

Oldham Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan
2025 – 2026

Head of Service: Clare Griffiths

Chair of Youth Justice Partnership Management Board: Julie Daniels, Executive Director,
Children and Young People, Oldham Council

1. Introduction, vision and strategy

Oldham is one of ten boroughs in Greater Manchester. It is a complex and challenging area to deliver youth justice, with, according to 2021 Census Data, a population of 242, 100, a figure which represents an overall growth rate of 7.3% within the last 10 years. Of this, 54, 800 children live in Oldham and this figure continues to rise. While a youthful population undoubtedly has many advantages, the impact on services, education and employment cannot be ignored. Adding to this, while the borough has pockets of prosperity, the English Indices of Deprivation shows levels in Oldham are ranked amongst the highest in the country- 19th out of 317 Local Authorities. Further analysis evidences that several wards are placed within the bottom 1% nationally in terms of income deprivation amongst children.

The ethnic composition of Oldham is more diverse than both Greater Manchester and England as a whole. In 2021, Oldham's largest population was White (68.1%) with the largest ethnic minorities being Pakistani (13.5%) and Bangladeshi (9%). A significant increase in non- white residents was observed (31.9% compared to 22.5% in 2011). This diversity is a strength to be valued, celebrated and promoted, although discrimination and disadvantage continues to be an experience of some.

Oldham is in a unique position in that it is one of the only areas in England and Wales whereby the statutory Youth Justice Service (YJS) is commissioned by the local authority and delivered by a charitable trust, Positive Steps. Positive Steps delivers a range of services, including Education Advice and Guidance; Early Intervention and Prevention (Early Help); Oldham Young Carers; National Probation Service Welfare Hub; Missing from Home Return Interview Service; and Positive Futures Alternative Provision. As such, children, families and adults can access an integrated, holistic and non-stigmatizing offer, delivered from our modern base in Oldham Town Centre, as well as in community hubs across the borough. Furthermore, this arrangement allows for innovation and creativity through the ability to access a range of additional funding streams to provide added value and to lead practice in specific areas.

This plan has been written in accordance with The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and national guidance from the Youth Justice Board, following consultation with the Oldham Youth Justice Partnership Management Board (YJPMB); YJS practitioners; and children with lived experience and their parents and carers. This plan seeks to inform the strategic direction of the service and outlines how it will achieve it's primary functions of:

- Reducing the number of First Time Entrants (FTE) into the criminal justice system
- Reducing re- offending by children subject to statutory Court Orders or Out of Disposals
- Reducing the use of custody for children

While additionally:

- Effectively safeguarding the children we work with
- Effectively protecting the public from harm

- Enhancing the voice and experience of victims of crime committed by children

The Oldham Youth Justice Service Plan 2025 – 2026 is not an isolated initiative, but part of the broader Oldham Children, Young People and Families Plan with a shared vision:

Oldham: A community where children, young people and families thrive

2. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements

Positive Steps is governed through a Board of Trustees which is comprised of elected members and community representatives. In 2025, each service, including Youth Justice, will begin to provide an annual update on delivery and performance to highlight impact and allow for challenge at an organizational level.

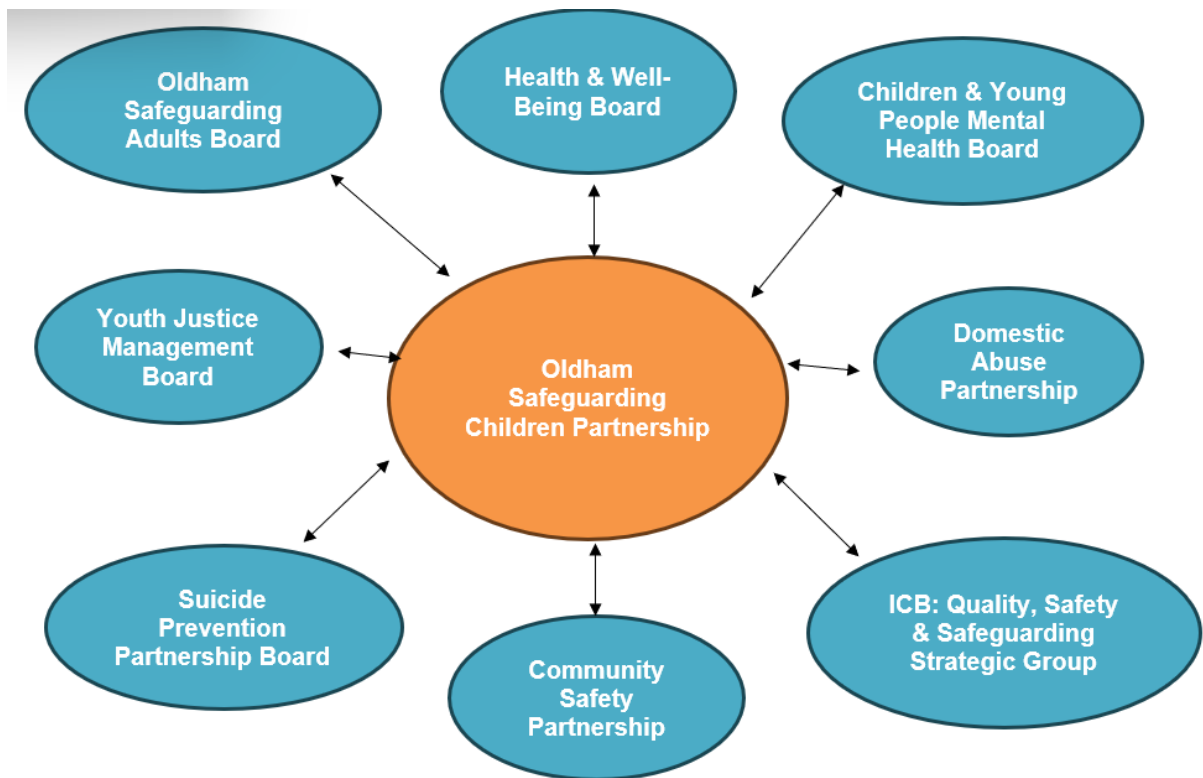
In its own right, Oldham YJS meets statutory requirements and maintains oversight from the local authority through the Youth Justice Partnership Management Board, chaired by the Executive Director, Children and Young People, who reports to the Chief Executive Officer of Oldham Council.

Working with the Executive Director, Children and Young People is the Head of Service for Youth Justice and Missing from Home, who reports to the Chief Executive of Positive Steps. Alongside this responsibility, they are also the Designated Safeguarding Lead for Positive Steps and the strategic lead for resettlement across Greater Manchester.

As a multi- agency team, Oldham Youth Justice Service has in place specialists through partnership arrangements to provide support to children working with YJS. This includes a seconded Police Officer (1FTE); seconded CAMHS Practitioner (0.7FTE); Speech and Language Therapist (0.7FTE); and seconded Probation Officer (0.5FTE). The funding for a Nurse was agreed in April 2025 and it is anticipated that the post will be recruited to shortly. In 2025, Oldham YJS and Tameside, Oldham and Glossop Mind are entering into the third year of a partnership project in which an Emotional Wellbeing Coach (1FTE) is seconded into the service. The staffing structure of the workforce available to deliver youth justice work can be found in Appendix 1. Ethnicity, sex and known disability of the workforce is contained within Appendix 2.

In recognition that to affect change, collaboration, grounded in positive relationships, is key, the Youth Justice Partnership Management Board has all statutory partners represented from Oldham Council; Greater Manchester Police; health; education; and Probation; alongside local agencies and the voluntary, community and faith sector. Quarterly meetings ensure that the Board is pro-active in taking responsibility for all aspects of youth justice, leading strategically, and providing oversight, to ensure a high-quality service is provided to all children. The full structure of the Youth Justice Partnership Management Board can be found in Appendix 3.

The Oldham Youth Justice Partnership Management Board is part of the Oldham Safeguarding Children's Partnership who oversee the effectiveness of multi- agency arrangements with the shared aims of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.



There is a strong tradition of partnership working in Oldham and as such, Oldham Youth Justice Service is engaged with the relevant boards and strategic subgroups including; Corporate Parenting Partnership; Children’s Assurance Board; Oldham Reducing Re- Offending Board (Co-Chair); Oldham Performance Subgroup; Oldham Review and Learning Hub; Neglect Subgroup; Complex and Contextual Safeguarding Subgroup.

3. Updates on the previous year

3.1 Progress on priorities in the previous plan

Oldham YJS and partners have worked tirelessly over the past 12 months to progress with the actions agreed in the Oldham Youth Justice Plan 2024 – 2025. A summary of this can be found within the table below.

Action	Progress
Continue to work with the police and education to promote Child Centered Policing and a Child First Response	Training has been delivered throughout the year to partners on Child First Policing and Child First response. This will continue into 2025 -2026. Staff are confident in challenging Police and partners where decision making is not in line with these principles.
Every child will have a “bespoke” intervention to meet their individual needs and promote child- first principles	Quality assurance work confirms that on the whole, children access a bespoke intervention plan in line with their individual needs. There are some good examples of partnership working with complex cases, bail and remand, and those living out of area.

Seek funding opportunities to develop evidence- based practice and innovation	We have had it confirmed that we will receive another 12 months of funding from the Community Safety Partnership to continue to the TOG Mind Partnership. We are exploring further funding from GMP to deliver Broadening Horizons and working with Greater Manchester Combined Authority in relation to Youth Futures Hubs.
Develop and embed a culturally aware service	Quality assurance work confirms that staff have developed practice to ensure that cultural needs are taken into consideration during assessment, planning and intervention. The Oldham Disproportionality Strategy launched in 2025.
Prevention and Diversion work will continue to be focused on first- time entrants, re-offending and reducing violence and exploitation. Work by SALT, CAMHS Practitioner and TOG Mind Coach will improve outcomes for children	In 2024 – 2025, we observed a reduction in three continuous quarters in respect of first time entrants. However, this increased in Q4. Staff have since received training on the use of Outcome 22 and Deferred Caution/ Prosecution. Staff are confident in referring into the relevant health professionals in YJS who present their work on an annual basis to the Youth Justice Partnership Management Board.
Restorative Justice opportunities will continue to expand and continued promotion of “Giving Back” and work undertaken with victims	Children can access a menu of options for indirect Giving Back. However, as part of the work to improve the victim offer this will remain on the plan for the coming year to ensure a bespoke offer is available for victims and increase the number of victims receiving direct Giving Back.
Resolve concerns regarding short- term funding commitments for SALT	The funding for the Speech and Language Therapist is no longer a short- term commitment.
Working with the Community Safety Partnership to reduce youth violence	Serious Youth Violence is now a priority for the Oldham Safeguarding Children’s Partnership and there is an action plan held within the Complex and Contextual Safeguarding Subgroup. Work in this area will continue.
Increase participation opportunities for children, parents and carers within the service	Children continue to have opportunities internally and both at a local and national level to engage in participation. Work to fulfil a specific post in relation to this will continue.

3.2 Performance over the previous year

Oldham Youth Justice Service, despite the challenging demographics highlighted earlier in this plan, continues to perform exceptionally well in all of the areas to be discussed in more detail below. This is in no small part due to the stable and dedicated workforce, who build positive relationships with children and families, using our Child First, trauma informed approach, which is supported by a strong multi- agency partnership.

Our performance data has progressed the service into Quadrant 1 of the Youth Justice Oversight Framework for two consecutive quarters at the point of writing this plan.

Reducing the number of First Time Entrants (FTE) into the criminal justice system

FTE PNC rate per 100,000 of 10-17 population	Oldham	North West	Greater Manchester	YOT family group	England
Jan 24 - Dec 24	178	169	204	194	161
Oct 23 - Sep 24	147	169	207	194	160
July 23 - Jun 24	158	182	220	194	165
Apr 23 - Mar 24	174	190	232	191	161

At the start of 2024 – 2025, the service saw a decrease in the first three quarters in the number of first- time entrants into the criminal justice system. The figures sat well below those of all comparative family groups and remained below the Geater Manchester and YOT family group in quarter 4.

There is a real focus on ensuring that, where appropriate, at the Joint Decision-Making Panel, children are afforded the opportunity to engage with an Outcome 22 or Deferred Caution to receive support without use of a formal disposal. This has been led strategically across Greater Manchester through the Police and Greater Manchester Youth Justice Senior Leadership Group, review of local policy and procedure and staff training.

Oldham has a robust prevention offer, using a combination of self and partnership referrals into the service, along side the Greater Manchester Police (GMP), “PIED” (prevention, intervention, education and diversion) identification tool. In line with GDPR, details of all children linked to a crime in the borough are shared on a daily basis. All children are then discussed at the bi- weekly Oldham Prevention Panel where agencies come together and agree who is best placed to support the child in the space of early intervention. Where it is agreed children will work with Oldham YJS, this is done via Turnaround or Prevention Intervention.

Reducing re- offending by children subject to statutory Court Orders or Out of Disposals

Reoffending - binary rate	Oldham	North West	Greater Manchester	YJS family	England
Binary Rate - Jan 23 to Mar 23	21.4%	28.2%	21.6%	30.9%	32.8%
Binary Rate - Oct 22 to Dec 22	23.1%	32.1%	29.8%	24.3%	31.2%
Binary Rate - Jul 22 to Sept 22	10.0%	29.6%	27.1%	29.3%	31.9%
Binary Rate - Apr 22 to Jun 22	20.0%	35.6%	31.3%	30.1%	33.2%

The number of children who have worked with Oldham YJS and go onto commit further offences is consistently low and performance figures have been lower than all comparative groups for the 12-month period.

This can be attributed to the Child First approach taken to assessment, planning, delivery and managing risk, ensuring that the function of protecting the child, victims and public is not lost. All staff received training on this in January 2025 through “Child First Consultancy”. Interventions are strengths based and build on the interests of the child, allowing for development of a pro- social identity, broadening of their horizons and raising their aspirations. Working holistically with

parents and carers is crucial and we involve them at each stage, maintaining contact throughout and ensuring that their own support needs are considered. The professional team around the child is also key with attendance and engagement at multi- agency meetings being evident and the work of others is clear within plans.

Reducing the use of custody for children

Custody Rate per 1,000 of 10-17 population	Oldham	North West	YJS family	England
Jan 24 - Dec 24	0.03	0.12	0.12	0.10
Oct 23 -Sept 24	0.07	0.11	0.12	0.10
Jul 23 - Jun 24	0.03	0.12	0.16	0.10
Apr 23 -Mar 24	0.03	0.12	0.20	0.11

The use of custody in Oldham remains significantly low with staff and partners ensuring that stringent community options are presented to the court on all occasions and that sentences of this nature are only used where there are serious and imminent public protection concerns.

All Pre Sentence Reports go through a robust management oversight process to maintain high standards of work, to provide challenge and allow for professional development, and to make sure that reports are balanced, unbiased and appropriate language has been used.

All reports also now highlight the overrepresentation of specific groups, including children looked after and children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds so that the courts are aware of these statistics when coming to any decision that they make.

3.3 Risk and issues

While Oldham Youth Justice Service is highly regarded across the Oldham partnership, within Greater Manchester and by the Youth Justice Board, in terms of performance and innovative working, we must still acknowledge any potential challenges we face.

We have already taken steps in 2024 – 2025 in relation to groups which we observe to be disproportionately represented by implementing the Oldham Disproportionality Strategy and reviewing The Oldham Protocol on Reducing the Unnecessary Criminalisation of Children Looked After and Care Leavers. However, we will need to monitor the usage of these documents through the presentation of data to the Youth Justice Partnership Management Board and thematic audits in these areas.

We are also acutely aware of placement sufficiency issues which prevail not only locally but nationally, particularly in relation to where a child is at risk of becoming Remanded to Local Authority Care or requires an alternative address for bail. There have been some great examples of partnership working in 2024 – 2025 which has seen no children from Oldham Remanded to Youth Detention due to lack of a placement, but we need to further develop the shared understanding of this and the processes required to enable this to be an efficient and effective process.

In line with the new inspection standard in relation to Work with Victims, it is recognized that this is an area of development, particularly in relation to gaining consent for youth justice to make initial contact so that all other work can follow to include risk management and support. This is already being progressed by YJS and GMP but needs to continue at a strategic and operational level so that the required actions are in place.

The data tells us that Oldham observe higher than average levels of Serious Youth Violence. This is now a priority area for the Safeguarding Children's Partnership with an action plan sitting within the Complex and Contextual Safeguarding Subgroup. Partnership working will need to be in place to ensure work is aligned and completed, and data presented to governance boards to monitor if these are effective.

4. Plan for the forthcoming year

4.1 Child First

Child First principles permeate all aspects of service delivery in youth justice in Oldham and are becoming increasingly recognized across the partnership. We will continue to build on this throughout 2025 – 2026 through further collaborative working, consultation and training.

We prioritise the best interests of children through acknowledging their developmental needs, maturity and experiences in all aspects of our work, and seek to break down any structural barriers that may be in place such as access to services, education training and employment or housing. All staff have positive relationships with partners to be able to work together to do this and challenge where required. Staff have received training on Child First Assessment, Planning and Interventions to ensure that while working with the child in mind, risk is still accurately assessed and managed and the balance between these two often contradictory ways of working is sought.

We promote the child's individual strengths and capacities to develop their prosocial identity. All staff use the acronym- AIR, activities, interactions and roles, when planning and delivering interventions. Over a number of years, the service has moved away from consequential interventions to ensure that a deficit model of work is not in place. We are immensely proud of the new opportunities and experiences we have been able to provide children to raise their aspirations through seeking additional funding to provide positive activities. This has included work with Manchester City Football Club, golf and boxing lessons- which have been maintained by the child and their dad, and animal care on a farm. Within quality assurance work, the relationships that staff have with children and families is a key strength.

Children's active participation is encouraged and there is meaningful collaboration with children and their families. All children and their parents/ carers create their intervention plan alongside their Case Manager and contribute to the activities they carry out. They can also shape service delivery through "Your Opinions Matter". Children have also been involved in the development of the Greater Manchester Police and Crime Plan, the Greater Manchester Youth Justice Transformation Framework and other local and national consultations. In January 2025 the Youth Justice Partnership Management Board received an input from the Participation Lead which will continue bi- annually going forward.

We promote a childhood removed from the justice system. In 2025, Oldham introduced PIED- Prevention, Intervention, Education and Diversion to identify children coming into contact with the Police on a daily basis. These children are screened by partners and discussed at the well-established multi- agency Prevention Panel, alongside referrals from schools and other organizations, to agree who is best placed to offer early intervention. We are increasing the use of Outcome 22 and Deferred Caution/ Prosecution and have trained all staff in this, updating the Prevention and Diversion Policy in addition.

Children and families working with Oldham Youth Justice Service say:

“You've been absolutely brilliant with D. You've done a lot more to support him and our family and I couldn't have been happier with your service from you and staff and the rest of the team. You've been absolutely brilliant. You've gone above and beyond”

“Just wanted to follow up on the back of your email and to reiterate our appreciation for all your help and support, both yourself and your colleague were fantastic in Court. You were excellent”

“Thank you to YJS for supporting K to obtain his CSC Card, gain employment and helping him with speech and language”.

4.2 Resources and services

This plan provides assurance throughout that the youth justice core grant will be used appropriately, as described in the Terms and Conditions of Grant.

Oldham Youth Justice Service is committed to ensuring value for money. The youth justice budget comprises of local authority funding and the Youth Justice Board grant which, in the main, supports the core staffing of the service. Staffing is further supplemented through the Ministry of Justice Turnaround Grant, the Greater Manchester Early Intervention and Prevention Grant and partnership secondments. The staffing structure has previously been highlighted and is contained within Appendix 1.

The commissioning arrangement between the local authority and Positive Steps is advantageous as it allows the Youth Justice Service to express an interest in and apply for funding streams that other services would not be able to. We will continue to explore opportunities for additional funding to enhance the offer for children and families. At the point of writing this plan the following have been confirmed or are in progress for 2025 – 2026 (all have been described in detail in other sections of this plan).

- Greater Manchester Resettlement Consortium, funded by Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Tameside, Oldham and Glossop Mind and Oldham Youth Justice Service- Emotional Wellbeing Coach, funded by Oldham Community Safety Partnership
- Broadening Horizons, funded by Greater Manchester Police ARIS Fund

We use our grant, partner contributions and additional funding streams to achieve our vision and primary functions, while driving best practice and demonstrating excellent performance. Our performance will be improved in 2025 – 2026 by:

- Ensuring all children working with the service have a full and comprehensive health offer, including physical, mental and sexual health, through development of the YJS CAHMS offer and piloting a Nurse post within the service (the confirmation of funding for which has now been agreed), so that these needs are addressed to promote desistance.
- Reducing the number of first-time entrants into the criminal justice system through partnership training, continuation of the well- established Prevention Panel and promotion of the use of Outcome 22 and Deferred Caution/ Prosecution.
- Implementing a live Re- Offending Tracker to closely monitor children who commit further offences while working with youth justice and develop the required response to this.

- Promoting the understanding of bail, remand and use of custody through partnership training to ensure that children are not placed in custody unnecessarily.
- Reducing instances of Serious Youth Violence through taking an active role within the Safeguarding Partnership and Community Safety Partnership, sharing expertise and completing the associated action plans which sit within these groups.
- Increasing the education, training and employment offer available for children working with youth justice through collaborating with “Skill Mill”, a social enterprise which provides employment opportunities for children within criminal justice.
- Increasing the voice of the victim and improving their experience of working with youth justice, through ensuring processes are in place to gain consent to contact victims whereby crimes are committed by children, and that there is an escalation process in place when this does not occur. Quality Assurance work relating to this area will be included in the annual Quality Assurance Framework.
- Develop the annual Quality Assurance Framework to include partnership oversight in the form of regular Multi- Agency Case Discussions led by members of Oldham Youth Justice Partnership Management Board and agree “Deep Dives” to take place throughout the year.

4.3 Board development

In September 2024, the Oldham Youth Justice Partnership Management Board received a new Chair following the retirement of the previous Managing Director of Children’s Social Care. From this point, the new Executive Director, Children and Young People, has taken over this role with the Superintendent, Greater Manchester Police, becoming Vice Chair in March 2025.

Work has taken place to improve the board over the last few years and the board is now stable, with both new and long-standing members who are committed to their role. They actively take responsibility for all aspects of youth justice; lead strategically across relevant partners and ensure a high- quality service is provided to all children. In 2025, a new Youth Justice Board Induction Pack was developed to improve this process and ensure that all involved have access to the relevant information they need to contribute to the successful oversight of youth justice.

Annually, Oldham Youth Justice Partnership Management Board hold a development day. In January 2025, the day focused on; Youth Justice Governance and Leadership- led by the Youth Justice Board; building Child First partnerships- led by Child First Consultancy; work with victims; participation; and disproportionality. To inform the development day in 2026, a survey will be used to understand the areas of development that members require.

In 2025, the Oldham Youth Justice Partnership Management Board introduced Multi- Agency Case Discussions, using the HMIP template, into the Oldham Youth Justice Quality Assurance Framework. Completed each quarter, a board member takes the lead for chairing a partnership case discussion and provides feedback on areas of strength regarding how professionals have worked together to achieve positive change.

4.4 Workforce development

There is recognition that the most important asset to the service is the staff team and so a real focus is placed on professional development from the outset and internal promotion. This is evidenced through a number of staff having started their journey as volunteers or apprentices, as well as others who have held numerous roles making their way up to leadership and management positions. All staff receive an in- depth induction, not only to youth justice, but to Positive Steps

and the partnership, the process for which was reviewed by the Positive Steps Leadership Team in May 2025.

Each member of staff has an annual appraisal where targets are set for the year to promote their development and are in line with their lead areas of practice, some of which include; work in court; serious youth violence; complex safeguarding; harmful sexual behaviour; and disproportionality. This process is then supported by regular supervision both by their Operational Manager and peers, direct observations and informal discussions.

Training for the year is set based on a review by the management team of each appraisal. All permanent staff have completed, or are currently completing, the Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate and all Case Managers are trained in AIM3. All staff have ongoing access to varied training from the Oldham Safeguarding Partnership and Youth Justice Legal Centre. In January 2025, staff received training via Child First Consultancy titled, "Child First in Practice. Assessment, Planning and Interventions".

In 2025, we began to support one of our qualified Social Workers through their Assessed and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE) after they secured a Case Manager role with youth justice following completing their second year Masters placement within the service.

As part of the wider workforce development across the partnership, there is a comprehensive offer from youth justice which sees training being delivered to other services on; Youth Justice; Restorative Justice and Child First. This promotes the understanding of the role and of our service, our offer and ways of working. We also collaborate with Oldham Complex Safeguarding Hub to facilitate Complex and Contextual Safeguarding, and Making a Child Protection Referral in conjunction with Children's Social Care. Furthermore, we are working with Salford Youth Justice Service to provide training the Magistrates on assessment, planning and intervention, and speech, language and communication.

Staff in youth justice are also provided the opportunity to develop through secondments to other teams or services. As of September 2024, we have one Case Manager and one Engagement Worker seconded to the Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce at the Pupil Referral Unit where they are part of a multi-disciplinary team, working to reduce and prevent exclusions, increase integration back into mainstream, reduce offending and violence and increase emotional wellbeing. In 2025, we will be exploring our third partnership with Skill Mill which will see an Engagement Worker seconded to the company to provide employment and training opportunities for children within the criminal justice system.

Positive Steps understands the importance of a healthy workforce and as such, all employees and their families have access to the TELUS Health and Wellbeing Platform. TELUS has a wide range of online wellbeing resources, as well as telephone and online support available 24/7 with professional advisors who are able to provide advice, work- life support and onward referrals. Immediate and short- term counselling is also available as well as in person counselling.

Following the recruitment of the new in post YJS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Practitioner in March 2025, staff will have access to quarterly Clinical Supervision with the primary purpose of enhancing both the wellbeing and professional development of the team, ultimately leading to better outcomes for the children and families we work with.

4.5 Evidence-based practice and innovation

TOG Mind Partnership

Oldham Youth Justice Service will enter its third year of partnering with Tameside, Oldham and Glossop (TOG) Mind to support children with their emotional wellbeing. We know that many children present with concerns at varying levels in this area but there are often structural barriers in place or stigma which prevent engagement with services. As such, the service benefits from the secondment of a Mental Health Coach who has provided support in areas such as anxiety, stress, mindfulness, grief and bereavement, grounding techniques, sleep and adverse childhood experiences to name a few. The outcomes of this partnership have been extraordinary with only two children out of 46 having been convicted with further offences in 2024 – 2025. In recognition of the positive outcomes we have achieved, this project is now included on the Youth Justice Resource Hub for other services to replicate.

Broadening Horizons

We appreciate the importance of providing children with access to new experiences to raise their aspirations. With this in mind, for the past two years, we have accessed funding via GMP and Oldham Community Safety Partnership to deliver the “Broadening Horizons” initiative. This has seen the service receive up to £2,000 per year which can be used to take children to places like National Trust or English Heritage Sites, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, local walking trails or gyms and leisure centers. Not only do the children get to see places that they have not seen before, but they see workers role model interactions with others while buying tickets, food or drinks and then develop key skills and confidence to be able to do this themselves.

Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce

As of September 2025, Oldham YJS have seconded one Case Manager and one Engagement Worker to the Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce (APST) at the Pupil Referral Unit. They are part of a multi-disciplinary team working alongside a Social Worker, Counsellor, Careers Advisor and Attendance Officer to reduce and prevent exclusions, increase integration back into mainstream, reduce offending and violence and increase emotional wellbeing. In the first 6 months of the project, the APST worked with 20 pupils and saw an improvement in “present” attendance and a decrease in “unauthorized” attendance, there was a reduction in the number of police incidents observed involving these students, safeguarding referrals reduced by over 50%, students who had previously declined voluntary YJS interventions accepted this and all students access planned provision during school holidays. This project, funded by the Department of Education, runs until September 2027.

Greater Manchester Resettlement Consortium

Oldham YJS continue to lead the Greater Manchester Resettlement Consortium at both strategic and operational levels to improve outcomes for children entering and leaving custody. Work across the year has included; the development of practice principles which has been supported by Dignify, an organization specializing in trauma informed practice, the development of a Greater Manchester Resettlement Data Set which is used to instigate required workstreams; an offer of quality assurance work which sees the Head of Service from Oldham visit other services and hold Multi- Agency Case Discussions using the HMIP template for resettlement cases. The current workstream is focused on education, training and employment as the data highlighted concerns that children did not have access to this upon release.

Greater Manchester Youth Justice Transformation Framework

Alongside colleagues from other Greater Manchester Youth Justice Services, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, GMP and those in the wider criminal justice system, Oldham YJS, through the Head of Service, have played a key role in contributing to the Greater Manchester Youth Justice Transformation Plan and the development of the new framework for 2025. Led by the Deputy Mayor for Greater Manchester and Deputy Chief Executive for Manchester City Council, the framework reflects a shared commitment to ensure all children have a chance to build a positive future. Our ambitions in Greater Manchester are for a youth justice system which centres children and their experiences; prioritises prevention, early intervention, and diversion; utilises best practice and the latest evidence; reduces disparity and ultimately ensures that young people who encounter the justice system are met with effective support to turn their lives around. Through this we strive to reduce offending, promote rehabilitation, and create safer communities.

Devolution also presents Greater Manchester with a unique opportunity to lead the way in justice innovation and transformation. As a region committed to forward-thinking approaches, we have positioned ourselves as a testbed for innovative ideas, driving improvements that not only enhance safety but also ease financial pressures on essential services. To support our framework for improving youth justice outcomes across Greater Manchester, we are developing a centre of excellence model. Through this approach, each Youth Justice Service in the region will be recognised as a specialist in a distinct area of practice, fostering expertise and ensuring that best practices are shared and implemented effectively. Oldham has positioned their centre of excellence to be resettlement and we are in early discussions for Positive Steps to pilot a Young Futures Hub.

Greater Manchester Remand Pilot

Similarly to the above, the Head of Service for YJS has been actively involved in the Greater Manchester Remand Pilot and will continue to do so over the next 12 months given an extension to this funding. For the past two years, Greater Manchester have been working in partnership with the Ministry of Justice to design and deliver an innovative Remand Pilot. This pilot involves pooling remand budgets across the 10 local authorities and working together to develop robust community options as an alternative to them being remanded to custody. Positive outcomes that have been observed to date are:

- Increased use of Remand into Local Authority (RiLA) regionally – 36 instances have seen direct savings of £2.1million.
- Decrease in monthly remand costs from £352k (May 2024) to £79k (February 2025).
- Reduced reoffending rates from 32% (national average) to 24% (GM Remand Project).
- Increased reinvestment into the community - £173k in year 1 of pooled funding and £269k in year 2.

4.6 Evaluation

4.6.1 TOG Mind Partnership

A full evaluation of the TOG Mind Partnership was completed in June 2025. In 2025, the Emotional Wellbeing Coach worked with 46 children across Prevention, Out of Court, Court and Bail. Interventions that have been covered have been wide reaching and are always based on the needs of the child. These have included; anxiety and stress; motivation; grounding techniques; mindfulness; resilience; self-awareness and adverse childhood experiences. To further develop the practitioner's skills, training has been completed in bereavement, trauma, safeguarding and

risk and safety. Only two children who the coach has worked with have gone on to be convicted of further offences (one further offence each). Both children are also known to be victims of Child Criminal Exploitation and their offences are linked to this. Other outcomes have included reintegration back into education, more positive experiences in Court and reported improved relationships at home.

4.6.2 Internal Evaluation

In 2024 – 2025, Oldham YJS introduced an annual Quality Assurance Framework to evaluate practice which includes; full case quality assurance; direct observations; and Multi- Agency Case Discussions.

Each quarter, 12 cases are selected at random and are fully quality assured by the Operational Managers and Head of Service. Each Quality Assurance Audit is rated across; Local Practice Standards; assessment; planning implementation; resettlement (where applicable); reviewing; the child's experience; management oversight; and victim work. 33 cases have been quality assured since the framework was introduced.

Scoring

The overall outcomes from this activity are as follows:

Rating	Total
Outstanding	9
Good	20
Requires Improvement	3
Inadequate	1

Summary

Practice Standards

Across the Quality Assurance Audits, Local Practice Standards are adhered to on the whole. Where there is deviation from these, management oversight is used to explain why this is so. The standards were relaunched in November 2024 and so there has already been action taken to ensure further compliance with these.

Assessment

This is a strength across the majority of cases included within this activity. Assessments are clear, concise and strengths focused, with contributions from the partnership. There is evidence of the child and parent/ carer being included in this. This allows for accurate identification of factors for and against desistance, and analysis to make positive change and keep the child and others safe.

To improve this area further, although attention is given to mental health and speech and speech and language needs, there should be more of a focus on physical health and it is likely that once the nurse offer is more present within the team, this will improve. Staff have been reminded of the current process for obtaining health information and booking health assessments in the interim.

Planning

There is some good work in this area with key areas for intervention being identified and with evidence of partnership planning to manage risk and safety included. There is a real focus on moving away offence focused work and towards; ensuring engagement with education, training and employment; emotional wellbeing; speech and language therapy, positive activities and broadening horizon to achieve positive change.

Implementation

The relationships that staff within Oldham YJS have with children, families and partners is outstanding and this is clear through the delivery and recording of interventions. There is evidence of the service being responsive to meet the needs of the child, as well as being creative and strengths based. Contact with children and families on the whole is in line with Local Practice Standards and as stated these have been relaunched. Compliance issues are followed up early and addressed to prevent breach proceedings becoming necessary. It is clear in the majority of cases that partnership working is taking place to support the child and the wider family. Case Managers and Engagement Workers are utilizing case discussions more regularly and recording these to ensure that delivery is in line with the plan of work agreed to prevent drift.

Resettlement

There were two children in this quality assurance activity who were remanded in custody. There is evidence of good partnership working on both, including with agencies in the community and within the custodial establishment. This is an area for development but take on board that staff do not experience work in this area often due to low numbers remanded or sentenced to custody. We have introduced a "Custody Planning Panel" for internal staff and partners to ensure processes and guidance are being followed and to improve, knowledge, skills and confidence in this area of work.

Reviewing

Reviewing of assessments and plans is improving in line with Local Practice Standards. There is some good evidence of progress and change being taken into account at review points to evidence change. Where there is a significant change in circumstances, assessments are on the whole reviewed. Case Managers need to ensure that the good progress shown within case recording is evidenced in reviews and become more confident in lowering risk levels where appropriate.

The Child's Experience

The assessment, plan and delivery of interventions shows good evidence of hearing the child's voice. This is done in the main through the relevant self- assessments being completed to inform all areas of work. Staff take on board what children say, are responsive to this and make adaptations accordingly. Case Managers understand the impact of trauma, ACES, victimization, poverty, neglect, etc. on behaviour and offending, with there being evidence of this is assessment and planning.

All staff have been reminded to ensure that "Your Opinions Matters" is completed every three months so that feedback on overall service delivery is obtained in line with guidance. Children and families have also had the opportunity to take part in local and national participation forums to shape policy and practice.

Management Oversight

Management oversight is a strength across all cases with evidence of feedback on work being provided, assessments being countersigned and supervisions in place. Where there has been deviation from standards, there is explanation as to why this is so. Risk Management Meetings are clearly recorded where applicable. There are some good examples of escalations being recorded, for example in relation to the agreement of Out of Court Disposals.

Victim Work

There are some good examples of practice in this area with a range of restorative interventions being delivered, including “Giving Back” and letters of apology. In most cases where there is a direct victim, the victim impact is included within the assessment. However, this is an area of work to be prioritized. More of a focus needs to be given where there is an indirect victim in terms of the impact on the community and where a victim has not consented to contact, assessing the likely impact of offending. Issues with gaining consent also need to be resolved.

4.6.3 Direct Observations

Each member of staff has had one Direct Observation carried out in the first half of 2025. This covered all areas of practice from leading meetings, work in court and delivering interventions with children. Strengths included; positive relationships with children and parents and ensuring their voices are heard within assessments; using a relaxed and informal approach to engaging children and families in assessment; showing confidence in the subject matter of youth justice when working in court; referring to other services following issues raised; and presenting as bubbly, chatty and non-judgmental.

5. National priority areas

5.1 Children from groups which are over-represented

At times, we continue to see children from black and minority ethnic background over-represented within the criminal justice system. We launched the Oldham Disproportionality Strategy in January 2025 which addresses this alongside over representation of children in care and those with special educational needs and disabilities. In addition, The Oldham Protocol on Reducing the Unnecessary Criminalisation of Children Looked After and Care Leavers demonstrates the partnership commitment to reducing the number of care experienced children entering the justice system.

We will monitor the impact of these through presentation of data to the board and audits in 2025 – 2026.

5.2 Policing and detentions in police custody

The relationship between Police and partners in Oldham is strong and there has been a longstanding commitment to having a seconded Police Officer within the Youth Justice Service for a number of years. The seconded Police Officer has been in role for five years and as such they have developed an understanding of Child First principles and supported the understanding of this amongst frontline officers through a training offer to ensure decision making is aligned to this. They are part of the Oldham Prevention Hub portfolio which highlights the priority for early intervention, prevention and diversion, and play a key role in identifying children at risk of

becoming involved in the criminal justice system, and decision making in the Prevention Panel and in Out of Court Joint Decision- Making Panel, as well as being involved in developing risk management and safety plans. They have led on the implementation of Outcome 22 and Deferred Caution/ Prosecution in Oldham.

Greater Manchester Police introduced the Child Centered Policing Strategy in 2023 and while there is direction from strategic leaders in relation to this, it is not always translated into operational practice outside of youth justice. Therefore, a focus on improving this is required in the coming year.

We have also observed an increase in the number of children charged and remanded to Court so will continue to use the data received on a monthly basis to work with Social Care and GMP to prevent this where possible. using the option for children to be transferred under PACE to a secure or unsecure bed.

5.3 Prevention

Oldham YJS are proud that the holistic offer available for children and families working with the service remains the same regardless of the intervention the child is working under. This means that all children are overseen by a Case Manager, can access the health offer in its entirety and can gain support from the same funding pots to promote desistence.

Oldham is committed to preventing children from entering the criminal justice system and this can be observed through the multi- agency commitment to the well- established Prevention Panel. Partnership decision making here ensures that information is shared in a timely manner and the child receives support from those with expertise in their area of need or those who already have positive relationships.

Turnaround has been established in Oldham since 2023 and in 2024 – 2025, 107 children and families were offered the opportunity to engage with this programme. It is positive that this year children open to Children's Social Care on Child Protection Plans or those who are in the care of the local authority can access this. The service is also fortunate to receive a small grant from Greater Manchester Combined Authority to offer early intervention work to those children who do not meet the criteria for Turnaround.

Following the introduction of the Prevention and Diversion Tool by the Youth Justice Board in 2024, all assessments completed had a full quality assurance tool completed.

Positive Steps have also positioned themselves to be the pilot site for a Youth Futures Hub and conversations are taking place to progress this further, highlighting our dedication to early intervention and prevention.

5.4 Diversion

Diversion remains a priority and we have been working closely with police to increase the use of Outcome 22 and Deferred Caution/ Prosecution. There is a commitment from Greater Manchester Police to make Outcome 22 a “positive outcome”, and Oldham YJS will support this piece of work where needed. In 2025 -2026, all children who receive a Youth Caution will have management oversight to confirm if this could have been dealt with via Outcome 22/ Deferred Caution as an alternative.

All children who receive an Out of Court Disposal have this agreed at a Joint Decision- Making Panel which is attended by youth justice, police and social care. Where other professionals are involved, they may also attend to contribute. Where there is disagreement on an outcome, there is an agreed escalation route in place.

Oldham YJS are also part of the Mentally Vulnerable Offender Panel which sees children who have become involved in an offence and charged be diverted to other agencies specializing in mental health. This ensures that children are not unnecessarily involved with justice-related service because of an unmet need. This is being further promoted now that we have a CAMHS Practitioner seconded to youth justice and her expertise is essential to this assessment and decision making.

5.5 Education

Oldham YJS demonstrate excellent performance in relation to education, training and employment. We have an experienced YJS Co- Ordinator with a background in education who focusses on this as part of her role and uses her expertise and relationships to ensure that children have access to provision that is suited to their needs.

Being based within Positive Steps is of great benefit as the service sits alongside the Careers Information Advice and Guidance Service, Positive Futures Alternative Provision and Empower Oldham (UKSPF). This means there are established relationships with staff from these areas, information sharing is efficient and more importantly, children know the building and professionals when referring into Positive Futures or Empower Oldham. Empower Oldham is becoming a popular option for children working with YJS who are not in education, training or employment and one of the children we have supported on bail has been nominated for a “Shining Star Award” at the Greater Manchester Skills Awards following the progress he has made through his engagement with this.

Where a child is released from custody and does not have education, training or employment in place, the Director of Education and member of the Youth Justice Partnership Management Board, has requested that he is made aware of these instances.

Oldham have had in place for a number of years an Education Risk Assessment so that children can remain in their current school, college or training provider, and this does not break down simply because of the offence that has been committed. This has been adopted the Greater Manchester Remand Pilot and further developed with the main colleges in the area to be used across all services in the region.

5.6 Restorative approaches and victims

The service has a YJS Co- Ordinator who focuses on restorative justice and victims as part of her role. This change came into practice in November 2024 following a re- structure. They work in line with the Oldham Restorative Justice Policy and Victim Code of Practice.

In Oldham there are various indirect options available for children to complete their Giving Back including work with Oldham Foodbank, Bread and Butter and Street Angels. Children are also supported to engage with activities of their own choosing with one child creating memory bears for his family who had been impacted by his involvement with YJS to rebuild relationships, and another expressing an interest to work in his local charity shop.

It has been earlier highlighted that there have been issues in gaining consent from victims for YJS to make contact and this will require resolution in 2025 -2026. However, there are some good examples through quality assurance work of support being provided to the victim when this is in place. This has included referrals to Community Safety for target hardening and Early Help, as well as the YJS Co- Ordinator taking the victim and his family their Friday “chippy tea”, which they were no longer able to collect due to injuries sustained.

5.7 Serious violence, exploitation and contextual safeguarding

Oldham Youth Justice Service, through the Head of Service, are part of the Community Safety Partnership and through the CEO of Positive Steps, the Oldham Safeguarding Children's Partnership, with the YJS Management Team being involved in related subgroups.

Serious Youth Violence is now a partnership priority following a number of serious incidents referred to the Child Safeguarding National Panel. There is an action plan which sits within the Complex and Contextual Safeguarding Subgroup to address this. Following any serious incident, the process for referral to national panel is followed or the Oldham Safeguarding Children's Partnership conduct a Brief Learning Review to ensure any learning is taken forward. At Oldham YJS, these actions sit within the Safeguarding Assurance Group to provide oversight and scrutiny on completion or any barriers that may be in place. We will continue to present data to the YJPMB in relation to this area. We have also recently introduced a dedicated Case Manager to lead on Serious Youth Violence, including those involved in violent extremism, who will pick up some of the actions to develop this area of practice.

Oldham YJS has a Case Manager who leads on Complex and Contextual Safeguarding and attends Daily Governance Meetings with the Complex Safeguarding Hub to ensure information is shared and actions to safeguard children are complete. The service also plays a role in decision making on referrals through attendance at the Missing and Child Exploitation Meeting. We are aware that children often find themselves working with both YJS and Complex Safeguarding and as such, a Joint Working Protocol has been developed to ensure responsibilities are clear and there is no duplication of work. We also collaborate to ensure children are referred into the National Referral Mechanism when needed.

5.8 Remands

Oldham YJS work tirelessly to prevent children from being remanded to custody. This year we have reviewed the Bail and Remand Strategy and will work with partners to improve their understanding of work in court and the response required when a child appears for a serious offence to ensure this is as effective and efficient as possible.

We are an active part of the Greater Manchester Remand Pilot which has been discussed in detail previously in this report.

5.9 Use of custody and constructive resettlement

When children go into custody, we are mindful of the trauma this will cause themselves and their family. We have a YJS Co- Ordinator who focuses on this area of work to support both parties alongside their Case Manager. In recognition that custody numbers in Oldham are low and this affects the experience some staff have in relation to this, we have introduced Custody Planning Panels to ensure all staff are working in line with Local Practice Standards and timeframes are met.

We know that accommodation for children leaving custody can be an issue and so Case Managers know that planning for release begins at the point of sentence and will escalate any concerns with accommodation or ETE via the correct routes.

Oldham are also responsible for leading the Greater Manchester Resettlement Consortium which has also been discussed in detail in this report. We also have oversight of the dedicated Greater Manchester Social Worker placed within HMPYOI Wetherby who supports with safeguarding the children from the region placed there. We are provided with a quarterly report on practice and use this to further develop the role and the offer they provide.

5.10 Working with families

Working with families is fundamental to achieving positive change and is identified in the assessment and plan for the child. Practitioners build trusted relationships with the family and often work with different family members individually, as well as together. This can include re-building relationships or safety planning.

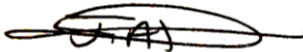
Oldham YJS benefit from being co- located with the Early Intervention and Prevention Service (Early Help) and as such information sharing can be quick as well as discussions being able to take place informally regarding potential referrals. Families also do not experience the stigma of coming to a YJS office to access this given the holistic offer from Positive Steps.

6. Service Development Plan

The Service Development Plan for the coming year has been developed in line with the content of this document and is aligned to the national priority areas discussed above. This details the activity of the Oldham Youth Justice Partnership for the next 12 months and who is responsible for this. Each quarter, the Youth Justice Partnership Management Board will receive an update on the progress of the plan, as well as any risks, challenges or issues that arise in relation to this.

The Service Development Plan 2025 – 2026 can be found in Appendix 4.

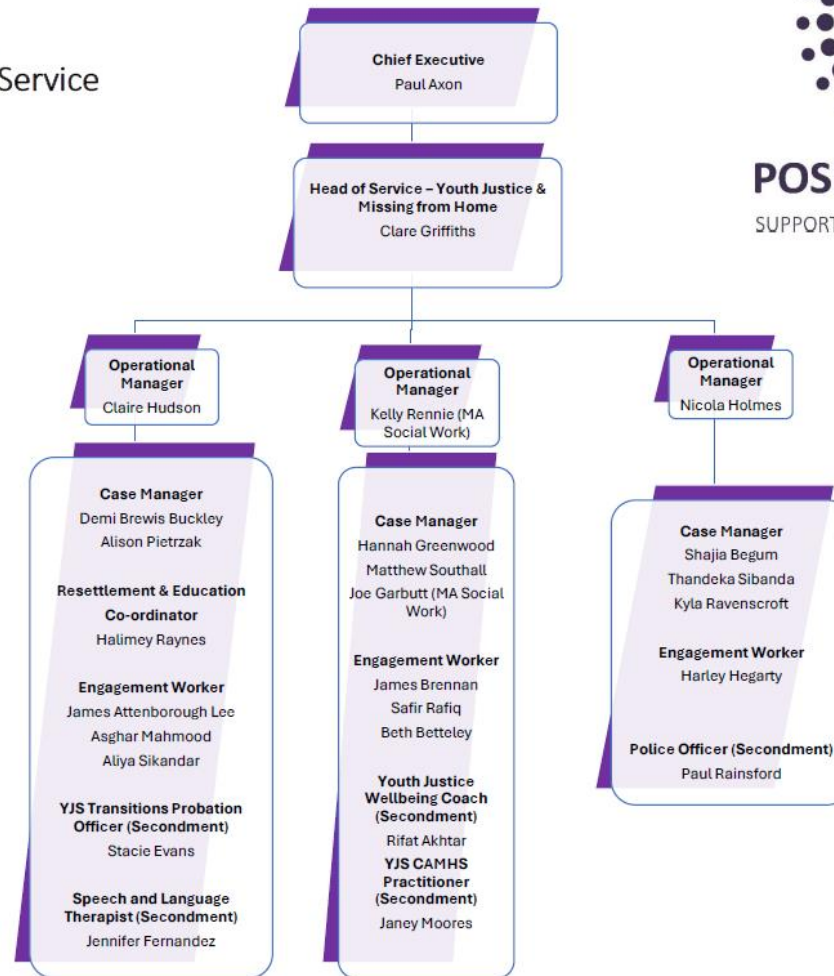
7. Sign off

Chair of Oldham Youth Justice Partnership Management Board	Julie Daniels, Executive Director, Children and Young People, Oldham Council
Signature	
Date	27.06.2025
Council Representative	
Signed	
Date	

Appendix 1 – Oldham Youth Justice Service Structure

POSITIVE STEPS – ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE – May 2025

Youth Justice
Missing from Home Service



POSITIVE STEPS

SUPPORT | CHALLENGE | CHANGE

Appendix 2 – Characteristics of the Workforce

Ethnicity		Gender		Known Disability
		Male	Female	
White British	15	4	11	1
Pakistani	5	3	2	
British Bangladeshi	1	0	1	
White Caribbean	1	1	0	
Black African	1	0	1	
White Irish	1	1	0	

Appendix 3 – Youth Justice Partnership Management Board Structure

Name	Role	Organisation
CHAIR- Julie Daniels	Strategic Director Children's Services	Oldham Council
Clare Griffiths	Head of Service	Oldham YJS
Tony Decrop	Acting Director Children's Social Care and Early Help	Oldham Council
Sheila Garara	Assistant Director, Children's Services Integration	Oldham Council
Paul Axon	Chief Executive Officer	Positive Steps
Claire Hudson	Operational Manager	Oldham YJS
Nicola Holmes	Operational Manager	Oldham YJS
Kelly Rennie	Operational Manager	Oldham YJS
Cara Charlesworth	District Superintendent	GMP
Amy Poulson	Head of Oldham Delivery Unit	National Probation Service
Lorraine Kenny	Head of Violence Reduction and Community Safety Services	Oldham Council
Matt Bulmer	Director of Education Skills and Early Years	Oldham Council
Jennie Davies	Head of the Virtual School	Oldham Council
Andrea Edmondson	Head of Quality and Safeguarding	Greater Manchester Integrated Care
Joanne Whittingham	Service Lead for Early Years and Early Help Pathways (CAHMS)	Pennine Care
Janine Day	Operations Director	Early Break Substance Misuse
Andrea Weir	Senior Commissioning and Partnerships Manager	Oldham Council
Laura Windsor Welsh	Strategic Locality Lead	Action Together
Moirra Fields	Senior Housing Officer	Oldham Council
Katie Shoebridge	North- West Oversight Manager	Youth Justice Board
Cllr Mushtaq	Councilor	

Appendix 4 – Oldham Youth Justice Partnership Service Delivery Plan

Priority Area	Lead	By when	How will this improve outcomes for children in Oldham	Progress
Health	Andrea Edmondson		Children working with youth justice will have access to a fully comprehensive health offer as a foundation for achieving positive change	
			Measure: There will be a seconded school nurse in place to offer health assessments, inform assessments, planning and reports, and provide interventions for children	
Transitions	Amy Poulson		Children will have a positive transition from youth to adult services that is aligned to Child First principles and effectively manages risk and safety and wellbeing	

			Measure: There will be arrangements in place with Probation to assess, plan and manage children transitioning to adult services	
First Time Entrants	Cara Charlesworth Clare Griffiths		Children will be supported at the earliest opportunity to prevent entering, or further contact with the Youth Justice System Measure: The number of first- time entrants into the criminal justice system will reduce	
Victims	Cara Charlesworth Clare Griffiths		Victims of crimes committed by children and communities will feel safe and protected Victims of crimes committed by children will be supported with any identified needs, aligned with their protected characteristics	

			<p>Measure:</p> <p>The number of referrals into the service for Out of Court Disposals or Court Orders with consent to contact victims will increase</p> <p>There will be an increase in Restorative Justice interventions delivered within the service</p> <p>Through quality assurance work, there will be an improvement in the quality of work with victims.</p>	
Serious Youth Violence	Lorraine Kenny		<p>Children, victims and communities will feel safe and protected</p> <p>Children will receive the relevant support to prevent involvement, or further involvement, in serious youth violence</p> <p>Measure:</p> <p>There will be a reduction in Serious Incident Incidents</p>	

			<p>submitted to the Youth Justice Board</p> <p>There will be a reduction in the rates of Serious Youth Violence within the service</p>	
Disproportionality	Clare Griffiths YJS Managers		<p>Children will not receive disproportionate outcomes based on their lived experiences, protected characteristics or additional needs</p> <p>Measure:</p> <p>The number of children looked after within the service and those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds will reduce</p>	
Data and Quality Assurance	Clare Griffiths YJS Managers		<p>Improvements to service delivery will be responsive and based on quantitative and qualitative data to ensure that the partnership offer is aligned to observations and trends in data</p>	

			<p>Measure:</p> <p>The Youth Justice Partnership Management Board, partner and staff will report a better understanding of the work of the youth justice service</p> <p>There will be a more comprehensive “Impact Report” in place each quarter for delivery to the Youth Justice Partnership Management Board</p>	
Child First	<p>Clare Griffiths Natassja Golcher- Head of Service- MASH, EDT and Complex Safeguarding</p>		<p>Children will receive a response from all services which is in line with the principles of child first to achieve positive change, manage risk and increase safety and wellbeing</p> <p>Measure:</p> <p>Partners will report an improved understanding of Child First.</p> <p>Through partnership quality assurance work, evidence</p>	

			<p>of Child First will be available throughout multi-agency working</p> <p>There will be no children remanded to custody due to placement sufficiency issues</p>	
Policing	Cara Charlesworth		<p>Children will receive a response from police in line with Child Centered Policing to achieve positive change, manage risk and increase safety and wellbeing</p> <p>Measure:</p> <p>There will be a reduction in the number of children remanded to court and kept in the police station</p> <p>There will be improved reporting on children released under investigation, children on bail and children who are stopped and searched</p>	