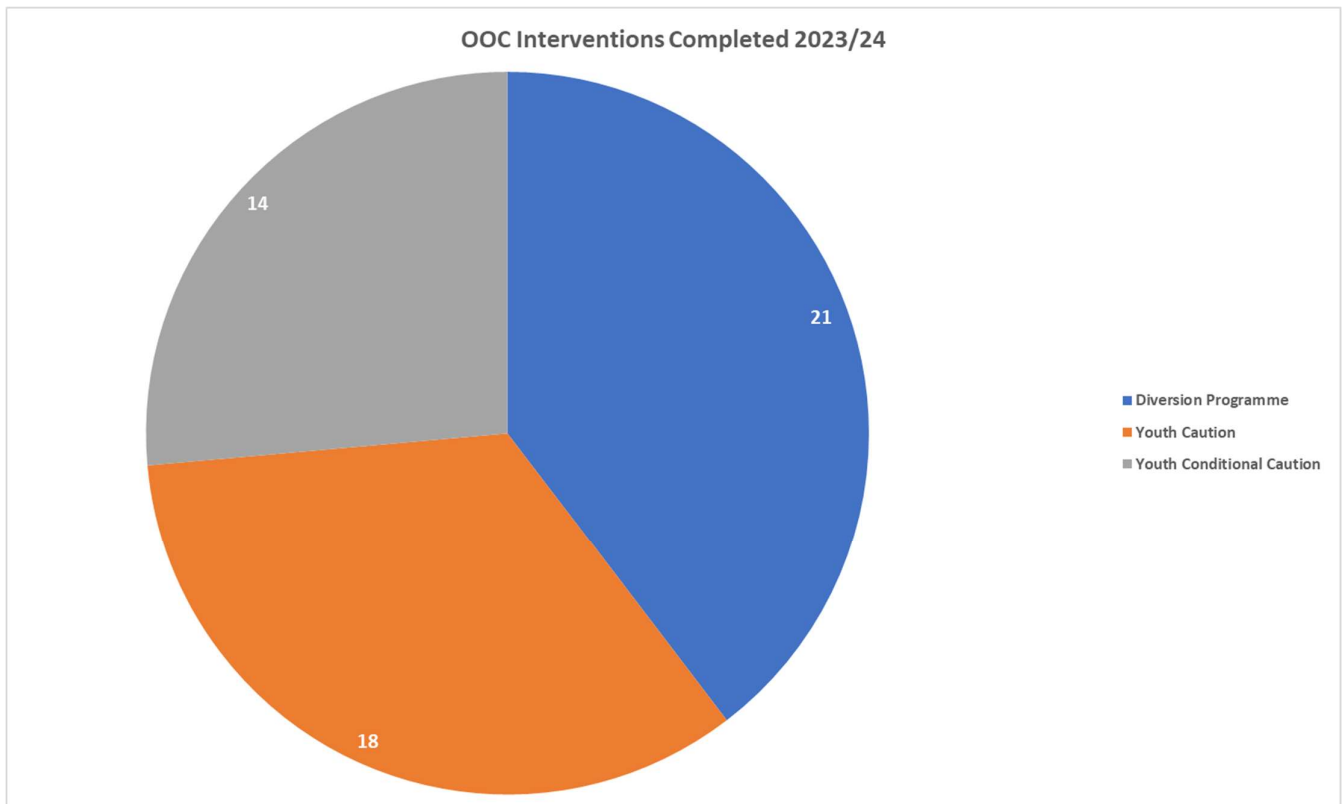


## Substance misuse 2023/24 -

Many of the substance misuse interventions are typically linked to cannabis. It is uncommon for the Service to see complex substance misuse issues with Class A substances (such as cocaine and heroin). This said, a number of children are known for drug related offences including possession with intent to supply Class A's. Alcohol misuse is also not common within the cohort but can occur. Many children will not have any substance related issues identified and some will refuse services. The Service has a designated Specialist Substance Misuse Worker post delivering interventions for children sentenced. A commissioned service called Change Grow Live works voluntarily with children on Out of Court disposals or those engaged in preventative interventions.

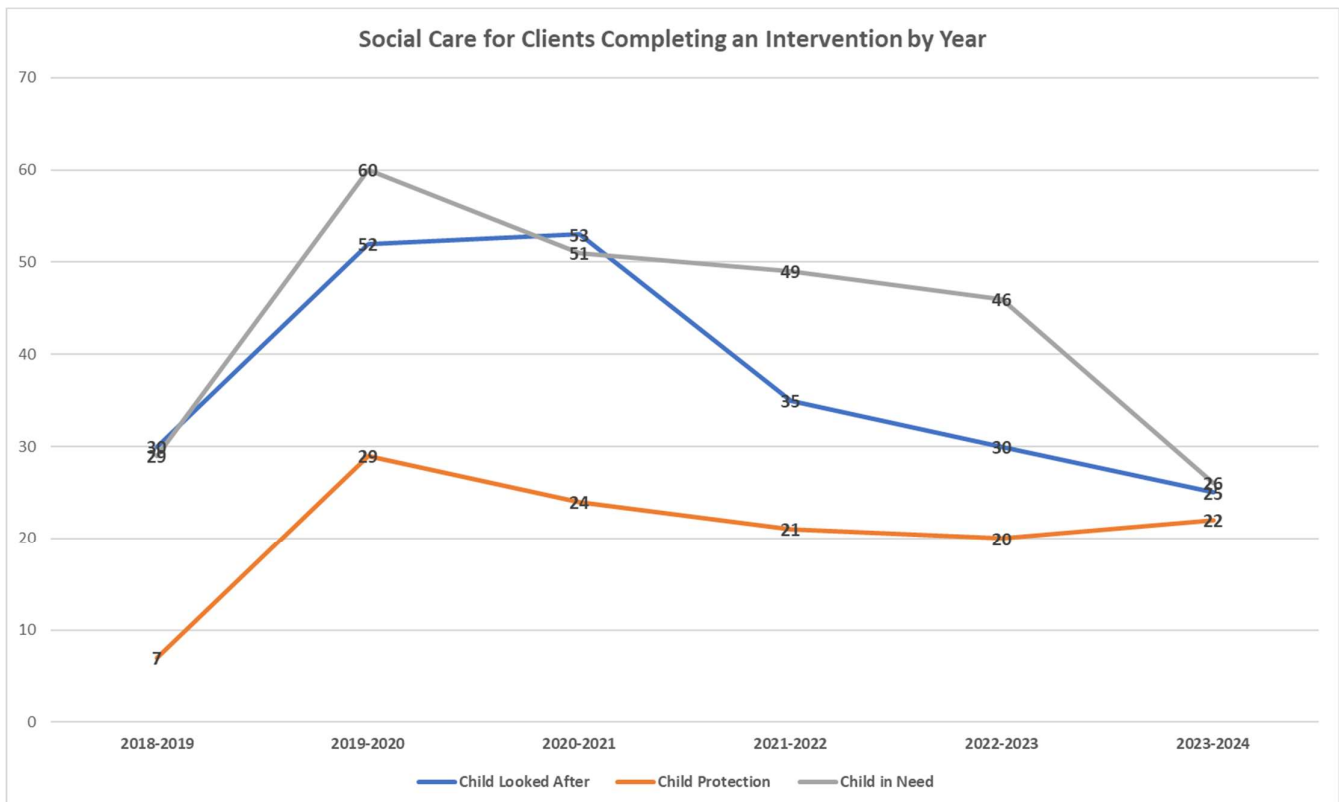


**Out of Court disposals 2023/24 –**



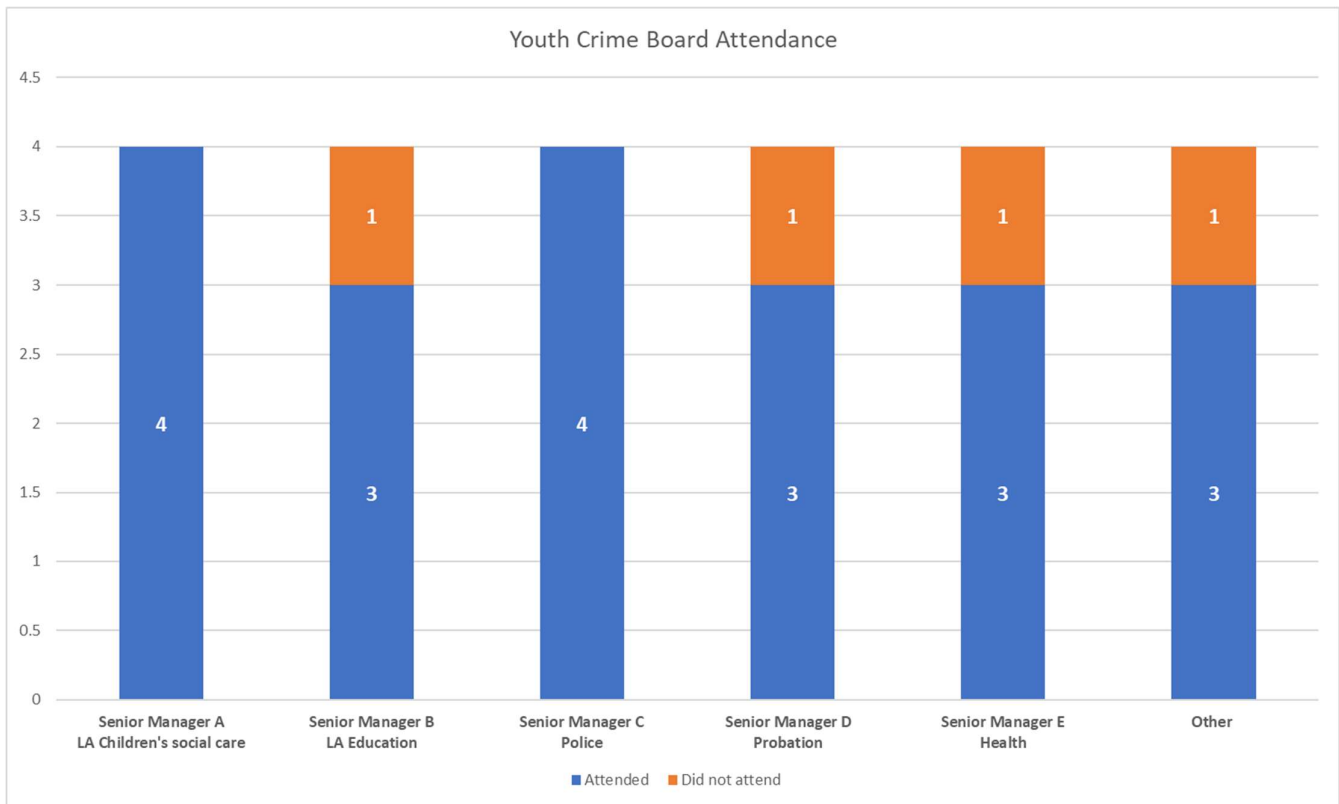
## Links to wider services (Children's Social Care) 2023/24 –

First time entrants have been reducing since 2019 nationally. There are multiple variables contributing to this reduction including changes within Policing but also the introduction to preventative programmes and a heavy emphasis on diversionary offers. This equates to a shift in Youth Justice Services delivering interventions that are deemed non-statutory or Out of Court. Subsequently, with a reduction in numbers the Service has seen a reduction in children deemed 'Child in Need' and a reduction in Children Looked After. However, children with an active Child Protection Plan have remained at similar levels. One conclusion from this is that the Service remains to see some of the most vulnerable children in the borough entering the Youth Justice system. The data below could also lead to the presumption that vulnerability and criminality are linked with many of the plans linked to contextual safeguarding concerns (risks outside of the home) (Criminal and Sexual Exploitation).





## Management Board attendance 2023/24 -



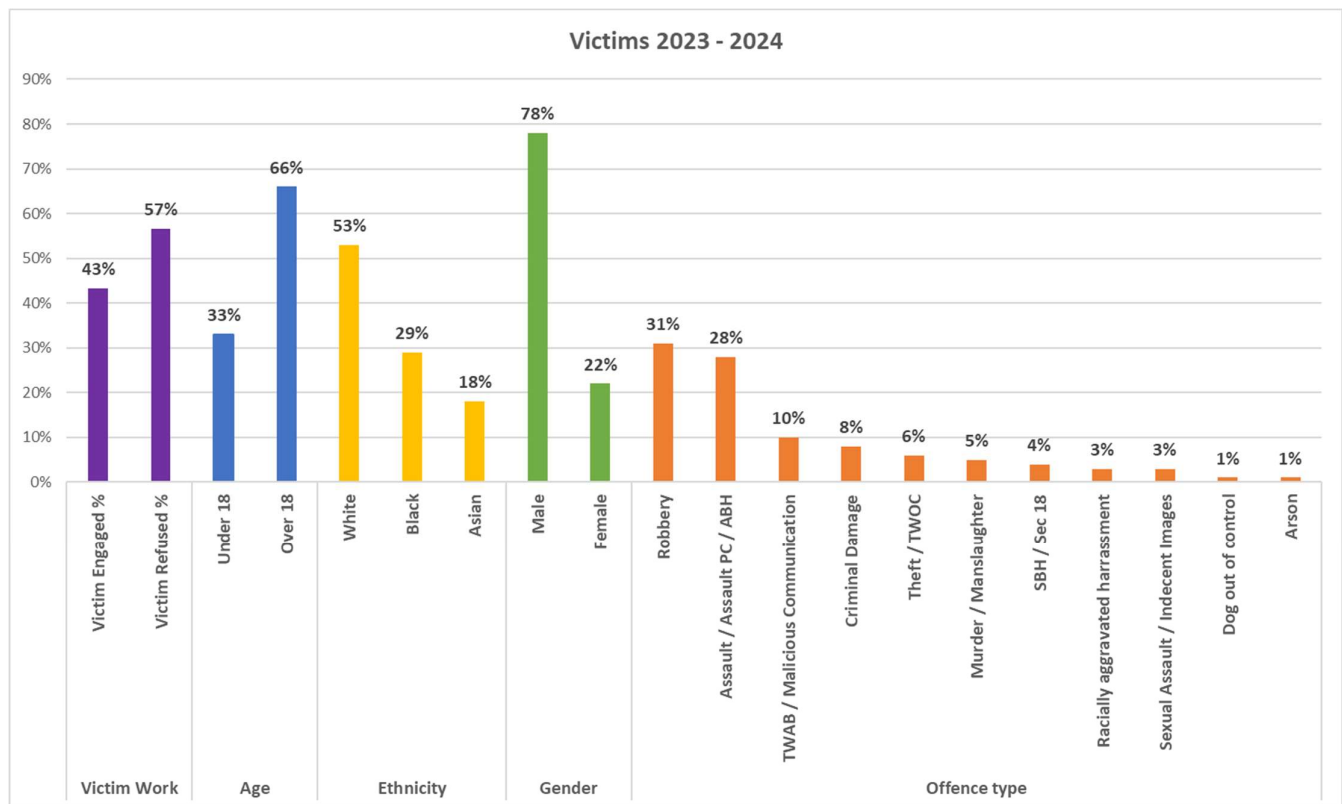
Board attendance is a now a monitored Key Performance Indicator.

## Victims 2023/24 –

Victim data is received from the Police and once consent is obtained the Restorative Justice Team will contact the individual to offer a service using a variety of restorative approaches, dependant on the victims wishes and the child(s) capacity. The data shows that in 57% of instances a service is declined. There are a variety of reasons for this including trauma related to victimisation in addition to system delays (time from arrest to charge). The data gathered from 2023/24 shows 66% of victims were over 18 with 78% being male. The largest offence type being robbery followed by other forms of violence.

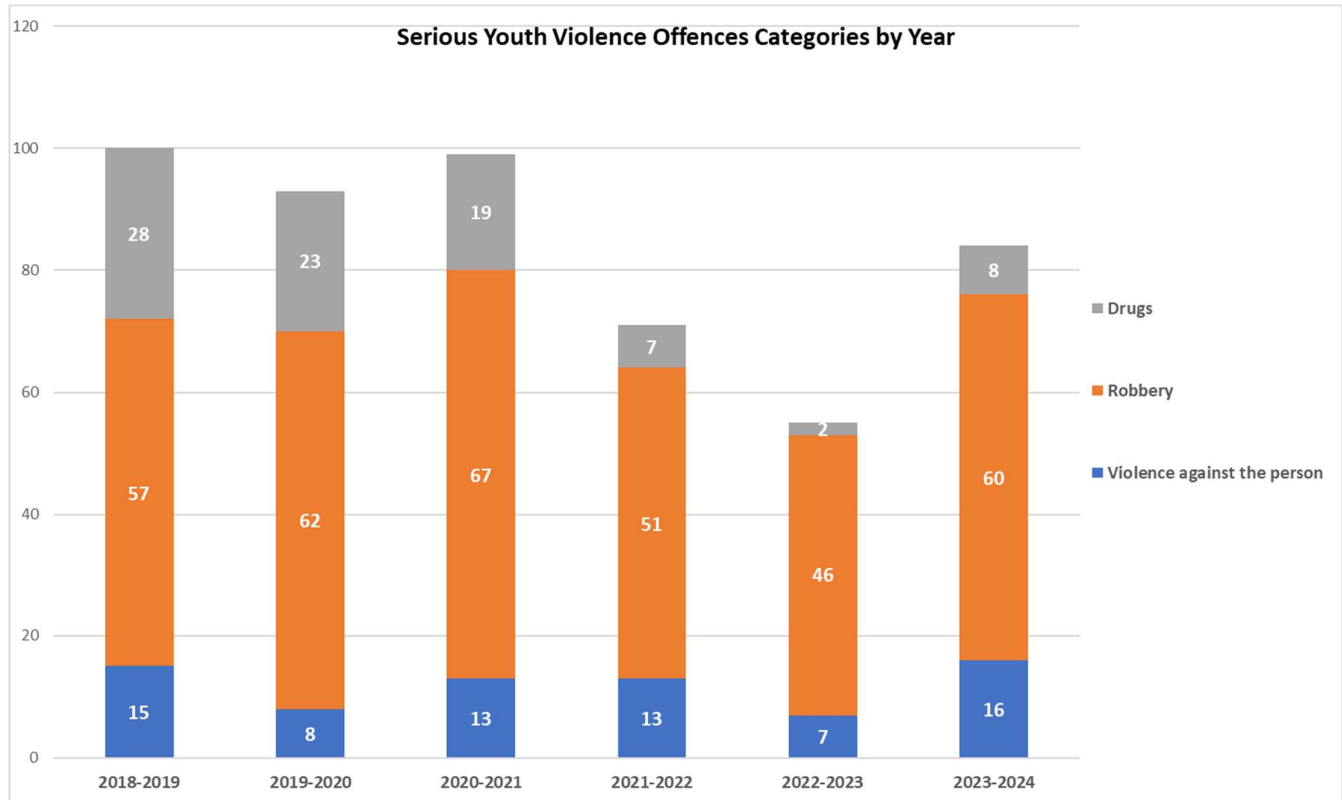
All staff within the Service are restoratively trained and able to deliver victim awareness sessions for those children unable to deliver direct restorative processes. Conversely, the Service works closely with the MET Police in various capacities and given the number of robberies reported formed closer working relations with the robbery squad. In practice this has led to weekly co-location and attendance at MET lead meetings to ensure intelligence is shared in a drive to reduce robberies within the borough.

The Service works closely with the Victim Liaison Service, the responsible agency for delivery victim work, where the offence type has received 12 months custody or more.

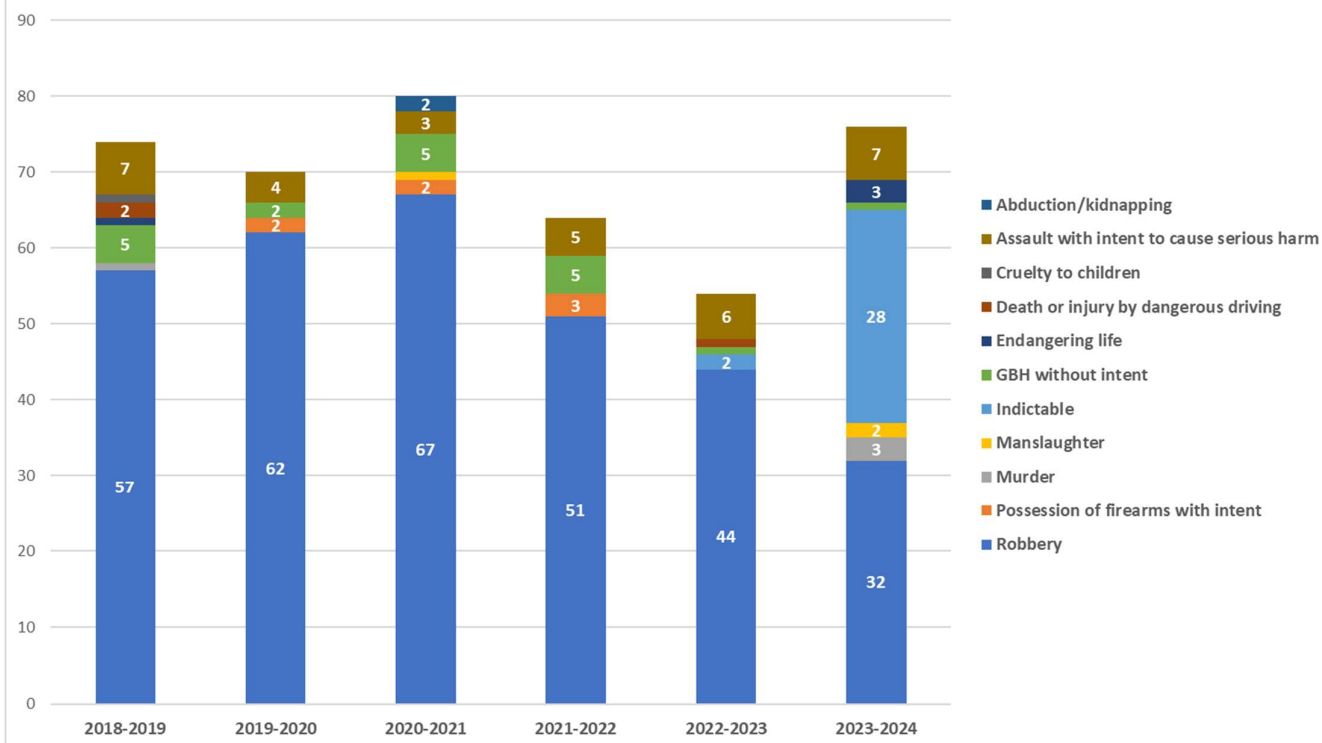


## Serious Youth Violence 2023/24 –

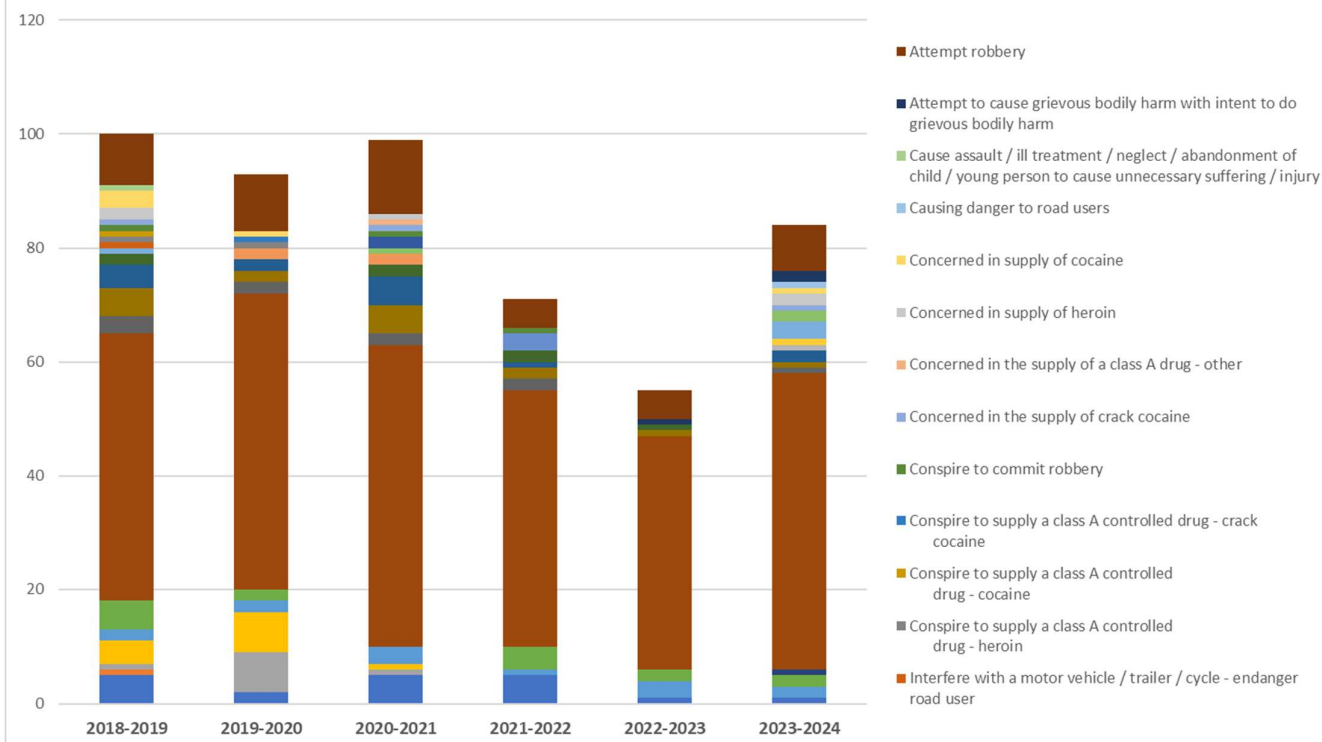
The Service continues to see a surge of weapon related and robbery offences. Serious Youth Violence therefore remains a priority for the Service and Partners. This will be expanded on in more detail within the Plan. However, the Local Authorities Youth Safety Plan provides a framework for all agencies to work together to address Serious Youth Violence meeting with the Home Office’s Serious Violence Duty, an expectation that Local Authorities have full understanding of the needs and are responsive to these needs to reduce serious youth violence. Multiagency location risk management meetings, joint work with the METs Robbery squad, Exploitation Team, Serious Youth Violence Unit, preventative projects such as Turnaround and Engage, design and delivery of community-based projects, and joint work with Croydon Social Care, are all examples of work in this area.



**Serious Youth Violence Offences Sub Categories by Year**

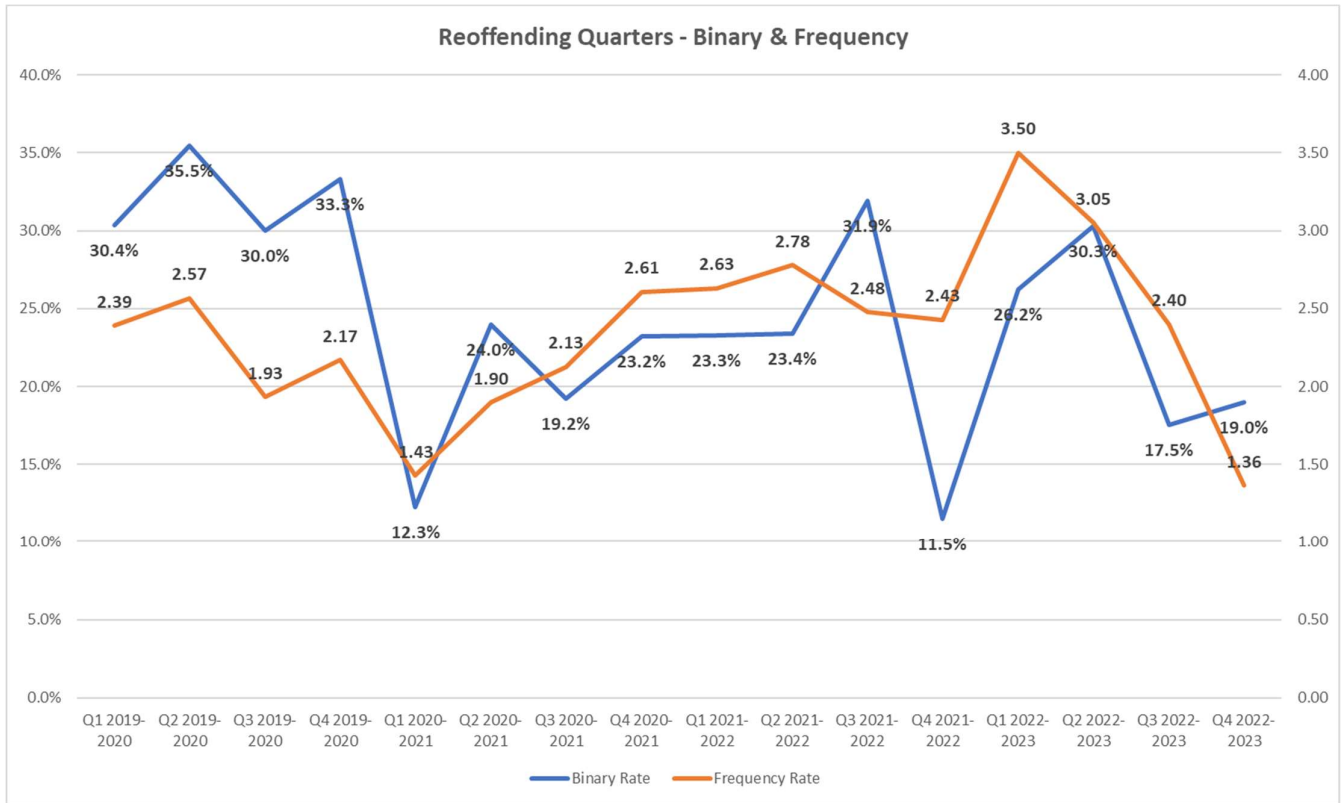


**Serious Youth Violence Offences Types by Year**



**Binary re-offending 2023/24 – this is the % of young people who re-offended.**

**Frequency re-offending 2023/24 – number of offences per child.**

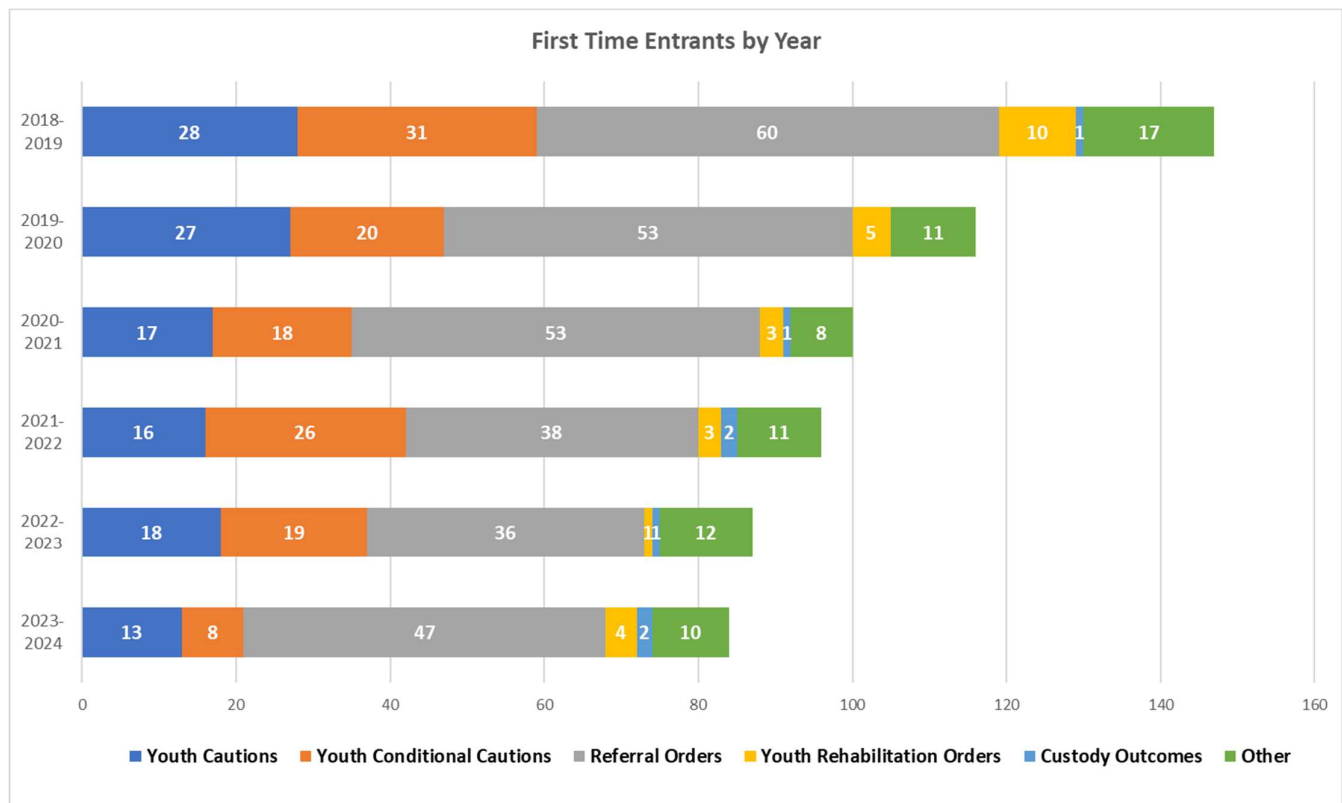


As detailed in the above graphs re-offending rates can decrease and fluctuate through the year. The Service however continues to see a decrease in frequency, much lower than national and local averages.

### First time entrants 2023/24 –

The Youth Justice Service has seen a steady decline in First Time Entrants (children entering the Service formally), this in part could be explained by a more enhanced prevention offer delivered by the Service (not included in data below). The introduction of community resolutions (on the spot cautions) has added a further layer to diversionary work. Notifications of community resolutions are received by the Service and each child is contacted and offered a voluntary service. Most community resolutions are issued for cannabis or shop lifting related matters and appears to have replaced more formal processes such as triages.

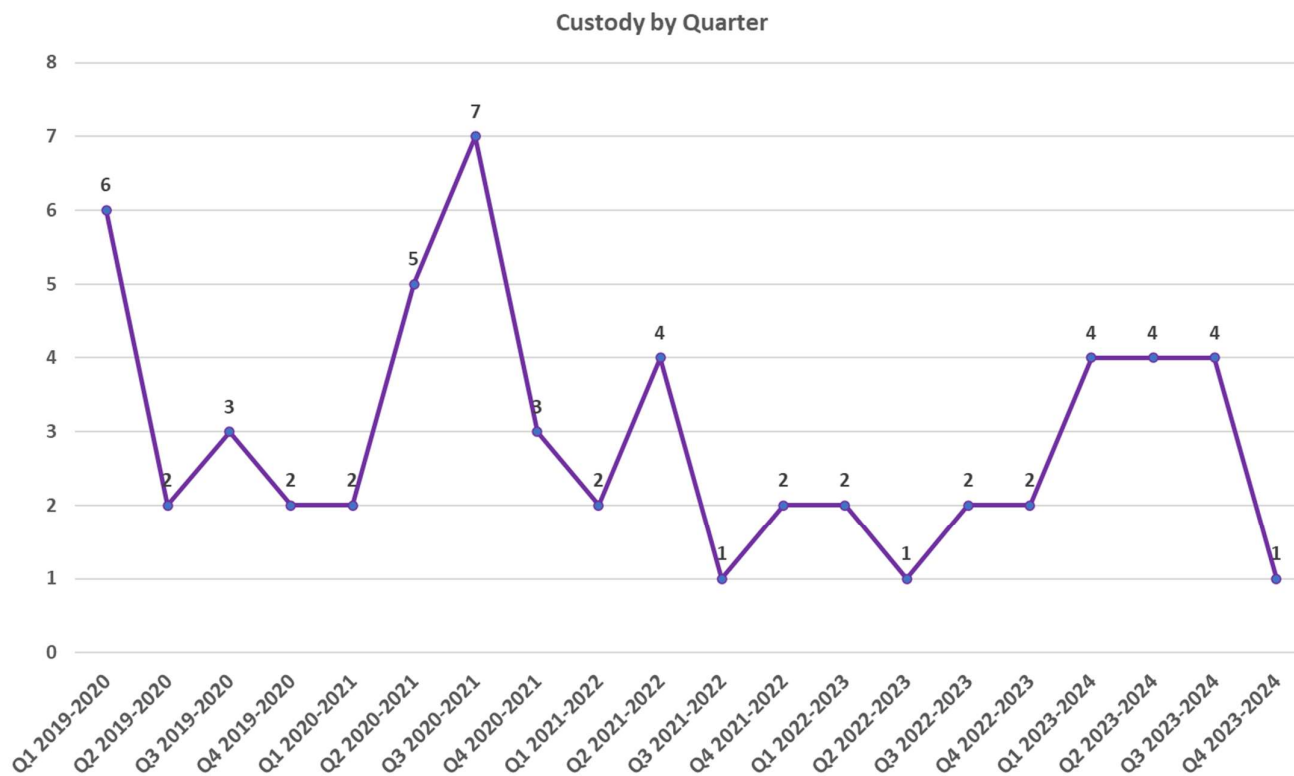
Following COVID 19 the Service remains to see a constant of Referral Orders, this being the primary statutory court order imposed, granted to children who appear in Court for the first time. This sentence is unique as the sentence is issued but the content of the sentence is decided by community members (trained volunteers) in discussion with the young person and families. There has been a reduction in higher tier Orders such as Youth Rehabilitation Orders and custody numbers have remained low in comparison to pre-COVID. The introduction to the METs 'child gravity matrix' has shifted the imposition of Youth Conditional Cautions resulting in formal responses for specific offence types to Referral Orders.



## Use of custody –

National custody numbers began to decline prior to the pandemic (COVID-19) and Croydon's custody numbers correlated with the national picture. In January 2024 440 children were in custody, nationally.

In 2021 there were several murders within the borough with both victims and perpetrators being under the age of 18. The graph below shows the peak in custody numbers during this period which also coincided with the removal of COVID restrictions. It is hard to decipher if a direct link existed between the pandemic and violence or if this peak was a coincidence. Custody numbers have not reached the level(s) of 2021. Those sentenced to custody have typically received this disposal for a serious violent offence. Quarterly audits carried out by the Service's management team, remain to see that all children subject to this form of disposal have offence types that meet expected custodial thresholds (such as murder or manslaughter).



Additional to key performance indicators, the Youth Justice Service is measured against 'Standards for children in the Youth Justice System (2019)'. The government produced expectations which sets out clear guidance on the delivery of core Youth Justice work – including Out of Court, Court work, Court disposals, Secure settings and resettlement and transitions into adult Criminal Justice. For full details please use the below link.

[Standards for children in the youth justice system - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

There are several ways in which these standards are monitored in Croydon Youth Justice Service – through weekly management team meetings, monthly performance clinics reporting to the Head of Service – Specialist Services, quarterly oversight at the Youth Justice Board and through bi-monthly audit activity overseen by the Local Authorities Quality Assurance Team in addition to thematic reviews and annual self-assessments. In 2023/24 the Service also partook in a peer audit review, jointly with Hammersmith and Fulham Youth Justice Service. (Please see section 11. Standards for children, within this plan that provides further detail).

## Risks and issues –

Using data there are a number of challenges for the Service that also pose as risks. These are outlined below.

Risk	Challenge
Over-representation	The service continues to see an over-representation of black and mixed race boys. Whilst girls are lower in numbers black and mixed race females are also over-represented. More concerningly, young black males are more likely to be over-represented in custody. Children Looked After are also over-represented within the cohort. The Service has continued to review and reflect on ways to reduce and address over-representation, including work with Partners, use of diversionary methods, advocacy, challenge and ensuring interventions are racially and culturally sensitive.
Engagement with Mental Health Services	Many children known to the service have identified adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), often with their offending behaviours linked to their own traumatic lived experiences. Children can often be reluctant to engage in therapeutic services through fear or stigma and re-traumatisation.
Delays with Policing (preventing swift justice)	Many children enter the Youth Justice system having had considerable contact with the earlier stages of the Criminal Justice System. Whilst there has been evolution of preventative means to assist children and divert away from future contact, this requires continued consideration. Examples of children going to Court for offences that are 12 months old is not uncommon or children subject to a number of pending investigations prior to contact with the service.
NEET (readiness)	Employability and Further Education readiness remains a challenge with many children open to the service having experienced a disrupted statutory education. In addition to readiness accessibility to provisions poses significant challenge, particularly where risk has to be assessed and managed e.g. unable to attend certain locations for work or college due to assessed risk to self or others. Furthermore, many children have needs that are identified via the Speech and Language Therapist and may have contributed to their overall experience of the education system.
Victim participation	GDPR led to the requirement of Police confirming consent with victims prior to referring into the Services Restorative Justice Team. This layer of action required has led to the dependency of Police being able to articulate the Service to victim(s). This and delays in charge following arrest has led to a high proportion of victims declining the offer.
Resourcing	The Local Authority has remained committed to ensure the Youth Justice Service remains appropriately resourced. However, the Service is dependant upon a number of funding streams from partners and central government. Should funding decrease or streams stop this would have an impact on delivery.



#### 4. Child First Approach

Croydon Youth Justice Service and Partners have adopted Child First Principles devised by Loughborough University, and endorsed by the Youth Justice Board, when considering what works to increase desistance and tackles recidivism. The approach applies four tenets:

- See children as children.
  - Adopt a pro-social identity for positive child outcomes.
  - Collaboration with children
  - Promote diversion from stigma.
- 
- Principle 1 – Prioritise the best interests of children, recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. Child-focused practice.
  - Principle 2 – Promote children’s individual strengths and capacities to delivery their pro-social 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 meet their full potential and make positive contributions to society.
  - Principle 3 – Encourage children’s active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their careers.
  - Principle 4 – 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.

Hearing the voices of children and families is therefore essential when considering delivery, as is knowledge and understanding of the communities they reside. Consequently, the Service has reviewed how it obtains the thoughts and feelings of children, families and the community throughout all areas of Service delivery and created – **Croydon Youth Justice Voice Participation Strategy Appendix 5**.

The Service has held various events to engage children, families, and the community, during 2024 a Youth Justice Engagement Forum and a Parents evening to meet with the Youth Justice Management Team.

The Parents spoken with during March 2024 generally were satisfied with the Youth Justice Service. They spoke positively about interactions with staff and felt there were strong communication channels. Their dismay and frustrations appeared to be linked to experiences prior to their child entering the system, primarily with the education system and their perception of unjust actions such as avoidable exclusions or the late identification of needs. Many of the parents spoken with linked education and peers as pertinent factors that influenced their child’s involvement with the Criminal Justice System. Their asks therefore were linked to systemic and policy changes rather than changes with Service Delivery. To ensure their voices are heard parents have been invited to form part of the Youth Crime Board membership.

Equally, Croydon Youth Justice Service has a strong relationship with the voluntary community sector. As a partner in the Violence Reduction’s Unit, My Endz project, a project placing communities at the forefront of tackling serious youth violence, recognising that often the communities where children reside hold wider local knowledge of need and complexities, the Youth Justice Service has aligned themselves with a number of local organisations delivering services in the localities children frequent within the borough. In 2021, following a number of tragic incidents, the Youth Justice Service created a space titled the Community Hub, where local organisations could attend and advocate for children and raise issues, they were observing first hand, where perhaps children were ill-equipped to raise what was negatively happening in their communities through fear. An example was several girls frequenting a part of the town-centre, where it was suspected they were being exploited both sexually and criminally. This led to the creation of a specific girls group titled Starz and Sistas. The group was designed to promote positive identify and encourage different experiences such as field trips, exposing the girls to alternative ways of living that were safe and promoted their wellbeing. The group also aimed to assist the girls to recognise their own victimisation and to consider personal safety alongside their families. The girl’s voices have been paramount in shaping the group and weekly topics are chosen by the girls to discuss.

Surveys and questionnaires are also in regular circulation and reviewed by the management team and have been used to feedback to the Youth Crime Board, in some instances this has led to delivery being revised. At the time of compiling the plan a survey asking children to express their thoughts on: Police/Education/Health/Youth Justice/Social Care was being collated and will be shared with partners in due course.

In addition to hearing the child's voice, Croydon Youth Justice Service has felt it is important that they also shape the environment in which the service is typically delivered (our offices) For examples children have helped redesign and decorate the reception area, have helped design a sensory space for children with neurodiverse conditions and helped create the Service create a new logo with a local graphic designer.

## 5. Resources and Services

Financially the Youth Justice Service is made up of several funding streams. Detailed below is a break-down of funding and contributions.

<b>2024-25 Budgeted Funding Streams (Staffing &amp; Non-Staffing)</b>				
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Budget</b>			<b>Total</b>
LB Croydon	1,380,000			1,380,000
YJB Grant	535,000			535,000
Unaccompanied Minors Grant	81,000			81,000
Community Safety	52,000			52,000
MOPAC	262,000			262,000
Engage Project (MOPAC)			100,000	100000
Turnaround Project (Ministry of Justice)			136,623.96	136,623.96
Million Hour Fund			52,000	52,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,310,000</b>		<b>288,623.96</b>	<b>2,598,623.96</b>

Other contributions are made up of staffing/seconded staff as detailed below:

<b>2024/25 Additional Income (Unbudgeted)</b>				
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Payments in Kind - Revenue</b>	<b>Other Delegated Funds</b>	<b>Total</b>
MET Police	130,000			130,000
National Probation Service	23,750		5,000	28,750
Health Service	110,000		5,000	115,000
<b>Total</b>				<b>273,750</b>

### Youth Justice Board Grant -

The Youth Justice Board grant is issued annually and is intended to help the delivery of the Youth Justice Plan and local priorities. The grant expenditure is detailed below. The grant primarily pays for a number of posts to help achieve the following outcomes:

- Reduction in re-offending
- Reduction in the use of custody
- Reduction in number of First-time entrants
- Effective safeguarding
- Effective Public Protection

Improving the safety and wellbeing and outcomes for children within the system.

<b>Post Description</b>	<b>Budget Grade</b>	<b>FTE 2024/25</b>	<b>Unit Cost £</b>	<b>Full Year Forecast</b>
		<b>8</b>		
Operational Manager (Out of Court)	16	1	80,023	80,023
Operational Manager (Post Court)	16	1	80,023	80,023
Practice Manager (Out of Court)	14	1	70,143	70,143
Practice Manager (Court)	14	1	70,143	70,143
Restorative Justice Coordinator	12	1	65,988	65,988
Restorative Justice Worker	8	1	52,536	52,536
Education Practice Manager	12	1	65,988	65,988
Youth Justice Service Officer	11	1	61,821	61,821

**(Please see Appendix 1 for full staffing structure.)**

In summary the Youth Justice grant provides two operational managers, who directly report to the Service Manager, leading on a range of delivery areas. Operational Manager (Out of Court) leads on Out of Court, Youth Justice Police and Partnership, Restorative Justice, Turnaround Project, Referral Orders and Volunteers. The grant also provides a Practice Manager who reports directly to the Operational Manager and helps deliver Out of Court work including the Joint Decision-Making Panel co-chaired with the Police (a panel making decisions on the use of Out of court disposals for children), supervises staff and ensure the Service is up to date with research and practice within this area. This role also deputises in the absence of the Operational Manager.

Operational Manager (Post Court) leads on Court work, Custody Work, Probation and the Partnership, Interventions (including reparation/community pay back), electronic curfews and community-based sentences. The grant also provides a Practice Manager for Court, this role is based at Croydon Magistrates on Sentence days (Thursdays), helps co-ordinate weekend cover and holiday cover at Court, delivers training to the judiciary, oversees staff and deputises for the Operational Manager role.

The grant also provides a Restorative Justice Lead and Officer – delivering direct and indirect reparation to victims. The two roles are also responsible for ensuring the Team are up to date with restorative processes and research in addition to achieving a restorative justice marker which endorses the service standards when working with victims.

Additionally, the grant pays for a specific Education Manager, who oversees key performance indicators related to education including ensuring all children of statutory school age are attending school, supervising the post of the out-reach ETE worker supporting children post 16 into further education or employment and oversees the Speech and Language Therapist.

Finally, the grant contributes a Youth Justice Officer to ensure our caseloads are manageable and in line with other Youth Justice areas and expectations.

A detail of roles and additional resources available to the Service is provided in the chart below:

Area	Specialist Resource
Substance Misuse Worker	1 fte Substance misuse post overseeing the substance misuse needs of children. In addition, working closely with Change Grow Live commissioned service to work with children known to the Youth Justice Service not subject to statutory sentences.
Speech and Language Therapist	0.4 fte Speech and Language Therapist responsible for screening and assessing all children open to the Service.
Mental Health Practitioner	1 fte Mental Health Practitioner supporting children into statutory services, linked to the Local Authorities Clinical Team. Provides consultations to Youth Justice Officers and carries a small caseload of lower tier cases.
Probation Secondee(s)	0.3 fte National Probation Service seconds a Probation Officer for 3 days per week, assisting with transitions both community and custody based of children approaching 18.
ETE Worker	1 fte MOPAC funded worker delivering support for children 16+ supporting them in their transition from school into education and/or employment.
General Health	0.3 fte Nurse for the Youth Justice Service, screening all children open to Youth Justice and signposting to service. Also includes oversight of sexual health clinic delivery.
Counselling	Co-location 1 day a week with Off the Record delivering lower tier counselling services to children.
Police – Intelligence sharing	BCU provides 3 fte Police Officers to jointly deliver OOC disposals and information share.
Liaison and Diversion	NHS for England funds the Crisis Team at the Custody Suite to screen and support any young person presenting with mental health concerns.
Prevention	1 fte Turnaround Project co-ordinator, 1 fte Turnaround Project Worker, 1 fte Engage Project co-ordinator and 1fete Engage Project Worker –

	delivering on early engagement or children presenting with criminal behaviours. Eligibility includes children subject to Community resolutions, children released under investigation or subject to bail where no other statutory support is in place.
Serious Youth Violence Worker	3 fte posts working with children and young adults who commit Serious Youth Violence. Young adult worker is MOPAC funded.
Serious Youth Violence – BCU	1 designated Police Officer assigned to the oversight and co-ordination of Integrated Offender Management.
Access to Youth Offer	Youth Justice Service is aligned to the Youth Engagement Team who deliver a number of projects across the borough, inclusive of a girls group.
Parenting	Youth Justice Service has access to Local Authorities Parenting Offer and Family Clinical Team.
Listening to the Voice of the Child	Youth Justice Service works closely with Children in Care Council and Youth Assembly
Hospital	Partnership with Redthread a commissioned service delivering Youth Work within Croydon University hospital.
Mentoring	MOPAC funded mentoring Service via Mentivity. Work with Inspire, Reaching Higher, P4YE and Play Place.
Resettlement/Custody	1ft Practice Manager designated to the area of custody and oversight of resettlement. Responsible for resettlement forum inclusive of representation from SEND.
Group Work	1 fte Project Worker post – delivering on all reparation projects, unpaid work and group work.

## Staffing gender and ethnicity break down -

	Strategic Manager		Manager(s)		Practitioners		Administrative		Specialist		Student		Referral Order Panel Volunteer	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Asian	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Black	0	0	0	6	1	5	0	0	1	4	0	0	2	5
Mixed	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
White	0	1	2	2	0	3	0	3	1	1	0	1	1	4
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not known	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	0	1	2	8	2	11	1	4	2	5	0	1	3	11
Disabled	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

## 6. Board Development

In 2023 Croydon Youth Justice Service invited the Youth Crime Board and its members to their offices to meet with staff and children. The session primarily looked at the newly launched key performance indicators but also provided staff to discuss their day-to-day work, detailing challenges. The workshop also permitted a child involved in the employability scheme to address the Board about the ETE work being carried out and the positive impact this scheme had resulting in employment.

In 2024 Croydon Youth Justice Service will facilitate a similar workshop, the focus being education in response to parent's feedback. The agenda includes the work carried out by the Education Team within the Youth Justice Service (Education Manager, ETE Worker and Speech and Language Therapist) alongside the partnership including the SEN Team and Post 16 Participation Team. The session will show how cross departmental work has led to the Service being awarded with a lead accreditation in its collaborative efforts working with children with a SEN status. The session however is intended to provide Board members with details of positive partnership working but also some of the challenges our children face in Croydon within the area of education. For example, within the Youth Justice cohort many children have missed significant periods of education by the time they reach 16, some not taking core exams. The service has also found that many children do not have bank-accounts and forms of identification required for further education or employment. More significant, Speech and Language screenings of all children open to the Service have detected unidentified needs and some children have been found unable to tell the time and literacy issues.

Board members have remained consistent, however there is an Induction Offer to all new Board members including a person induction from the Chair and Service Manager. A building tour, in addition to meet and

greet with the Team and access to all key documents informing Board members is part of the induction process.

## **7. Workforce Development**

Croydon Youth Justice Service prides itself on its training offer and remains heavily focused on the training of its staff and managers throughout the year. In 2023 a training analysis was carried out identifying all core training areas expected of Youth Justice Staff – Trauma Informed Practice, Safeguarding, Domestic Abuse Awareness Training, Aim Training (working with children who sexually harm), Degree or above qualifications, Contextual Safeguarding Training, Cultural Competency training, YJS effective Practice Certificate, Mental Health First Aid training and Systemic Training. The analysis confirmed that Croydon Youth Justice Service has a highly trained and experienced workforce with many staff having post graduate degrees in relevant topics such as: criminology, social work, Probation, psychology and youth work. This said in 2023 all staff undertook AIM training both assessing children who sexually harm but also delivering interventions to those who sexually harm – ensuring that all staff have specialist skills in this area. Additionally, staff undertook a refresher Domestic Abuse 2-day course, domestic abuse being a common risk factor within the cohort.

In 2024 the Youth Justice Management Team revisited the analysis to ensure that all staff were up to date with training expectations and to plan for the year ahead. In addition to individually chosen training relevant to the member of staff's personal development the team will be expected to undertake the following training in 2024.

- Voice of the Child Participation Training delivered by Leaders Unlocked and Children with lived experiences.
- Refresher Safeguarding Training (Manager's will be expected to attend Children's Social Care threshold training additionally)
- Victim Awareness Training
- 14 internal workshops will also be delivered by the Management Team on all topics relevant to service delivery please see **appendix 6**.

## **8. Evidence based practice and innovation**

Evidence based practice is the idea that practices should be based on evaluated evidence this includes research evidence, clinical experience, and service user preference.

Croydon Youth Justice Service acknowledges that interventions should occur more organically in the communities where children reside. Interventions should also be delivered by people children trust and where there is relatability. Consequently, Croydon Youth Justice Service utilises its partnerships, particularly with the Voluntary Community Sector, to carry out work in an array of settings. Such settings include Legacy Youth Club, Samuel Coleridge Centre, BME Forum Offices, Croydon Voluntary Action Centre, Play Place, Fieldway hub and South Norwood Community Kitchen. These premises also permit borough wide coverage to ensure children feel safe when being seen and providing them with a choice of location.

### **Engage Project –**

The Engage Project is a Mayor of London initiative in conjunction with the MET Police. This project provides Croydon Youth Justice Service a presence within the local custody suite, enabling contact with children when they first come into contact with the Police. The Project requires voluntary participation but provides children and their families with advice on how to access services. The Project can work with young people on a short-term basis in an attempt to divert them away from further contact with the system. The Project works closely with community-based project including Palace for Life (Sports and Mentoring) and the Hope Programme (Music). The Project also works alongside the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team (CAMHS) and Counselling Service Off the Record. This Project's objective is to assist

children at the earliest opportunity before criminality progresses. The use of sports, music and health is used to promote community reintegration and increase desistance.

### **South Norwood Community Kitchen –**

Croydon Youth Justice Service work in partnership with Reaching Higher an organisation that offers mentoring and support to young people across the borough. The organisation is both community and school based. In 2023 the partnership launched collaborative work within South Norwood Community Kitchen. This provided children known the service work experience, working both within the foodbank and clothes bank section of the kitchen. Children worked alongside staff to acquire customer service skills and assisted in cooking and keeping the premises tidy including attending to the kitchen's garden. The Kitchen is located in the heart of South Norwood and provided many children a safe space to meet new people and learn new skills.

### **Positive Males Group –**

Research remains to query how effective groups really are in Criminal Justice Settings, however the Positive Males Group was designed to acknowledge the overrepresentation of black boys within the cohort. The programme uses a music studio for children to unleash their creativity and use art and music to express themselves. The sessions also provide Positive Black Male guest speakers who can talk about success and overcoming adversity and racism. The group has proven popular with high attendance rates concluding that the use of arts is a successful means for children to express otherwise suppressed frustrations and emotions.

### **Starz and Sistas –**

As detailed earlier within the plan, the community raised concerns surrounding a specific group of girls. Subsequently, Starz and Sista was created, led by the girls, the group meets weekly to discuss several topics but also interacts and partake in activities such as cooking and arts. In 2023 the group was awarded funding via the Home Office 'Safer Streets' initiative, permitting further work to enhance the girl's positive self-image and exposure to opportunities and experiences. The group has gone from strength to strength, with regular attendance and reduction in risk factors surrounding exploitation, including a reduction in missing episodes and an increase in education attendance. The success is believed to be driven by the girls having full control over content and delivery. Whilst facilitators within the group may challenge or support, fundamentally the creation of the group has been child led.

### **Reparation –**

Croydon Youth Justice Service has a number of reparation projects (providing young people an opportunity to make amends for the harm they may have caused). Children told us that they would like to do something for Croydon's homeless population. Croydon Youth Justice Service have linked with Croydon Night Watch, a charity who help people who are homeless, and children help the organisation prepare food and essential items to help those in need. The Service is also involved in the delivery of Age Concerns Dementia Café, where children befriend persons with dementia, providing tea and conversation.

**See appendix 7 for full reparation project details.**

### **Experts by experience -**

The Interventions Project Worker and Speech and Language Therapist have joined partnership to create a group that is driven to improve outcomes for children open to the cohort who are neurodivergent. The group is for children with neurotypical and neurodivergent needs to create a space that meets with their needs and embark on projects that also fits with their needs and experiences. The group has begun to design a sensory space that promotes engagement.

## **9. Evaluation**

The Youth Justice Service is reviewed by the departmental audit framework – Windows into Practice. Each child is reviewed by two auditors and an overall moderator with each audit resulting in a grade based on a number of factors based on the ASPIRE model (Assessment, Planning, Interview, Review and Evaluation).



There is an expectation for each auditor to speak to the child and family to gain a sense on how they perceive the intervention(s) progress.

The Service has also undergone external review via two external consultants during a 12- month period and a peer review overseen by Hammersmith and Fulham in 2023. Other forms of measurement include use of data including re-offending data and individual feedback from children.

## 10. Priorities for the coming year

Priorities 2024/25	Objective
Child-First Practice	To ensure all areas of Youth Justice practice within Croydon embeds the ethos of Child First Principles and application of the four tenets. To ensure partners working with Youth Justice also adopt this approach.
Address over-representation	To continue to develop and apply the Service's Disproportionately Action Plan to reduce the over-representation of specific groups within the cohort of children. This requires a partnership response and commitment.
Prevent and reduce Serious Youth Violence	To continue to contribute, with Partners, in the prevention and reduction of Serious Youth Violence, using child-first principles and evidence-based practice to promote research proven desistance. Ensuring that the approach safeguards children and promotes children(s) wellbeing.
Victim Centric Service	To ensure the Service promotes restorative approaches and hears the thoughts and feelings of the victims and continuing to contribute to the safeguarding and wellbeing of victims.
Accessibility to universal services	To ensure that the Service continues to provide a multi-agency response with specialist services available – health, education and vocational activities. This will be achieved by continuing to offer a variety of health services, evolving our NEET offer with support to assist children into employment and further education and to continue our work with the voluntary community sector to promote opportunities including pro-social modelling via mentoring.
Violence against Women and Girls	To ensure that the Service recognises domestic abuse, understands safeguarding procedures and delivers interventions jointly with Social Care inline with the Local Authorities Violence against Women and Girls strategy in consultation with the Family Justice Centre and Team and Social Care.

## 11. Standards for Children

The Youth Justice Service partakes in a variety of audit activities throughout the year. Croydon Youth Justice Service is currently integrated into the department's Windows into Practice Framework, and children who are open to both Youth Justice and Social Care are jointly reviewed bi-monthly. The framework looks at all key areas of practice including Management oversight but also includes feedback from children and families. The Local Authorities Quality Assurance Team oversees the framework and produces reports identifying strengths but also areas for improvement. These are sighted by the Board each quarter.

In 2023/2024 improvements included:

- Increased use of joint supervision where a child is open to Children's Social Care and Youth Justice
- Assurance of safety plans being accessible on file between both services
- Audit training delivered to Management Team by the Quality Assurance Team

Continued focus remains on:

- Improving quality of plans (as typically seeing a grading of requires improvement)

- Training for Management Team on reflective supervision and subsequently improve quality of supervision notes.

### **Court Work (Self-Assessment) -**

In July 2023 Croydon Youth Justice Service completed a self-assessment titled 'Work in Court'. The assessment was broken down into 3 sections. Section A looked at strategic performance - are there policies and procedures in place, are these policies adhered to.

Section B and C required an assessment of practice, whereby children who attended Court between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 were audited specifically looking at Court processes and practice.

Summarising Section A the self-assessment looked at the Service's ability to divert children away from the Court System. There are a number of measures taken by Croydon Youth Justice Service to ensure children avoid Court. Such processes include joint work with the Police to make out of court decisions. The Service also scrutinises Court lists, identifying children who could potentially receive out of court disposals. Prior to these processes however the Service has a prevention offer via Turnaround and Engage Projects, in an attempt to redirect children at the earliest opportunity from the system. The assessment also asked for information on how we divert children away from custody and being remanded. Croydon Youth Justice Service has seen a steady decline in the use of custody over the past 4 years and this aligns with the London and National picture. This said, processes and systems are in place to avoid remands where possible. This includes early notification from Police, Court presence 6 days a week and remands that are made being reviewed by Senior Management to ensure they are just or to look at alternative proposals to the Court when re-considering bail. In addition, use of Remand to Local Authority and creativeness with packages are offered and all proposals oversighted by Managers. The self-assessment also requested the consideration over-represented groups attending Court. The Youth Justice Service has revised their pre-sentence report template to directly address the Judiciary on this matter and have delivered training to both Judges and Magistrates. The Service has a Disproportionately Action Plan (**see appendix 4**) that is sighted and monitored by the Youth Crime Board. Court features within this plan and is viewed as an essential aspect of work when considering entry of over-represented groups into the system. The BME Forum and Equalities Team have been fundamental in the creation of this plan ensuring its focus is on anti-racist practice. This plan has now been in place for 3 years and is reviewed each year and revised at the beginning of each financial year.

One sub-section within Section A, resulted in a 'requires improvement' rating this was concerning voice of the child and feedback. Since the completion of the self-assessment, we have obtained technology to assist the service to swiftly ascertain the thoughts and feelings of children and families attending court in addition to the Judiciary providing us with feedback. The assessment also required consideration of how we support children to engage with Court processes, Speech and Language Therapist has trained the Judiciary and we attach a communication passport to any paperwork informing the Court of any needs and how best to communicate with the child.

Section B looked at the quality of our pre-sentence reports on children. In 80% of our reports, we scored good or above. This was further endorsed by feedback from the Judiciary who commonly praise the quality and detail of our reports. This is viewed as one of the Service's strengths. Reports were deemed to be child-focused, detailing desistance factors and applying a strength-based approach in writing and proposing sentences. Reports took account of protective characteristics and recognised the needs of the child. In 70% of reports audited the parents' views and feelings were explicitly referenced with clear evidence of engagement. To improve in this area the quality assurance checklist was revised, requiring completion with all reports submitted. Similarly, more explicit focus on victims was recognised – considerable work and discussion has been had, recognising that not all victims wish to work with the Service, for us to fully acknowledge their feelings, we therefore have trained staff to write hypothetically recognising the impact offences *may* have had. Similar to Section B, Section C looked at ways we engaged children and families at Court and ensured they understood Court processes. Whilst it was evident that we typically supported children we had limited evidence of explaining things to parents. This was revisited with the Team, and we hope to see improvements in 2024/25.

## Peer audit -

In June 2023 the Service, in addition to the above audit activity, carried out a 'peer audit' with Hammersmith and Fulham Youth Justice Service. An exchange of work occurred whereby we looked at their cases and they looked at ours (6 each). Using the ASPIRE model (assessment, planning, intervention, review and evaluation) outcomes were measured. A theme of over-representation was chosen by both agencies. The findings were as follows:

- 66% of assessments were deemed good or above.
- 77% of plans were deemed good or above.
- 83% of implementation and delivery (interventions) were deemed good or above.
- 67% of reviews were deemed good or above.

## Multi-agency audit -

In April 2024 the Youth Justice was involved in multi-agency audit activity where 4 cases were audited collaboratively by the partnership with a specific focus on Serious Youth Violence. The partnership included: Children's Social Care/Health/Education/Health/Police/Third Sector. There was however learning and reflections for the service:

- Reviewing safety plans and ensuring they are shared with all relevant professionals involved.
- Ensuring we are accessing all relevant information (particularly around earlier years) for the purpose of our assessments.
- Ensure our representation at Child in Need and Child Protection conferences has been fully reflected upon with Senior Managers in advance of attendance.

## 12. Service Development

Objective 2024/25	Action(s)
Addressing Overrepresentation of black and ethnic minority children and ensuring the service applies an anti-racist approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To deliver on all agreed objectives as set out in the Disproportionately Action Plan 2024/25</li> <li>• To continue to challenge, train and advocate on behalf of children, to parts to the Criminal Justice System, which may contribute to the overrepresentation of certain groups.</li> <li>• To promote and deliver preventative work to divert children away from the system at the earliest opportunity.</li> <li>• To ensure diversionary processes are complied with avoiding unnecessary entry into the system.</li> <li>• To consider the needs of Children Looked After (CLA) in liaison with the CLA Team and Children in Care Council.</li> <li>• Continue to deliver gender specific programmes (Starz &amp; Sistas, Positive Male Group) that aims to inspire young people by building self-esteem and promoting opportunities.</li> <li>• Continue to strengthen community relationships in recognition that the VCS plays a vital role in the safe reintegration of children.</li> <li>• Continue to provide a bespoke mentoring Service to support children at home, in education and in the community, outside of the youth justice system.</li> </ul>
Contribute to the prevention and reduction of Serious Youth Violence with partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use data available to understand Serious Youth Violence in the borough. Continued joint work between Youth Justice SYV analyst, Community Safety analyst, Police and Children's Social Care analyst.</li> <li>• Identification of hot spots and application of location risk management with partners (Police/Social Care/Health/Education/VCS/Housing/Community Safety/Youth Engagement).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service to contribute to the delivery of the Local Authorities Youth Safety Plan ensuring all staff have full knowledge of this plan and expectations of delivery.</li> <li>• Continued Youth Justice representation at the National Referral Mechanism Panel and MACE.</li> <li>• Joint Supervision with Social Care</li> <li>• Creation of bespoke interventions promoting desistance taking account of individual needs and wishes.</li> <li>• Continued joint delivery of Integrated Offender Management scheme with MET Serious Youth Violence Unit.</li> <li>• Continued co-working with the MET Police Robbery Unit.</li> <li>• Ensuring Service learns from previous thematic reports focused on Serious Youth Violence.</li> <li>• Continue to contribute to the local Pupil Referral Units Serious Youth Violence Taskforce.</li> </ul>
Continue to reduce the number of children and young people identified as NEET (Not in Education or employment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued partnership work with the Participation Team (sharing resources and knowledge)</li> <li>• Continued partnership with Croydon Works to ensure the Service has knowledge of local employment opportunities.</li> <li>• Designated worker to continue to support children in this area, building on strengths and aspirations.</li> <li>• Evolve 'readiness' offer by ensuring young people are supported in gaining practical skills when entering the employment sector.</li> <li>• Continue to research and build partnerships with further education provisions.</li> <li>• Ensuring children 16+ with an Educational Health &amp; Care Plan continue to receive support, utilising support of the Service's Speech and Language Therapist (SALT).</li> </ul>
Increase accessibility to Health Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to evolve the role of the Mental Health Practitioner in collaboration with the Local Authority's Clinical Team.</li> <li>• Promote the Local Authorities Parenting Offer</li> <li>• Ensure all children open to the service are screened by the resident Nurse.</li> <li>• Continue to work with Forensic Child Adolescent Mental Health Service on children assessed as high risk.</li> <li>• Ensure all children are screened by the Service's SALT worker and any follow up referrals are completed or ongoing support offered.</li> <li>• Continue to deliver the monthly Sexual Health Clinic, run by the NHS Sexual Health Team.</li> <li>• To improve accessibility into Substance Misuse Services</li> <li>• To ensure the Team has an understanding of dual diagnosis and how to support children when this occurs.</li> <li>• Continue to run, in collaboration with the Clinical Team, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy under the Your Choice umbrella.</li> <li>• Continue to make use of systemic and clinical discussions.</li> <li>• Continued partnership work with Redthread (Youth Engagement Team based at local hospital)</li> <li>• SALT training to support staff to detect where there may be a neurodivergent need and to ensure support is evidence-based.</li> </ul>
Continue to develop a 'victim centric' service with an increased use of restorative approaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all staff are trained in restorative processes.</li> <li>• Use of appraisal system to ensure all staff are considering victims (including potential victims) in every area of Youth Justice delivery.</li> <li>• For all staff to be trauma informed trained and give recognition that many of the children open to the service have also been victims.</li> </ul>

Development of Voice Participation Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For victims to be considered in each child's intervention plan</li> <li>• Work with Leaders unlocked and children with lived experiences to train staff on utilising the voice of the child in every aspect of their work. (training scheduled for September).</li> <li>• Continue to work with the Children in Care Council to ensure we are hearing children who are in care and their experiences of the Youth Justice System.</li> <li>• To develop ways in which children can be more embedded in advising the Youth Justice Management Team on decision making.</li> <li>• To ensure that in all areas of work we are listening to the voice of the child and acting on their feedback.</li> <li>• Ensuring parents have accessibility to the Youth Justice Management Team and for the Service to use feedback to shape and improve the service.</li> </ul>
Work in line with the Borough(s) Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff to be trained in domestic abuse and understand MARAC and safeguarding processes</li> <li>• Referrals to be considered into relevant programmes run by the Local Authority</li> <li>• Continue to work closely with the Family Justice Centre</li> </ul>

### 13. National Priority areas

The Youth Justice Board continues to set strategic objectives inline with child-first principles, this includes where possible diverting children away from the system, ensuring that where possible custody is avoided and/or if custody is imposed that resettlement and support is offered, ensuring all children are provided with opportunities that provide positive outcomes. The Board remains committed to reducing disproportionately and ensuring that communities are work with communities is supported.

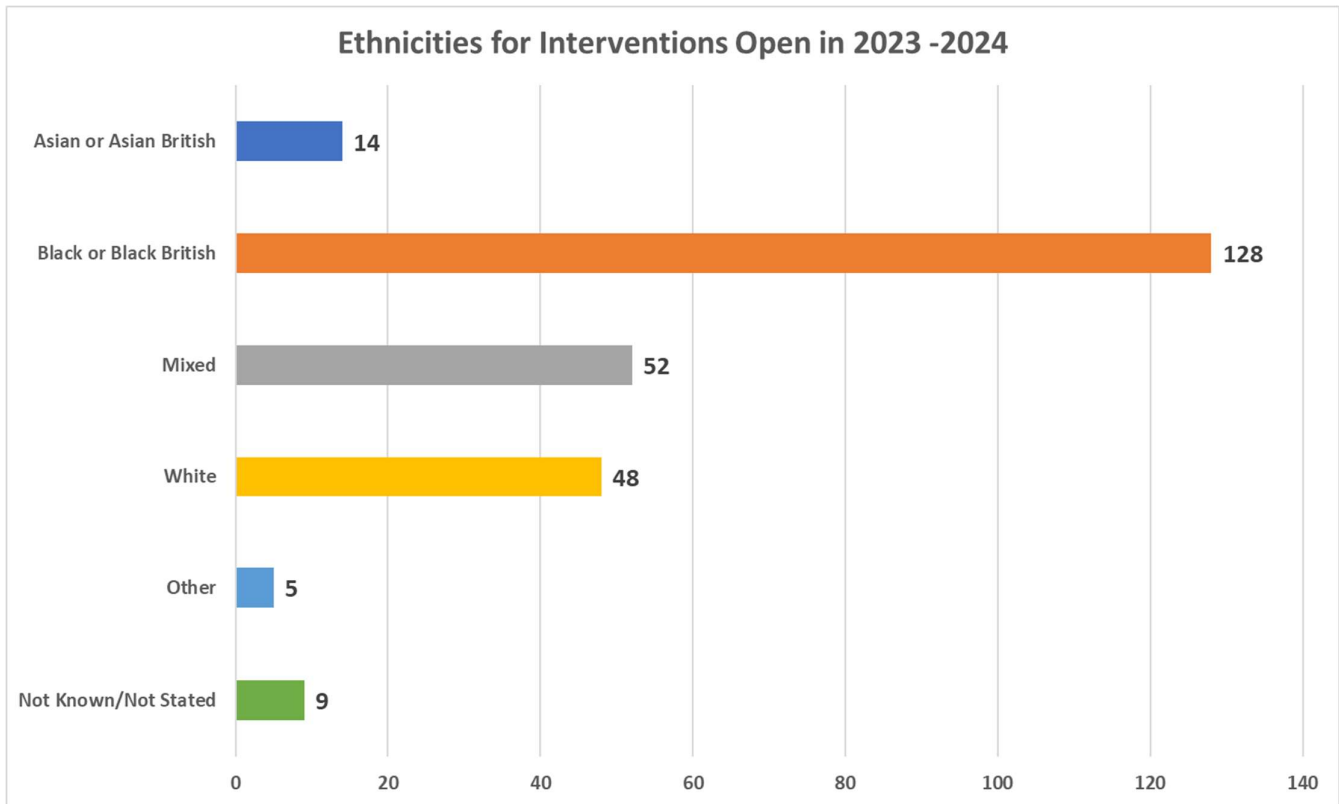
For full details please see the below link:

[The Youth Justice Board strategy for delivering positive outcomes for children by reducing offending and creating safer communities 2024–2027 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100000/youth-justice-board-strategy-for-delivering-positive-outcomes-for-children-by-reducing-offending-and-creating-safer-communities-2024-2027.pdf)

### 14. Children from groups which are over-represented –

Reducing the over-representation of certain groups with the Youth Justice Service has continued to be a key priority for the Youth Justice Service and partners. The Youth Justice Service uses data to view characteristics of children known to measure over-representation including race, ethnicity, age, religion, gender, Children's Social Care status and locality (where they reside) and where they attend school.

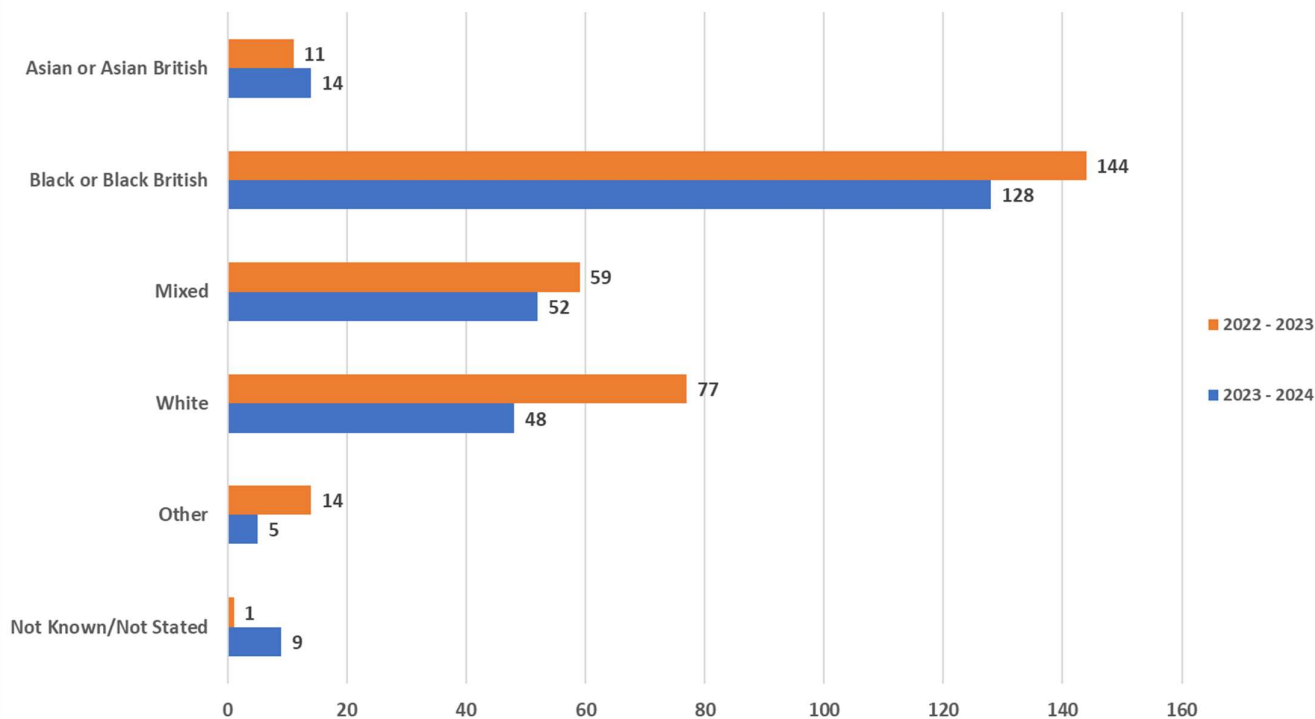
Detailed below is a break-down of ethnicities of children open to the Youth Justice Service during the year of 2023/24.



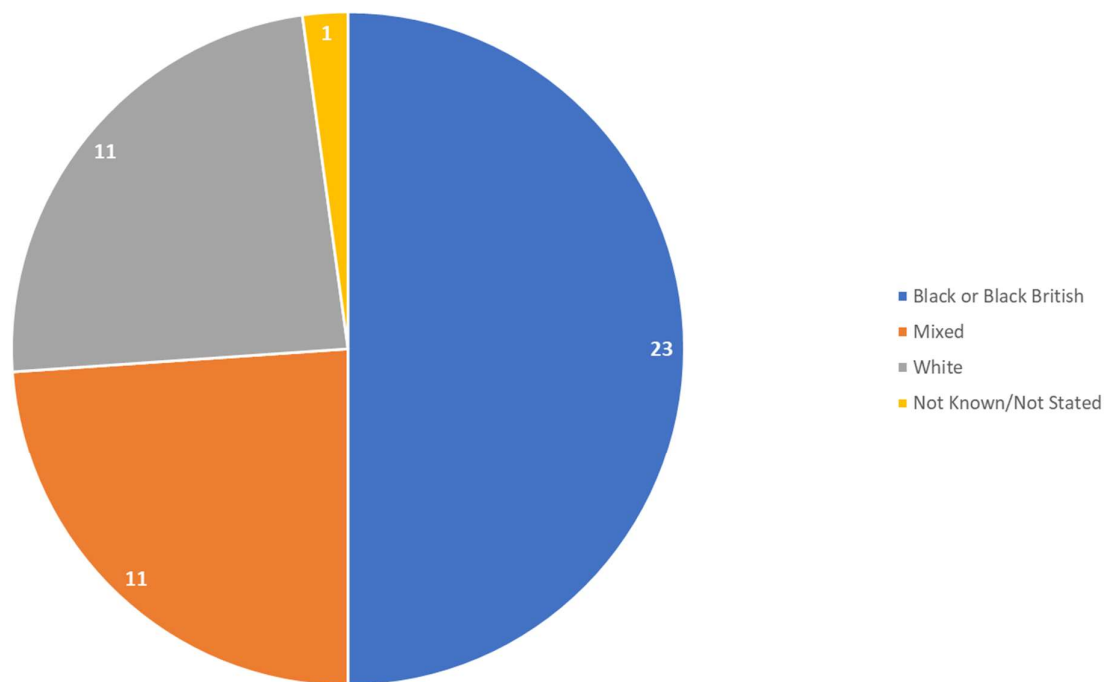
Disproportionality of specific groups within the Criminal Justice System has caused long-standing concern and has been heavily researched. Each year the Service reviews ways in each of its operative areas, to explore how the Youth Justice Service can contribute to reducing over-representation. In consultation with the BME forum, the Service details their commitments within the Disproportionately Action Plan (DAP). The plan aims to ensure the Service delivers anti-racist practice in line with the Local Authorities George Floyd Race Equality Pledge and Equalities Strategy.

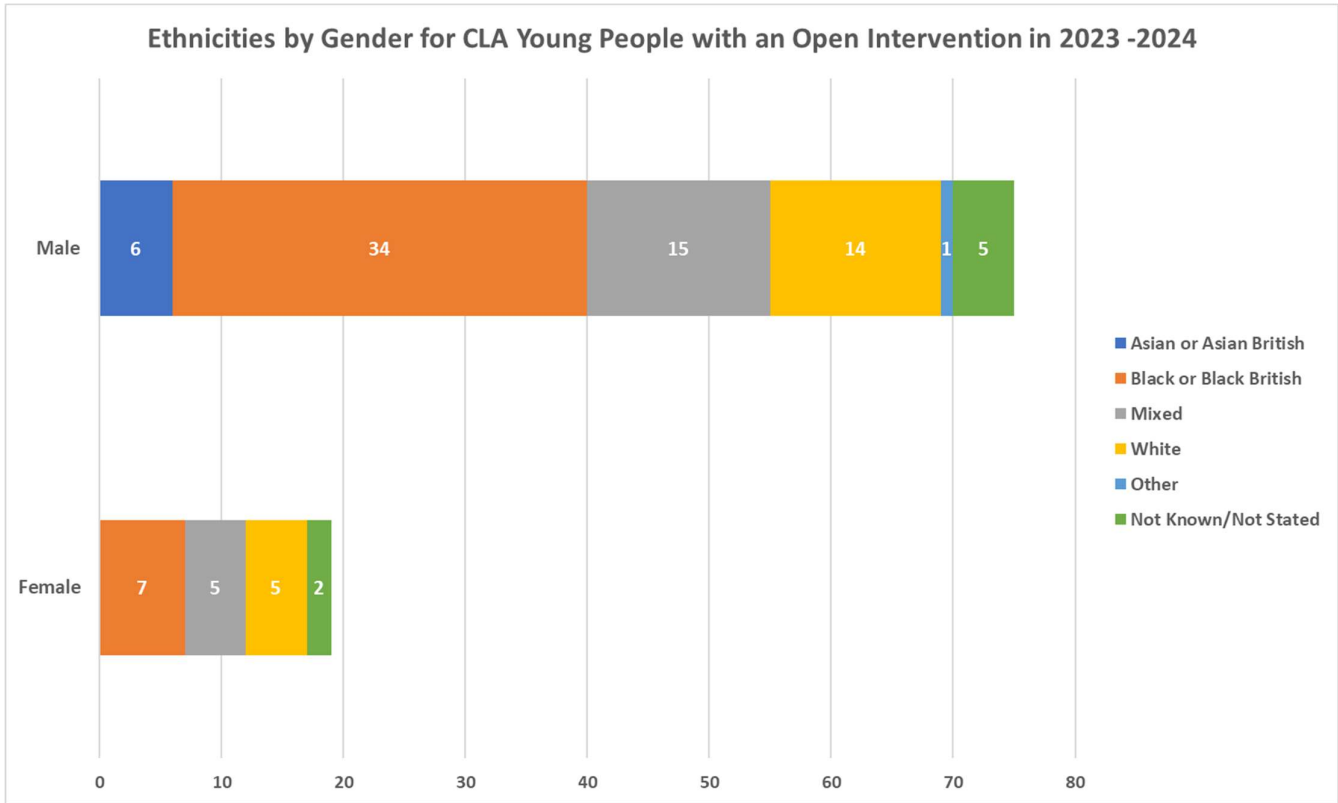
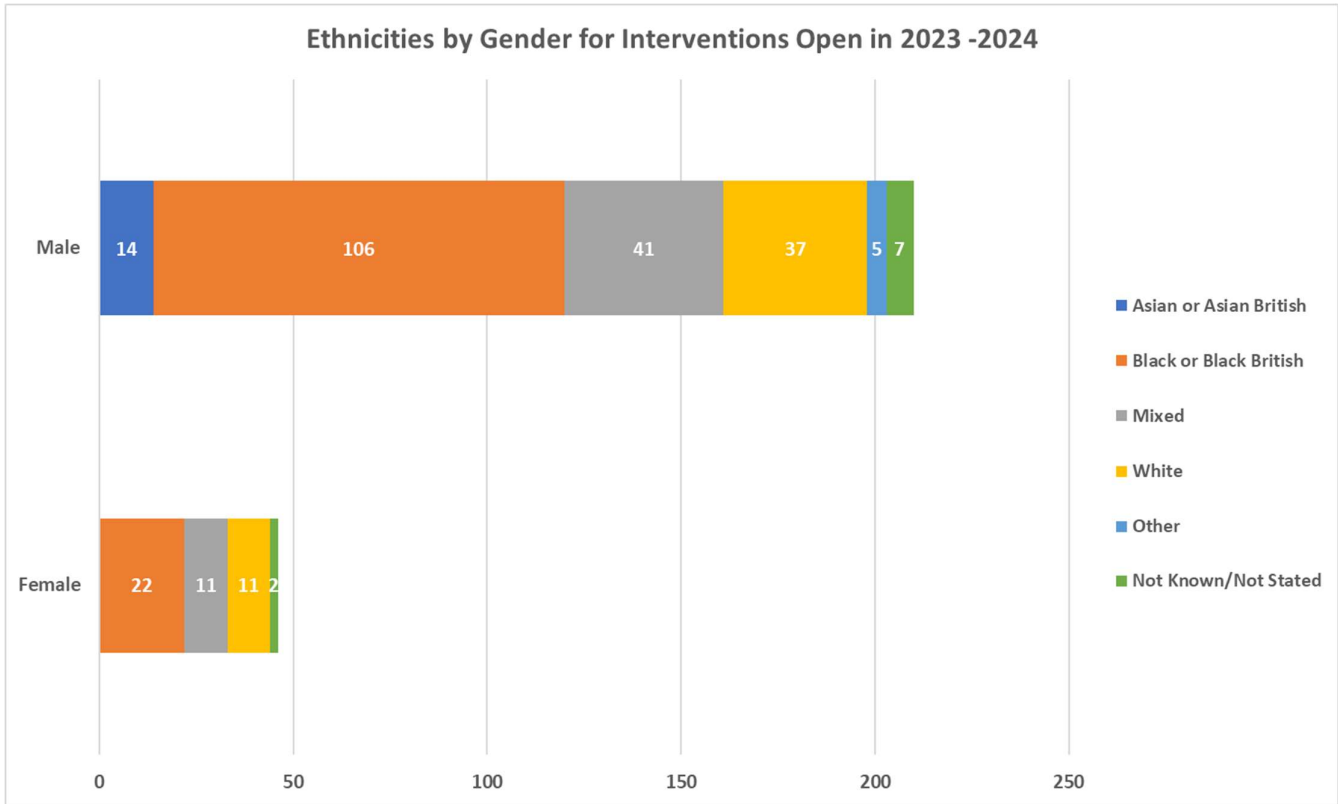
The DAP places an expectation on Youth Justice Staff to advocate for children, including challenging other parts of the Criminal Justice System in their thinking and recognising that this is an ongoing issue. In addition to challenge the Service has played a role in training Court staff and ensures Court reports mark protected characteristics and draw awareness to inequality with sentencers.

### Ethnicities for Open Interventions 2022 - 2023 vs 2023 -2024



### Girls Ethnicity 2023 - 2024





A further group who are over-represented within the Youth Justice cohort are Children who are looked after. Being placed in care is an adverse child experience and many of the children in care have suffered a number of traumatic events during their lifetime that led to being placed into care. Not all children who are looked after entering the Youth Justice Service but the number of within the cohort requires consideration.



## 15. Policing –

Croydon Youth Justice Service is part of the South Area Basic Command Unit (BCU) (Metropolitan Police) that oversees Croydon, Bromley and Sutton. Croydon Youth Justice Service works closely with its statutory partner in all aspects of delivery starting with arrests.

As noted earlier within the plan, the Service has a Youth Work Offer connected to the custody suite and is notified of any arrest to ensure children coming into contact with the Police are detected at the earliest opportunity.

The Service also has 3 full time Police Officers that are based in their office daily. Their role is to ensure the Service is notified of any child coming into contact with the Police, to provide intelligence on all children known and to process Out of Court work. A designated Police Sergeant is also assigned to the Service and is in regular attendance within the Service.

Both Services jointly review children eligible for an Out of Court disposals and attend a weekly panel titled the Joint Decision-Making Panel. At each panel, children who have committed offences that are deemed diversionary are discussed and it is agreed what form of diversionary disposal is imposed in joint discussion. This panel provides a space for context of each child to be explored and reflected upon.

Police work with the Service however extends beyond the lower tier interventions and the Service works closely with the Neighbourhoods Team, with the Sergeant and Detective Inspective are members of the Youth Crime Board.

On an operational level the Service jointly works with the Serious Youth Violence Unit and Robbery Squad. There are weekly meetings between these Teams to ensure intelligence is shared and the two agencies are able to discuss children of concern, often the Youth Justice Service will provide context and information that may influence policing and both agencies strive to apply a child first approach in addition to considering the balance of protecting individuals and communities. Within the Serious Youth Violence Unit there is a function titled Integrated Offender Management. This scheme is divided into two parts, under 18s and over 18s, and is designed to monitor those where intelligence supports there is high risk to self and others. The Youth Justice Service, where there is concern specifically linked to risk (in the main risk of violence) can refer into the scheme. There is a designated Officer linked to the under 18s work, their role is to work jointly with Youth Justice Officers, supporting them to reduce risk and further offending. Joint visits, quick information sharing and intelligence gathering are all aspects of this work. Young people made subject to the scheme will be notified. The scheme works under a traffic light system with red being the most severe risk, amber moderate risk and green risk has reduced. It is the aim of both agencies to reduce risk and with the eventuality of removing them from the scheme. Parents are also informed of the scheme and both agencies work hard to engage families to assist in the reduction of risk.

Strategically a number of Policing meetings are also attended on a regular basis by Youth Justice Senior Management. Meetings include the discussion of use of custody and overnight stays of children and meetings with the Robbery Squad and British Transport Police, this accounts for robbery becoming one of the main offence types within Youth Justice data.

The Service also works closely with the Police(s) Exploitation Police, who have visited and presented on their roles ensuring that there is accessibility and co-working. Many of the children who pose risk are also at risk and understanding the complex nature of combined risk is vital for both organisations.

Whilst the agencies are proud to have a strong working relationship there are challenges that are regionally seen.

Challenges	
Released under investigation and charge delays	The introduction of Released Under investigation (RUIs) has seen a decline in a swift response following arrest. This can result in children being subject to RUI for a considerable period of time and resulting in No Further Action or being charged, in some instances, 12 months, following arrest. Swift justice is therefore not applied.

	Solution: The Service ensures it monitors Released Under Investigation data and there is now a designated Team within the MET whose role is to ensure more timely outcomes are prioritised for under 18s.
Stop and Search	<p>Local stop and search data concludes that most stop and searches do not result in any further action and that some groups have a higher probability of being stopped. The Service continues to see an over-representation of young black/mixed males and the correlation between stop and search is one explanation often discussed between both agencies.</p> <p>Solution: Whilst the solution is often debated and deliberated upon, the Service ensures that it is confident to challenge the Police and where possible applies diversionary means to prevent children from entering the system formally.</p> <p>To ensure the Service is briefed on the learning from Child Q inquiry (2022) ( a female child strip-searched in school during 2020), gaining and understanding of the 14 recommendations included within the report and policy/procedure changes</p>
System changes	<p>Policy changes such as the removal of policing systems once accessed by the Services Serious Youth Violence Analyst has led to a reduction of our analytical abilities for example mapping and making links between groups.</p> <p>Solution: working more closely with the Police on ascertaining information and further alignment with other analysts has been evolving but not entirely resolved the issue.</p>
Overnight stays & PACE beds	<p>There remains to be a number of children who have unfortunately been subjected to staying at the Police Station overnight.</p> <p>Solution: monitoring, challenge and joint working to ensure overnights are avoided.</p>

[child-gravity-matrix-v2.2---september-2023.pdf \(npcc.police.uk\)](https://www.npcc.police.uk/child-gravity-matrix-v2.2---september-2023.pdf)

[Case management guidance - How to use out-of-court disposals - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/case-management-guidance-how-to-use-out-of-court-disposals)

## 16. Prevention –

There are several preventative services available in Croydon via the Local Authority and Voluntary Community Sector. The Local Authority has an Early Help offer for children and families who do not meet statutory thresholds and where there is moderate concern relating to anti-social behaviour and/or exposure to criminality. The Youth Justice Service works closely with the Early Help Team sharing good practice and resources in addition to joint working when a family is known to both Services.

The Service currently has a targeted prevention offer funded by the Ministry of Justice 'Turnaround Project'. The Project is designed to work with children who have been made subject to a community resolution (on the spot cautions), have had a no further action outcome or are released under investigation or bailed where there is no additional Children's Social Care or Youth Justice involvement. The Project is underpinned by the strengthening families model – a model that works with the entire family to make change not solely with the child. Whilst this project sits within the Youth Justice Service structure there is a clear distinction that children open to the project are not within the Youth Justice System. The Project has continued to see high levels of referrals reconfirming there is a need for specialist services in this area.

The project worked with 53 families during 2023-24. 10 of the children were female the remainder male. 22 of the children were black, 16 mixed, 8 white and 1 Asian. 47 of the children were 14+.

A secondary prevention service also sits within the Youth Justice structure 'Engage'. The Teams consists of one Project Lead and has a designated practitioner for Croydon based at Croydon custody suite. The aim of the programme is to ensure that children being arrested (potentially for the first time) are in receipt of a child first response and an offer of assistance and support to prevent further contact with the criminal justice system provided. The offer requires a screening of need with children and families informing the

Team what they feel would help. The offer involves education, health and constructive activities and where required referrals can be made for practical and family support.

Additional prevention services are delivered by the Youth Engagement Team. The Team offers a number of interventions to engage young people across the borough. Services include 1:1 direct work for those of moderate concern, workshops within schools, holiday programmes, outreach work, voice participation forums, joint work with community sector partners and joint work with street doctors teaching young people to administer first aid.

The borough also has a variety of voluntary sector programmes that are closely aligned with the Youth Justice Service including: Palace for Life, Croydon Voluntary Action, BME Forum, Aspire, Reaching Higher, Play Place, Mentivity and My Endz – many of whom are linked to the overall delivery of the borough's My Endz Project. The programmes range from music to sport, education support and health.

## **17. Diversion –**

The Team has a designated Out of Court Manager who oversees all children eligible for Out of Court disposals. There are also two designated practitioners assigned to Out of Court Work, but all Manager and practitioners are trained in this area of work. These disposals include triages, Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions. These disposals provide an alternative to formal Court processes and entry into the Youth Justice System. Each disposal imposed, a child is allocated to a practitioner, who will assess the child and their family/carer ensuring that any needs identified receive support. Croydon Youth Justice Service typically works with children subject to these forms of intervention for a period of 3 month(s) wanting to support but also exit children out of criminal justice processes. However, where there is a need, and a child wishes to extend their work with the Service this will be accommodated.

## **18. Education**

Education, further education and/or employment are proven by research as being a primary desistance factor to avoid further contact with the Criminal Justice System. Consequently, Croydon Youth Justice Service views this area of work as a priority, understanding that each individual may be at different stages, including readiness to re-engage in this area.

The Service has a dedicated Education Manager, funded by the Youth Justice Board grant, whose primary focus is to ensure all children open to the Service of statutory school age are in school. This requires attendance at various panels to ensure children are enrolled and actively attending, in provisions that meet their needs. The role also requires extensive partnership work with the SEN Team, Education and Schools. The Service adheres to a target of 95% of statutory school children to have an identified provision. Challenges are often related to 'school refusers' children for various reasons refusing to attend. In these instances, the Education Manager will work directly with the child and family to support a return or to make representations on behalf of the child their wishes and support needs to return. The Education Manager also collates data and monitors Key Performance Indicators in this area, this includes:

- Suspensions
- Children subjected to part-time hours.
- How many children are home school elected.
- How many children have Education Health & Care Plans
- How many children open to the SEN Team
- How many children are assessed by the Youth Justice Speech and Language Therapist who require further assessments?
- How many children are school refusers?
- Ethnicity of children linked to above.
- Case status of children linked to above.

Reporting to the Education Manager is a ETE Post 16+ Worker. The role of this worker is to work with all year 12 children with no provision and support them to engage with further education or to seek employment. The role requires the worker to see children in the community, assisting them to attend

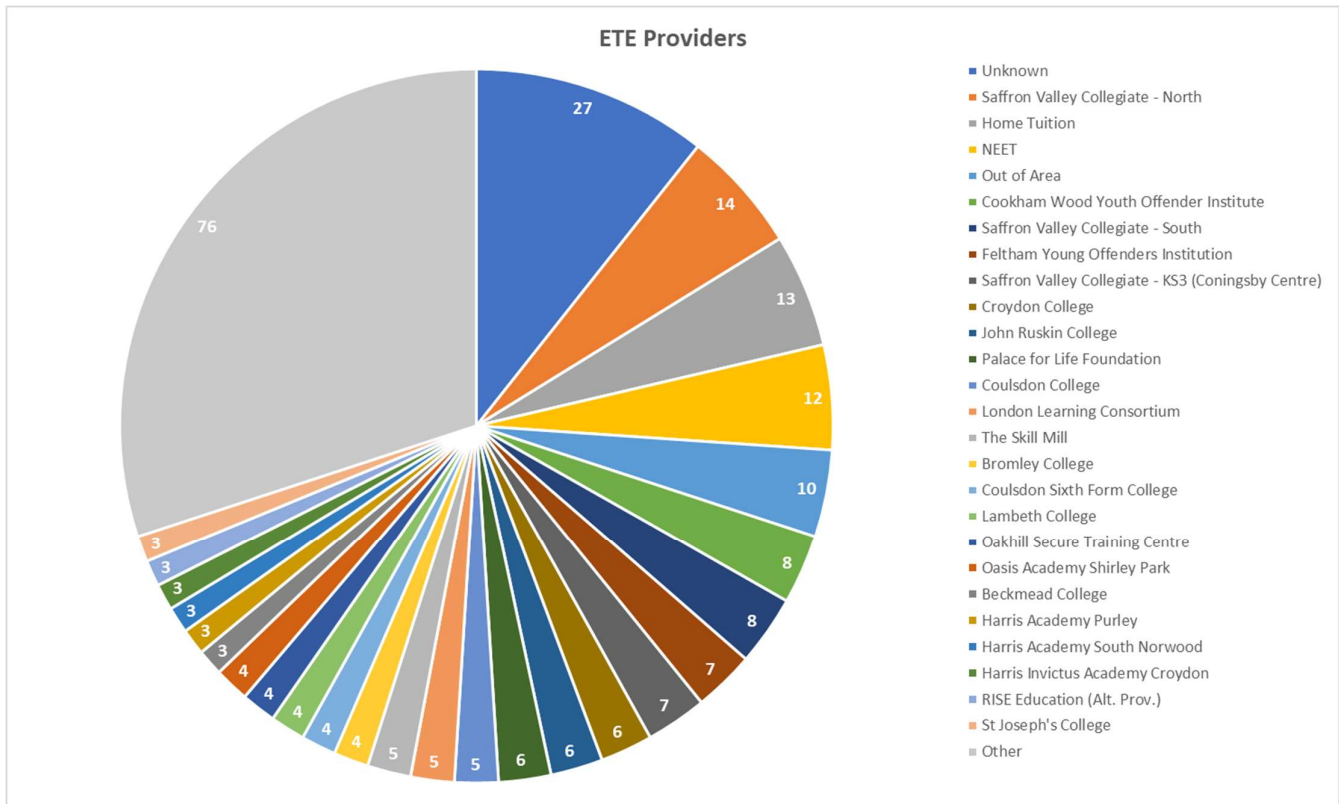
employment fairs or help them with open days at colleges. The direct and practical work is seen as invaluable by parents and children, but often there are additional readiness needs identified and the worker supports children with these needs. Such needs could be practical such as helping apply for identification or opening bank accounts however some needs are linked to literacy and numeracy and the worker, works closely with the Speech and Language therapist to support neurodivergent children open within the cohort. The worker assists with CV formation, interviewing techniques. The worker applies a strength-based approach, listening to the child's aspirations and capabilities. The worker also strives to build connections and links with local providers and the employment sector. The overall target is to have 85% of the cohort within some form of education or employment. The Service works closely with the Participation 16+ within the Local Authority. To note in 2024 the worker was awarded the Council's 'Residence award' for the work undertaken to support young people in this area.

During the year 2023/24 the Service also delivered its own employability scheme titled Skill Mill. Every 6 months the Service would interview and appoint 4 young people to work on various projects, gaining direct work experience with the end goal securing permanent employment. Those appointed would benefit from a training offer, typically in construction and health and safety.

The Speech and Language Therapist also reports to the Education Manager. Each child open to the Service has access to the Therapist, who screens and assesses children's communication needs. Where neurodivergent needs are identified the Speech and Language Therapist will work with the Services Physical Health Nurse and Mental Health Practitioner to seek further assessment and support whether through General Practitioners or CAMHS. Where a need is identified, the Therapist will provide tips on how best to engage the young person and will create what is known as a communication passport, which is often integrated into Court reports for the judiciary to also reference.

In March 2023, Croydon Youth Justice Service were awarded with the Youth Justice SEND Quality Lead Status Redesignation with Child First Commendation. This award is a measure of how the Service works with children who have specialist educational needs and disabilities. An external assessor evaluates work between the Youth Justice Service and SEND Team. Croydon is 1 of 8 London Boroughs who has been the Quality Lead marker, confirming exceptional practice in this area.

In 2021, the local Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in Croydon (Saffron Valley) began a Department for Education funded Project titled the Serious Youth Violence Taskforce. The taskforce provided a holistic offer for children suspected or known to be involved in Serious Youth Violence. Due to a number of children attending the PRU, Croydon Youth Justice were involved from the beginning, by providing staff to attend the provision, strengthening the model which included therapists, speech and language support, group work and youth work. This joint piece of work will continue until 2025 and has strengthened the partnership work between the two agencies, who were working with the same children. A positive was improved communication and understanding of each agencies remit. It also enabled the Youth Justice Service knowledge of resources assigned to the project assisting with avoidance of duplication of work.



## 19. Restorative approaches and victims

Croydon Youth Justice Service is a victim-centric service and has a specialist Restorative Justice (RJ) Team dedicated to deliver services to victims according to their rights, as required under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales (Victims' Code). All the members of the Service and RJ Team are accredited/registered practitioners with the Restorative Justice Council (RJC) as well as experienced trainers and provide regular RJ training sessions to colleagues, Community Panel Members as well as partner agencies and the Courts.

The YJS RJ Team is also an active member of the Restorative Approaches Pan London Group and is involved in the South London Peer Supervision Group. The RJ Team aims to contact all victims harmed by the young people they work with as a service. This includes the victims of young people who have been referred by the Courts for a community or custodial sentence, as well as referrals received by the police for cautions and community resolutions and referrals from current projects focusing on prevention and early interventions.

The RJ Team takes a multi-agency approach, working in partnership with the police and British Transport Police (BTP) to obtain consent for the details of people harmed by crime, according to GDPR and internal processes. The Service has 3 seconded Police Officers who are attached to the Service and co-located, who are trained to use Restorative Approaches when contacting victims and they are committed to making at least two attempts to speak to them directly.

The RJ Team also coordinates victim contacts with other boroughs as well as the National Probation, when there are several co-defendants or when the young person is about to become an adult to ensure consistency during their transition to adult services. When a young person receives a 12 month or longer custodial sentence for a violent or sexual offence, the RJ Team refers the Victim Liaison scheme linked to the Probation for them to receive the support they are entitled to under the Victims' Code.

The RJ Team prioritises the needs of victims by ensuring they receive clear information about the process and their rights. This is achieved through direct engagement with victims over the telephone and home

visits, as requested, and by ensuring that relevant letters are translated, and meetings interpreted when required.

Victims' needs are made a priority by ensuring that young and vulnerable victims receive the support necessary, parents/carers involvement is strongly encouraged throughout the process and special care is given to victims who present with specific physical and mental disabilities. After an initial conversation with the RJ Team around the offence and the impact this has had on them and their families, victims are offered the opportunity to engage in a wide range of direct and indirect restorative interventions. These include formal and informal restorative conferences, shuttle mediation, apology letters and videos. This is to ensure that those harmed have the opportunity to be heard and their requests are addressed. Very often victims need reassurance that this is not going to happen again, would like the young person to hear the impact the incident has had or they wish to receive an apology, therefore the RJ Team will work with the young person in question to support them to satisfy the requests from the victims.

The RJ Team has developed a number of specific tailored AQA accredited interventions to facilitate this process. Victims are also offered the opportunity to participate in the Referral Order process directly or indirectly and they are also given the option to choose which reparation projects young people attend as a way to make up for the harm caused. Our practice is victim-led, and we adhere to the Victims' Code, therefore offering victims regular updates on the progress made by the young person, either in writing or over the telephone, as they prefer. Victims may have specific needs that cannot be met by our service and in this instance, they are referred to relevant support services, such as Victim Support, housing, counselling or positive activities for example. Victims are also supported through attending court to read their statement directly by the RJ Team or in partnership with relevant Witness Services. Often victims have queries about compensation and are therefore directed to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme. The RJ Team discusses safety during the initial contact with victims and then raises any specific requests around non-contact or exclusion zones with the wider professional network. Any concern is then discussed at our regular multi-agency meetings such as the Resettlement Panel, New Case Panel, Joint Discussion Meeting and Risk and Vulnerability Panel, chaired by the Service Manager, with the aim to create an accurate safety plan.

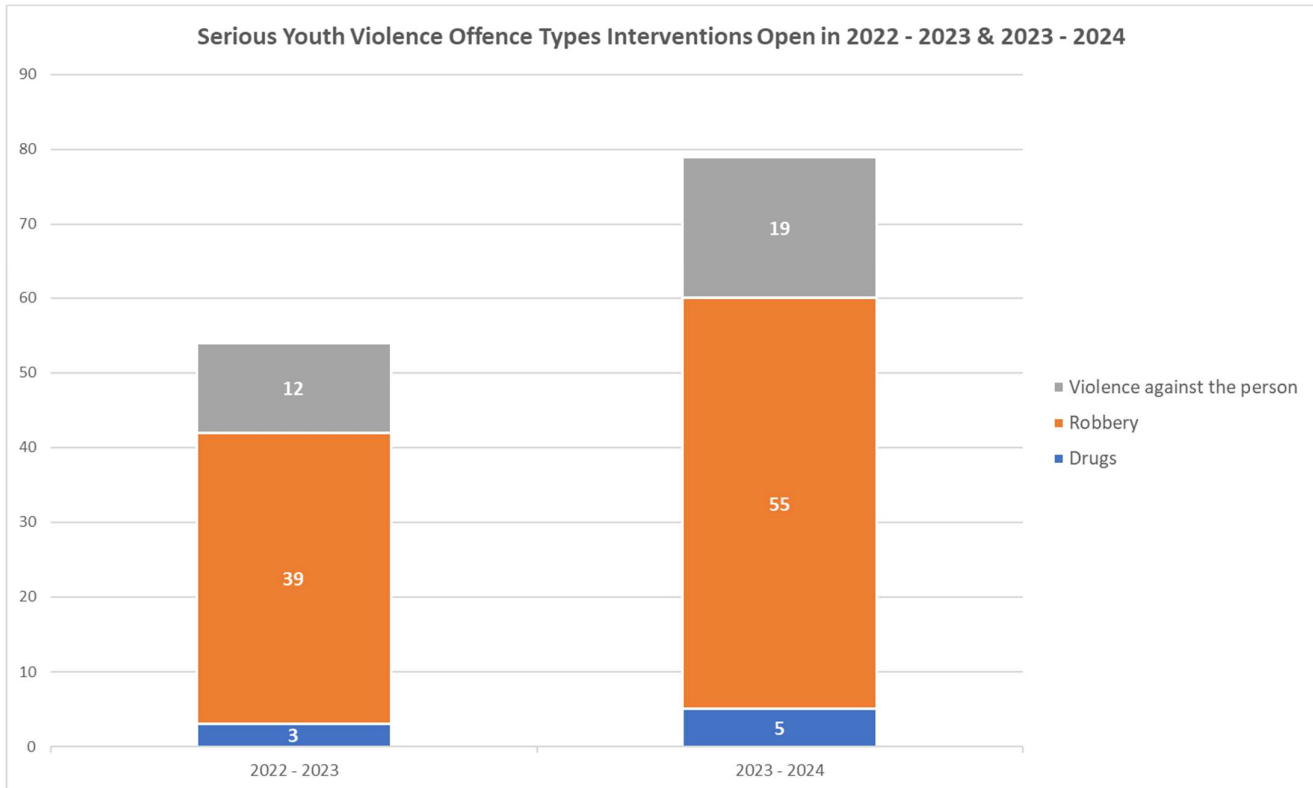
The Croydon RJ Team contacts not only individuals but also corporate victims to give them the opportunity to share how they have been impacted. Some of the impact statements from corporate victims have been used to develop accredited programmes about Shoplifting and knife crime to be used with young people to help them develop a pro-social identity. Receiving feedback from victim is extremely important to us, therefore in addition to asking for verbal feedback, we also have an online system to ensure victims are given the opportunity to shape the service we provide anonymously. Complaint procedures are also made available to victims.

All staff are trained to deliver specific victim awareness sessions supported by the RJ Team. The sessions are designed to assist young people to consider the impact their offending has had on individuals and their wider community. Children receive a AQA award for completing the content.

The RJ Team also oversees indirect reparation projects and unpaid work, projects designed to provide young people with the opportunity to make amends to the community as a whole. The RJ Team has an Interventions worker who assists with building relations with local charities and projects, where young people can engage and assist, offering a contribution back to the communities they may have harmed. A variety of projects have been created to ensure suitability for young people based on their availability and additional needs that may present. **(see appendix 7 – reparation projects).**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime/code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime-in-england-and-wales-victims-code>

## 20. Serious violence, exploitation and contextual safeguarding



The London Borough of Croydon is compliant with the Serious Violence Duty, given levels of violence reported. The Serious Violence Duty requires Local Authorities to complete a strategic assessment and analysis of data relating to violence and using this data to devise a strategic plan on how to tackle violence. Consequently, the Local Authorities objectives are detailed in the Youth Safety Plan, a plan created in partnership, looking at ways to prevent and reduce violence within the borough. The Youth Justice Service and its areas of work are featured within this strategic plan. **(Youth Safety Plan – appendix 2).**

Croydon Youth Justice Service and Partners continue to apply a Public Health approach when tackling Serious Youth Violence.

In summary a public health approach incorporates:

- **Uses data to inform a response.** The Youth Justice Service has a dedicated Serious Youth Violence Analyst who works collaboratively with the Violence Reduction Unit, Children’s Social Care and MET Police to analyse data. Identifying risks, patterns and themes.
- **Seeks to understand the cause of the issue.** Surveys, participation groups, discussions with children, parents, schools and the community help Croydon Youth Justice Service understand in detail the causes of serious youth violence.
- **Seeks evidence of effectiveness to tackle the issue recognising that often those involved in Serious Youth Violence have often been victims themselves.** The Service uses research, shared practice and feedback from children to determine what works.
- **Generates long-term and short-term solutions.** Croydon Youth Justice Service recognises that what works for one child may not work for another and therefore is adaptive in approach, using partnerships and a holistic approach to strengthen responses.
- **Community Partnership.** Croydon Youth Justice Service aligns itself with the Community. Projects such as My Endz specifically funded, supporting the voluntary community sector (VCS) to deliver on tackling Serious Youth violence within designated hotspots, with the support of statutory services.

Similar to other health matters, the public health approach views serious youth violence as a contagious disease.

- It aims to prevent exposure of serious youth violence recognising it can spread. (primary prevention)
- Responds to exposure of serious youth violence. (secondary prevention)
- Develops methods to treat those exposing serious youth violence ((tertiary prevention).

Croydon’s My Endz model embeds all three layers and works with the following agencies:

Primary Intervention	Palace for Life & Play Place	Croydon Youth Justice Service works closely with both organisations. Referring via preventative Turnaround and Engage Projects at the earliest opportunity to engage children into constructive pursuits both sports and arts. In 2023, Palace for Life, jointly with the Service bided to deliver bespoke sports interventions for those at risk of entry into the system and was successful. This provided a number of children a direct route into sports activities across the borough.
Secondary Intervention	Reaching Higher & P4YE	Croydon Youth Justice Service works closely with both organisations. Both organisations specialise in mentoring and the Service has worked with both services in offering bespoke programmes, particularly for children who have committed robberies. As noted earlier in the report, Croydon Youth Justice has worked collaboratively with South Norwood Kitchen food and clothes bank, supported by Reaching Higher. This project has provided work experience for children, learning a variety of skills.
Tertiary Intervention	Inspire & Mentivity	Croydon Youth Justice Service works closely with both organisations. Both organisations have experience working with more prolific young people,



		<p>offering mentoring and programmes to engage those deemed the most entrenched within the borough. Mentivity provides children within the Youth Justice Service specialist mentoring and Inspire has jointly delivered a number of projects with the Service including boxing and other constructive pursuits in addition to mentoring and support with ETE.</p>
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Serious Youth Violence is a safeguarding issue and is often linked to a child’s own victimisation and exploitation. This is known as ‘contextual safeguarding’ where the risk sits outside of the child’s home.

National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking or modern-day slavery and works to ensure that children assessed as exploited are receiving appropriate support. The framework is viewed as linked to serious youth violence, recognising that the perpetration of serious youth violence is often linked to a child’s own victimisation and criminal exploitation. For example, an adult asks a child to carry drugs to a county and the child, often in possession of large quantities of high value drugs, feels the necessity to protect themselves by carrying a weapon in the fear of being robbed or targeted. It is therefore no surprise that the top two offences within Croydon Youth Justice are weapon related and drug related offending.

In 2023, the Local Authority was successful in their application to pilot an internal National Referral Mechanism framework, which had typically been delivered by the Home Office. The Pilot has led to decision making on whether a child is being exploited, to be decided upon internally, this has typically seen a reduction in delay. Croydon Youth Justice Service are representative at the Local Authorities NRM Panel, which is held weekly, which determines decision making and looks at interventions on those assessed as being criminally or sexually exploited. All Youth Justice Managers have been trained by the Home Office on NRM processes. The panel is aligned to the Local Authorities Multi-agency Child Exploitation (MACE) processes.

During 2023/24 139 referrals were received for MACE of which 113 were accepted. In March 2024 119 children were subject to MACE. Of the 119, 36, were known to Croydon Youth Justice Service (30.25%).

Breakdown by intervention type MACE/YJS–

Intervention Type	Count
Bail Support and Supervision	4
Diversion Programme	1
DTO Custody	1
Referral Order	16
Remand to LAA Status/Programme	2
Section 250	1

Youth Caution	3
Youth Conditional Caution	1
Youth Rehabilitation Order	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>

30 of these children were on MACE for Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), 5 for CCE and Criminal Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and 1 for CSE, 5 of these children were deemed as having Emerging Risk, 6 Low Risk, 13 Medium Risk, 12 High Risk.

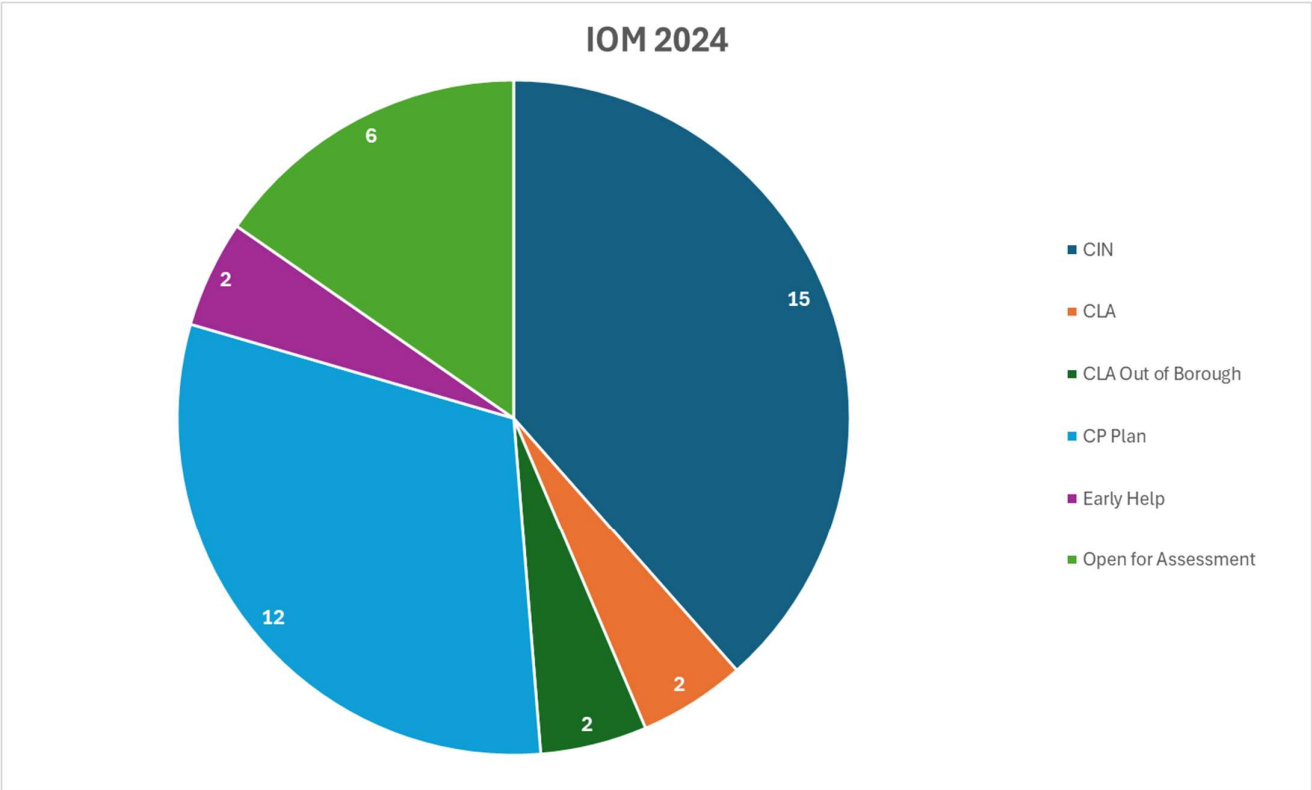
Rescue and Response is a pan-London county-lines support service for children and young people up to the age of 25, who are actively involved in county-lines and subsequently criminal and/or sexual exploitation. The organisation provides training for front-line practitioners in this area, creates regional intelligence hubs and analysis of data on county-lines across London and provides support and specialist interventions to young people involved in county-lines activity. Rescue and Response has now had an established relationship with Croydon Youth Justice Service since 2019.

### **Integrated Offender Management –**

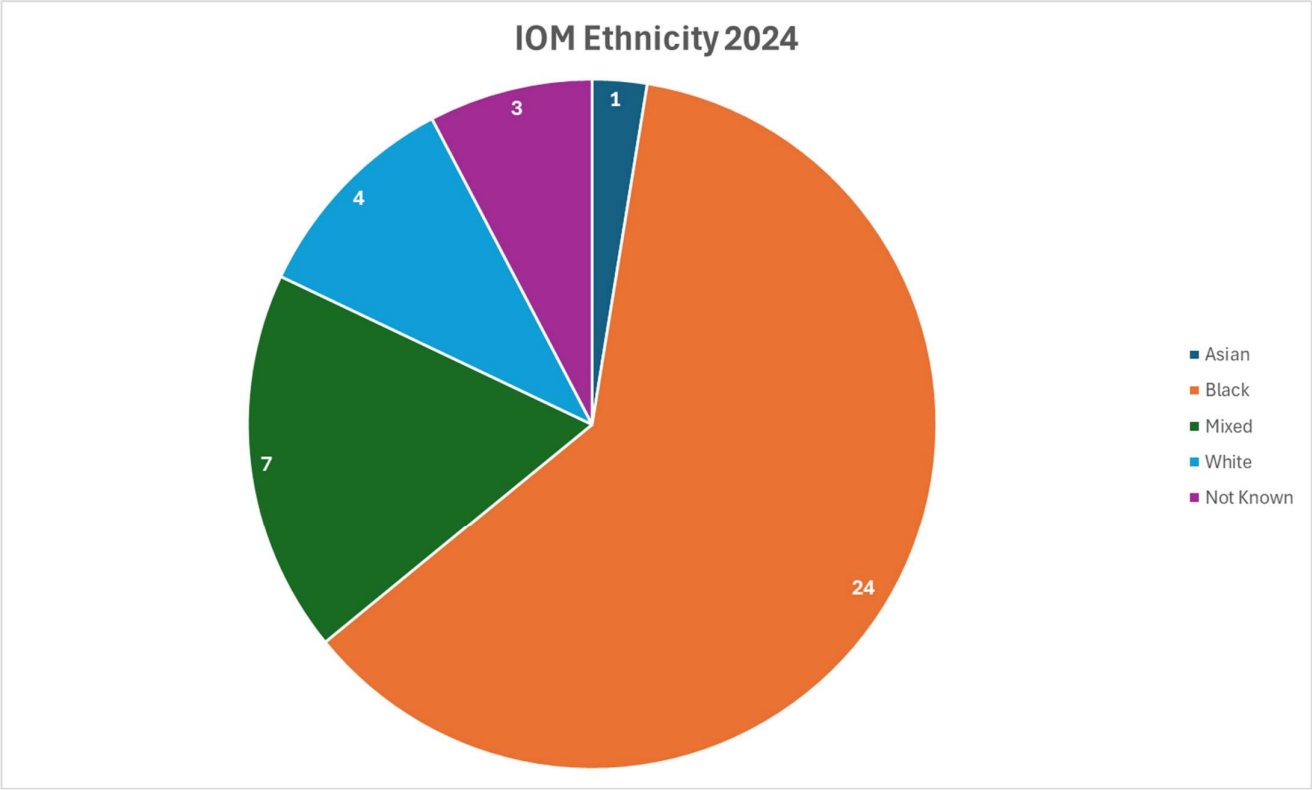
The Integrated Offender Management scheme is run by the Youth Justice Service, jointly with the Police's Serious Youth Crime Unit, identifying children who have repeated episodes of Serious Youth Violence, where additional support and monitoring is required. Children identified are deemed as red (severe risk), amber (medium risk) green (low risk) or blue (a risk but in custody). Ratings are transient with a child whose activity reduces being deemed green before being removed if no further intelligence is sustained.

At the time of writing (2024) there were 31 identified children and a further 10 children who had positively been removed.

Children on the scheme are discussed monthly in conjunction with Children's Social Care, Education and Community Safety. Daily intelligence reports are received if the child encounters the Police, thus enhancing communication between the two Criminal Justice agencies and partners. Children and families are advised that a child is subject to the scheme. The Serious Youth Violence Unit has a designated Officer assigned to the under 18s scheme and this Officer works closely with allocated Youth Justice Officers, often co-located, and joint work includes conducting joint home visits and engagement. The designation of a specified Police Officer, who is child-first in their approach, has led to improved community-police relations and in many instances, children have significantly reduced their offending behaviour and been removed from the scheme. The scheme acts as a form of deterrent with the child being aware that there is increased monitoring on their activity but also expedites enforcement when required.



A break-down of Children's social care status, for those subject to this scheme is shown above.



## 21. Detention in police custody –

Children arrested and presented at the Police Station are entitled to legal advice under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE). Where a parent or carer is not available to act as an appropriate adult (AA) the child is provided with an approved appropriate adult. Within Croydon this Service is commissioned to The Appropriate Adult Service (TAAS). The scheme is reported by local police to run well, and Police, Social Care and Youth Justice are familiar with the processes and organisation.

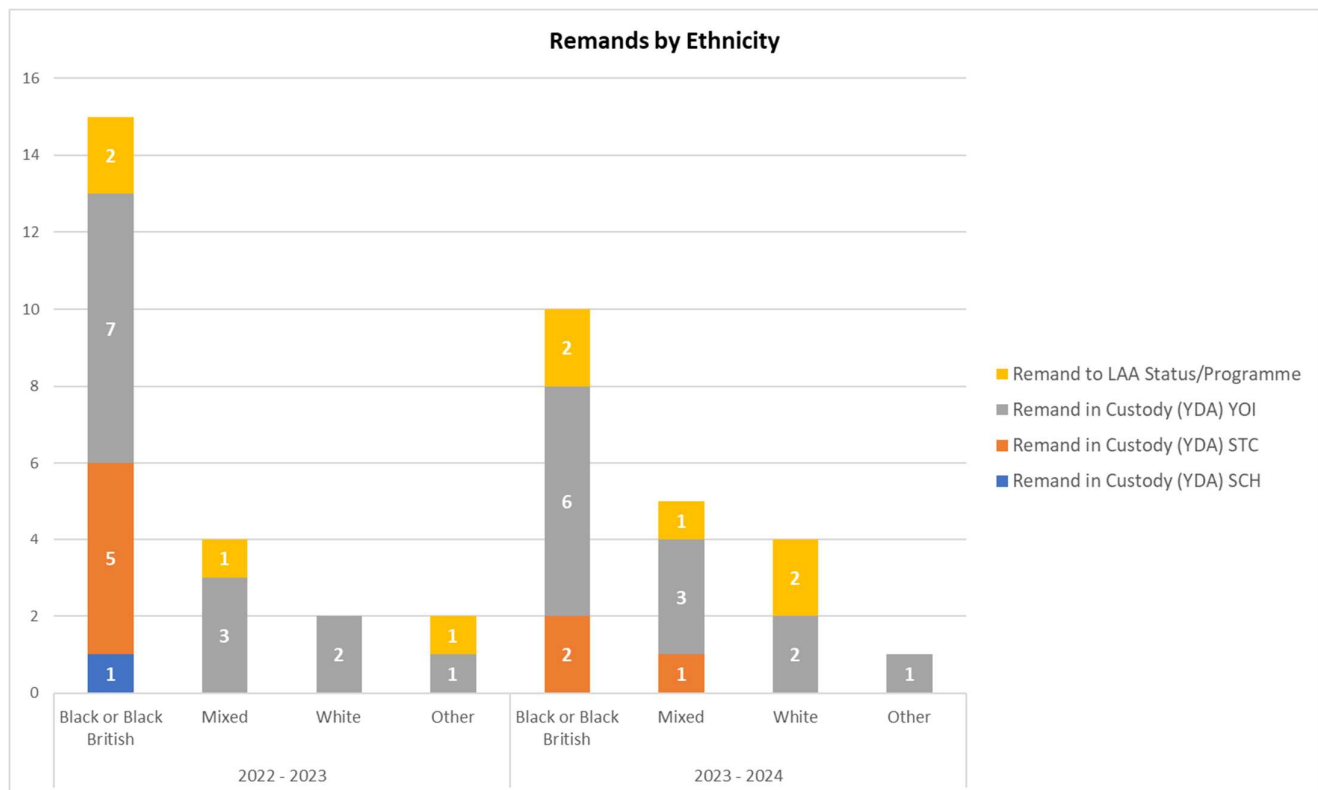
Operational Harbinger has been in operation since 2021, within the borough, and has improved communication between the Police and Local Authority reporting on all children who are in custody. The process requires Officers to contact Social Care’s MASH Team and Emergency Duty Team when out of hours to formally notify of a child’s arrest. Where the Police foresee an overnight admission of a child’s they will comply with PACE regulations and notify Social Care to see if any alternative accommodation can be sought.

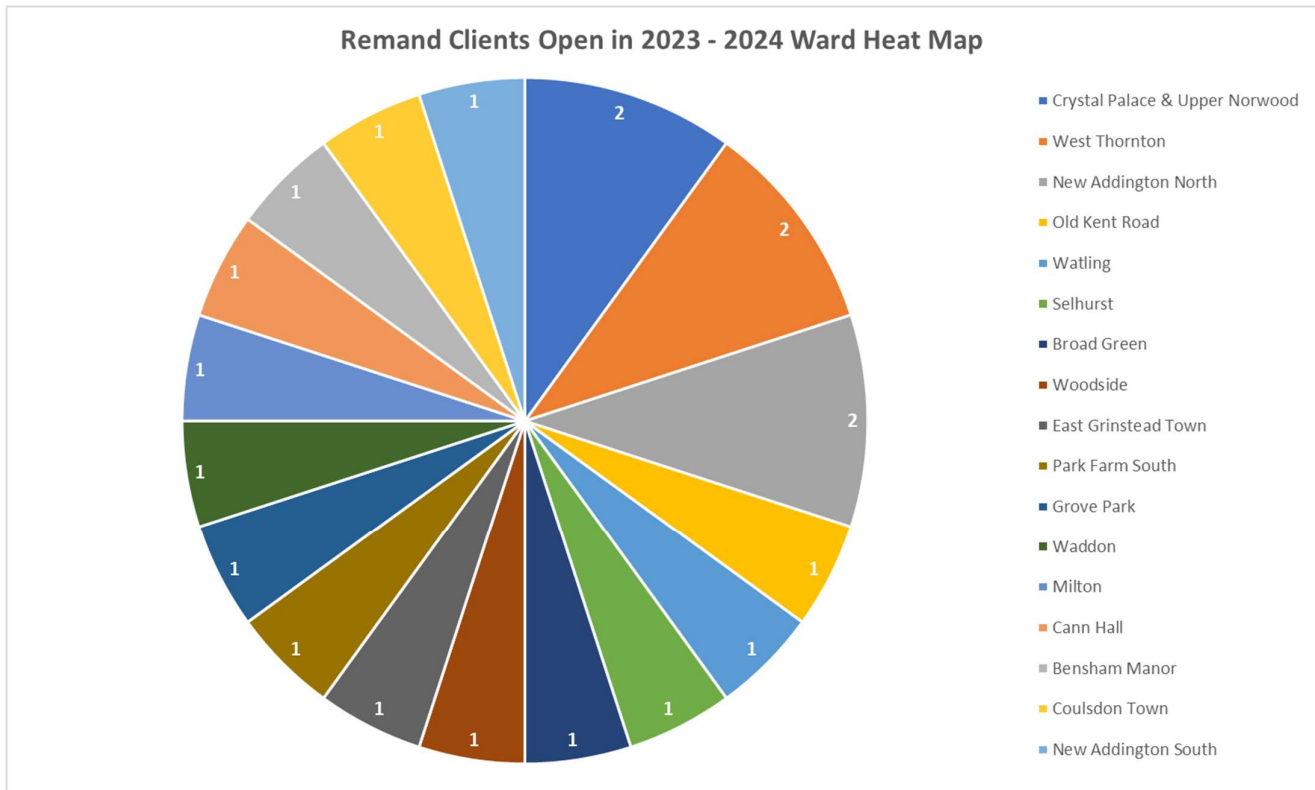
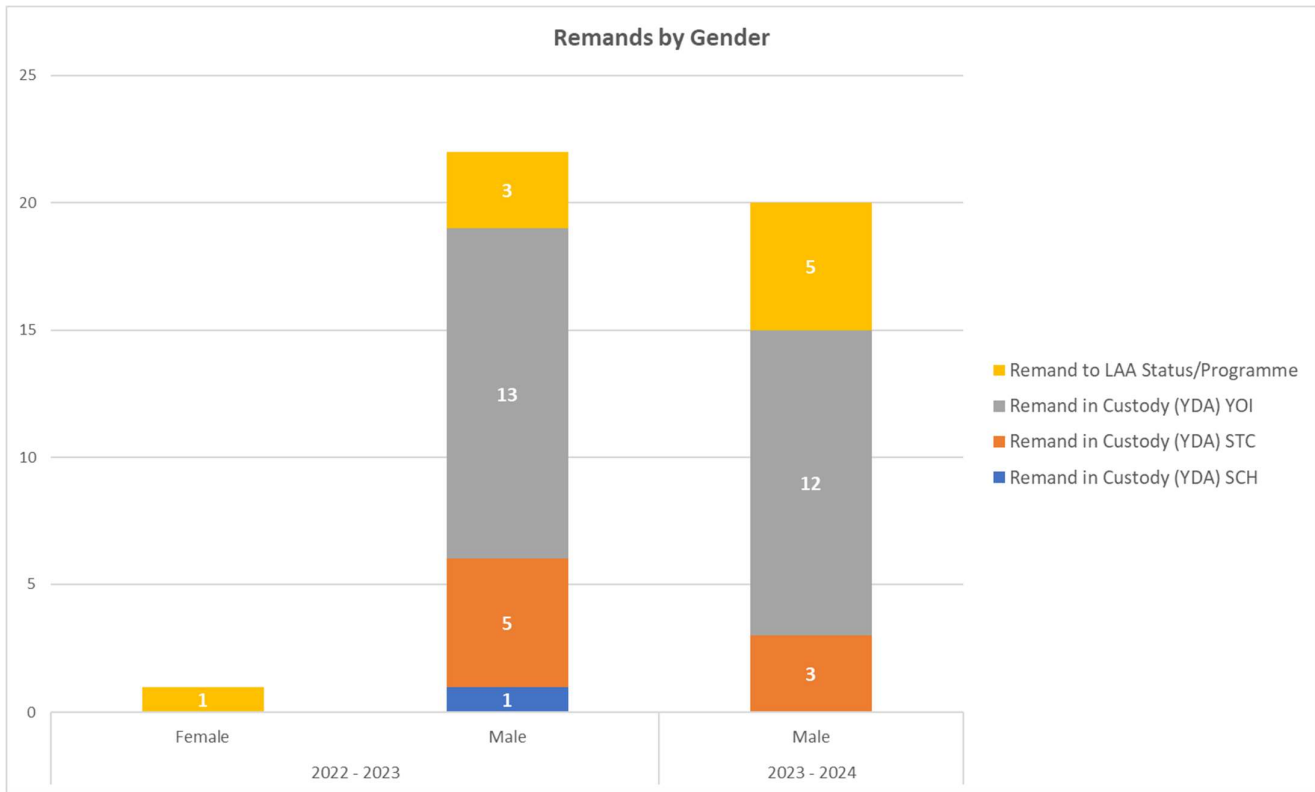
Children appearing within the custody suite will also have access to the Liaison and Diversion Health Worker (Delivered by the Crisis Team). Where a child is presenting with emotional health concerns they will be seen and supported by a specialist. This information is shared with Social Care and Youth Justice and where necessary will be picked up following a child’s appearance at the Police station.

## 22. Remands

The Legal Aid Sentencing, Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 provides the Court with powers to remand a young person. The Court can remand.

- Into Local Authority Care
- Into Secure Training Centre(s)/Units
- Into Youth Detention (Young Offenders Institutions)





Croydon Youth Justice Service recognises that custody should be a final resort for children and is not a conducive environment to reduce recidivism or promote desistance. The Service is experienced in creating bespoke bail packages to dissuade the Court from imposing custody. Proposed packages account for community safety and victim considerations recognising its role within public protection but also to increase outcomes for children. Youth Justice bail packages will consider the following:

- Victim consideration/wishes including no contact clauses and exclusions from locations where the victim frequents.
- Exclusion from specific areas if felt linked to offending behaviour.
- Prohibited activities (e.g. not to travel on specific transports means or to attend a specific building)
- Curfew(s) (doorstep/electronic/GPS)
- Non-association with co-defendants
- Reporting requirements to both Youth Justice & Police Station
- To reside at specific address (including outside of borough)
- In some instances, to comply with the Youth Justice Intensive Supervision Surveillance Programme (daily contact with the Youth Justice Service, combining education and programme attendance in addition to curfew monitoring).

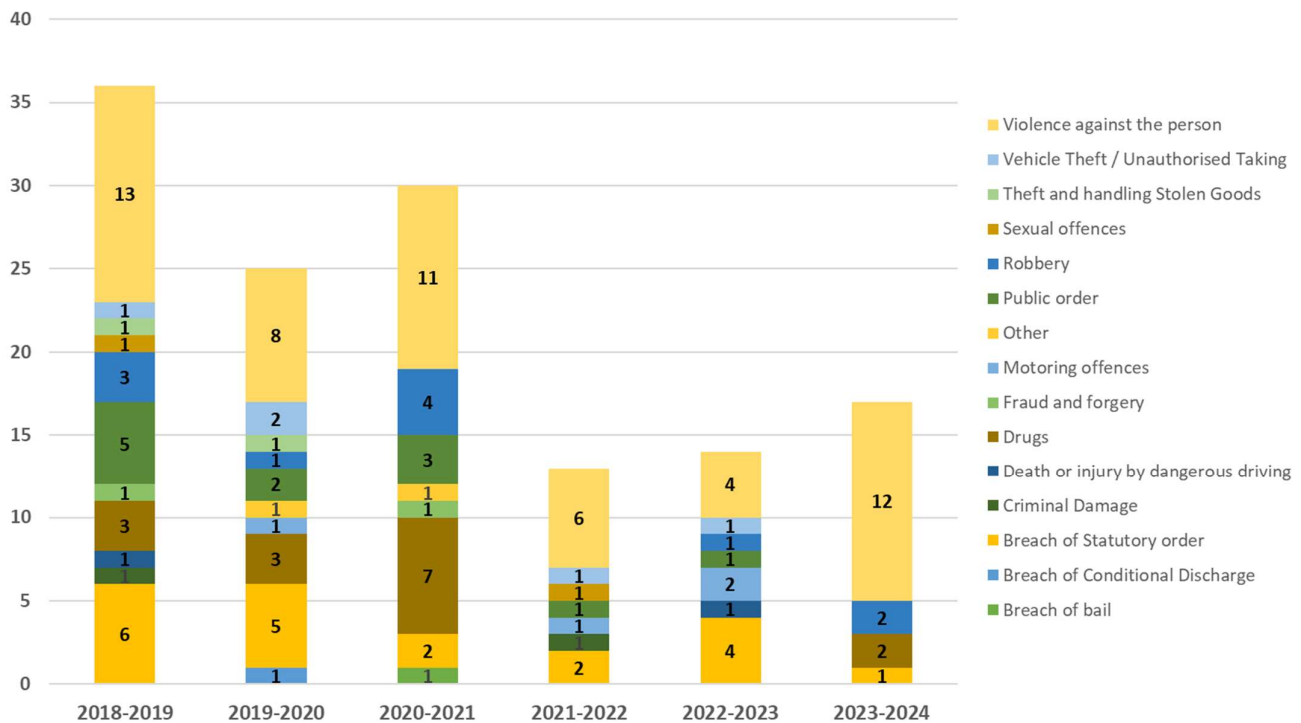
Bail packages require partnership inclusion and the Youth Justice Service with consult with education provisions, the voluntary community sector, social care and the Police when devising bespoke packages.

If a child is remanded and already open to the Service, they will retain their allocated Officer, who will remain in contact with the child and visit the child at a minimum monthly. The Youth Justice Officer will also ensure that they have details of the Case Manager linked to the secure setting and will remain in consistent communication with the secure estate. Often the role of the Youth Justice Officer is to advocate on behalf of the child in custody, ensuring they are safe, and their needs are being met – this includes health, education and social. Where a child is not known and remanded, they will be allocated an Officer who will carry out the same practice as above. Additionally, the Youth Justice Officer will remain in contact with family and carers ensuring contact is upheld.

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

In January 2024 there were 440 children in custody (nationally) a fall of 3% from the previous year. The national picture has been replicated in Croydon's declining custody numbers of children. I

Custody by Year



As the data provides, many of the children in custody will transition into the adult secure estate and transition under the supervision of the National Offending Management Service and National Probation Service. Preparing children for this transition is vital. The Service has a probation secondee whose expertise assists Youth Justice Officers preparing children moving between establishments. Many establishments also have programmes within the secure estate to help children adapt and prepare to future moves.

For those children who will come out into the community under the supervision of the Youth Justice Service, planning for release begins at entry into custody. Croydon Youth Justice Service uses the 5 Cs of resettlement, based on research proving to have the most positive outcomes for children, when planning for release.

- Constructive resettlement
- Co-created resettlement
- Customised resettlement
- Consistent resettlement
- Co-ordinated resettlement

Constructive focuses on framing all support around achieving pro-social development. This requires the practitioner to remain positive and support the child having hope by encouraging use of activities that assist with pro-social development. The Practitioner requires an understanding in motivational interviewing skills and to empower young people. This practice method moves away from repeatedly focusing on past behaviour.

Co-created ensures that the child leads on their resettlement plan, by listening to their wishes. The practitioner works with the child to enable them to meet objectives they have identified for themselves.

Customised resettlement is the continued support offered to the child to meet their vision. It helps the child explore who they are, supporting them with their own identify and embedding diversity.

Consistent focuses on identity development from the start, this relies on consistency and inclusion of the child's support network to reinforce positive self-image.

Co-ordinated – the Youth Justice Practitioner acts as a broker to help co-ordinate necessary support for child. A plan should be based on strengths and aspirations, sequenced but timely and well communicated to a child and their network. Some aspects of co-ordination may require contingency planning.

The release from custody can be a challenging time for children. Issues children are faced with include accommodation, education, health needs, re-joining negative peer groups and re-connection with exploitive adults. The Youth Justice Service has devised a number of policies for practitioners to consider when preparing for resettlement, policies are based on the Youth Justice Board’s case management guidance (2022). However, resettlement requires holistic service accessibility, work with partners and careful planning that is led by the child’s wishes.

**24. Working with families –**

Croydon Youth Justice works within a systemic framework, with most of the workforce trained in systemic practice.

Systemic principles lead, the service to consider beyond the individual and look at the children’s family, community and structural factors. Departmentally, the practice model is underpinned by systemic theory, this meaning joint work with Children’s Social Care and Early Help also supports a whole systems approach.

The model applied in Early Help and the Youth Justice prevention model is Strengthening Families, a research informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce likelihood for abuse or neglect. The practitioner is required to work with all members of the household to improve outcomes. Strengthening families’ objectives are to improve parental resilience, enhance social connections, provide families with information on parenting and child development, look to improve support networks and work with child on social and emotional competence. This way of working recognises the need for multidisciplinary teams.

The Youth Justice Service ensures it keeps up to date with the Local Authorities Parenting Offer, this offer includes a range of groups and 1:1 support for parents, with children of all ages. Staff from the Parenting Team are regularly invited to Management and Team meetings to discuss courses. Staff will discuss available support with parents and complete a referral where consent is agreed. Courses are voluntary. Additionally, the Service works with the Local Authority’s Clinical Team, who provide family therapy. Often families are reserved, particularly with attending therapy, for several reasons they may not be ready. In these instances, the Service applies a relational approach, supporting families and parents in other ways including linking them with voluntary community services that may present as less formal and clinical and serve to support them into more clinical services where required. Parents who engaged with the Youth Justice Service Parents evening all stated that they felt supported by the Service. For them having a clear communication channel, having things explained but also having practical support was of importance.

**25. Sign off and approval**

Chair of Youth Justice Board	Debbie Jones
Signature	
Date	July 2024

Appendix 1 – Staffing Structure



Appendix 1 Structure  
Chart.docx

Appendix 2 – Youth Safety Plan





Appendix 2  
Youth\_Safety\_Delivery

### Appendix 3 – Youth Crime Board Terms of Reference



Appendix 3 YCPYOS  
Board TOR 2023.docx

### Appendix 4 – Croydon Youth Justice Disproportionality Action Plan



Appendix 4 Croydon  
Youth Justice Disprop

### Appendix 5 – Croydon Youth Justice Voice Participation Strategy



Appendix 5 YJS Voice  
Participation Strategy

### Appendix 6 – Croydon Youth Justice Workforce Development Plan



Appendix 6  
Workforce Developm

### Appendix 7 – Croydon Youth Justice Reparation Projects



Appendix 7 Available  
Reparation Projects .d

### Appendix 8 – Joint working protocol



Appendix 8 Joint  
Working Protocol 202