

YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE STRATEGY 2024-2029 UPDATE

Committee name	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
Officer reporting	Kudakwashe Kurashwa, Head of Service, Youth and Adolescent Services
Papers with report	Appendix A – Hillingdon Youth Justice Five-Year Strategy 2024 – 2029
Ward	All

HEADLINES

This report provides an update on the Hillingdon Youth Justice Service (HYJS) Five Year Strategy (2024-2029), outlining strategic priorities, performance data and key initiatives aimed at preventing youth offending, reducing reoffending and promoting restorative justice. The strategy is anchored in a child first ethos that emphasises early intervention, equity and holistic support for both children and victims.

The ongoing development and delivery of the Youth Justice Strategy directly align with the Council's overarching vision of *putting residents first* and its ambition for Hillingdon to be a safe, inclusive, more digital borough with a strong economy. The work of HYJS contributes meaningfully to these ambitions by safeguarding vulnerable young people, promoting safer communities and ensuring children and families are supported to thrive.

More specifically, the strategy underpins two of the Council's five core commitments to residents:

- **Safe and strong communities:** The Youth Justice Strategy supports this commitment by reducing the risks associated with youth crime, improving community safety and working collaboratively with partners to build resilience and strength within local neighbourhoods.
- **Thriving, healthy households:** By championing a child centred model and focusing on early help, prevention and rehabilitation, HYJS enables children, young people and their families to live healthy, active and independent lives, while ensuring vulnerable cohorts receive timely, targeted support.

In this context, the Youth Justice Strategy plays a vital role not only in addressing offending behaviours but also in contributing to the wider social, educational and wellbeing outcomes that help young people reach their potential. The service works closely with statutory and voluntary sector partners to create positive pathways, reduce systemic barriers and ensure that young people remain engaged in prosocial, future focused activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

1. **Notes the progress and strategic direction outlined in the Hillingdon Youth Justice Five-Year Strategy; and**
2. **Notes the continued focus on prevention, early intervention and restorative justice as key priorities for youth justice in Hillingdon.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Hillingdon Council, under S.38 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, is committed to providing youth justice services for children aged 10 -18. The principal aim is to prevent offending through early intervention, prevention and rehabilitation. The strategy was developed in consultation with children, families and partners, reflecting on performance and considering local and national drivers. The Hillingdon Youth Justice operates in line with a clear and ambitious vision: *to be a fair, inclusive, child-first youth justice service that empowers every child to thrive, supports victims of crime, and repairs harm within safer, stronger communities*. The mission is equally focused i.e. diverting children from the criminal justice system, preventing offending and reoffending and reducing reliance on custody through restorative, welfare-led approaches. At the heart of this work lies a strong safeguarding mandate, delivered through multi-agency collaboration and embedded within the Hillingdon Family Help model.

Strategic Priorities

The strategy sets out five priorities:



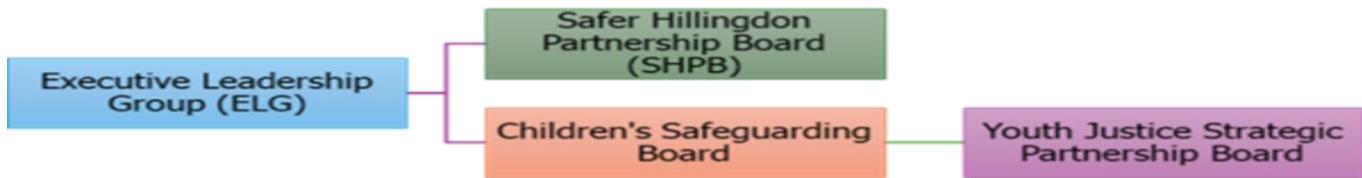
Context

Hillingdon is a diverse borough with a growing child population and significant challenges, including poverty, social deprivation, and over-representation of certain groups in the youth justice system. HYJS is located within the Children, Families and Education Directorate and benefits from strong governance, leadership, and partnership arrangements.

Governance and Partnerships

HYJS is funded centrally and through statutory partners. Operating in line with Youth Justice

Board guidance, the Youth Justice Strategic Partnership Board (YJSPB) convenes senior representatives from statutory partners to ensure strategic coherence and accountability. The Corporate Director's membership across key governance forums including the Safer Hillingdon Partnership Board, Children's Safeguarding Partnership Board, Integrated Care Board and well as the Executive Leadership Group, enables the YJSPB to influence wider agendas and mobilise cross-sector resources.



PERFORMANCE DATA

The performance evidence underpinning the Hillingdon Youth Justice Five Year Strategy (2024-2029) demonstrates a youth justice system that has strengthened year on year, driven by early intervention, strong partnerships and a child first ethos.

Over the past five years, the borough has sustained strong performance in reducing First Time Entrants (FTEs). Although numbers fluctuated during and after the pandemic, FTEs remain significantly below prepandemic levels, with 64 children entering the system in 2019/20, falling to 38 in 2021/22, and stabilising at 46 in 2023/24. This trend reflects the effectiveness of prevention pathways including triage, community resolutions and Hillingdon's AXIS intelligence led approach. *Turnaround* has exceeded Ministry of Justice targets each year, engaging 9 children in 2022/23 and 32 in 2023/24, surpassing set quotas.

Across the same period, the total number of youth justice outcomes reduced from 246 in 2019/20 to 100 in 2023/24, with court outcomes falling by **54%**, out of court disposals by **65%**, and triage outcomes by **77.5%**. This represents a significant system wide shift towards proportionate, early intervention responses and reduced criminalisation, particularly for low level offences where community resolutions now dominate.

Performance in custody also shows sustained improvement. Custodial sentences decreased from eight to seven in 2022/23, and the custody rate remains comparatively low at 0.22 per 1,000 children aged 10–17. Remands have both reduced in number and shortened in duration, from an average of 63 days to 36 days. Despite this, disproportionality persists children from Black and Mixed ethnic backgrounds are three times more likely to receive a custodial sentence and accounted for 69% of new remands.

The borough's reoffending rate, while fluctuating due to small cohort sizes, compares favourably with national data. Published Ministry of Justice figures show a reduction from **40.5%** to **37.5%**, while local analysis suggests a more accurate estimate of **32.8%**, slightly above the national average but below the London average. The cohort who reoffend typically present with complex trauma, unmet health needs and high levels of vulnerability which helps to illustrate and explain the rates detailed above.

The service has also delivered strong performance against new Youth Justice Board indicators introduced in 2023. Hillingdon reports 96% of children in suitable accommodation, compared with 86% nationally and 87% of school aged children in fulltime education at the end of their intervention. For non school aged children, ETE engagement improved from 56% to **67%** year on

year. These outcomes are supported by integrated work across Early Help, SEND and the dedicated YJS Health Hub, with **39%** of children identified as requiring mental health or emotional wellbeing support which is significantly above national averages.

A defining strength of HYJS is its embedded speech and language therapy offer, with 480 children assessed since 2018 and between **58%** and **72%** identified with communication needs annually. This early identification supports fairer justice processes and more effective intervention planning.

Finally, the restorative justice offer has been strengthened, with victim engagement rising to **90%** **in 2023/24** and the majority of participating victims opting for letters of apology or direct conferences. Feedback evidences improved victim confidence and emotional resolution.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

The strategy benefits residents by creating safer communities, reducing youth offending and supporting vulnerable children and victims. Early intervention and holistic support promote positive outcomes, resilience and opportunities for children to thrive.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

HYJS is funded through central and partner contributions, with annual budget setting reflecting service needs and demographic growth. Continued investment supports effective service delivery and strategic priorities.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The strategy is delivered in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and relevant youth justice legislation. Legal comments are not obligatory for this information report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- London Reducing Criminalisation of Looked After Children and Care Leavers Protocol ([link](#))
- Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales ([link](#))

APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Hillingdon Youth Justice Five-Year Strategy 2024-2029
- Appendix B – Youth Justice Board for England and Wales Strategic Plan 2024–2027