# Darlington Young Peoples' Engagement & Justice Service Youth Justice Plan 2024 – 25

#### **Foreword**

As Chair of the Darlington Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service Board it is a privilege to introduce our Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2024 – 25.

This plan is designed to serve as a comprehensive guide, steering our partnership towards sustained growth, resilience, and success and prevent children and young people from being drawn into offending.

The partnership has developed strongly over a period of time with extensive membership across a broad range of partners who are committed to maximising the potential of every child and young person in Darlington. Collaboration is at the heart of what we do, and we will work with our partners across the system and beyond to push for positive change.

We understand that some children can face challenges that they cannot overcome themselves such as poverty, discrimination, childhood trauma and special educational needs.

As chair of the board, I am committed to ensuring that children are provided with opportunities to flourish and realise their potential. This partnership will continue the excellent work of previous years by supporting children and young people by providing opportunities to improve their chances of doing well for themselves and improve their quality of life. The plan aims to promote positive child outcomes, reduce crime, support victims, and make communities safer.

I am proud to report that the Young People's Engagement and Justice Service has accomplished some significant achievements this year. The activities on offer as well as who they have attempted to engage has continued to expand. Last year saw the team deliver the Duke of Edinburgh award with a group of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children in addition to our victim support and Youth Justice groups.

Following an increase in First Time Entrants I am pleased that they have decreased last year, and early signs indicate it will be similar this coming year.

Grant funding has afforded the service the opportunity to work with those young people and their families who are on the 'cusp' of offending. This intervention has seen positive outcomes and I am confident that the good work of the service will continue.

A new programme was delivered by Darlington and Durham Fire and Rescue service which targeted young people causing Anti-Social Behaviour with a view to develop resilience and life skills. This was kindly funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

There are undoubtedly considerable challenges ahead, people and local services are significantly challenged in meeting the needs of children in our local communities due to the increased costs of living and partnership funding pressures. Darlington Young Peoples'

Engagement and Justice Service Board will continue to adapt to the circumstances which we are operating in and the resources which are available to us to put children first.

The success of this partnership will be demonstrated through positive child outcomes, reduced crime and safer communities. Thank you for taking time to read this plan which provides an overview of how Darlington Young Peoples' Engagement & Justice Service will deliver improved outcomes for young people, their families, and our community over the coming year (2024/25)



Stephen Long – Chief Superintendent Durham Constabulary & Chair of Darlington Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service Management Board

# Introduction

This plan supports wider partnership strategies including 'Darlington Strengthening Families Plan 2024/27, Durham Constabulary Anti-Social Behaviour plan, 'Darlington Borough Council Community Safety Plan 2024/27, and the Police and Crime Commissioner Plan 2021/24.

We are a multi-agency service tasked with;

- Working with young people to prevent offending and reoffending whilst also safeguarding them from future harm
- Supporting victims of crime and protecting the public

This plan will outline our local delivery model of Youth Justice Services, including; our structure, governance and roles, partnership working, financial information, the risks to our future delivery as well as detailing our priorities for the coming years.

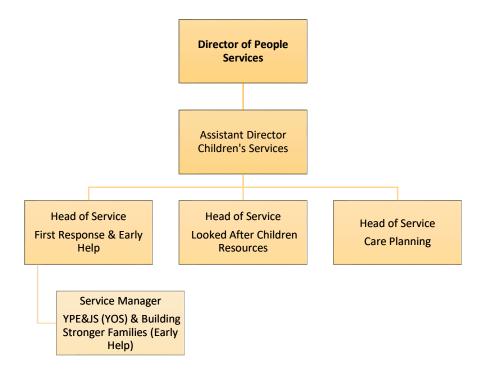
The below chart provides the context and information about the known demographics of the local population including data relating to social depravation, crime and safety and any other concerns which may impact on the welfare of children and young people in Darlington.

Population	There are 107,799 people living in Darlington	Education & skills	19% of people have no qualifications in Darlington compared with 18% across England
Vulnerable groups	25% of children aged 0-19 are in relative low-income families in Darlington compared with 20% across England	£ Economy	36% people aged 16-74 are in full-time employment in Darlington compared with 34% across England
Housing	1% of households lack central heating in Darlington compared with 2% across England	Access & transport	25% of households have no car in Darlington compared with 24% across England
Crime & safety	The overall crime rate is higher than the average across England	Communities & environment	The % of people 'satisfied with their neighbourhood' (79.2%) is similar to the average across England (79.3%)
Health & wellbeing	20% of people have a limiting long-term illness in Darlington compared with 17% across England	Appendix A	

#### **Governance, Leadership and Partnership Arrangements**

The Service is located within Darlington's People Directorate, it gives a high priority to its statutory duty under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

We are aligned with the Building Stronger Families Service and share a Service Manager who reports to the Head of Service who in turn has responsibility for the Front Door (Childrens Initial Advice Team), Early Intervention (BSF) and the Independent Review Service and Darlington Safeguarding Partnership.



Governance arrangements are the responsibility of the Management Board who hold all statutory partners accountable for meeting requirements within their own areas as well as driving for improved outcomes for young people.

Integrated strategic partnership working and clear oversight by the Management Board are critical to the success and effective delivery of Youth Justice Services in Darlington. All HMIP inspection reports and thematic inspections are responded to and escalated to board to ensure any actions are addressed.

The Board has an agreed Terms of Reference which is reviewed and refreshed on a two-year basis (or earlier if required). All board members sign and agree to the terms. The leadership, composition and role of the Board are crucial. The board is directly responsible for:

- Delivering the principal aim of reducing offending and re-offending
- Strategic Performance Oversight
- Ensuring the effective delivery of youth justice services for children and young people
- Accountability and representation of youth justice issues within the local authority

- Ensuring that children and young people involved in the youth justice system have access to universal and specialist services
- Reacting and responding to findings from HMIP inspection reports
- Ensuring local authorities discharge their duties under the Children Act 1989, in particular those in Schedule 2, paragraph 7, to:
  - o Discourage children and young people within their area from committing offences
  - o Take reasonable steps designed to reduce the need to bring criminal proceedings against children and young people
- Avoid the need for children within their area to be placed in secure accommodation.

Established in April 2000 following the introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Darlington Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service is proud of its long history, traditions and achievements in partnership working.

The service and board members integrate particularly well with partnership planning arrangements for children and young people. We do this by sharing our understanding of the needs and issues facing young people in other arenas in relation to cross cutting safeguarding and youth crime related issues. The service also shares learning from practice and delivery with partners to drive improved outcomes for young people.

The Service is represented by the Local Authority at Senior Leadership level at the Local Criminal Justice Partnership Board, MAPPA SMB and Darlington's Local Safeguarding Partnership.

The Service Manager sits on the Darlington Community Safety Partnership and two of its sub groups, is the Deputy Chair within the council for the Channel programme, the lead for Building Stronger Families (formerly Early Help Services) within the council, a member of the Strategic Serious Violence group, and, an active contributor to several regional and national groups including Heads of Service Youth Justice Executive Northeast Region and the Association of Youth Offending Team Managers. The Service Manager also sits alongside a small number of Service Managers across the country (advocating on behalf of the Northeast of England), to consider and work alongside HMIP colleagues in relation to collaborative decision making in readiness for the next round of HMIP Inspections for children and young people.

The Team Manager for the service represents operationally at various subgroups including Reducing Re-offending, Children Exploited Group, Liaison and Diversion Steering Group, Victim & Witness Group and Regional YJB Developing Practice Meetings.

The service contributes to wider strategies such as the LA, Strengthening Families Plan and "Community Safety Plan' which both set out the direction for organisations working together to make the borough of Darlington a better place to work and live and provide children with the best start in life.

Darlington Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service has excellent working arrangements and engagement with the Durham Police Crime Commissioner (PCC) who

continue to support both financially and operationally with aspects of the service, and particularly the Victims Service offered locally.

Since the development of the last plan, there has been a change in the political leadership. Despite this, there remains strong political leadership and the Portfolio Lead for Children and Young People in as active member of the YPEJS Strategic Board. Both the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Lead for Children and Young people continue to show commitment to the children, young people and families of Darlington.

We remain committed to working in partnership with others around the key issues affecting young people and ensure that we have pathways to support for areas including harmful sexual behaviour, sexual and criminal exploitation, mental health and trauma, substance misuse and radicalisation/terrorism.

As a Multi-Agency partnership, the service has a seconded Police Officer who has been a consistent representative for several years now and plays an integral part in both the prevention and recidivism of the young people we serve. A Probation Officer was seconded to Darlington YPEJS from County Durham & Darlington in April 2024 further to national challenges regarding Probation Officer recruitment. Operational and strategic oversight continues involving the Service Manager and Team Manager of YPEJS and the Head of the Probation Service for County Durham & Darlington; with operational management meetings well established and the Probation/YJS Transitions Board for County Durham & Darlington, established in 2023 as a good practice initiative, brings together operational and strategic management of Youth Transitions across County Durham and Darlington to share good practice, opportunities as well as implementation of national Youth Justice policy at a local level.

The service also has a seconded Health and Wellbeing worker funded by TEWV supporting young people in improving their emotional wellbeing.

# **Progress on Priorities in Previous Plan**

In 2023/24 the service has achieved the following:

 Development of wider provision of community reparation programmes including working with the local Veterans Charity, council Supported Accommodation Provision including both the Women's Refuge and Over 50's provision, area targeted Graffiti and Litter Picking and community work including the maintenance and development of local gardens and graveyard.



"Support delivered to Family Help... has been incredible. Together they have cut back overgrowth and tidied up grassed area.... Family Help is a small, underfunded charity and we struggle with the upkeep of the grass, brambles, shrubs, and trees in the outside areas. Now our external areas are tidy and safe... very much appreciated by staff and residents alike." – Family Help

"I'm really enjoying the reparations I thought it would be scary but I'm really enjoying it I'm happy ... is my like reparation leader cause he's really nice and we just get along" **Young Person** 

"I've been struggling with my garden due to my age and prosthetic leg. ...turned up with crew and sorted my garden front and back in two hours. Young people get a bad press these days, but these young lads got stuck in and did a great job." – **Veteran Garden Assistance Project** 



- More communication and family views are evidenced. There is evidence of groupwork and referrals to Building Stronger Families for additional support where required.
- Work in specific schools requiring support around racially discriminatory language. This was inclusive of a parent group to ensure that there was a Whole Family Approach to the concerns.

"...was fantastic engaging our young people and reactive to many different topics that were brought up." – School Feedback regarding targeted on-site Intervention

- Immediate Justice and the Turnaround provision is fully embedded and continues to have successful outcomes.
- Work pertaining to the Family First Model is enhanced due to the new Prevention and Early Intervention Assessment tool.

"... has helped my son loads throughout her time with him. He has engaged well from the topics they have covered also he has opened up loads more since working with her too. She will be missed, and she has been a huge help to my son and our family!" — **YP Parent** 

Staff are encouraged to become more involved in the decision making with regards to appropriate intervention. This gives the staff more autonomy to be creative and innovative in line with Child First.

The service remains in Quadrant two of the Youth Justice Board Oversight Panel, which classifies us as 'good' with minimal oversight required. However, with the decrease in First Time Entrants returning to pre-covid figures, it is hoped that we may move to Quadrant one.

There has been a Successful bid to support enhanced provision to work with those young people identified with Serious Youth Violence characteristics.

The service continues to develop adapted resources for those young people identified as having SEN needs.

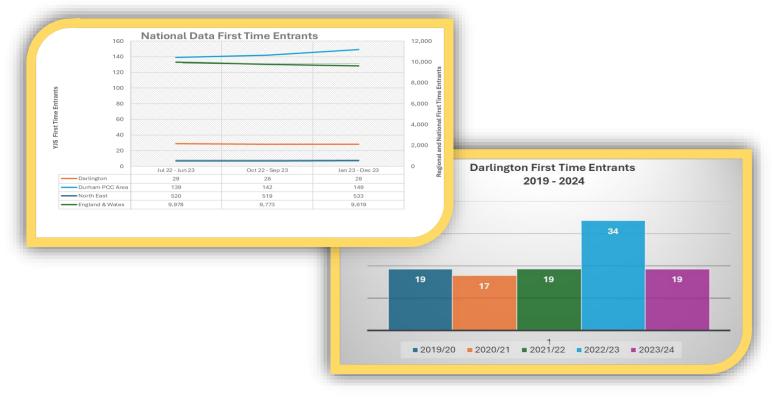
#### **Performance on Previous Year**

Darlington Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service reports comprehensive performance information on a quarterly basis to our Management Board and partners, which is presented at Board meetings. Alongside the three key indicators we report on a range of information which evolves with the priorities of the service. We also produce thematic reports where the data indicates further information is required, and at the request of the Management Board (as outlined re FTE's).

The below is information relating to performance in the 2023/24 period, and some data on the YPEJS cohort during that time.

#### **First Time Entrants**

A First Time Entrant is where a child or young person receives a formal youth justice outcome for the first time, this equates to a Youth Caution or, where an offence has been so serious



the young person has not been eligible for an out of court disposal and has received a statutory court order for the first time.

The number of First Time Entrants has remained static since the year 2019, with the exception of 2022/23 where we saw a 79% increase. This was linked to the gravity of some offences leading young people straight to court and not being eligible for an out of court disposal, there was also a high proportion of young people in that year who had previous diversionary disposals and have gone on to commit further offences therefore have entered the formal outcome provision.

When compared with regional and national data, Darlington's FTEs are significantly below the Northeast region and Durham's Police & Crime Commissioners area.

# **Reducing Re-offending**

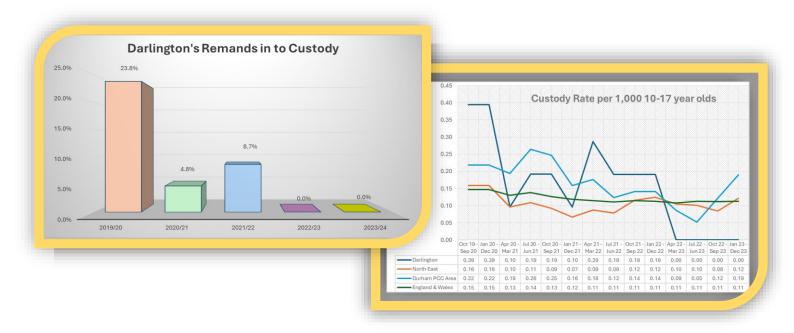
The service monitors its re-offending rate locally as well as reporting on the national requirements to the Youth Justice Board. The local measure monitors a rolling cohort of all young people receiving an outcome in the year and tracks them for 12 months (+ 6 months to allow for outcomes to be processed) from their original outcome date. Our latest cohort of young people tracked are those who received an outcome between Nov 21 – Oct 22 cohort.

This cohort tracking period ended in April 2024 which resulted in 20% of the cohort reoffending in that period.

Reoffending Cohort	Nov 21 - Oct 22
Number in Cohort	104
Percentage who Re-offended	20%
Frequency Rate of Re-offending	0.83
Re-Offender Rate	4.1
20% of Young People in the Nov 21	- Oct 22 Cohort Reoffend

# **Use of Youth Custody**

This indicator uses case level data and monitors the number of young people who are remanded into custody and or sentenced to a period of detention.



Over the last 2 years there have been no Darlington young people placed on a custodial remand. The service will always propose a robust bail package where appropriate.

In relation to use of custody, Darlington have not had any young people sentenced to a period of detention since 2022.

In 2023/2024 additional Key Performance Indicators were introduced for the Service. At the time of writing this report, the processing of this data is still in the early stages and not due to be published by the YJB until April 2025 and as directed by the Youth Justice Board, given their direction not to publish any data this is not included in this year's plan.

## **Risks and Issues**

There remain ongoing expectations from the government to consider reducing public expenditure and this will clearly have an impact on Local Authorities and, the Youth Justice system is no exception to this. Partners will need to continue to work together with limited resources to overcome any future unpredictable challenges which may arise. The Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service has a strong partnership arrangement locally, and we will need to ensure that any risks are communicated and dealt with by the Board Members at the earliest opportunity to mitigate any risks.

- Due to an enhanced extensive offer of diversion within the service for those young people eligible, those who remain present with increasingly complex needs and present challenges in terms of the help and response needed has already been noted and scrutinised by both the Youth Justice Board and the Strategic YPEJS Board that this can have an impact on reducing the numbers of re-offenders at a rate expected as highlighted in 2021/2023.
- In both December 2022 and July 2023, the Ministry of Justice provided enhanced money aligned to 'Turnaround' and the 'Immediate Justice Grant'. Turnaround is based on similar principles to those underlying the Supporting Families programme. The YJS-led programme is an integrated Early Help offer of holistic support, which takes place separately to any formal criminal justice proceedings. The programme assesses and addresses the underlying needs which may have brought children into contact with the justice system, aiming to both promote positive development and prevent further interaction with the justice system. The Immediate Justice Grant was provided to support in the delivery of Early Intervention of those young people on the 'cusp' of offending.
- We have been informed recently that the Turnaround funding will cease to continue after March 2025. If alternative funding is not sought, this will invariably have a significant impact on the families-/young people that the dedicated team have been intensively working with. At the end of 23/24 the offer of support had been made to 137 families with 41 families consenting to engage with the service, there have also been young people that despite being ineligible for Turnaround due to their status with Children's Social Care or who have been involved with youth justice services before that have received targeted intervention programmes. Concerns relating to the end of funding have been raised at Board focussing on the impact that this will have on the families and other service provision.
- Another area of concern relates to the loss of the Child psychologist who provided 11 support and guidance to the service. Whilst a financial bid has been submitted under
  the Serious Violence Fund for a Principal Psychologist, recruitment has been
  unsuccessful. The service, jointly with Durham Youth Justice Service are working with

Tees Esk & Wear Valley Trust and looking at an adapted way of working whilst recruitment continues.

Some other key risk for future delivery for the year include:

- The element of funding controlled by the PCC remains a year-on-year allocation, however we are pleased with new robust service level agreements in relation to this.
- The stability of statutory partners budget contributions and the impact on the shortage of staff in kind at any time would have an impact on service delivery.
- If funding in the future decreases, it would have an impact on the ability to support the range of diversionary and preventative work of which we are immensely proud.
- Given the recent information to inform that the Turnaround funding is to cease in March 2025, there is a great risk that the service will be unable to provide the provision to families and young people and therefore sustainability is a risk.
- The YPE&JS is due to move premises this year. This will be the first move in its current existence. There are risks associated with the location of the new premises, which, whilst closer to the town centre, the space does not currently have a designated reception and waiting area for young people, there will also be a significant reduction in the space available to engage with young people. The risks and threats associated with this continue to be discussed at a strategic level to ensure that any concerns can be mitigated and dealt with.
- We have not yet received our annual YJB Grant Allocation. Any decrease in allocation would have an impact on future delivery and staffing associated with this.

Darlington Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service intends to continue to work with partners to drive efficiency within the Service through the delivery of high-quality services making maximum use of available resources.

The partnership will be proactive in addressing risks to ensure it continues to achieve its aims and priorities for 2024/25.

#### **Child First**

In line with the Youth Justice Boards Strategic Plan 2024-27, Darlington YPEJS is committed to:

See children first, offenders second and champion the needs of children throughout our work. Darlington is aligned to the following YJB strategic principles:

Prioritise the best interests of children and recognising their needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.

"All the people I have worked with have changed my life in such a positive way, gave me all the support I needed in school and outside of school and I really appreciate it. I loved working with them, and it is a shame it had to come to an end" — Young Person

The Service is developing their Relational Approach to all Children and Young People with a particular focus on language and how we respond to individual's needs.

The development of in-house child friendly tools enables the service to identify the needs of individuals. Such tools are interactive to encourage play and relationship development between workers and young people thus giving the young people the opportunity to communicate as and how is easiest for them.

#### **Building Pro-Social Identity**

Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop 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 fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.

We attempt to build pro-social identities rooted in the interests that the young people already hold. We pursue opportunities for our young people to gain meaningful education and employment opportunities. Additionally, we find that our public facing community reparation projects develop positive interactions between the public and our young people and allows them to feel more connected to their local area and communities.

"... is Very nice and good listener. [She] organised a meeting with an author for me and it has helped me understand how to improve my writing skills. It helped me think about the future in a bigger view" — **Young Person** 



"Hello [staff member] just to let u know that my card has come today.

And I couldn't thank u enough thanks a lot... much appreciated" — YP

Achieving CSCS Card

"CSCS card, thoroughly enjoyed the support. ...has pushed me though all the way from the beginning" – Young Person

From the onset of involvement, all activities are offered to allow 'children to be children'. Workers have the support and encouragement to think creatively about how to engage individual children and families in a way that reinforces positive identity. The variety of activities and projects allows for that positive connection also.

# **Collaborating with Children**

Encourage children's active participation, engagement, and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their families. The service frequently utilises young people during our recruitment processes, in the last year we a group of young people have participated in our recruitment process during our reparation and activity process. A young person from Darlington YPE&JS was also involved in the recruitment of the Durham Constabulary Chief of Police.

During a Home Office visit to Darlington to review our implementation of immediate justice we visited a community project location with a group of young people who then took turns speaking with the Home Office representatives about their work with the service.

2 of our young people have participated in the consultation of the proposed National Policing Strategy 2024/27 and feedback has been shared with National Police Chiefs Council.

Our young people are currently involved in a local Serious Violence Survey led by the Police and Crime Commissioners Office under the serious violence strategic group with a view to using the feedback to shape our vision and local delivery going forward.

There is an existing mechanism to receive service feedback which has been utilised in a similar way for several years. An MS Form is utilised to capture both direct and indirect feedback from any source, albeit a very simple format we have found it the most effective to date in gathering qualitative feedback from colleagues, young people, families, partner agencies, victims and the public. This survey is on all staff mobile phones and can be done directly on the device or links can be easily sent via text or email.

The service documentation has been adapted to ensure that the voice of the child and the family is captured in a child friendly way.

#### **Diverting from Stigma**

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.

As our name suggests whilst we remain committed to intervening with those young people who commit offences that can only be dealt with via the court arena, our ethos is to intervene at the earliest opportunity to support, engage and promote desistance away from the justice system as per our name, 'Young Peoples Engagement and Justice Service'.

The service has continuously over the years developed and promoted the work of both our prevention and diversion pathways via a partnership approach. In July 2023 our Early Intervention & Prevention offer has been enhanced following the Home Office 'Immediate Justice' investment into Durham and Darlington as a pilot area. This has enabled the service to recruit a third Family Worker and a Reparation and Activity Worker as well as a 0.5 Victim Liaison Officer, widening the capacity to reach out to young people receiving on street community resolutions, no further action after a police interaction as well as victims of these behaviours. Referrals are made by Darlington's Civic Enforcement Team and Police and following consent an assessment of need is undertaken and a plan agreed. This pathway gives opportunity for earlier intervention and case identification, meaningful information sharing and links, gives alternative approaches to 'prohibitions only' within Acceptable Behaviour Agreements and more meaningful understanding of young people responsible for ASB and emerging issues and behaviours.

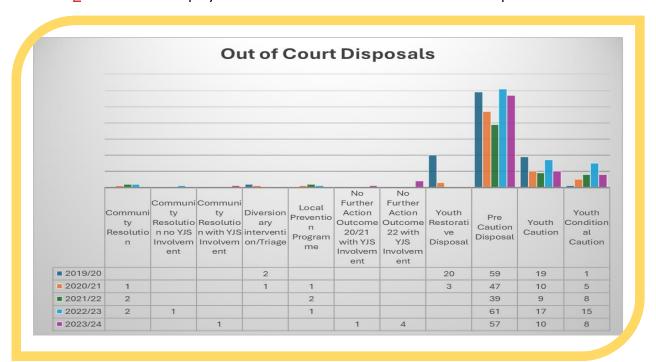
In relation to diversion, Darlington YPE&JS operates a pathway in conjunction with Durham Constabulary whereby they refer young people who are eligible for consideration of an alternative outcome that avoids escalation into the formal youth justice system. Following completion of the new Prevention & Diversion assessment tool, young people go on to receive either a Pre-Caution Disposal or Restorative Justice Outcome, these files may also be diverted into a prevention programme or education only piece of work with no justice style outcome. This involves multi agency decision making via our Assessment, Planning and Decision panel in determining the outcome and plan proportionate to their identified needs.

Darlington YPE&JS assess, and case manage, all out of court files that have been submitted to the service. Following an initial eligibility gatekeeping by our YPE&JS Police Officer the case is allocated to a case manager whom following information gathering and assessment will meet with a manager to present their assessment, proposed plan and the outcome/programme

decision, other workers including the service Police Officer and Victim Liaison Officer can contribute or attend these meetings.

Our out of court casework receives scrutiny from a local panel convened by the Police to determine the appropriateness of decisions, those round the table from varying backgrounds hear the details of the case and determine if the diversion was correct. As a service we are proud that our case work and decision making consistently stands up to enquiry.

The YPE&JS has been key in alternative provision bids to offer out of hours engagement activities for young people at risk of ASB and offending. As well as being involved in supporting the bid,—the service also plays a role in identification and referrals to the provision.



Our service prides itself on its willingness to provide prevention and intervention offers even when not part of central funding expectations. In the last year we have engaged with students from four secondary schools at the school's request, several of these have been groups of students attending our off-site outdoor activity and targeted PSHE sessions, other schools have requested the delivery of targeted intervention work with groups of students at their establishments. The team has also been involved in delivery at 7 local primary schools in the last year, delivering targeted group work regarding issues such as ASB/offending consequences, racism, weapons and emotional management. There were over 600 sessions attended in 2023-24, the majority of these involving engagement for a full school day.

The YPEJS has continued to promote a child first approach which ensures all interactions and interventions reflect the individual needs of the child and builds upon strengths.

## **Resources and Services**

The partnership financial structure consists of a central government grant administered by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and mandatory investments from key agencies.

The YJB grant award is an important funding stream representing a large proportion of partnership funding sources. In the last few years, the grant has remained at a standstill budget thus securing a degree of budget stability, however, we have yet to receive our financial location for this year.

The contribution from the PCC to Darlington Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service is £142,200. £98,200 for YPE&JS operational services including a contribution to underpin Restorative Justice and £44,000 to enhance services to young people who become victims of crime. This is a 20,000 increase to last year's allocation to enhance the victim service further by recruiting to an additional 0.5 worker. In addition, we have support via our Health Colleagues for a Health and Well Being Worker. The costs associated to the seconded staff are met by their employing agency.

100% of the youth justice grant is allocated to staffing costs within YOT functions; to deliver statutory youth justice work in the courts, community, and custody; the supervision and management oversight of case managers and other YOT staff, and staff who populate the youth justice management database and extract performance data.

#### Value for Money

We are committed to delivering services that represent value for money. A significant amount of time has been spent on understanding the 'value' of services that are delivered in terms of cost, outcomes and savings created through prevention and 'invest to save' approaches.

Robust financial management, within YPE&JS and overseen by the Local Authority, is underpinned by regular budget reports to the Management Board and Finance colleagues. We will continue to deliver a range of services going forward in respect of youth justice provision and in partnership with others, to avoid duplication and to draw upon the skills and expertise of staff and partners to maximise use of resources and improve performance.

The staffing of the service is compliant with the minimum staffing requirements set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and is attached in Appendix 1.

For partnership contribution table, see attached Appendix 2.

#### **Board Development**

Darlington Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service Board continues to benefit from a strong appropriately attended Senior Partnership membership. The growth of this membership in the past 18 months is encouraging and allows for continuous partnership development. It remains to be chaired by Senior Representation from Durham Constabulary which has been in existence for several years. This Governance and Leadership, including chairing arrangements were identified as 'efficient and proactive' in the HMIP Inspection of 2021. Whilst recent chairing arrangements have changed, it remains at Chief Superintendent level, with the Deputy Chair of the board being the Assistant Director for the Children's Services, Darlington Borough Council.

Members of the Management Board are also members of a range of other partnerships relevant to the work of Darlington Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service at both operational and strategic level. Board members are required to ensure that they represent the views of YPEJS in those partnerships as well as their home agency and that they present back on a quarterly basis relevant and purposeful information pertaining to the prevention and intervention of young people in Darlington.

The YJB expects local management boards to take responsibility for all aspects of YJS governance; to lead strategically across relevant partners and to ensure a high-quality service is provided to all children.

All new and existing Board Members receive a Management Board information and Induction Pack (with their views and wishes taken into consideration during our last management board development session). This affords them all relevant and purposeful guidance and information relating to the governance and leadership/oversight of the board and the expectations in their role as key board members. In addition, Board Members were also provided with a copy of the Youth Justice Service Governance and Leadership Document (2021), allowing members to consider 'GOOD' Governance expectations in their role in its oversight.

Each quarter, members present relevant information pertaining to Youth Justice and this is carried out in collaboration with such members to determine the key priorities for the year. This is often based on thematic reporting, trends and necessity based on performance data. The board has focused previously on SEND, Serious Youth Violence, Mental Health and how strategically we ensure that such matters are dealt with efficiently and collectively with regular follow up discussions and Task and Finish Groups where required.

Board Members met with YPEJS staff in year, meeting them at the workplace and undertaking the Board meeting at this venue. Allowing them the time to engage with staff in conversations to further understand the roles of our staff. This was very much, a two-way conversation allowing staff to ask pertinent questions of the board. Given the success of this, further Board Meetings and events with staff will be included in the forward plan for 2024/25.

One area for focus that did require such scrutiny was the significant rise in First Time Entrants in Darlington in 21/23 based on previous years. Meetings were held outside of the board

arena with members from the LA, YJB and Chair to agree actions and a proactive way of taking the board agenda forward. This was a multi-agency piece of work, allowing both the police and the LA to consider the Hypothesis for the rise in numbers and any such impact that it may have had on the young people we work with whilst also identifying any unmet needs. Those findings were shared at board in April 2024 and whilst such findings were not reflective of current practice within agencies, there are still some 'key themes' which remain live and will be addressed with partners. It should be noted however, that the First Time Entrant figures for 23/24 have once again decreased significantly and that board members are assured that young people are receiving outcomes that are proportionate to their crime /offences and there has been no evidence of 'up-tariffing'.

It has always been paramount that as a board, we ensure that Child First, trauma informed principles and other child focused approaches are embedded strategically and operationally and this has once again formed rich discussions when considering the 2024/25 schedule for the board.

The YPE&JS are now able to drive forward with a clear and collaborative approach, focusing on a Child First ethos, ensuring that young people's voices form an integral part of the 2024/25 vision for Darlington.

BOARD ROLE	INDIVIDUALS				
CHAIR	Chief Superintendent, Durham Constabulary				
STATUTORY	Head of Durham National Probation Service				
PARTNERS	Office of the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner				
	Head of Service Children & Young People (CYP) – North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board				
	CAMHS Team Manager				
LOCAL AUTHORITY PARTNERS	Assistant Director of Children's Services, Darlington Borough Council, DBC				
	Lead member for Children and Young People				
	Head of Service – Front Door, BSF, YPE&JS and Safeguarding Partnership, DBC				
	Service Manager - Young Peoples' Engagement & Justice Service, DBC				
	Team Manager - Young Peoples' Engagement & Justice Service, DBC				
	Head of Community Safety, DBC				
	Director of Public Health, DBC				
LIASON & DIVERSION	Service Manager (TEWV)				
FIRE & RESCUE	Divisional Manager Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue				
COURT	Clerk to the Justices, Her Majesty's Court Services (HMCTS)				
EDUCATION	Head of Service - SEND, DBC				
	Virtual School Head, DBC				
	Local Secondary & Primary Leads				

#### **Workforce Development**

The Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service works in conjunction with the Local Authority Workforce Development Unit. This unit has developed an annual Workforce Development Strategy has allowed the staff within the service full access to the council and its partnership wide training opportunities. This is inclusive of our seconded staff who have equal opportunities to all offers of both external and internal training. Those Seconded staff have day to day line management via the Team Manager and Deputy Team Manager, whilst receiving formal clinical supervision with their respective agencies.

All newly appointed staff, regardless of their role receive a minimum four week induction process, which includes a specific introduction to the world of youth justice and our ethos as a service, they receive corporate training relating to a host of key issues and introductions to the different areas of the service as well as key partner agencies both inside the council and externally.

All staff, regardless of their role, receive four to six weekly supervisions with their direct line manager, and in addition, a Personal Development Review bi-annually which focuses on the individual in greater depth.

A full staff meeting takes place weekly allowing for uninterrupted time to discuss all aspects of the service provision, different areas of the team have their own meetings to focus on operational delivery. In addition, full staff development sessions with a thematic focus occur every two months, this allows the service to pull out trends and areas of concerns whilst encouraging the team to share best practise with their peers.

The reparation and activity team have undertaken training in the last year, particularly on indoor climbing and their outdoor first aid and incident management which enables them to continue to deliver exciting and engaging activities to our young people.

The service regularly participates in development around areas such as Harmful Sexual Behaviour, with team members attending training delivered by the Lucy Faithful Foundation. The wider team have received training focusing on relational practice, specifically how we can effectively engage the wider family as well as the language that is used in our recording and reports.

"These sessions have really helped me feel able to talk about things I didn't really want to talk about" — YP Completing HSB Intervention

"Made a very stressful and difficult situation a lot easier to understand. Was very understanding, friendly and easy to work with. Always kept us informed and helped answer any questions which we had. Was always approachable and never had any issues with the work." – Parent of YP Completing HSB Intervention

We have had several staff members trained in C-Card and are therefore able to deliver appropriate sexual health advice as well as dispense sexual health supplies to young people who have obtained a 'c-card'.

The team receives specific training as and where identified, for example with the release of the new prevention and diversion assessment tool.

Away from training our own team also develops the skills of our volunteers with a 10-session panel member training programme, we consistently refresh our panel members and 3 new volunteers received training at the start of 2024. The service has also assisted in appropriate adult training for foster carers and staff at the YMCA.

The service delivers a half day Youth Justice Awareness session that is open council wide and to partner agencies, we had 20 attendees on the 5 sessions delivered in 23/24, an extended session is also delivered yearly at Durham University for Masters Social Work Students and this year we also delivered it for a group of students on a law and policing course at Darlington College.

"... was an exceptional tutor for the day. We have had over a year of learning at Durham, which is rated number 1 in the country for Social Work Masters and he is easily one of the best we have had. He came with a lot of information about the law and context youth justice sits in but also gave us excellent experience of assessments. The mix of law, theory and practical application was brilliant... I think he has inspired a couple of people in the class to look into that as a line of work once they have qualified." — Student at Durham University

#### **Evidence Based Practice and Innovation**

The service is proud to continue its delivery of the Duke of Edinburgh programme, we continue to see huge benefits for the young people that engage in the programme, developing new skills and building lasting memories and relationships for young people that typically would not access the programme. The Duke of Edinburgh is committed to our approach, regional and national representatives have come to visit our provision to see our delivery and have also come to celebrate the achievements of our young people at our annual presentation evening.



The team has benefitted from the introduction of a fishing provision, with a staff member's passion for the hobby being utilised with young people from across the service including victim support, school engagement and our statutory caseload, all accessing individual and group sessions. Several young people have been set up with their own licences and equipment following their sessions.

In addition to the above the service consistently encourages young people to be involved in alternative hobbies, sports, and activities. In the last year we have provided several young

people with gym passes and membership, monthly memberships with boxing clubs, school holiday sports clubs, attended local football matches, encouraged positive family time with activity vouchers, introduced a young person to a local author and we have also facilitated music lessons as well as setting young people up with equipment and studio time.

"... [YPs Nan] said he really looks up to you, she really appreciates you taking him out fishing... he said 'he's dead sound you know we proper get on' which is MASSIVE praise from him" — YP Grandparent

As previously mentioned in the plan we continue to work in partnership with local schools for a variety reasons, we believe this practice is invaluable in being a truly preventative element of our service delivery. Where schools are looking for targeted interventions or off-site provisions, we can generate income which we can then re-invest in our activity and intervention provisions for young people across our entire service. A particularly different approach in the last year was for a dual delivery of discriminatory work with young people at a primary school alongside a session for the parents of the students.

The service has been working on imbedding the ethos of immediate justice with our preventative cases, previously work on a preventative or consent based level would miss out on aspects of restorative justice, however with the implementation of Turnaround we immediately started to incorporate restorative processes in the plans for children, as a pilot area for immediate justice we have then pushed this provision further and as we enter 24/25 we aim to increase the number of children from our prevention pathways engaging in community projects.



In the last year the service has benefitted from a joint scheme with Durham and Darlington Fire & Rescue Service, the service has wanted to increase their youth engagement and through a joint piece of work funded by the Police Crime Commissioner we have been able to deliver a developing resilience programme with 3 groups of young people with further groups planned for the coming year.

"He hasn't shut up about the course since he's got in the car lol he has love it x" — YP Parent

"Yeah he's just been telling me all about it.. He's really enjoyed himself (thank you so much"

— YP Parent

"...he seems to of loved it and thank you" - YP Parent

# **Evaluation**

Work is underway to evaluate the Serious Violence Duty arrangements which has been implemented across County Durham and Darlington. Whilst Durham Constabulary do not have a Serious Violence Reduction Unit, the application has been developed with support from a commissioned service named Crest Advisory. Crest offered both Consultation and Research. The partnership is awaiting the findings from the research which will be shared in due course.

The service is part of a national pilot in relation to the implementation of Immediate Justice. The Home Office have commissioned Ipsos UK, an independent research and evaluation company to carry out an evaluation which aims to understand and assess how the implementation of the IJ policy is working nationally. To date the service has been involved in practitioner interviews followed by an onsite observation where young people were asked about their experiences. We are waiting to hear the next steps.

In relation to the Future Pathways evening sessions detailed above there are plans within the bid to carry out an independent evaluation around the impact and outcomes for children and young people on the cusp of ASB and crime.

# **Priorities for the Coming Year**

Priority	Objectives
Enhance and continue to develop our contextual safeguarding approach and practice as a service and with partners and parents and young people.	Be supportive and be part of the wider LA development around contextual safeguarding by using the knowledge and expertise that already exists in the team.  Training and development around tools and intervention that focus on the context in which children are likely to be exploited.
Develop our response to Serious Youth Violence and ensure that the Strategic Board maintains oversight and governance	Reinstate the Trauma Informed Care Pathway with a focus on those that are at risk of becoming involved in serious violence  In partnership with Northumbria University carry out research on females and violent behaviour to better understand the local profile.  Continue to represent both at Strategic and Operational level
Review and plan our Early Intervention and Prevention offer and what this looks like	Expanding our victim offer to those who are victims of ASB and crimes that receive no further action/alleged crimes.  Comply with victim's code of practice and monitoring requirements.  Develop relationships with businesses in the borough allowing them to share experiences of ASB with us and in turn for us to provide a universal offer of support.  Consider current offer and eligibility criteria and redesign against resources and capacity.
beyond Turnaround Funding period.	

Ensure that all our activities and interventions build relationships between young people and their communities and vice a versa.

Continue to embed relational practice inclusive of language in staff development.

Promote our work to educate and build the communities understanding of the approaches the YPEJS take.

Child First ethos is at the forefront of all interactions with our children and young people.

# **Standards for Children**

Darlington YPEJS undertook the required National Standards audit which focused on standard 2, "At Court", which required a self-assessment that included the Management Board and the YPEJS operational responsibilities.

The YPEJS had to grade each question against a set of criteria as follows:
Outstanding
Good
Requires Improvement
Inadequate

The Young Peoples' Engagement Service came out with an overall grade of GOOD.

In Summary, 'evidence of good practice has been seen, including work with victims and the support pathway. Darlington have a very experienced team with QA systems in place. Some processes may benefit from being reviewed and formalised'.

#### **Service Development**

Improvements and developments of the service are contained within the priority section of the action plan. These will be the focus for 2024/25.

The Service Manager sits on the HMIP working group and this affords the opportunity to hear first-hand what the national context is. This arena also allows a Voice for those Youth Justice Services across our local region to be heard and be involved in shaping future delivery of the inspection Regime.

The service with the support of the YPEJS Strategic Board and colleagues in Childrens Social Care have undertaken a deep dive analysis of those young people who have displayed Sexual Harmful behaviour. Those findings will be considered, and further multi agency groups will continue to develop process and procedures to address the findings.

Given the conclusion of the Turnaround programme from a government grant led position, the service is mapping out ways to sustain the programme in house and will consider the options for futured delivery.

Our overarching focus for 2024/25 will ensure that the Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service 'continue to see Children as Children first, we will treat them fairly and help them to build on their strength's so that they can make a constructive contribution to society' (YJB A guide to child First 2024/27)

#### **National Priorities**

#### Children from Groups which are Over-Represented

It continues to be that within Darlington the ethnicity of children is predominately white British. The service completes an annual review using the disproportionality toolkit which supported there were no concerns regarding the ethnic composition of children within the YPEJS.

Children in our care have been an overrepresented group and whilst there are still children involved with the service, the use of out of court and diversionary programmes, we have seen a reduction in reports to police. The Team Manager for YPEJS and the Service Manager for Children Looked After having worked jointly with Durham Constabulary in the production of a local protocol around unnecessary criminalisation of children in care. The protocol incorporates the core principles set down in the National Protocol and provides a framework for practice in Darlington and provides the principles and tools to facilitate the co-ordinated, consistent multi-agency practice that is needed to prevent unnecessary criminalisation of children on our care.

#### Policing

Darlington Young Peoples Engagement and Justice Service sits within the Constabulary Area of Durham. The Service has been in the fortunate position of retaining a senior representative of the Constabulary to chair the Strategic Board. This has been a consistent approach for several years and has been recognised as good practise by HMIP.

As part of the Strategic Governance Arrangements as set out by the YJB, the service has a full time Police Officer aligned. We have been fortunate to maintain the same Police Officer for a few years now. This has been down to strong partnerships with Durham Constabulary and the ability to discuss both operational and strategic views and thoughts at any time. Having the consistency of the police officer allows for a level of continuous development and understanding, a stable workforce and a common individual who young people recognise and can form a positive professional relationship with.

Both the Strategic and Operational led Serious Violence duty meetings are represented by management within the service. Chairing of the strategic meeting is the responsibility of the Acting Chief Constable for Durham Constabulary who in turn, was the chair of the YPEJS Strategic Board. Links remain strong and within the meetings, the partnership engagement is comprehensible.

Under our Early Intervention and Prevention provision we have an Information sharing agreement with police to access data to identify young people early and reach out to with our offer.

As a service we regularly reviewing our referral routes into our prevention provision and most recently we have met with the local 'Shop Watch' group led by police and are working towards an offer to young people who are involved in shop lifting where the stores opt to resolve matters themselves. Early indication is that retail is supportive of this and are keen to come on board with the service.

Whilst Durham Constabulary Force Management Statement for the year 24/25 is a substantial document, the following 6 priorities have been identified as key for which the Chief Constable will be responsible for, in partnership with services across the force area. This will be inclusive of Darlington Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service given the cross-cutting themes identified:

- 1. Violent Crime: Addressing the root causes of violence and working collaboratively with partners to prevent and intervene in instances of violent crime.
- 2. County Lines: Combating the scourge of county lines drug trafficking, which exploits vulnerable individuals and communities while fuelling organised crime networks.
- 3. Cybersecurity: Enhancing our capabilities to detect, investigate and prevent cyber-enabled crimes, including fraud, online exploitation and data breaches.
- 4. Community Policing: Strengthening our engagement with local communities, building trust and empowering residents to play an active role in crime prevention and public safety initiatives.
- 5. Mental Health: Developing tailored interventions and support mechanisms for individuals experiencing mental health crises, ensuring their welfare and minimising their involvement with the Criminal Justice System.
- 6. Equality and Diversity: Promoting inclusivity, diversity and equality within our workforce and addressing disparities in the delivery of policing services.

#### Education

Darlington Young People's Engagement & Justice Service works closely with a number of education partners in ensuring that those young people within our service are having their education needs met. Although we do not have educational staffing provision within the service, both primary and secondary schools, SEND and Virtual Head are all represented on the Strategic Management Board.

Darlington operates a Vulnerable Pupil Panel where the YPE&JS are represented. The panel aims to take collective ownership across all schools / academies, other agencies and the local authority around issues resulting in pupils disengaging from education including suspensions and exclusions and to work to identify the potential solutions to these issues. The service receives referrals from this avenue into our Early Intervention and Prevention pathway.

The SEND Implementation Group was formed to strategically and operationally respond to the areas of significant weakness identified in the Local Area SEND Inspection of January 2022. There is representation from the Head of Service and/or the Service Manager responsible for YPE and J and Early Intervention. The focus of the Group since Inspection has been to tackle significant weaknesses in (1) meeting the needs of children & young people with SEND and the impact of this on their outcomes and (2) poor preparation for adulthood and post 19 opportunities for children & young people with SEND. From an early help perspective any help, support and intervention that can be provided with a targeted approach as early as possible is vital, working with local area partners, children and young people and their families to ensure we identify and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND effectively, to ensure they achieve consistently positive outcomes as they progress into adulthood.

#### Restorative approaches and victims

As a small service we endeavour to deliver a flexible and bespoke response to all victims of youth crime in Darlington.

Our VLO will attempt contact with all victims of youth crime to offer a variety of potential support pathways including restorative options, case updates, referrals to other services and taking impact statements and being a 'listening ear'.

Additionally, young victims of Youth Crime as well as young victims of Adult Crimes (upon referral) receive the same as above with some supplementary offers as part of our support pathway. This offer consists of emotional resilience interventions, positive activities designed to increase self-esteem, participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award, group support, one to one support and parenting support.

In 2023/24 the service received additional funding from the PCC to recruit a part time Victim Liaison Officer due to the increase in demand. Following the introduction of Immediate Justice the service most recently have been successful in their bid to increase this post to full time with a view to reaching out to victims of Anti-social behaviour and low-level crime dealt with by way of a Community Resolution.

Our most recent validated data show that between April and Dec 2023 the service worked with 68 victims of youth crime who engaged in 98 activity sessions, 30 assessment meetings, 2 interactions from the victim at Referral Order Panels and 3 Restorative face to face meetings. The service has delivered 520 hrs of reparation in this period.

#### Serious Violence, Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding

The YPEJ service is represented at both the Operational Child Exploitation Group and at a senior level at the Durham & Darlington Strategic Child Exploitation Group quarterly.

The service also attends the Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) each week, this meeting is chaired by Police and this is the mechanism in place to consider a contact to the Children's Front Door which could lead to the completion of the Child Exploitation Matrix, or referral to MEG.

With regard to our approach in respect of Harm Away From Home, the Service Manager and/or Head of Service responsible for this area of work at the Front Door also attend the quarterly Regional Harm Away from Home meetings. This arena includes all 12 regional local authorities and 3 police forces, this allows us to have a consistent approach across the region. This arena also enables the sharing and gaining of information when embedding Harm Away from Home within the individual authorities.

A weekly Community Safety Check In Meeting is chaired by the Team Manager or Advanced Practitioner from the Missing and Exploited Service this is a responsive meeting to immediate concerns and issues that arise linked to individuals, hotspots, vehicles and relevant incidents. This meeting is a remotely held 'drop in' for all partners both internal and external with the aim of implementing disruption, making spaces and places safer for young people and gathering intelligence to inform mapping.

The MEG is held fortnightly and is a multi-agency arena where young people who are risk assessed as moderate or high risk using the Child Exploitation matrix leads to multi-agency discussion and review of the harm. MEG aims to reduce risks, identify any new links and discuss solutions for disruption to minimize the risk to the young person.

The Child Exploitation matrices are quality assured at the by the Team Manager or Advanced Practitioner for the Missing and Exploited Service, this provides consistency of quality and information and helps provide additional support to workers.

A Child Exploitation Worker commissioned via Barnardo's is part of the Front Door Service, as is a Missing From Home Worker. The Child Exploitation Worker holds a caseload and works across the whole service, including with the children's homes in the Borough.

The Team Manager or Advanced Practitioner for the Missing and Exploited Service attend all Strategy Meetings held across the whole service where children are going missing or deemed to be at risk of exploitation.

The Service Manager is the Deputy Chair of the Channel Panel in collaboration with Durham Constabulary Special Branch, with the Head of Service having the responsibility for the chairing arrangements.

The YPEJS Team Manager is the service link for Prevent and attends regular PREVENT Champion meetings, ensuring up to date counter terrorism local profiling, training and information on an emerging theme is shared with staff.

#### **Detention in Police Custody**

Total 126								
Ages	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
	1	1	14	27	24	34	25	
Male	Male 98			Female		28		
36 YPs in LA Care (Not necessarily known to Darlington LA)								
90 YP not in Care								

#### Remands, Use of Custody and Constructive Resettlement

The service has worked in partnership with other local youth justice services and has a regional policy regarding resettlement. This policy outlines how we will work with other services and the secure estate to manage the effective resettlement of children released from custody.

At a local level, we also work with our family group conferencing service to ensure that families are assisted in how they set up and maintain contact whilst in custody and prepare for children returning to the community.

#### **Working with Families**

The Service Manager for the Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service is also responsible for the Building Stronger Families Service, which includes the Early Help provision for Darlington. Aligned with this provision is the Supporting Families Programme, which the Service Manager has oversight and responsibility for.

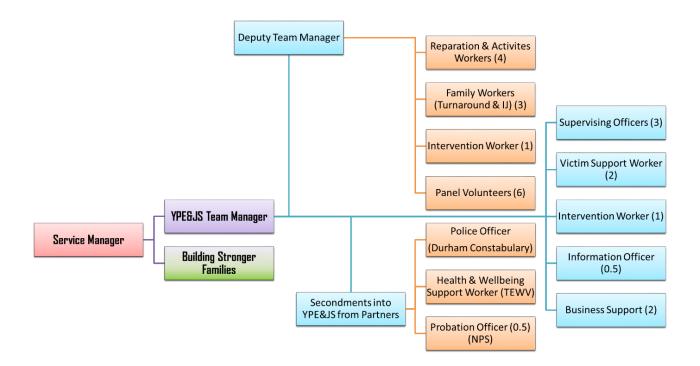
The service continues to develop a Whole Family Approach, aligning their intervention with both those members that have direct responsibility for the young person and those family members who may have wider responsibilities.

"has been truly amazing! From the moment my son and I met her we felt comfortable and free to talk. My son had issues with school and Charlotte was so supportive and came along to all of these - amazing work" – YP Parent

".. are very friendly and helpful. I couldn't talk more highly about them. They are always there to help. Nothing is to much trouble. I feel they have tried there hardest with my son. My son doesn't like to talk but he does talk to them (most of the time)." – YP Parent

# **Appendices**

# **Appendix 1: Team Structure Diagram**



**Appendix 2: Partnership Contribution Table** 

INCOME	Youth Justice Board	Local Authority	Police	Police and Crime Commissioner	Probation	Health	Welsh Government	Other
Cash	£286,722	£258,330	£50,612	£132,165	£56,460			£92,824
In-kind		£102,004	£51,982			£29,354		
Total income	£286,722	£360,334	£102,594	£132,165	£56,460	£29,354	£0	£92,824