

North Yorkshire Council

Corporate & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee

16th March 2026

Annual Performance Update - Youth Justice Service

Report of the Corporate Director for Children & Young People Service

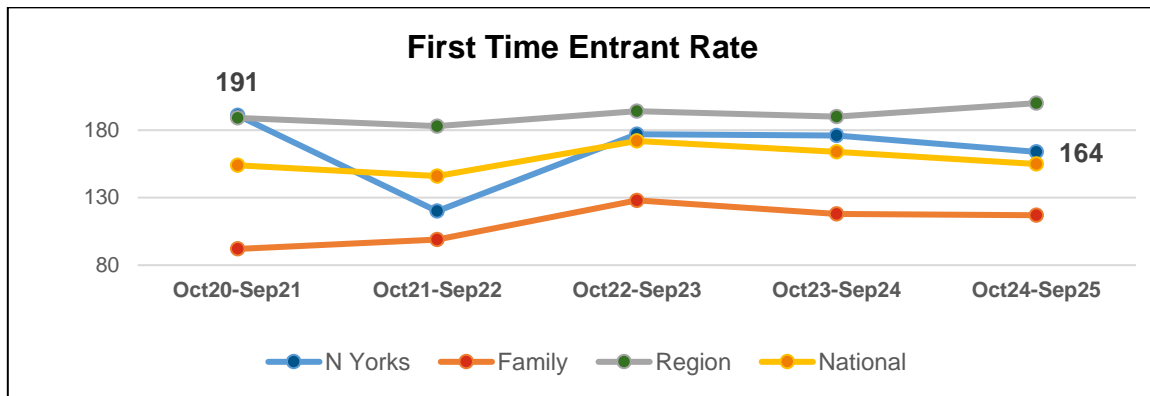
1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an annual performance and service overview of the North Yorkshire Youth Justice Service for consideration by the Corporate Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It sets out current performance information and service context, and includes specific sections on inspection preparation and readiness, strengthened arrangements for victims, and the introduction of a new traffic diversion programme due to commence on 1 March 2026.
- 1.2 The North Yorkshire Youth Justice Service sits within the wider Early Help and Children & Families portfolio, providing a single, coordinated pathway for children who display risky, harmful, or offending behaviour. The service is delivered in line with Child First principles, recognising that children who come into contact with the justice system are often those with the greatest levels of unmet need.
- 1.3 The service works closely with teams across the Council—including Housing, Safer Communities—as well as with health partners, education providers, North Yorkshire Police, the courts, voluntary organisations and community-based services. The move to a unitary authority has further strengthened these partnerships by enabling clearer governance, shared priorities and more consistent practice across the county.
- 1.4 The overarching aim of the service is to reduce the number of children entering the criminal justice system, to divert children away from formal criminalisation wherever possible, and to support positive and sustainable change for those who do offend. This is achieved through early intervention, strong relationships, and a focus on children's strengths, needs and lived experience.

2.0 Performance Overview

- 2.1 North Yorkshire continues to demonstrate improvement across key youth justice indicators while maintaining a detailed understanding of local trends, patterns of need and the experiences of children known to the service. Evidence from performance monitoring, thematic auditing and trauma-informed practice development shows a system that is increasingly responsive, relational and effective.
- 2.2 First time Entrants
The Service completed a Thematic review of first-time entrants covering a 6-month period. It showed that 46 children entered the youth justice system in this period; 17% of these were girls. The offences most associated with this group were physical assaults and motoring-related incidents, including some non-recordable matters which do not appear on the national police database. Educational vulnerability was a notable feature of the cohort, with 75% experiencing at least one school exclusion and 33% supported through an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- 2.3 Many of the children in this cohort had already been known to Children and Families Services; the geographical analysis indicated higher numbers in Scarborough and Harrogate, with Hambleton unexpectedly registering more children than Selby.

- 2.4 The twelve-month First-Time Entrant indicators show a clear reduction. For the twelve months ending September 2025, the rate per 100,000 ten-to-seventeen-year-old children was 164, a decrease from 176 in the previous period and relating to 93 individual children. This places North Yorkshire in the third quartile nationally. 14 fewer children entered the criminal justice system for the first time compared with the period ending in September 2024.
- 2.5 The current rate is lower than the regional figure of 200 but remains higher than the national rate of 155 and higher than the family group average of 117.

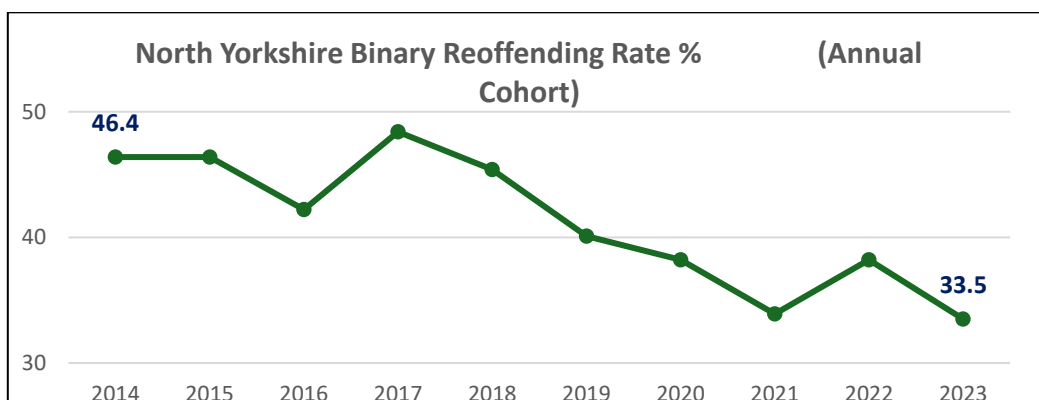


2.5 Recent first-time entrant figures are drawn from nationally published data sourced from local case management systems. These datasets include children linked to non-recordable motoring offences that do not appear on the Police National Computer, which is the basis for the annual national headline measure. In the most recent cohort, 18% (17 children) were linked to non-recordable motoring offences. The proportion of these non-recordable motoring offences in North Yorkshire is higher than is seen regionally or nationally.

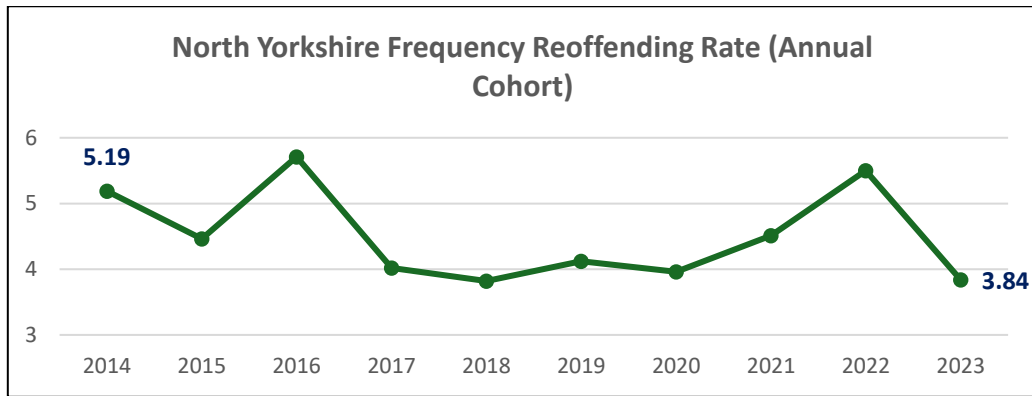
2.6 Alongside this, the service has continued to strengthen the work of the Youth Outcomes Panel, which achieved a diversion rate of 62% in 2025 compared with 52% in 2024.

2.7 Re-offending 12 Month Cohort Data

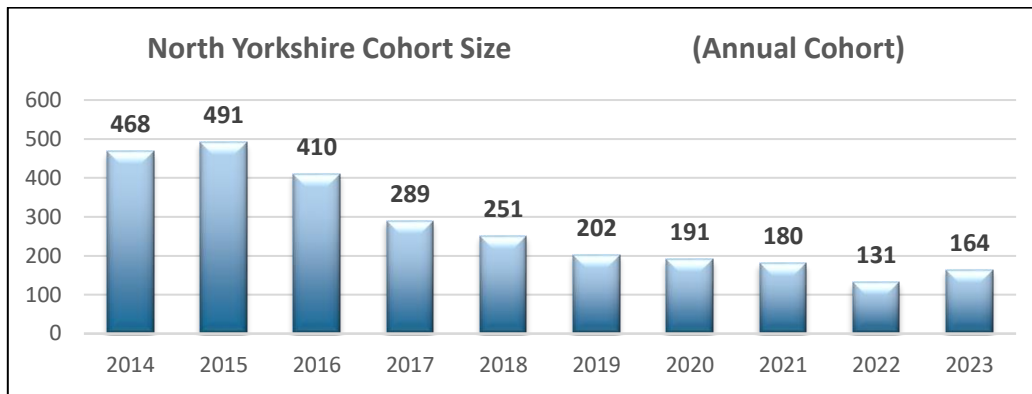
In relation to reoffending, the proven twelve-month cohort reoffending rate has reduced to 33.5% from 38.2% in the previous year, marking the lowest local rate in a decade.



2.8 The average number of proven reoffences per child who reoffended has fallen to 3.84, which is the lowest figure since 2018 and is also below regional and national comparators.



2.9 This improvement has occurred despite a 25% increase in the latest annual cohort, rising to 164 children. The most notable change took place in the old Scarborough, district where numbers increased from 36 to 64. Scarborough accounted for 39% of the cohort and 44% of all those who reoffended, even though the town represents only 16% of the ten to seventeen population.

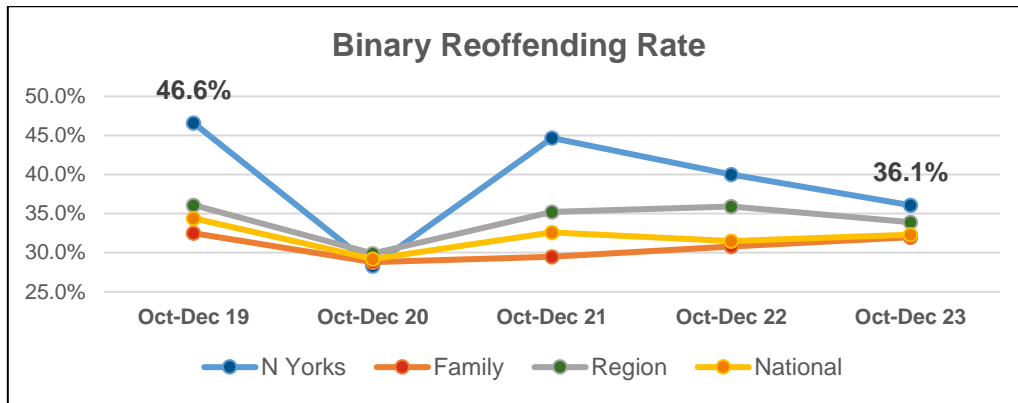


2.10 Girls made up nearly 24% of the reoffending cohort, and a higher-than-expected number of children reoffending were aged between ten and fourteen. The fifteen to seventeen age group continued to show the highest reoffending levels. Because of the limitations of national data systems, particularly the reliance on the address recorded at the point of disposal and the lack of case-level validation, small cohort sizes can produce large percentage movements even when the actual numbers involved are low.

2.11 Re-offending 3-month Cohort

The most recent three-month reoffending cohort, covering October to December 2023, shows a binary reoffending rate of 36.1%. There were 36 children in this cohort and 13 of them committed a proven reoffence. These 13 children were responsible for 58 proven reoffences, producing a frequency reoffending rate of 4.64.

2.12 When considered against other areas, the binary rate of 36.1% is higher than the family group average of 32.0%, higher than the regional figure of 33.9% and higher than the national figure of 32.3%, however significantly lower than in Oct-Dec 2019.



2.13 Previous three-month cohorts, particularly those affected by the pandemic and the recovery of the court system, were influenced by delays in processing offences and some reoffences likely fell outside the six-month waiting period and therefore were not captured in national statistics.

2.14 Twelve-month indicators remain the most reliable measure of performance because they smooth out the volatility inherent in small cohorts, which can produce disproportionately large shifts in percentage outcomes.

2.15 Serious Youth Violence

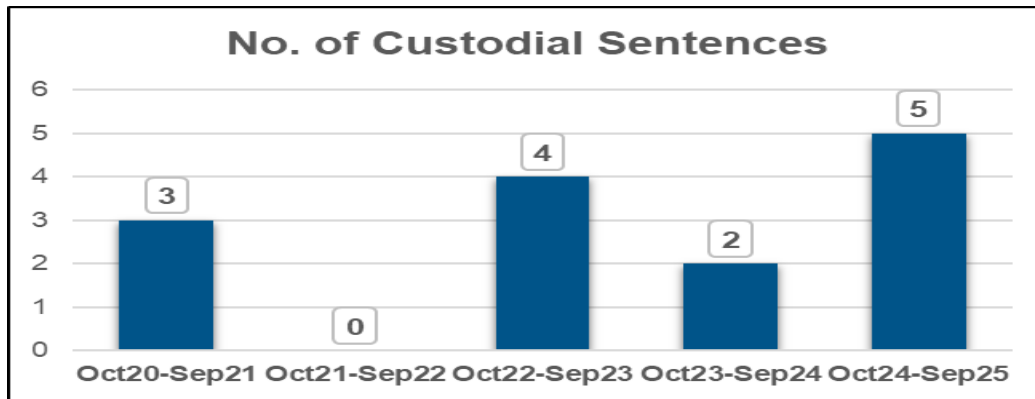
Serious youth violence remains lower in North Yorkshire than in comparable areas. Recent data shows that North Yorkshire’s rate is below the rates found in all three comparator groups and has been so consistently over a three-year period. However, 14 serious violence offences were recorded in 2024, representing the highest figure since 2018 when 18 offences were recorded.

	Year Ending December (Rate per 10k 10-17 Population)					
	2022		2023		2024	
	No. of SYV Offences	Rate of SYV Offences	No. of SYV Offences	Rate of SYV Offences	No. of SYV Offences	Rate of SYV Offences
North Yorkshire	4	0.7	10	1.8	14	2.5
Family Average	18	2.9	15	2.6	20	3.4
Region	263	5.0	248	4.7	318	5.9
National	2906	5.2	2967	5.3	3495	6.2

2.16 The national definition of serious youth violence includes any drug, robbery or violence against the person offence with a gravity score of five or more, with robbery carrying a gravity score of six. For the year ending December 2024, serious youth violence accounted for 4% of all offences in North Yorkshire.

2.17 Custody

Custodial sentences for children remain rare. The partnership has sustained a clear focus on reducing the use of custody over several years and has achieved significant progress. The number of custodial sentences increased to 5 in the period from October 2024 to September 2025, but this is still markedly lower than the figures recorded prior to the period ending in September 2021. Over the five years ending September 2025, the average number of custodial sentences was 2.8, compared with an average of 16.8 in the previous five-year period.



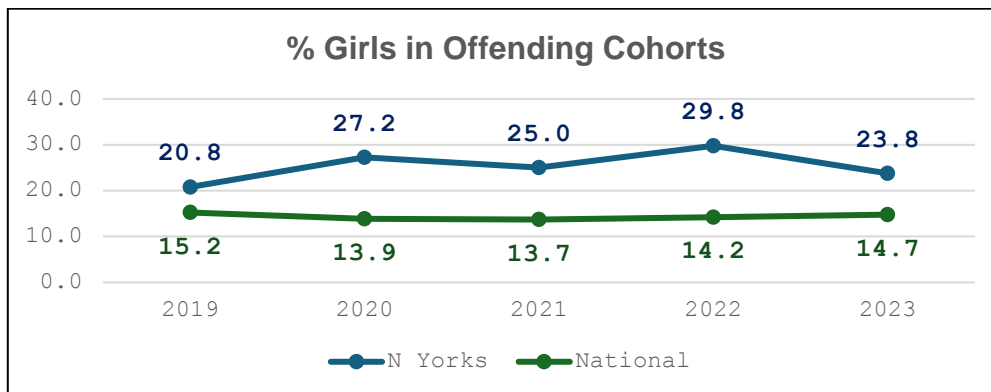
2.18 Children who receive custodial outcomes benefit from coordinated planning to meet welfare needs, reduce risk and support reintegration at the earliest opportunity. The overall aim continues to be the reduction of unnecessary custodial outcomes by intervening earlier and strengthening protective factors within the community.

2.19 Victims are also carefully considered in cases involving custody. The service works to ensure victims are kept informed, appropriately supported and offered opportunities to engage in restorative approaches where suitable and safe. This balanced approach recognises the seriousness of the harm caused while maintaining a focus on rehabilitation and future safety.

2.20 Overall, the low use of custody in North Yorkshire reflects effective prevention, diversion and community-based interventions, alongside robust decision making in the small number of cases where custody is required. Maintaining this position remains a core partnership strength and an ongoing priority.

2.21 Work with Girls

Girls remain noticeably over-represented in the North Yorkshire offending and reoffending cohorts when compared to national data.



2.22 Many of the girls known to the service have faced domestic abuse, coercion, sexual harm, controlling relationships and wider contextual risks. These experiences strongly influence their behaviour, emotional regulation and sense of identity. Local practice recognises that girls often carry complex trauma presentations, disrupted attachments and heightened relational vulnerability. Support for girls therefore continues to prioritise relationally attuned, developmentally sensitive and safety-orientated approaches.

2.23 North Yorkshire continues to embed national expectations relating to violence against women and girls. Training delivered through duties relating to serious violence has strengthened awareness of how gendered harm influences young people's behaviour and emotional responses. Structured session plans and resources help practitioners deliver safe, relational and reflective work.

2.24 The Trauma Informed Framework – Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC) – remains a core element of practice and is fully embedded within our Strengths in Relationship Practice model. All staff adopt a trauma-informed approach that emphasises consistent, predictable relationships, supports emotional understanding, and promotes improved self-regulation. The Psychologically Informed Practice and Assessment (PIPA) team provides specialist formulation, consultation and reflective practice to ensure interventions are sensitive to each child’s life experience, cultural context, strengths and readiness for change. In addition, partnerships with community organisations continue to offer confidential, relational support for girls experiencing multiple disadvantages, including poverty, domestic abuse, mental health challenges and previous victimisation.

2.25 Overall Summary

North Yorkshire continues to show sustained progress in key areas, including reductions in first-time entrants, improvements in reoffending, strengthened work with girls, enhanced trauma-informed practice and a consistent reduction in unnecessary custodial outcomes.

2.26 Ongoing challenges remain, particularly the concentration of need in Scarborough, the vulnerability present in the education profiles of children entering the system and the over-representation of girls. Nevertheless, with strong multi-agency partnerships, reflective practice and an increasingly robust early intervention and diversion offer, the service is well placed to continue improving outcomes for children, families and communities.

3.0 **Prevention and Diversion**

3.1 Turnaround Programme

Early intervention continues to underpin North Yorkshire’s approach. The Turnaround Programme, now in its fourth year and delivered by North Yorkshire Youth, provides targeted support to children on the edge of the youth justice system who do not meet the threshold for statutory intervention. By the end of December 2025, 192 children had been supported, and all have now exited the programme, with most moving into the lighter-touch Change Direction offer. Performance monitoring shows sustained impact: over the 12-month period following case closure, 179 of the 192 children maintained positive outcomes, with only 13 (6.7%) subsequently becoming involved with criminal justice services.

3.2 The target for North Yorkshire is to work with 221 children over the four-year programme period to 31 March 2026. We have engaged 219 children to date and are on track to meet the full requirement.

3.3 Non-Recordable Traffic Offences-Diversion

A new traffic diversion programme will be introduced through the Youth Outcomes Panel from 1 March 2026. This programme will provide targeted intervention for children who commit non-recordable traffic offences, such as driving without insurance or without due care and attention. Historically, these cases have been processed through the courts, contributing to first time entry despite the relatively lower-level nature of the behaviour. The programme will deliver proportionate education and behaviour-change work, reduce unnecessary court involvement, and is expected to contribute to a reduction in first time entry to the criminal justice system.

4.0 **Child First Approach**

4.1 A child first approach underpins all youth justice activity in North Yorkshire. This places children’s rights, strengths, participation and long-term outcomes at the centre of practice, rather than prioritising punishment.

4.2 In practice, this means working with children within their families, schools and communities wherever possible, avoiding unnecessary criminalisation, and building trusting relationships

that support positive change. Where formal justice involvement is unavoidable, the emphasis remains firmly on rehabilitation and addressing unmet needs.

5.0 Voice of the Child and Victim Involvement

- 5.1 The service places strong emphasis on hearing and responding to children's views, ensuring these inform assessment, planning and service development. Children are supported to express their wishes and feelings in ways that are accessible, meaningful and appropriate to their needs.
- 5.2 Work with victims has been strengthened in response to inspection findings, feedback and national good practice. Victims are offered timely information, opportunities to share the impact of harm, and access to restorative approaches where appropriate and safe. Ongoing work is focused on improving engagement, feedback mechanisms and governance oversight of victim services.

6.0 Inspection Preparation and Readiness

- 6.1 Inspection preparation is embedded within routine governance, quality assurance and performance management, supporting an "always ready" approach through scheduled self-assessment and structured learning spaces that test the consistency and impact of practice.
- 6.2 Learning from recent national inspection findings has informed local improvements in governance oversight, decision-making quality, recording sufficiency and work with victims. The Youth Justice Management Board receives regular assurance reports with clear actions and timescales, supported by visible senior leadership across all priority workstreams.
- 6.3 Quality assurance activity includes rolling thematic audits, case reading, management oversight and feedback from children and victims. Findings are translated into targeted training, procedural adjustments and partnership actions. Workforce stability and supervision arrangements provide additional confidence that strengths are embedded, and that practice is improving where required.
- 6.4 Overall, the service is well placed to evidence safe, effective and child-focused practice at inspection, with clear accountability and demonstrable impact for children, victims and communities.

7.0 Victims as a Key Element of Inspection Readiness

- 7.1 Work with victims is a central component of inspection readiness. In line with national inspection standards and the Victims' Code of Practice, the service is developing a time-limited Victim Improvement Plan, setting out clear strategic and operational actions over a six-month period.
- 7.2 The plan strengthens governance oversight, clarifies roles and responsibilities, improves the quality and timeliness of contact with victims, and embeds routine case-level quality assurance. It also introduces a structured approach to capturing and using victim feedback, and to testing informed consent and diversity information in partnership with the police.
- 7.3 Youth Justice Management Board oversight will be provided through a standing agenda item and a nominated senior champion, supported by quarterly reports evidencing timeliness, quality and victim satisfaction. This provides assurance that the service can evidence not only policy intent, but high-quality, individualised practice with victims that is consistently understood, delivered and reviewed across the partnership.

8.0 North Yorkshire Alternative Prevention and Diversion Assessment – My Assessment Plan (MAPs)

- 8.1 The Youth Justice Board have agreed the continued use of North Yorkshire Youth Justice Service's alternative assessment, My Assessment Plan (MAPs). A Memorandum of Understanding is in place and will be reviewed annually to ensure ongoing compliance, transparency and quality.
- 8.2 Over the past year, the assessment has been comprehensively redesigned following the recommendations from the 2023 evaluation. This redevelopment was undertaken through meaningful consultation with children open to our service, their parents and carers, York University, and the full staff team. This co-production approach has ensured that My Assessment Plan now reflects Child First principles, incorporates the lived experiences of children, and aligns with the evidence base for effective diversion and prevention practice.
- 8.3 The redesigned My Assessment Plan assessment is now fully functional and operational within our Case Management System, enabling consistent recording, improved workflow, and reportable data outputs. Integration into the system has been supported through the forms-development training package purchased from the Case Management System's developer, CACI, ensuring that My Assessment Plan is embedded as a reportable form with full analytical capability. This allows the service to track progress, measure impact, and demonstrate outcomes at individual and cohort level.

9.0 Harmful Sexual Behaviour

- 9.1 North Yorkshire has identified the need for a stronger, more consistent approach to understanding and responding to harmful sexual behaviour displayed by children and young people. Funding was secured from the Police and Crime Commissioner to enable the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to carry out a multi-agency audit of local practice. This independent review provided a clear picture of current strengths and gaps across education, health, social care, youth justice and the voluntary sector. Its findings highlighted the need for better consistency in assessments, greater confidence among practitioners, and clearer pathways for support and intervention. The learning from this work has been used to shape a coordinated set of improvements to ensure children receive the right help at the right time, reduce risk, and strengthen safeguarding practice across all agencies.
- 9.2 In response, partners across North Yorkshire have jointly developed a countywide strategy for harmful sexual behaviour and created a practitioner toolkit bringing together guidance, resources and best practice. The service has engaged in national learning forums to share and adopt emerging practice, reviewed the current assessment pathway, and commissioned Barnardo's to design an enhanced assessment model and intervention pathway for local use. A multi-agency Task and Finish Group is now overseeing implementation, ensuring that the new tools and processes lead to improved decision making, better support for children displaying this behaviour, and stronger protection for those who may be at risk. These developments will create a more confident, skilled and coordinated workforce and ensure that North Yorkshire's response is aligned with best practice nationally.

10.0 Educational Psychology Service

- 10.1 The Youth Justice Service has been allocated five days of support per year from the Educational Psychology Service, which will be targeted towards improving outcomes for children involved in the youth justice system who have significant barriers to education. This support will be used to identify unmet or unclear special educational needs and disabilities, assist with interpreting and updating Education, Health and Care Plans, and offer

professional consultation on cases where education attendance, engagement or provision is breaking down. Educational Psychologists will contribute to existing multi agency structures, including group supervision sessions, drop in consultation spaces and resettlement planning for children leaving custody, to ensure earlier identification of needs, more appropriate provision, and a coordinated approach across education, health and social care. This targeted time will also be used to strengthen staff understanding of neurodivergence and trauma informed practice, an increasing area of need within the youth justice cohort.

11.0 Looking Ahead

- 11.1 Over the coming year, the North Yorkshire Youth Justice Service will continue to focus on reducing first-time entry to the criminal justice system, addressing reoffending, maintaining low use of custody, and strengthening outcomes for victims.
- 11.2 Key priorities include embedding the Victim Improvement Plan, implementing the traffic diversion programme from 1 March 2026, enhancing support for children with complex needs, improving transitions to adult services, and sustaining effective prevention and diversion activity.
- 11.3 Continued preparation for the forthcoming inspection remains a core priority, ensuring that quality, compliance and evidence of impact are consistently demonstrated across all areas of practice.
- 11.4 The service remains committed to collaborative working with partners and to providing assurance to elected members that children, victims and communities are supported through a fair, effective and child-centred youth justice system.

12.0 REPORT RECOMMENDATION

- 12.1 The Committee are asked to note the contents of the report and advise officers regarding any areas of the work that they may wish to see more detailed information at future meetings or briefings.

EI Mayhew
Corporate Director – Children & Young People Service
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4th March 2026

Report Author & Presenter: Barbara Merrygold – Head of Early Help, Children & Families Service

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

APPENDICES: None

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.