



**CABINET – 28<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2026**

**YOUTH JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN 2026 TO 2027**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

**PART A**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Cabinet's approval for the submission of the Leicestershire Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2026-27 to the County Council at its meeting on 13 May 2026. The Plan is attached as Appendix A to this report.
2. The County Council has a statutory duty under section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to produce a Youth Justice Plan which reflects on the progress of the previous plan (2023-26) and sets the strategic priorities for the forthcoming period.

**Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that the County Council at its meeting on 13 May 2026 be recommended to approve the Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2026-2027.

(KEY DECISION)

**Reasons for Recommendation**

4. There is a statutory requirement in section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 for the County Council to produce a Youth Justice Plan which is linked to releasing the Youth Justice Grant from the Ministry of Justice.

**Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

5. The Youth Justice Plan 2026-27 was ratified by the Youth and Justice Partnership Board on 6 March 2026 in line with the Youth Justice Board guidance on Youth Justice Plans.
6. The Scrutiny Commission will receive a report at its meeting on 22 April 2026 and its comments will be reported to the Cabinet.

7. Subject to the Cabinet’s approval, the draft Youth Justice Plan 2026-27 will be submitted to full Council on 13 May 2026.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

8. The current Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2023-26 was approved by the Cabinet in April 2023.
9. The proposals within in this report support delivery of the following outcomes in the Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan (2022-2026):
  - Clean and Green – through direct and indirect education and reparation with children linked to the environment and green spaces. An example of this is the Nature4Nurture Project which is a gardening wellbeing project which is ran across three County Council sites, County Hall being one of them.
  - Great communities – the service is supported by a pool of committed volunteers who engage with children and support re-engagement within communities by being a trusted adult. The Service has since introduced “young volunteers” who are children who volunteer with the service as an exit-strategy from support and contribute to developing the service, the recruitment of staff, and voice and influence work.
  - Improved outcomes – the service remains committed to ensuring that the children who access the service have access to the relevant support and advocacy to ensure that their needs are met and risks are managed. The service has developed a strong offer of support for victim to ensure that they are heard, supported and can engage in restorative justice approaches.
  - Safe and Well – the service remains committed to identifying and supporting children and victims where safeguarding approaches are required both inside and outside of the home.

### **Resource Implications**

10. The Youth Justice Service is funded through the Youth Justice Grant, of which the Youth Justice Plan is a condition for release of the finances, along with a partnership pooled budget.
11. The financial position of the Youth Justice Service is managed through the Youth and Justice Partnership Board through quarterly reporting which is overseen by a Business Partner.
12. The core Youth Justice Grant is released in conjunction with oversight from the Director of Corporate Resources.
13. A full breakdown of the budget is provided in paragraph 24 of this report. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on this report.

**Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

14. None.

**Officer(s) to Contact**

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## PART B

### Background

15. There is a statutory requirement under section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 for the County Council to produce a Youth Justice Plan which is linked to releasing the Youth Justice Grant from the Ministry of Justice.
16. The Youth Justice Strategic Plan has previously covered a 3-year period. In March 2026, the Ministry of Justice announced the first of a number of reforms to the youth justice sector over the coming year and it felt appropriate to understand the impact of these prior to considering a further multi-year plan. This can be considered from 2027.

### Youth Justice Partnership Board

17. Guidance stipulates that the Youth and Justice Partnership Board should govern and own the process of producing the Youth Justice Plan. The Board, which meets quarterly, is the statutory body which oversees the performance of the Service as defined by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Members include officers from the Council, Probation Service, Leicestershire Police, the Integrated Care Board, and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Board is accountable for the performance and delivery of Youth Justice provision across Leicestershire.
18. The quality of services delivered to children and victims and the strength of the Youth and Justice Partnership Board are independently scrutinised by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation.

### Changes to Youth Justice

19. The new Youth Justice Strategic Plan is a one-year plan due to a number of changes expected, for example -
  - Several Youth Justice reforms are due to be announced during 2026 by the Government. In February 2026 it was announced that several statutory functions would move from the Youth Justice Board into the Ministry of Justice.
  - An announcement in March 2026 by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Jake Richards, which focused on reforms to keep children out of prison. An opportunity for partnership work with neighbouring Youth Justice Services to strengthen the offer of alternatives to custody has been presented; this is in its infancy and will be managed through the Youth and Justice Partnership Board.
  - Further tightening to crime-related legislation are expected to be announced over the coming year, details of which are awaited. Knife Crime legislation introduced on 1 April 2026 places greater responsibility on Youth Justice Services to identify/manage knife-related risks,

strengthen prevention and diversion activity, and work with partners to reduce access to weapons and prevent serious violence.

- The impact of the Local Government Review/Reorganisation is unknown.

### **The Youth Justice Plan 2026-27**

20. The Youth and Justice Service in Leicestershire has continued to perform strongly, with a low level of First Time Entrants compared with regional and national comparators, low longer-term reoffending, and very low use of remand and custody, whilst remaining compliant with all statutory returns to the Youth Justice Board.
21. In 2026/27, the Youth and Justice Partnership will focus on five priorities: improving education, employment and training outcomes, strengthening children's health and wellbeing, improving support for victims, strengthening prevention pathways for children at risk of entering the criminal justice system, and ensuring a coordinated response for children at the highest risk of harm, exploitation and/or serious violence. Delivery against these priorities will be coordinated through the Youth and Justice Partnership Board with performance monitored through agreed partnership measures and regular reporting.
22. Statutory responsibilities have been placed upon Youth Justice Services and the Police in relation to new knife-crime legislation and the Partnership is fully compliant with these in line with the implementation date of 1 April 2026.
23. Across all priorities, the Youth and Justice Partnership Board will maintain a commitment on reducing groups of children who are disproportionately represented within the youth justice system such as looked after children, girls, Black, Asian and multi-ethnic children for example. This is achieved by sharing partnership data and appropriate challenging agencies and their approaches.

### **Resource Implications**

24. The financial position of the core Youth Justice funding has been stable with the Service managing within its budget. The Youth and Justice Partnership Board receives a full financial report on the position of the pooled budget each quarter. The budget for 2025-26 is shown in the table below.

Agency	Staffing Costs	Payments in kind	Other delegated funds	Total
Youth Justice Board			604,659	604,659
Local Authority			1,032,461	1,032,461
Police				0
Police and Crime Commissioner	91,847		77,934	169,781
Probation	73,764		37,806	111,570
Health	70,945		47,588	118,533
Welsh Government				0
Other			75,645	75,645
<b>Total</b>	<b>236,556</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,876,093</b>	<b>2,112,649</b>

25. The strategic partnership also provides staffing in-kind as part of its contribution and this equates to a full-time seconded Probation Officer, two warranted Police Constables and access to an Adverse Childhood Experiences Team from the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Public Health supports a Youth Justice Health Lead post. The Team is further supported by a young people's substance misuse offer from Turning Point. All these specialist workers are fully embedded within the Service and support the direct delivery of interventions with children whilst retaining positive relationships with their parent organisation.
26. In terms of the 2026-27 budget, the Ministry of Justice (previously the Youth Justice Board) has yet to confirm the grant allocation, and this is expected to be announced in late April. Heads of Youth Justice have been advised that the grant will be a three-year settlement, for the first time. Confirmation has also been received of additional three-year funding for prevention work, but the amount is not yet confirmed. Partner contributions remain the same. The budget should remain relatively similar to 2025-26. A multi-year settlement does provide the opportunity to plan the service and establishment better.

### **Consultation**

27. There is a requirement that the Plan is agreed by the statutory partners of the Youth and Justice Partnership. The Chair of the Youth and Justice Management Board is the only signatory required on the Plan. Consultation with Youth and Justice Management Board members commenced on 2 December 2025 to identify the key priorities and concluded when the Plan was ratified by the Board on 6 March 2026.
28. There is no formal requirement for children to be consulted on the Youth Justice Plan due to its strategic nature. However, the workforce, children, parents and carers have contributed to the development of this plan.
29. There is no requirement for a public consultation exercise.

### **Comments of the Scrutiny Commission**

30. The Scrutiny Commission will consider the Youth Justice Strategic Plan at its meeting on 22 April 2026 and its comments will be reported to the Cabinet.

### **Equality Implications**

31. Inequality is inherent within in the criminal justice system and there is substantive research to support this. To this end, an Equality Impact Assessment has been completed to support this Plan and is attached as Appendix B. The Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2026-27 sets out its intentions to address inequalities for children.

### **Human Rights Implications**

32. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### **Background Papers**

Report to the Scrutiny Commission on 22 April 2026 "Draft Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2026-2027" -

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=8538>

Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan 2022-2026

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-01/LCC-Strategic-Plan.pdf>

### **Appendices**

Appendix A: Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2026-27

Appendix B: Equalities Impact Assessment

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