

Youth Justice Briefing for Corporate & Partnerships OSC

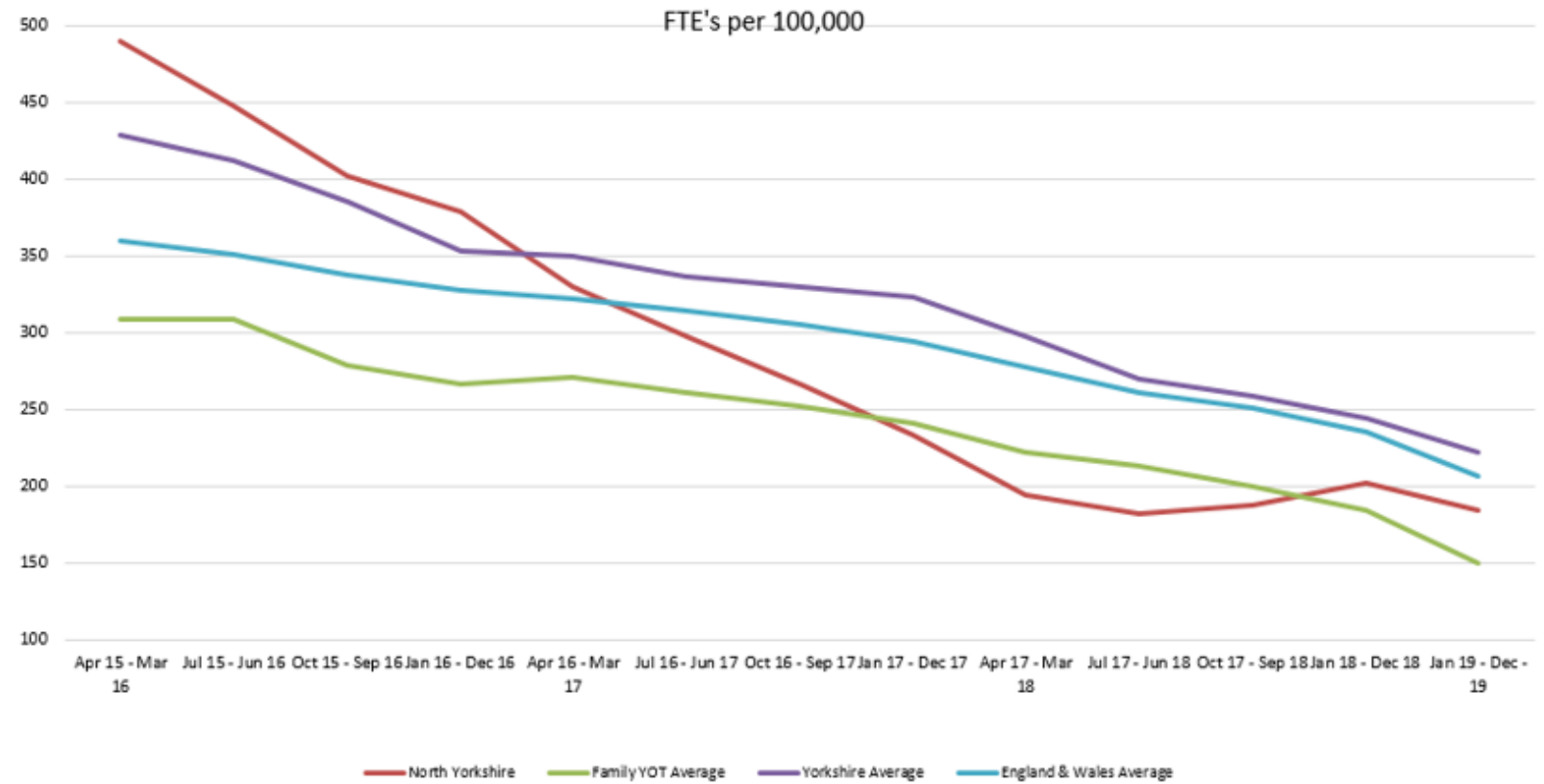
Steve Walker – 13 Sep 2021

First-Time Entrants

The Ministry of Justice have been unable to provide updated First-Time Entrant data from PNC during the Covid pandemic. We also know from experience that the quarterly PNC reports include some First-Time Entrants we were unaware of, and also some 'false positives' which have been incorrectly assigned to North Yorkshire. The most recent data available through the YJB's YOT Data Summary (YDS 106) indicates that North Yorkshire is well below the national and regional average rates, although still behind our highest-performing family comparators. Only 2 of our 11 'family' YOTs have higher First-Time Entrants rates than North Yorkshire (one being City of York).

Further reduction of First-Time Entrants is a major priority for 2021-22 (see p10). Two of our highest-performing 'family' YOTs have reduced their FTE rate to less than 100 per 100,000, demonstrating that there is room for significant further progress.

We know from research that children who are formally criminalised will often experience shame or stigma in their family, community and school, and by internalising the 'criminal' label may become more vulnerable to negative influence. This underlines the importance of effective partnership diversion.



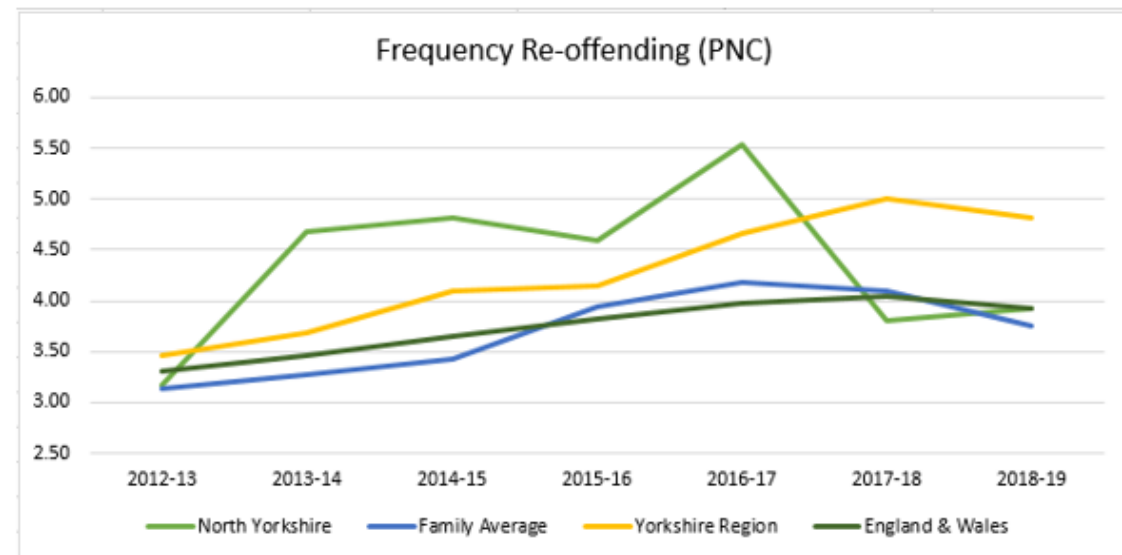
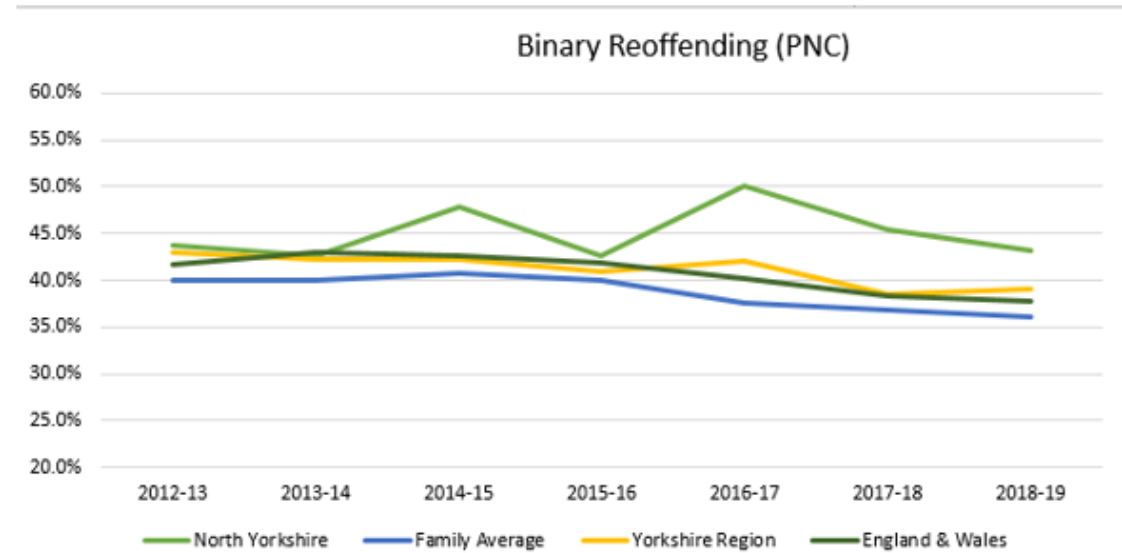
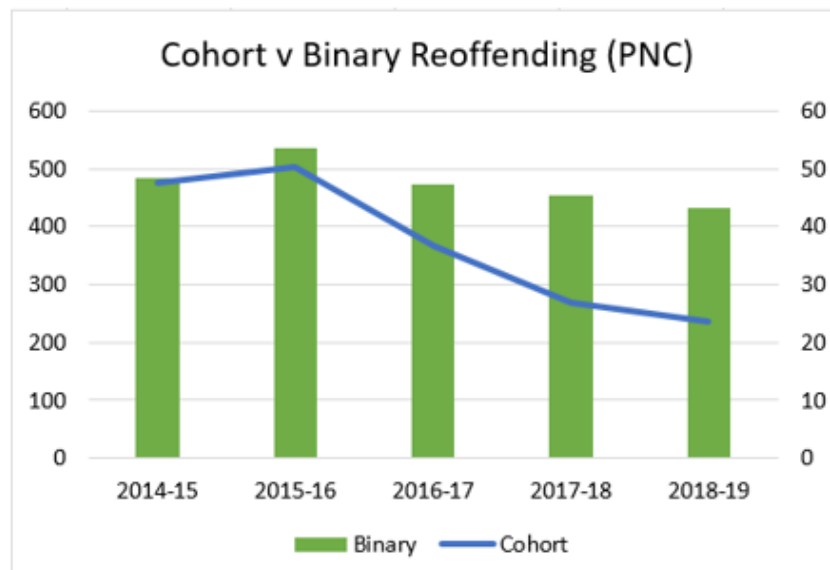
Reduction of First-Time Entrants has been included as a high-level Key Performance Indicator (KPI) in the North Yorkshire Children and Families Service Plan 2021/24, signifying the importance of this priority.

Reoffending

The Ministry of Justice have been unable to provide updated Reoffending data from PNC during the Covid pandemic. The most recent data available relates to the Apr18-Mar19 cohort, which offers limited value in the present. The available PNC data does however evidence a welcome improving relative trend in both binary and frequency reoffending.

It is also significant that this reducing trend has been achieved in the context of a much smaller cohort, driven by our continued work to divert children from the formal justice system wherever possible. This has reduced the cohort under statutory supervision by more than half since 2015, but with the inevitable result, that general levels of need & risk in the PNC cohort are further concentrated.

A modest statistical reduction of reoffending in this context actually represents very substantial improvement of service impact.



Custody

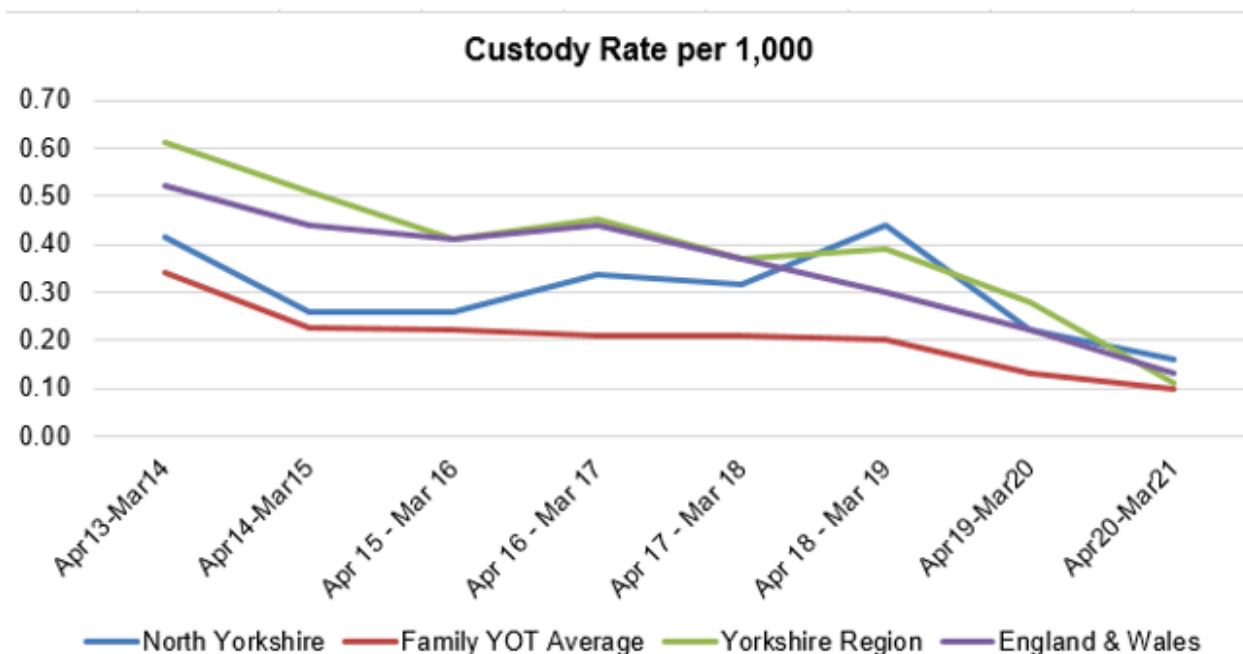
Reduction of custodial sentencing remains a key priority for North Yorkshire, and we are making good progress. In the 12 months ending 31 March 21, our frequency rate decreased to 0.16 per 1,000, representing only 9 custodial sentences in the previous year. This is our lowest ever rate of custodial detention, and we can confidently project further reduction this year.

While celebrating this achievement, we can see that our regional and family comparators are also improving, and that further work is still needed to drive custodial sentencing down to its proper place - as a last resort to protect the public from serious harm.

In those few cases where detention is strictly necessary, those children usually have very substantial and complex needs, which cannot be properly met in the environment of a Young Offender Institution (YOI). While respecting the hard work of the Governors and staff, these large prison-like institutions simply cannot offer the stability, safety, care and positive rehabilitation required for very vulnerable children. This view has been reinforced by the Children's Commissioner's reports on YOI conditions during the Covid pandemic.

As set out in our National Standards Strategic assessment in June 2020, our service therefore works hard to identify the needs and vulnerabilities of detained children, and to advocate for appropriate placement. As a result of this, 68% of our detained children are placed in the smaller, welfare-led Secure Children's Homes (SCHs) compared to a national average of 28%.

It is a continuing concern that secure estate funding arrangements significantly penalise North Yorkshire's welfare-led approach. YDA Remand placements in SCH's cost £500 per night more than a YOI placement, yet we receive a disproportionately small Youth Custody Service grant.



Early Prevention & Diversion

The key purpose for integrating our Youth Justice Service into Early Help is to more effectively focus on 'upstream' prevention and diversion. Although we provide excellent support for children who are already involved in prolific or serious offending, this is costly and often has limited effect. It may be difficult or impossible to undo the harm already suffered by that child, and by their families or victims.

Youth Justice expertise is supporting the wider Children & Families Service - Early Help to better identify and support the children at greatest risk. It must be emphasised that this is not exclusively about risk of offending, we know that the same vulnerable, traumatised child may equally be at risk of many other adverse outcomes - educational exclusion, entry to care, mental health, substance use, exploitation or self-harming behaviour for example.

"There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river.

We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in."

Desmond Tutu



During 2021-22, we will increase our work with local voluntary sector partners, helping them to secure resources and provide critical early support through organic, non-stigmatic activities in local communities – sports, youth projects, performing arts etc. We will work with local schools to develop North Yorkshire's [Ladder of Intervention](#), building their capacity to support emergent needs within the child's everyday environment.

We will work closely with our partners in Police & Community Safety to identify positive, preventative and diversionary solutions for children at risk, for example the [North Yorkshire Youth Change Direction](#) (funded by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner), and the [North Yorkshire Sport Get on Track](#) projects.

Finally, we will build new provision by mentoring and supporting the development of Community Networks to support the universal Early Help Offer, with the aim of establishing stronger, more resilient and creative neighbourhoods, better able to care for their children together.

Youth Outcomes Panel

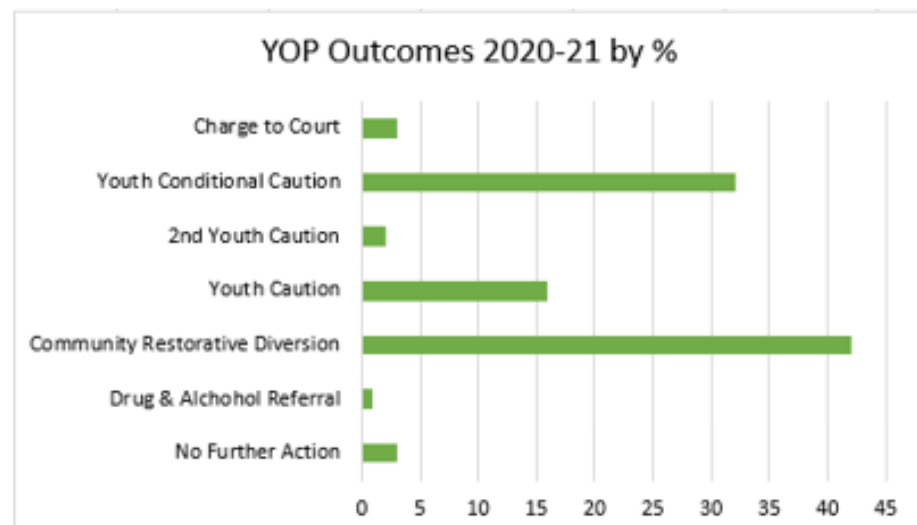
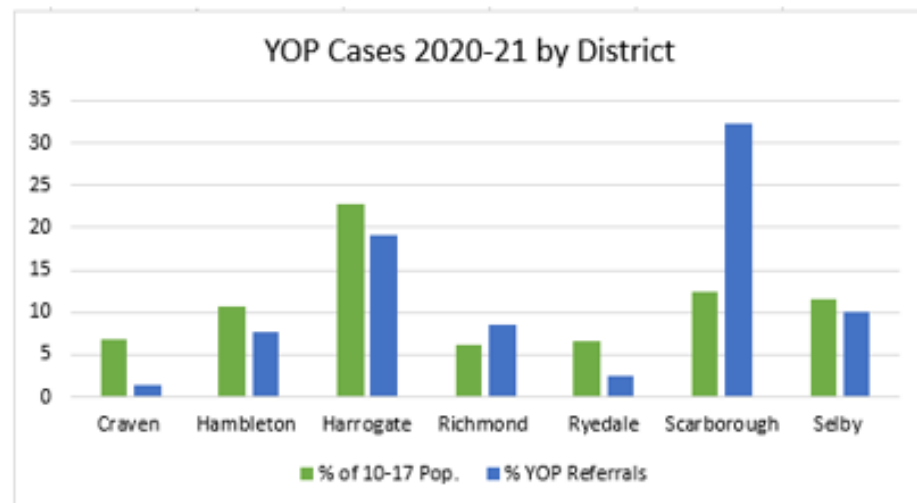
The Youth Outcomes Panel (YOP) has a key gatekeeping function in diverting children from formal criminalisation. This pre-court work is now a major part of the service's overall activity, representing around 50% of our typical caseload. YOP interventions are usually shorter than court orders, so those children comprise two-thirds of our annual throughput.

Children who reach the Youth Outcomes Panel will often have substantial and complex needs, which early prevention & diversion could not meet. There is a disproportionate referral rate from Scarborough, at 2.6x that District's 10-17yrs population, reflecting high levels of social exclusion. All children referred to YOP receive a comprehensive, holistic assessment, leading to a bespoke diversion support proposal. About half of YOP referrals result in an informal outcome.

"A wide variety of information is gathered to assist decision-making, supported by a range of assessment tools. Good professional relationships between the YJS and the Police enable the YJS to contribute effectively to decision-making for out-of-court disposals and, when needed, provide effective challenge. There is a shared culture of making decisions in the best interests of the child, while considering the wishes of victims." HM Inspectorate of Probation, Sep 2020

Reoffending within 3 months is very low (6.8%) but over a 12 month tracking period this rises to 35.8%. This is not unexpected for complex, high-need children, and the YOP system accepts re-referrals where appropriate.

33% of YOP cases during 2020 were repeat visits, and 7 exceptionally needy or vulnerable children (e.g. children in care) have been diverted via YOP on 3 separate occasions during a 12-month period. North Yorkshire Police & YJS will always try to find an effective diversionary solution for our highest-need children, and minimise the harmful use of formal criminalisation. Alongside this, we also review multiple re-referral cases to identify opportunities for improvement.



Reducing Exclusions and Supporting Attendance –

The Virtual School Head represents YJS in the NYCC Strategic Attendance and Exclusions Group, which monitors and challenges schools with high levels of exclusion or low attendance rates. School improvement is supported by provision of training and guidance to implement advanced Relational Behaviour Management and Emotionally Based School Avoidance approaches. Creative development of Alternative Provision is further supporting reduction of fixed term and permanent exclusions.

Elective Home Education (EHE) –

Our service considers home education to be a poor option for most children, especially those with complex needs and risks. We believe that a structured onsite education provides a greater range of learning opportunities, pastoral support and social development. This is especially important for safeguarding those children who may be vulnerable to criminal or sexual exploitation. We therefore discourage parents from Elective Home Education, unless the circumstances are exceptional. At present we have only two YJS children being educated at home. This work will be reinforced by North Yorkshire's new EHE Pathway, which provides for a pre-decision meeting led by an independent advisor, where parents, children and professionals can be supported to discuss their wishes.

Best Practice Example -

The Transition Project is a national pathfinder funded by the Coastal Opportunity Area, and provides close mentoring support for a cohort of 63 highly-vulnerable Year 6 pupils in Scarborough who are expected to struggle with transition to secondary school in September. Research evidence suggests that achieving a positive transition will have critical benefits in reducing later issues with attendance and behaviour, and also a range of other adverse outcomes.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) –

The children we support have high prevalence of special needs, which can be a significant barrier to engagement and attainment unless promptly identified and met. The service has the benefit of specialist Speech & Language Therapists, and approx. 70% of our young people are assessed to have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). Speech & Language support has recently been extended to the Youth Courts. Our Education Liaison Advisors are trained & accredited Thrive practitioners, enabling them to provide assessments and recommendations for supporting complex need. Approx. 41% of our children have a formal Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP). Our Education Liaison Advisors work closely with SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Independent Advice and Support Service) to support parents in obtaining the advice and support their child needs.

We have been working for some time to establish a real-time shadow tracker for the MoJ reports, using our own case management system to generate actionable insights from live data.

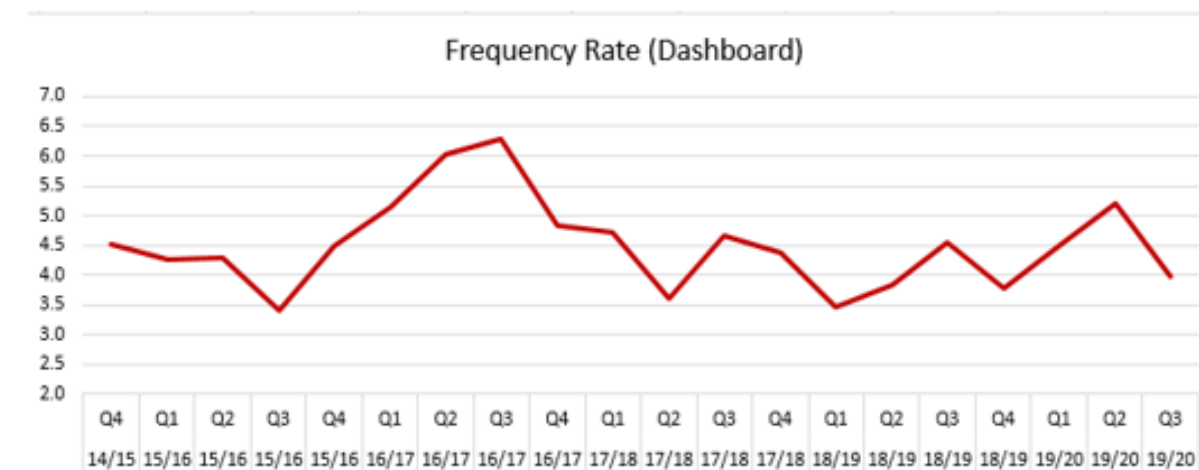
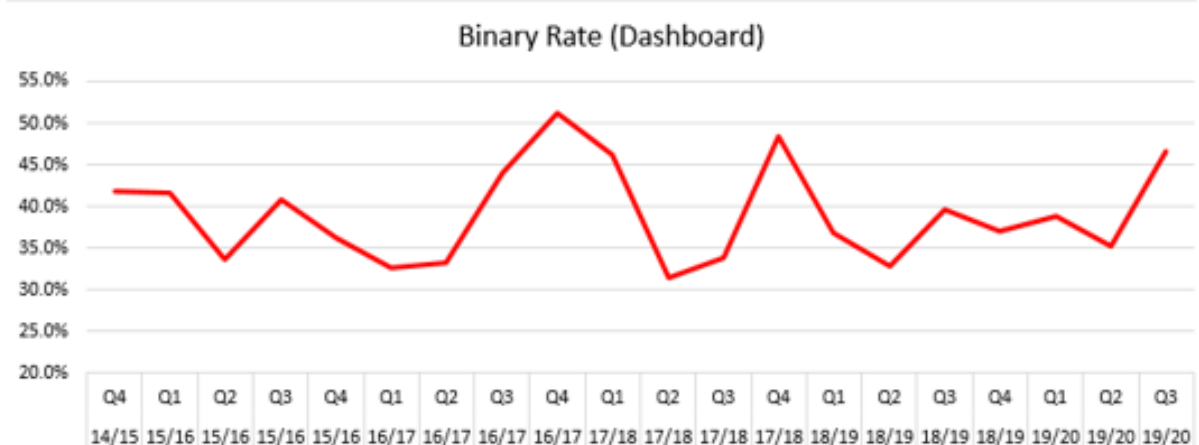
Although this 'dashboard' can only provide an isolated view of North Yorkshire, it will be important in our mission to further reduce re-offending. At present, our internal data suggests that good progress has been maintained, albeit with a seasonal Binary spike in Q3 2019-20.

Accessible local data will also allow us to more effectively drill-down into the underlying trends, and to cross-match data with other services to identify the most vulnerable children and communities. This will be especially important in addressing complex, multi-faceted pockets of need.

For example, Scarborough has only 16.7% of North Yorkshire's 10-17yrs population, but comprises 29.2% of the current YJS cohort. Scarborough children are significantly more likely to reoffend (55.8%), and to commit significantly more re-offences. 35% of the Scarborough cohort are girls, compared to the national rate of 15.8%.

We do not have easy answers for this disproportionality, which arises from the compounded social exclusion seen in many seaside towns. Further layers of intersectional disadvantage can be identified for BAME families, children in care and asylum-seekers, etc. A number of investment and regeneration projects are underway, and the forthcoming change to a single unitary local authority will help to address the underlying factors. The YJS Management Board has directed a programme of review to ensure that the service and wider partnership achieve best impact.

It is also important to note that this large, diverse County has many other hotspots of need, including poverty and social isolation in our most beautiful rural areas, and the large military base at Catterick. By more effectively using our data with partners, we will better understand the support needs of those communities.



My Assessment & Plan

ASSETPlus is the mandatory national assessment & planning framework for youth justice. Although ASSETPlus has certain strengths, particularly in managing very complex, risky young people, portability between YOT areas and secure establishments etc, it also presents significant barriers to effective practice. The 2016 Taylor Review recommended that developing local compatibility & interoperation could achieve better overall outcomes for children.

In 2017, our Youth Justice Service began a strategic integration into North Yorkshire's Children & Families Service - Early Help. One of the key aims was to develop a seamless support offer for children at risk of offending or reoffending. Our practitioners quickly identified ASSETPlus as a key barrier, because of its siloed, bulky and inaccessible format. This inhibited close collaboration with service users and colleagues, and also required a high level of desk-based work.

We were very proud to become one of three high-performing Local Authorities who were granted special dispensation to devise and pilot locally integrated assessment and planning systems, commencing this practice leadership role in Apr 2019. Our MAP model is an advanced, family-centred and strengths-based assessment, designed for close alignment with the Signs of Safety model. It is a radically condensed approach compared to ASSETPlus, usually comprising less than 20 pages of plain and direct language, set out in a simple, clear framework, which is readily co-produced and understood, by children and their families.

'My Assessment Plan' (MAP) model is a radically condensed and sharply focused approach, written in simple direct language and with full participation by the children and families. This methodology builds on the strengths of children, rather than using the previous risk and deficit-based approach"

- HM Inspectorate of Probation, Sep 2020

An initial scoping evaluation by NATCEN noted that the that the new pilot approaches appeared very promising, but further research would be required to explore longitudinal impact upon re-offending. It has not yet been possible to complete this external evaluation, because of the Covid pandemic and the absence of PNC data. However, we are highly confident that MAP has been very effective, in both the quality of impact & positive change for children and also the benefits for local compatibility & interoperation. Our own Interim Evaluation (Dec 2020) found strong evidence of significant advantages, in particular the strength of positive support from families.

Clearly, there is substantial work ahead to support our communities through Covid recovery, but when this has been achieved we will work with national government and other key stakeholders to develop a full and independent evaluation process for MAP. If those findings are consistent with our internal assessment of performance, quality and impact, we believe the transformative benefits will be recognised and shared across the national youth justice sector. We are immensely proud to hold this national practice leadership role, reflecting the high standards and aspirations of our service, and we are grateful for the continued support of [DfE](#) and YJB.

Strengths in Relationships Practice Model

Developing My Assessment & Plan (MAP) has allowed us to build a converging alignment with the many other teams and services working across North Yorkshire Children & Families. The Strengths in Relationships practice model is the defining theme of our local approach, a common language of skills, values and behaviours, which support deep, sustainable positive change.

Systemic practice focuses upon the child's whole family & social context, understanding that their feelings & behaviour are profoundly shaped by the people around them. Vulnerable children must not be 'adultified' as if autonomous actors. Durable solutions must be built from the family's needs and strengths.

Restorative practice means we are constantly working to rebuild and reintegrate a safe, nourishing environment around the child. Repairing harm, re-establishing trust and inclusion. This applies fully to our work with victims, where we seek authentic reconciliation, healing and resolution to support good closure.

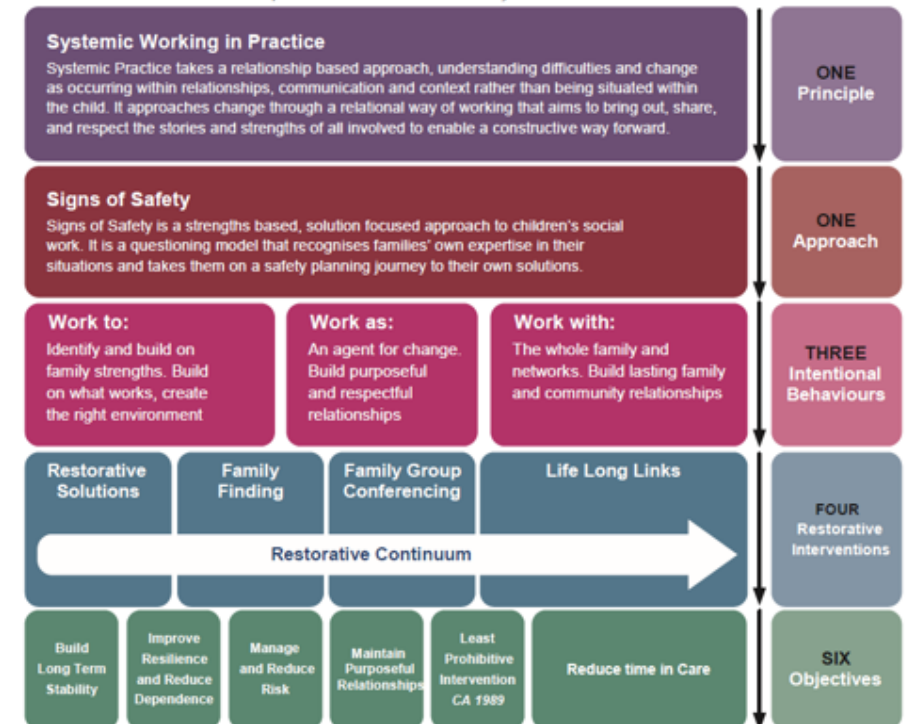
Relational practice means establishing warm, honest, resilient and purposeful relationships, and using those relationships to support positive change. This will not be achieved by filling out forms or writing reports in our offices, it requires sustained and authentic engagement with the child and family.

These advanced skills and practices form the core of our new Youth Justice model, supported by extensive training and system changes. But it is important to understand that they do not replace or dilute our statutory duties. We must unflinchingly recognise and assess risk for example, for the safety of both the child and the wider public. The key difference is in how we then manage and reduce that risk, recognising that supervision and control is at best a temporary scaffolding to support long-term healing, hope and inclusion.



Our Purpose

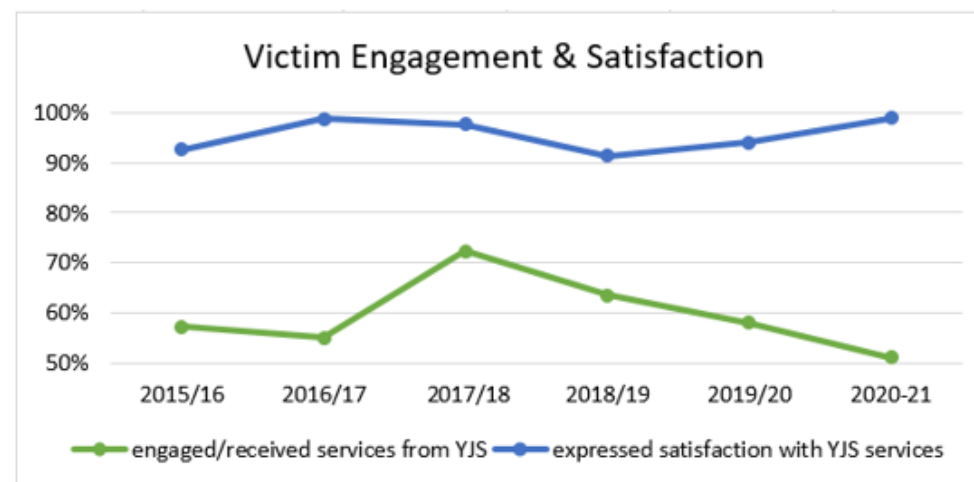
To support positive change that continues after we no longer need to be involved. We will create conditions that allow relationships to flourish. Our Practice system is built to deliver this outcome.



Services and support for victims

Although victim engagement & satisfaction were discontinued from the YJB's national performance structure some years ago, the North Yorkshire YJS partnership has maintained a close local focus on this theme. Restorative practice is a key pillar of our service model, prioritising healing, reparation & reconciliation above abstract punishment. We recognise victims as service users in their own right, with needs and entitlements which must be respected. This important work is led by two specialist Victim Liaison Officers, and most of our practitioners are trained RJ Facilitators.

Service data shows a continuing reduction in the proportion of victims who wish to receive support from Youth Justice, recently exacerbated by Covid. This is because an increasing proportion of victims are professionals, mostly in Police or residential care settings. Those colleagues have internal processes to support their wishes & needs, and have already considered whether they wish to participate in mediation or reparation. Our victim liaison service is fully available to those colleagues, but most of them do not ask for further support. During 2021-22, we will build stronger links with those organisations to ensure that support for professional victims is seamlessly coordinated.



For the many victims who do wish to receive information and support from Youth Justice, the quality of service has continued to improve. We cannot undo the harm which victims have suffered, but by supporting them to have a voice and to access the help they need, we play an important role in supporting their recovery. We are proud of the strong, appreciative feedback we receive from victims.

Where possible we arrange direct restorative mediation and reparation, which we know provides the best healing and closure for victims (and also has the most meaning and impact for the young harmer). The Covid pandemic has necessitated greater use of virtual and video-based methods, which have in practice proved helpful for some participants. We will maintain and further develop this capability beyond the pandemic.

Finally, the service welcomes the revised national Code of Practice for Victims (VCOP). During 2021-22 we will audit and benchmark ourselves against this new standard, in particular the 'Enhanced Rights' provisions for vulnerable victims. We will work with partner agencies across Children's Services and the Criminal Justice Partnership, including the valuable services funded by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner, to develop a more consistent and 'joined-up' offer.

Feedback from Young People & Families

Feedback from the children we support, and also their parents or carers, is a vital part of our quality and performance approach. The service operates several tiers of capture, including self-assessments, online closure systems and dip-sampled direct consultation research. During 2021-22, we hope to further extend this by development within the Children & Families “Mind Of My Own” system.

Regular samples of independent consultation and feedback work are undertaken by NY Voice (Youth Voice & Creative Engagement Service) evidencing very high appreciation.

It is striking that YJS support achieves higher ratings than most other children’s services teams, despite usually being imposed by statutory criminal processes. It appears that parents feel relieved that a decisive event has brought the support they need. During 2021-22, we will continue work within Early Help to improve our ability to offer that support before a statutory criminal trigger arises.

Family Feedback	Av.	(0-10)
Were your family listened to during the assessment process?		9.9
Did the assessment help you find your real needs and concerns?		9.5
How much did this work feel like a collaboration?		9.8
Was your YJ worker involved, available, responsive & committed?		9.9
Did you feel you could be open and honest with your YJ worker?		10
Did this support help you & your child to have a more positive future?		9.3

I felt I could be really open and wasn't being judged, neither did my son

He always had the trust in his worker and could open up to him

They listened to what I thought needed to change, instead of just telling me

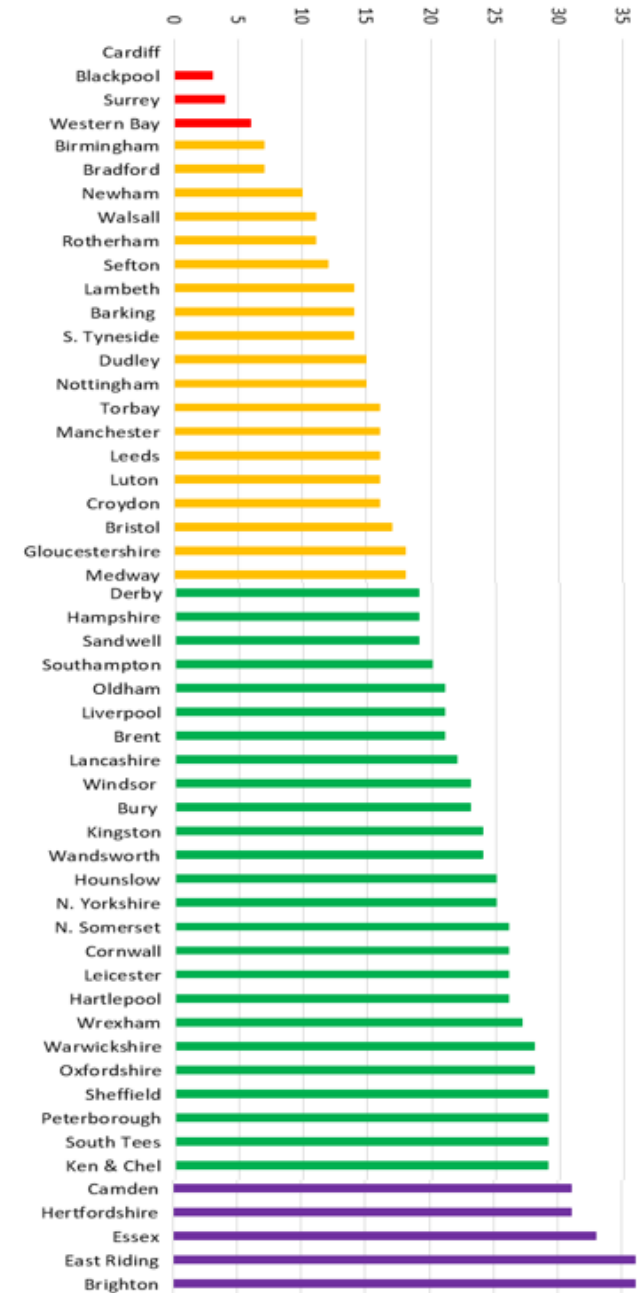
National Inspection

Our HMIP inspection was underway when the first Covid lockdown commenced in March 2020. The remote technology arrangements we then innovated with HMIP for virtual completion became the basis of the national inspection model through the pandemic. Our [Inspection report](#) was published in Sept 2020, with an overall Good rating. Our detailed score of 25 is well above average, and ranks us 17th of the 53 YOTs inspected so far during this programme - towards the top of the second quartile.

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We are satisfied with this finding, which fairly reflects the significant practice change, taking place at that time. More than half the selected cases were managed under our new My Assessment & Plan pilot (see p8), which had only recently commenced. The HMIP team had little experience of this practice model, because of the dominance of actuarial/criminogenic assessment systems across Probation and Youth Justice.

Given this context, we were delighted that HMIP assessed our *Desistance* practice to be Outstanding, and our *Safety & Wellbeing* practice at the higher end of Good. We fell fractionally short of a Good rating for *Safety of Others*, by a margin of just one case (from 36). This was of course frustrating, but we respect HMIP's advice and so we immediately modified the MAP model and retrained the team to ensure improvement. A follow-up audit in Mar 2021 using HMIP thresholds assessed that an average 80% standard for *Safety of Others* has now been achieved across the service.



Plan on a Page

- Safe, phased Covid recovery, consistent with our service-level plan and NYCC's overarching remobilisation strategy.
- Further reductions in first-time entry, re-offending and custodial sentencing, benchmarking ourselves against high-performing family group peers.
- Focused partnership review project to explore improvement for 'hotspot' Scarborough neighbourhoods facing high levels of deprivation, social exclusion and crime.
- Further develop our advanced practice model by completing training of all YJS practitioners, and establishing a new Quality Assurance and practice learning framework.
- Maintain and improve My Assessment & Plan, and agree arrangements with national government for a full, independent evaluation to be completed.
- Review our victim services against the standards of the revised Code of Practice for Victims, and implement new or improved provision as required.
- Establish operational delivery of the National Protocol for Reducing Criminalisation of Children in Care & Care Leavers
- Review and develop our services for Harmful Sexual Behaviour, establishing best-practice provision in collaboration with City of York.
- Evaluate our partnership Resettlement Panel and implement agreed changes to further improve the support and planning for custody leavers.
- Develop and expand our Skills4Work project in partnership with local businesses and other key stakeholders.

Questions and Discussion

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