Witness Name: Stephanie Roberts-Bibby

Statement No.: 2

Exhibits: SRB2/01 – SRB2/81

Dated: 31 July 2026

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

PHASE 2

SECOND WITNESS STATEMENT OF STEPHANIE ROBERTS-BIBBY

ON BEHALF OF THE YOUTH JUSTICE BOARD

I, Stephanie Roberts-Bibby, will say as follows: -

INTRODUCTION

1. I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Youth Justice Board (YJB).

2. I make this statement in response to a Rule 9 request received from the Southport Inquiry (Inquiry) dated 24 June 2026 in relation to Phase 2. I am providing this as a corporate witness statement on behalf of the YJB, and as such, this statement includes the recollections of others as well as internal records.

3. Our thoughts remain with the families of Bebe King, Elsie Dot Stancombe and Alice da Silva Aguiar, the victims of the attack and all those who continue to be affected by what happened. There can be no greater responsibility than learning from tragedies such as this.

OPENING OBSERVATIONS

4. Making our communities safer depends on effective multi-agency working, timely information sharing, professional curiosity, clear accountability and ensuring we have early intervention. Where these key matters fail, opportunities to prevent harm are missed.

5. The term Violence Fixated Individual (also known as VFI) whilst used by some agencies, is not a term which has, as yet, been defined, nor is it a term which is used by the YJB. Without a fixed definition it is not possible to categorise individuals according to this term. The YJB considers that factors which are likely to apply to Violence Fixated Individuals could also apply to many of the children in contact with the youth justice system, given the high prevalence of additional needs and vulnerabilities within this cohort.

6. The YJB wholeheartedly agrees that earliest possible identification of the type of characteristics shown by AR, combined with systems capable of fast and effective action, could have prevented the nightmare that took place on the 29th of July 2024.

7. But unless there are systems which are effective in identifying any individual **who may become** a violence fixated individual or **who have a 'non-fixated' capacity for violence** then there will be another tragedy. Early intervention and diversion are key to prevention of offending. The YJB's continued focus remains on reducing risk and prevention of offending through early intervention to ensure needs are addressed and support is put in place to manage and mitigate the risks to self and others.

8. Given the tragic incident underpinning this Inquiry took place in England, our reply is framed within the statutory framework that applies in England. However, the YJB urges consideration of the differences with arrangements in Wales due to its devolved responsibilities and how any actions leading from the learning of this Inquiry need to be considered for varying impact and implementation in the context of Wales.

THE TWO COHORTS OF CHILDREN

9. The YJB believes it will assist the inquiry if it briefly describes the two cohorts of children that engage with local Youth Justice Services and how they can come to the attention of the Youth Justice System.

10. The first cohort is the prevention and diversion group:

    10.1. Prevention: These children have come to the attention of local services because of concerns about anti-social behaviour, emerging offending behaviour, association with offending peers, or other indicators that they may be at risk of entering the youth justice system. Many may also have additional needs relating to safeguarding, education, mental health or family circumstances. They are referred to the Youth Justice Service by practitioners from partner agencies where there are concerns and that targeted prevention support may reduce the risk of offending or further anti-social behaviour. As this engagement is voluntary and not mandated by a court order, it does not form part of the statutory caseload. Referral pathways and assessment processes vary locally and there is currently no nationally mandated screening or assessment tool used consistently across all agencies when making referrals into prevention services.

    10.2. Diversion: These children can come into contact with the Youth Justice Service through both formal and informal out-of-court resolutions (OOCRs). Formal OOCRs, issued by the police, comprise Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions, which would be categorised as part of the Youth Justice Service's statutory caseload. However informal OOCRs, including Community Resolutions, Deferred Prosecutions and Deferred Cautions, do not form part of the statutory caseload. Not all informal outcomes involve referral to the Youth Justice Service and some may be issued and managed solely by the police. As a result, Youth Justice Services do not necessarily have visibility of all children who receive informal outcomes.

11. The Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool (PDAT) is a tool used across prevention and diversion pathways and so accordingly for all within the first cohort. It is mandated for formal OOCRs and for specified informal OOCRs, including Community Resolutions and Deferred Prosecutions where the child is referred to the Youth Justice Service. PDAT may also be used to inform assessment and planning where a child is referred to a Youth Justice Service prevention programme, although its use in prevention cases is determined locally and is not mandated.

12. Data has only recently been available to begin to quantify the proportion of Youth Justice Service caseload taken up by prevention and diversion work. However, the YJB's 2023 Prevention and Diversion Project found youth justice services reported an average prevention and diversion caseload in 2020/21 of 52% **[SRB2/01 - YJB000133]**. In 2026, the YJB published diversionary outcomes data for the first time, and found that in the year ending December 2025, 43% of cases involving Youth Justice Services were resolved without a formal court outcome **[SRB2/02 - YJB000134]**. These statistics provide a new but partial picture of recorded diversionary outcomes involving Youth Justice Services.

13. A child within the non-statutory cohort can, with the support of local services, self-refer to the Youth Justice Service.

14. The second cohort are those who are supervised or on an order by the Youth Justice Service who are under the direction of the courts. These are children who have received a Referral Order (RO), Youth Rehabilitation Order (YRO), certain Civil Orders, or a custodial sentence such as a Detention and Training Order. These children will have an AssetPlus assessment completed by their caseworker. Responsibility for supervision will be determined by the type of order or sentence and the individual's circumstances, and may be undertaken by the Youth Justice Service or, where appropriate, the Probation Service if they have turned 18.

15. There is wide variation across local services as to cross service work, information exchange and team working. As the Inquiry has acknowledged, IT support and common platforms represent a huge challenge to interservice work and engagement.

CORE RECOMMENDATIONS

16. The YJB strongly considers that there should be a single assessment tool which is used and applied across all agencies nationally. This will require the agreement of all government departments [Education, Justice and Health] to adopt the tool. There are a range of established assessment frameworks that already exist across health, education, social care, safeguarding and youth justice to identify children who may be vulnerable to violence, exploitation or other harms.

17. The YJB believes that government should explore, of the tools that are available, which one is best placed to assess need, improve multi-agency information sharing, and that could be implemented without creating duplication or additional burdens for practitioners. The current evidence supports structured assessment of children's needs, vulnerabilities and risk factors, this is why the YJB developed PDAT. Once the tool is agreed, there needs to be one professional, from education, health/Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHs), and/or social services who locally takes the lead in ensuring that all partners are aware of the child's needs, that partners understand their role in addressing those needs and ensuring that they are met in line with the assessment, and escalating if the plan does not achieve the intended objectives within the required time.

18. PDAT is the standardised framework introduced in 2024 by the YJB for assessing children involved in prevention and diversion programs in England and Wales. PDAT replaces varying local practices to ensure consistency across Youth Justice Services. Its key features and findings include:

    18.1. **Child-Centric Plan:** Includes dedicated sections co-created with children and their carers to highlight their goals, strengths, and who can support them.

    18.2. **Holistic Assessment:** Explores the child's circumstances, family, diversity needs, and any risks to others, themselves and risks of possible exploitation.

19. The YJB agrees with the inquiry that where possible current services should be used more effectively rather than seeking wholesale change.

20. Feedback from Youth Justice Services has been very positive as regards the use of PDAT; it is a valuable tool for the assessment of child need and any risk the child may pose to themselves or others.

PERSONAL ROLE AND EXPERIENCE

21. I have held the position of Chief Executive Officer of the YJB since June 2023, this was initially on an interim basis until November 2023 when I became the permanent Chief Executive Officer and was therefore in post for the period from before the tragic incident occurred until the current time **[SRB2/03 - YJB000081]**. I previously held this role on a two-month interim basis in 2021 and had been the Chief Operating Officer of the YJB since September 2018. Prior to this, I have extensive experience in the prison estate, which I set out below:

    21.1. August 2016 to September 2018, Governor, HMP and YOI Winchester

    21.2. February 2012 to June 2014 Governor, HMP Hewell

    21.3. February 2010 to February 2012, Governor, HMP and YOI Brinsford

    21.4. July 2007 to February 2010, Deputy Governor and Acting Governor, HMP Woodhill

22. I have also held the following relevant roles:

    22.1. May 2016 to August 2016, Design Lead for New Prison Operating Model

    22.2. June 2014 to May 2016, Through the Gate Implementation and Transformation Lead

23. As Chief Executive Officer, I hold operational responsibility for carrying out the YJB's statutory responsibilities and delivering the Board's strategy in line with any ministerial steer, while managing the non-departmental public body and accounting for its funds.

24. I exhibit as **[SRB2/04 - YJB000082]** the structure chart for the YJB which sets out how the YJB staff are distributed.

THE YJB

25. The YJB is a non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and is the only statutory body with oversight of the entire Youth Justice System in England and Wales. It was created by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 with the aim of preventing offending by children. The vision of the YJB is set out below **[SRB2/05 - YJB000083]**:

> *Our vision is for a youth justice system that sees children as children, treats them fairly and helps them to build on their strengths so they can make a constructive contribution to society. This will prevent offending and create safer communities with fewer victims.*

26. The YJB's core functions are to monitor the operation of the youth justice system and provision of youth justice services and provide advice to ministers on how the principal aim of that system might be most effectively pursued. As a result, we provide expert, independent advice to ministers on how the youth justice system is delivering its aim to prevent offending by children, and to support outstanding practice in the youth justice sector. As stipulated by section 41 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the statutory functions held by the YJB are: **[SRB2/05 - YJB000083]**

26.1. to monitor the operation of the youth justice system and the provision of youth justice services;

26.2. to advise the Secretary of State on the following matters, namely—

(i) the operation of that system and the provision of such services;

(ii) how the principal aim of that system might most effectively be pursued;

(iii) the content of any national standards he may see fit to set with respect to the provision of such services, or the accommodation in which children and young persons are kept in custody; and

(iv) the steps that might be taken to prevent offending by children and young persons;

26.3. to monitor the extent to which that aim is being achieved and any such standards met;

26.4. for the purposes of paragraphs 26.1, 26.2 and 26.3 above, to obtain information from relevant authorities;

26.5. to publish information so obtained; to identify, to make known and to promote good practice in the following matters, namely—

(i) the operation of the youth justice system and the provision of youth justice services;

(ii) the prevention of offending by children and young persons; and

(iii) working with children and young persons who are or are at risk of becoming offenders;

26.6. to commission research in connection with such practice;

26.7. with the approval of the Secretary of State, to make grants to local authorities and other persons for the purposes of the operation of the youth justice system and the provision of youth justice services, subject to such conditions as the Board considers appropriate, including conditions as to repayment; and

26.8. to provide assistance to local authorities and other persons in connection with information technology systems and equipment used or to be used for the purposes of the operation of the youth justice system and the provision of youth justice services.

27. Members of the YJB are appointed by the Secretary of State for Justice. At the time of writing, the Board consists of the following active members **[SRB2/06 - YJB000135]:**

27.1. Phil Bowen (Chair since February 2026)

i. Phil Bowen brings extensive expertise in criminal justice policy, court reform, and youth justice. He has served as Interim Chair of the YJB since January 2026, having joined the Board as a member in 2023. Prior to this, he was Director of the Centre for Justice Innovation from 2012 until 2025, leading the organisation's strategy and its work to improve the effectiveness, accessibility, and fairness of courts and wider justice services. Through this role, he developed significant expertise in the operation of criminal and youth courts, judicial processes, problem-solving approaches, and the use of evidence and innovation to improve justice outcomes. His earlier career included roles within the Home Office and MoJ, as well as serving as an adviser on criminal justice reform in the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit. Collectively, these roles have given him a deep understanding of the justice system, particularly the operation of courts, policy development, system reform, and the challenges involved in delivering better outcomes for children, victims, and communities.

27.2. Jacob Sakil

i. Jacob Sakil brings expertise in youth engagement, community development, entrepreneurship, and social action. Having served as the Young Mayor of Lewisham, he has first-hand experience of representing the interests of children and young people and promoting their participation

in decision-making. As the founder of the American Bites start-up, he has developed skills in business leadership, innovation, and organisational development. His experience as a Youth Justice Service representative provides valuable insight into the youth justice system and the challenges facing children and young people. In addition, as a member of Business in the Community's (BITC) Place Taskforce, he supports initiatives that harness the collective potential of businesses and local partners to strengthen communities across the UK. Together, these roles provide him with a strong understanding of youth voice, community engagement, partnership working, and the factors that contribute to positive outcomes for children and young people.

27.3. Karin Phillips MBE

i. Karin Phillips MBE brings extensive expertise in community safety, public policy, governance, and partnership working. Having held a number of senior positions within the Welsh Government, including Deputy Director for Community Safety, she has significant experience in the development and delivery of policies aimed at improving public safety, reducing harm, and supporting communities and developing and interpreting evidence. Her work has involved collaboration across government, law enforcement, local authorities, and voluntary sector organisations, providing her with a strong understanding of multi-agency approaches to complex social issues. As a school governor, she also brings valuable insight into education and the challenges facing children and young people. In recognition of her contributions to community safety in Wales and to the community in Cardiff, she was awarded an MBE in 2014. Her experience provides a strong foundation in leadership, public service, safeguarding, and community engagement.

27.4. Louise Shorter

i. Louise Shorter brings extensive expertise in criminal justice, investigative journalism, media communications, and issues relating to miscarriages of justice. A journalist specialising in criminal justice, she founded Inside Justice, a registered charity that investigates cases on behalf of individuals who claim to have been wrongly convicted, giving her significant experience of the criminal justice system and its impact on those involved in it. She is also a media presenter and expert contributor on justice-related issues, providing insight into public understanding and scrutiny of the justice system. In addition, she serves on the Board of Inside Time, the national not-for-profit newspaper for prisoners, and leads the Justice Project at the School of Law, University of East Anglia. Through these roles, she has developed a strong understanding of criminal justice policy, prisoner experiences, legal processes, rehabilitation, and the importance of fairness, accountability, and access to justice.

27.5. Martin Pratt CBE

i. Martin brings extensive expertise in children's services, social work, education, youth justice, and health and social care. A qualified social worker, he spent 13 years as a Director of Children's Services and previously served as Executive Director Supporting People and Deputy Chief Executive for the London Borough of Camden. His career has been characterised by leadership roles focused on improving outcomes for children, young people, and families, with particular experience in safeguarding, early intervention, multi-agency partnership working, and the delivery of integrated public services. His deep understanding of youth justice is complemented by significant experience across education, health, and social care systems, enabling him to take a holistic approach to addressing the needs of vulnerable children and young people. In recognition of his contribution

to public service, he was awarded a CBE in 2025 for services to children, young people, and families in London.

27.6. Robert Sullivan

i. Robert Sullivan brings expertise in strategic leadership, social impact, community development, and rehabilitation. As Chief Executive Officer of the Football Foundation, the UK's leading sports charity, he oversees significant investment in community facilities and programmes that improve opportunities for children and young people and strengthen local communities. His role as a Trustee of the Twinning Project has provided insight into prisoner rehabilitation and reducing reoffending, while his previous experience as Chair of a homelessness intervention charity has strengthened his understanding of social exclusion, vulnerability, and the challenges faced by disadvantaged groups. Together, these roles have given him extensive experience of partnership working, governance, and delivering initiatives that promote positive social change.

27.7. Susannah Hancock

i. Susannah Hancock brings extensive expertise in victims' services, criminal justice, public safety, organisational leadership, and partnership working across the public and voluntary sectors. As Chief Executive Officer of the Office of the Victims' Commissioner since March 2026, she draws on a distinguished career spanning victim support, policing, fire and rescue services, and youth justice. Her previous leadership roles include Chief Executive Officer of the National Fire Chiefs Council, Chief Executive of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, Assistant Chief Executive of the national charity Victim Support, and Chief Executive of the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner in Essex. Her experience is further strengthened by her earlier role as Head of London for the

YJB between 2004 and 2008, giving her valuable insight into youth justice, multi-agency working, and the challenges facing children and young people in the justice system.

28. The YJB brings together a wide range of experience, knowledge and expertise. The YJB meets, as a non-executive Board, on a quarterly basis and the minutes are exhibited to this statement **[SRB2/07 - YJB000085; SRB2/08 - YJB000086; SRB2/09 - YJB000087; SRB2/10 - YJB000088; SRB2/11 - YJB000089; SRB2/12 - YJB000090; SRB2/13 - YJB000091; SRB2/14 - YJB000092; SRB2/15 - YJB000093; SRB2/16 - YJB000094; SRB2/17 - YJB000095; SRB2/18 - YJB000096].**

29. The YJB's greatest asset is its people. The organisation brings together highly skilled professionals with expertise in public service leadership, frontline operations, youth justice practice, children's social care, education, safeguarding, policing, probation, policy development, research, digital and data analysis. This unique combination of operational experience and evidence-based expertise enables the YJB to work closely with key stakeholders, importantly frontline services, to deliver the statutory functions of the organisation and improve outcomes for children and victims in the youth justice system.

30. The Senior Leadership of the executive are responsible for the day-to-day leadership and management of the organisation and lead the staff group to develop and maintain effective partnerships across local authorities, police, crown prosecution services, courts, local authorities including children's social care and education, health, probation and voluntary sector organisations. Through this expertise and collaborative approach, the Executive helps ensure that the YJB delivers its objectives and supports better outcomes for children, victims, and communities across England and Wales. The staff team are skilled in working collaboratively to understand the needs of children, victims and communities, the context in which services are delivered, identifying effective interventions, supporting frontline services, advising ministers, and driving improvements across the youth justice system. The organisation's work is underpinned by a clear public service mission: to prevent and reduce offending, create safer communities, and improve outcomes for children, victims and communities.

The Changing Role of the YJB

31. The YJB advised the Inquiry on 19 February 2026, as part of Phase 1, that the role and remit of the YJB would be substantially changing as a result of the MoJ's paper – 'A modern youth justice system: Foundations fit for the future'. The YJB are now working through a reform programme with our sponsor department (MoJ) to change the YJB's focus from system oversight and advice on that system to a continuous improvement body to provide support to Youth Justice Services by commissioning and undertaking research, identifying best practice, supporting innovation, and accelerating the spread of effective approaches to improve outcomes for children, victims and communities. We are currently working through which statutory functions will move directly within the MoJ remit, and which will remain with the future YJB and identifying the wider system architecture impacts. It is expected that the YJB will retain its independence as a Non-Departmental Public body within the MoJ and is likely to conduct thematic work at both local and regional levels. The YJB will drive improvement through building the evidence base around innovative new practice.

32. On 18 May 2026, the MoJ published the Youth Justice White Paper **[SRB2/19 - YJB000136].** This included a covering letter from Jake Richards MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the MoJ, who stated that as part of the proposed changes to youth justice there was a commitment to "reforming the role and remit of the YJB to focus on driving continuous improvement" **[SRB2/19 - YJB000136].** The announcement stated that these changes were expected to take place by March 2027.

33. As part of the reform, it has been stated that "key functions of the board"... will be transferred into ... "the Ministry of Justice to ensure ministers are fully accountable for how the system performs". These key functions will include:

    33.1. National oversight of the youth justice system;

    33.2. Monitoring of Youth Justice Service performance in England and Wales;

    33.3. Development of National Standards; and

    33.4. Awarding of grant funding.

34. The following is the new 'vision' for the YJB **[SRB2/19 - YJB000136]**:

> *The reformed Youth Justice Board will drive measurable, evidence-led improvement across youth justice services by identifying what works, supporting innovation, and accelerating the spread of effective approaches to improve outcomes for children, victims and communities.*

THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

35. The youth justice system is a complex delivery landscape, involving numerous services, organisations and agencies. All these need to work in partnership to achieve the system aims of preventing offending and to truly realise the best outcomes for children, victims and communities.

36. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, requires the cooperation of named multi agency partners to deliver youth justice services locally, referred to in the Act as youth offending teams, but more often now known as Youth Justice Services (YJSs), (and how I will refer to them throughout this statement). Those statutory partners are the local authority (this should include children's social care and education), Police, Health and Probation. Additional partners may also provide specific services and support to children and victims.

37. The age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales is 10; in Scotland, the age of criminal responsibility is higher, at 12 years old. The Bar Council has recently called for the age of criminal responsibility to be raised to 14 years old **[SRB2/20 – YJB000137]**.

38. The Youth Court sits as part of the Magistrates Court and deals with children aged between 10 and 17 at the date that a child first appears before the Court and enters a plea. The relevant date for whether an individual then receives a 'youth' sentence or an 'adult' sentence is the date of their conviction.

MULTI-AGENCY ENGAGEMENT

39. The YJB currently oversees the youth justice system across England and Wales, advises the Secretary of State for Justice on standards set for the provision of YJSs and monitors system performance. The YJB works with Youth Justice partners in line with this oversight responsibility, with much of the contact at regional and local service level being through the work of our 'Operations' staff in line with the delivery of our Oversight Framework **[SRB2/21 - YJB000097].** This framework provides clarity on how the YJB's monitoring function is fulfilled at a local level, outlining how oversight of local YJSs is undertaken and delivery across the wider system is understood.

40. Nationally, the YJB engages with Youth Justice partners, through the intelligence it gathers from its oversight functions including the collection of data and evidence. Through this intelligence gathering, the YJB supports these partners to promote best practice in preventing children offending and supporting victims, as well as offering advice to Ministers in respect of this.

41. There is variation across local services as to interagency engagement, information sharing, approaches to leadership and muti-agency working. There is a need for greater consistency across local services, national guidance and national leadership whilst accepting that each delivery context and community is unique.

The Approach to those with an Interest in Violence

42. Where a local YJS identifies that a child has an interest in violence, the child would be managed through the service's existing risk management processes. YJS statutory involvement and therefore supervision activity with a child is aligned with the length of the order a child receives, following a conviction. The YJB provides guidance on assessing, managing and reviewing risk of harm through its Case Management Guidance **[SRB2/22 - YJB000138].** YJSs only undertake this activity with children on their caseload, for children not being worked with by the YJS it is for the relevant agency to identify any unmet needs, concerns or behaviour which would result in harm to themselves and or others.

43. There is an expectation that YJS workers will proactively seek out information relevant to the risks the child may pose to others. YJSs are multi agency by nature, the result of which is that information gathering and sharing is facilitated. Police, Social Care, Education and Health are partners within YJSs, usually having seconded staff with access to the home agency databases and seconded to the YJS to contribute agency information and professional expertise; also represented on the local Management Board.

44. The YJB seeks to ensure that highly experienced YJB Oversight Managers attend Management Boards for each YJS at a local level. These are partnership meetings involving all statutory partners. In these forums, Oversight Managers can support YJS partners and provide support and challenge to leadership and governance and where concerns are raised that statutory partners, including Police, Social Care, Education and Health, are not contributing effectively to information sharing and the shared management of risk for children on the YJS caseload.

45. Currently, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) may be applied in cases where the YJS identifies that a child would benefit from coordinated, multi-agency risk management. MAPPA enables relevant agencies to share information and coordinate the management of individuals who present significant risks.

46. Level 1 MAPPA cases are typically managed within the YJS. Only a small number of children meet the criteria for Level 2, and even fewer for Level 3, where more senior, coordinated risk management is required. While rarely used, a YJS may utilise Level 3 MAPPA where a child's interest in violence presents a significant risk to the public and requires an enhanced, multi-agency response. The YJB provides further guidance on MAPPA within its Case Management Guidance **[SRB2/23 - YJB000139].**

47. The YJB does not have operational responsibility for the identification, assessment or management of individual children who may present a risk of serious violence or who may be vulnerable to radicalisation. Responsibility for these functions rests with relevant statutory partners at a local level and multi-agency forums, including YJSs, safeguarding

partners, Police, Counter Terrorism Policing, PREVENT and Channel panels, in line with their respective statutory duties and responsibilities.

48. The YJB works strategically with the Home Office, Counter Terrorism Policing, PREVENT colleagues and YJSs to support effective practice across the youth justice sector. This includes contributing to the development of the evidence base, evidence based guidance, facilitating engagement and learning, and supporting practitioners to understand and respond to complex and overlapping risks.

49. Local YJSs are responsible for identifying children within their caseload, assessing and supervising cases of individual children who pose a risk of serious harm to others. Accountability against the quality of outcomes is also held at a local level but balanced with a national interest in the outcomes delivered by the youth justice system, as seen in our oversight framework **[SRB2/21 - YJB000097].** In the event that individual services require support for improvement or identify gaps in local authority provision across local and regional partners, this may be escalated to the YJB for support.

50. The YJB provides targeted support for improvement and universally provides national guidance and examples of best practice across multiple topics which touch on serious violence.

IDENTIFYING, ASSESSING AND MANAGING RISK OF VIOLENCE-FIXATED INDIVIDUALS

51. The term Violence-Fixated Individual has no agreed definition. The work to establish the behaviours and characteristics associated with such a definition should be undertaken as part of Phase 2 of the Inquiry.

52. More fundamentally, a system focused on identifying and managing individuals only once they are deemed violence-fixated is inherently reactive. It risks missing children who are not yet violence fixated, as described by the Inquiry, but who exhibit vulnerabilities, or

unmet needs and or an interest in violence and or causing harm that place them on that trajectory.

53. Without a strong emphasis on early identification and intervention, there is a real danger that children will fall through the gaps between services until their behaviour escalates to a level that attracts formal attention. The focus should therefore be on preventing violence fixation, not simply identifying and managing it once it has occurred.

54. The YJB would caution against the following:

54.1. Categorising children against fixed criteria risks overlooking their underlying vulnerabilities and needs. Need and risk are not static and change over time. An analysis carried out by the YJB of a subset of AssetPlus assessments found that many sentenced children presented with multiple assessed concerns. Within the measures examined, 70% of children assessed had concerns present in at least five of the 19 concern types included in the publication, while 56% were assessed as a current or previous Child in Need. The most prevalent concerns related to Safety and Wellbeing (88%), Risk to Others (85%), Substance Misuse (75%), Speech, Language and Communication (71%), and Mental Health (71%). The report concludes that these statistics suggest a large proportion of children supervised by YJSs exhibit a range of important, interdependent and interrelated needs, highlighting the complexity of children's circumstances **[SRB2/24 - YJB000140].**

54.2. Rigid frameworks can also reduce professional curiosity and context-led assessment and leave children at risk of not receiving support due to not meeting threshold criteria, and we know that when needs are not met that children can cause serious harm.

54.3. An interest in violence is one of many factors that can influence a child's behaviour and likelihood of committing a violent offence. These factors are not fixed; they can shift and change as children develop,

and may include experiences such as isolation, exclusion from school, neurodivergence, and or exposure to harmful online content.

54.4. The label 'violence-fixated individual' focuses on just one of these factors and risks reducing a child to a single, oversimplified identity. Negative labelling can reinforce and support a criminal identity which increases risk whereas children who feel safe and belong are more likely to develop a positive social identity.

54.5. Static risk assessments, whilst necessary, will identify the risk profile at that time. The risk presented by an individual is rarely static and varies over time with heightened risk changing due to lifestyle, domestic circumstances, individual vulnerabilities including mental heath issues and substance abuse issues. The YJB asks that the Inquiry recognises that considering violence alone as a risk factor, could lead to a static rather than dynamic assessment.

55. Assessing and addressing unmet needs through a multi-agency approach does not mean ignoring risk of violence to the public, it ensures that those risks through being thoroughly understood and managed appropriately are dealt with.

56. Many of the attributes which could be assigned to a 'VFI' apply to many children in contact with the youth justice system, given the high prevalence of additional needs and vulnerabilities within this cohort. In England, among children cautioned or sentenced for any offence, 80% had been recorded as having Special Education Needs, 81% had been persistently absent from school, 72% had been suspended, 45% had been a Child in Need and 11% had been permanently excluded. Rates were higher still for children cautioned or sentenced for a serious violence offence, with 86% having SEN, 85% having been persistently absent, 82% having been suspended, 54% having been a Child in Need and 16% having been permanently excluded. Evidence from Wales also suggests that at least 60% of children involved in the youth justice system have a speech, language or communication need **[SRB2/25 – YJB000141; SRB2/26 – YJB000142].**

Statistical Analysis

57. The YJB does not specifically collate data or carry out statistical analysis on any data provided from within the YJS relating to the term Violence Fixated Individual. This is because the term has not been universally defined nor is the term, as yet, an evidence based one.

58. Behaviour relating to violence, where relevant, will be recorded as part of AssetPlus or PDAT assessments, however the YJB does not currently review this partly due to a lack of resource to extract and assess the quality of this data and partly because the YJB does not work at a case level. Work is ongoing, led by the MoJ BOLD (Better Outcomes through Linked Data) team, to prepare some of the AssetPlus dataset for data linkage to Data First. This work should make it easier for the YJB or others to further explore and analyse AssetPlus data in the future. The workstream on multi agency data sharing is expected to take approximately 2 years to complete from now.

59. Jake Richards MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the MoJ, has set up a panel called PAYJAP (Preventative Analytics in Youth Justice Advisory Panel) to look at the potential use of preventative analytics as a way of bringing multi-agency data sets together and using analytics to predict areas of risk. The YJB is involved in this work and has membership on this panel along with various experts and academics. The YJB are facilitating contact with practitioners to inform this work, understand the data sets they are working with and the potential for using analytic technology. Mr Richards MP has been reappointed to a ministerial role within the MoJ but it is not yet known whether he will retain the portfolio for Youth Justice.

60. AssetPlus is primarily used as an assessment tool for local practitioners, rather than to produce national data. Therefore, at this time we are not able to draw any conclusions about the completeness or quality of this data, or how useful it might actually be to identify and support children who may fall under the definition of 'Violence Fixated Individuals'. AssetPlus is a combination of tick box assessment, and so capable of being quantitatively assessed, and open text box which would lend itself to qualitative assessment. The YJB currently does not receive the open text elements of an AssetPlus assessment - these would be challenging and resource intensive for the YJB to analyse

on a national level. The investment required to analyse the open text elements would include significantly enhanced technology infrastructure and the capacity to review 13,000 sentencing exercises.

61. The following are the potentially relevant 'tick boxes' which appear on the AssetPlus assessment, although a number of these require that earlier indicators are also met before they can be considered:

    61.1. Justification of offending on political or religious grounds.

    61.2. Violence at home, school or other social settings.

    61.3. Involvement in hate-based behaviour.

    61.4. Young person has said, indicated or threatened that s/he might cause serious harm to others.

    61.5. Behaviour driven by obsessions, fantasies or other problematic interests.

    61.6. Indications of young person planning for or preparing to commit offences.

62. The YJB believes that government should explore, of the tools that are available, which one is best placed to assess need, improve multi-agency information sharing, and that could be implemented without creating duplication or additional burdens for practitioners. The current evidence supports structured assessment of children's needs, vulnerabilities and risk factors, which is why the YJB developed the PDAT, rather than attempting to predict which individual children will go on to commit serious violence. Once the tool is agreed there needs to be one professional, from education, health/CAMHs and/or social services who locally takes the lead in ensuring that all partners are aware of the child's needs, that partners understand their role in addressing those needs and ensuring that they are met in line with the assessment, and escalating if the plan does not achieve the intended objectives within the required time.

63. The YJB considers that PDAT should be considered as part of this work as it may be capable of fitting the Inquiry's ambition that:

"There is no point in coming up with complicated, labour-intensive new systems, or adjustments to existing arrangements, only then to syphon resources away from organisations running existing vital programmes. We must strive to identify mechanisms and changes which do not impose unrealistic additional financial burdens on our already strained public resources."[1]

64. There are some variables in the PDAT which, used in combination, act to identify the depth and risk of violence. The relevant PDAT assessment prompts that may warrant further exploration are:

    64.1. Has the child previously or currently experienced radicalisation (tick-box)?

    64.2. Has the child previously or currently experienced radicalisation (tick-box)? What, if any, are the safety and well-being concerns to others as a result of the child's potential behaviour and why? (Response options are 'low, medium, high, very-high'. The question also asks respondent to 'Please identify who and explain why')

    64.3. Does the child have access to the internet and how do they use it? (Open text question, which would be more complex to analyse on a centralised basis)

65. AssetPlus contains a number of assessment modules, including:

    65.1. Personal, Family and Social Factors;

    65.2. Offending;

    65.3. Foundations for Change;

    65.4. Explanations and Conclusions; and

    65.5. Pathways and Planning (currently being updated and moving to a revised "Plan" section aligned with PDAT).

66. Subject to future reforms, future evaluations and developments, both AssetPlus and PDAT should focus on their effectiveness of detecting online harms affecting children. The YJB accepts AssetPlus needs updating and further guidance for the user of these

[1] Chair's opening remarks 8Th July 2026.

assessment tools. It is not possible to carry out these updates without significant investment (which the YJB sought to secure in the last spending review). Notwithstanding this acceptance, both tools still offer substantial value across multi-agency needs.

Research

67. The YJB commissions research to explore various areas across youth justice. I set out below some of the recent research that has been carried out which may assist the Inquiry in their consideration of the Terms of Reference for Phase 2:

67.1. **Enhanced Case Management (ECM) Evaluation (2024).** The YJB commissioned an independent process and impact evaluation of the ECM approach in South West England. ECM is a trauma-informed, psychology-led approach to working with children in YJSs. The evaluation offered practical insights into how the approach was implemented and how it could be incorporated in other areas **[SRB2/27 – YJB000143; SRB2/28 – YJB000144].**

67.2. **Integration in Youth Justice Services in England and Wales (2024).** This report explores how YJSs integrate with children's social care, Early Help and other services. It is relevant because identifying overlapping vulnerability depends heavily on multi-agency information sharing and joined-up assessment **[SRB2/29 – YJB000145].**

67.3. **YJB's Knife Crime Evidence and Insights Pack (2025).** The YJB's Knife Crime Evidence and Insights Pack brings together youth justice data, research and practitioner insight to provide an evidence base for policy, practice and partnership responses to knife crime involving children. It provides context on the knife crime landscape by summarising key evidence, trends and insights from professionals working with children in the youth justice system, and sets out recommendations based on that evidence **[SRB2/30 – YJB000112].**

67.4. **YJB's Evidence and Insights Pack on Online Harms Affecting Children (2026)** This brings together current evidence on the risks

children face online, the impact on their wellbeing and behaviour, and the implications for the youth justice system. It highlights that while online platforms play an important role in children's lives, they can also expose them to harms including cyberbullying, sexual abuse, exploitation and radicalisation, which in some cases are linked to offline violence. The pack notes the growing normalisation of harmful online content and intimate image sharing, identifies particular risks for girls, and outlines promising approaches such as safety-by-design measures, early intervention, and improved media and gaming literacy. It is intended to support YJSs and partner agencies in identifying and responding to online harms and promoting positive outcomes for children **[SRB2/31 – YJB000146].**

68. Additionally, via the YJB resource Hub, we share guidance from YJS which support other services in specific areas, examples of this are set out below:

68.1. **Case Management Guidance:** How to work with children in contact with the youth justice system. This is YJB guidance on undertaking assessments, including what practitioners should consider, how to gather information and how assessment links to intervention planning. It explicitly frames assessment as a way to identify needs, safety and wellbeing concerns, mental health and emotional wellbeing needs, substance misuse, exploitation, Adverse Childhood Experiences, trauma, speech and language needs, learning needs, safeguarding and welfare concerns. It also directs practitioners to draw on children's services, health, education and police information, which is essential when vulnerabilities overlap across different systems **[SRB2/32 – YJB000147].**

68.2. **Trauma-informed pre-sentence report templates** (Lewisham YJS): This Resource Hub item shares trauma-informed Pre Sentence Report (PSR) templates, a PSR quality assurance template and a Trauma Informed Anti-Racist Restorative Approaches court duty assessment tool **[SRB2/33 – YJB000148; SRB2/34 – YJB000149; SRB2/35 – YJB000150; SRB2/36 – YJB000151].**

68.3. **Trauma-Informed Practitioner role (York YJS):** This Resource Hub practice example describes a specialist trauma-informed practitioner role within York YJS. The practitioner works with children involved in crime or exploitation, or who have experienced adverse childhood experiences, and focuses on intergenerational trauma through work with parents and children **[SRB2/37 – YJB000152].**

Serious Incident Reports

69. The YJB primarily collects data relevant to that under consideration by the Inquiry through Serious Incident Notifications. The approach to reporting serious incidents has been mandatory since April 2022. YJSs are required to notify the YJB of a serious incident within 24 hours if a child aged between 10-17 years is charged with committing one of the following notifiable offences outlined below:

69.1. Attempted murder.
69.2. Murder/Manslaughter.
69.3. Rape.
69.4. Grievous bodily harm or wounding with or without intent — section 18/20.
69.5. A terrorism related offence.
69.6. If a child dies while on the YJS caseload, or up to 20 calendar days following the end of YJS supervision.

70. This means that all services are expected to notify the YJB when one of the following incidents has occurred. The prescribed incidents must be notified to the YJB within one working day of a YJS becoming aware of an incident involving a child. The YJB produced, for the first time in April 2025, a review of the Serious Incident Notifications received during the year between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 **[SRB2/38 - YJB000124].** During 2023/24, there were 438 serious incidents notified to the YJB involving 546 children. From April 2024, YJSs were required to submit all serious incident notifications via the Serious Incidents module on the Youth Justice Application Framework (YJAF).

71. 246 of 438 serious incidents reported involved a knife or blade. This represents 56% of all incidents reported in 2023/24. Proportionally, this remains broadly the same as 2022/23 with 187 (58%) of the 325 incidents reported involving a knife or blade.

72. The Serious Incident Notification data does not provide a clear picture of previous offending or convictions. The quantitative analysis of the SINs would not demonstrate whether an individual has multiple convictions for violence. At the point of charge, when a SIN is raised, the information relating to previous offending may not be known. This information would only be available to the YJB within a subset of these notifications where a more detailed SIN supports a ministerial briefing. There is scope for SINs to be expanded if the infrastructure were put in place across agencies, but this would require substantial investment.

73. There were three incident categories where over half of the incidents indicated knife or bladed article involvement. 92% of Attempted Murder notifications indicated there was knife or blade involvement and this was the highest proportion of all incident categories; 84% of Murder/Manslaughter and 62% of GBH incidents indicated there was knife or blade involvement.

74. From my observation of the SINs to date, I think there are very few cases that we have seen come through where there is not something that raises concern in the case before the child goes on to commit serious harm, these are rarely children not known to any body or organisation. In my view, it is very unlikely that an individual, who is considered a Violence Fixated Individual, has not had any previous engagement with statutory services which have legal responsibilities to safeguard children and protect the public.

75. There have been a number of high-profile murders committed by children, both on children and adults. Since the board has started carrying out analysis (2024) of our serious incident reporting, we have also begun to consider if serious offending is increasing in frequency. By the YJB's definition, we can see from initial analysis of our data that serious offending (from 2021/22 to 2024/25) is going up, as are the total number of offences of gravity scores 5-8. We have explored to see what the reasons for this increase could be, but there is no clear driver that we can currently identify; this requires more attention and analysis for us to better understand what is happening and why.

76. Further consideration needs to be given to whether the current SIN system should be developed further to capture offending outside of the notifiable offences described above; this might include multiple violent offences, including sexual offending or knife/weapon offences.

Policies and Guidance

77. The principal guidance documents are the AssetPlus Guidance and PDAT Guidance, as set out at paragraphs 18 and 60.

78. The Foundations for Change section captures the child's resilience, strengths and goals, and identifies opportunities that may support positive outcomes.

79. The Explanations and Conclusions section requires practitioners to assess and analyse current and future concerns, including concerns relating to safety and wellbeing and any risks posed to others. This section draws together information from across the assessment and requires practitioners to consider and analyse identified concerns, strengths and protective factors.

80. The PDAT Guidance similarly supports practitioners in identifying and assessing concerns relating to the safety of others. The guidance includes a dedicated section on assessing safety to others and encourages consideration of both concerns and protective factors as part of a structured assessment process. PDAT is used for children who are in a diversion pathway, so is not as intensive as AssetPlus **[SRB2/39 – YJB000153]**.

81. In support of implementation of PDAT, the YJB delivered regional two-day train-the-trainer events. These covered:

    81.1. building confidence to deliver PDAT training within local services;

    81.2. understanding PDAT;

    81.3. the role of assessment and the characteristics of effective assessment;

81.4. Child First evidence base principles;

81.5. the assessment of safety and wellbeing for both the child and the public; and

81.6. developing skills in writing plans.

82. Each YJS was invited to send two representatives. The face-to-face events were followed by three remote support sessions aimed at supporting implementation and developing regional peer-support arrangements. These support sessions have since ceased following feedback from the sector that they were no longer required.

83. In addition, the YJB is delivering briefing events to support forthcoming changes to AssetPlus. These briefings cover:

83.1. Child First evidence base and assessment;

83.2. New AssetPlus questions, including:

i. non-resident parent;

ii. use of the internet;

iii. experience of discrimination; and

iv. display of discriminatory behaviour;

83.3. Assessing concerns using case material;

83.4. Learning from serious incidents; and

83.5. Completing plans with children.

84. While these tools, guidance documents and training materials support the identification and assessment of concerns relating to violence, serious harm and risk to others, they do not contain specific guidance on identifying "fixation with violence" as a distinct assessment category.

85. Alongside the development of assessment tools, guidance and practitioner training, the YJB works closely with HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) to understand the quality

of assessments being completed across YJSs. HMIP inspection findings provide valuable insight into the strengths of current practice, as well as areas requiring improvement, including the quality of analysis, assessment of concerns, planning and risk management. The YJB uses learning from inspection activity, alongside findings from serious incidents, research, sector engagement and practice reviews, to inform the ongoing development of AssetPlus, supporting guidance and practitioner learning.

86. We also work closely with HMIP on the quality of the assessments they see when inspecting services. This helps us identify recurring themes, emerging practice issues and areas where additional guidance, training or system changes may be required to strengthen the assessment of children's needs, strengths, safety and wellbeing, as well as concerns relating to harm and exploitation. Following inspections, the YJB works with YJSs through its performance oversight and improvement arrangements to support improvement activity, monitor progress against identified areas for development, and share learning and effective practice across the sector.

87. The following are the key examples of guidance, tools and packs which are in place in terms of preventative analytics:

87.1. Case management guidance **[SRB2/40 – YJB000101]**;

87.2. PDAT **[SRB2/41 – YJB000154 ; SRB2/42 – YJB000155]**;

87.3. AssetPlus guidance **[SRB2/43 – YJB000156]**;

87.4. Knife Crime insights pack **[SRB2/30 – YJB000112]**;

87.5. Online harms pack **[SRB2/31 – YJB000146]**;

87.6. YJB TACT guidance **[SRB2/44 - YJB000105]**; and

87.7. Artificial intelligence (AI) use in YJSs: Key principles - Youth Justice Resource Hub **[SRB2/45 – YJB000157].**

88. The Board is aware that guidance on online harms is a gap in the Case Management Guidance (CMG). We would expect local services to use their local FCAHMS (Forensic Child and Adolescent Mental Health services) as a key specialist service for children and young people who present with high-risk behaviours, significant harm concerns, complex

mental health needs, involvement in serious violence, harmful sexual behaviour, exploitation are present; or where there is a risk of a child of entering secure settings.

89. FCAHMS use a structured professional judgement tool called SAVRY (Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth) to assess the risk of future violence in children aged approximately 12–18 years **[SRB2/46 – YJB000158]**. It is widely used in forensic, mental health, youth justice, and custodial setting.

90. It is often helpful to view the SAVRY as a structured violence risk assessment and formulation tool, rather than a predictive scoring tool, with the real value being the identification of the factors driving a child's behaviour and the interventions needed to reduce risk. The key elements included in assessment are:

    90.1. Historical violence and offending.

    90.2. Family and peer influences.

    90.3. Emotional and behavioural functioning.

    90.4. Attitudes to offending and authority.

    90.5. Protective factors such as school engagement, social support and resilience.

91. At present, when children come into contact with a YJS, the service uses AssetPlus and PDAT to gather a range of information not just about the incident but from children's social care, family, school, police to build a picture of the risks and behaviour. These assessments are not carried out before the child comes into contact with the YJS, as such this solely arises once a child has been convicted of an offence. As set out above, rather than investing new systems, the employment of a single agreed assessment tool such as PDAT earlier than first contact with the YJS is an obvious and necessary change, and would be effective in recognising the possible risk of a child committing crimes of violence or who may be at risk of becoming a Violence Fixated Individual.

92. Where a child presents concerns relating to serious violence or risk of serious harm to others, youth justice practitioners may contribute information to multi-agency public

protection arrangements (MAPPA) where appropriate. Should the YJS as lead agency assess that a child would benefit from MAPPA, the service completes a referral form which has details of the offence, behaviour, risk assessment and measures in place and what multi-agency input is needed and why. That referral is then shared with the Level 2 (and on rare occasions Level 3) MAPPA meeting to discuss and put arrangements in place. The intensity of management would depend on the assessed level of risk[2]:

92.1. Level 1: risk managed by a single agency through ordinary arrangements.

92.2. Level 2: active multi-agency management and intervention.

92.3. Level 3: strategic oversight through a Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel (MAPPP) for the most serious and complex cases.

93. Decisions about the most appropriate framework and level of intervention would be made locally by the responsible authorities and partner agencies following a comprehensive assessment of the child's circumstances and risk.

Guidance and Tools

94. AssetPlus guidance is currently being updated; the YJB has requested that amendments be made on the basis of feedback received from the sector. These were requested to update AssetPlus and to bring it more in line with the approach and language used within PDAT. There was also a request from practitioners to include questions relating to the child's access and use of, and identity though, the internet. Furthermore, the feedback suggested the inclusion of questions regarding the child's personal experience of discrimination. These are due to take place when the Case Management System (CMS) Providers make updates to their systems which is expected to be completed by October 2026.

95. In section 4 of the PDAT guidance titled "The Child's Behaviour", on page 28, the guidance refers to managing concerns around the safety for others **[SRB2/39 –**

[2] Utilising PDAT and AssetPlus.

YJB000153]. This is where any concerns that relate to violence fixation or violent behaviour would be addressed and judged.

96. We are also delivering four national events throughout Autumn 2026 to present these changes and demonstrate the application to practice. The events are held across England and Wales and are run by YJB staff in conjunction with HMI Probation, with the audience being Youth Justice Practitioners and Operational Managers. They will explain the changes and, in particular, link to the evidence base of child first and use case studies from YJSs to demonstrate the application of the assessment.

97. The YJB has scoped changes needed to case management guidance documents. This has indicated where amendments are required and emphasised the need to strengthen messaging to the sector for compliance. The drafting of the new guidance for parents as recommended by the Inquiry in Phase 1 (Recommendation 66) is underway and is planned for publication in October 2026. We plan to align any recommendations from Phase 2 at a later date.

98. It is likely that the Case Management Guidance and some policies will become the sole responsibility of the MoJ as part of the reform of the YJB, however the YJB will continue working through relevant sections of the Case Management Guidance reviewing and strengthening as appropriate until a point where we are no longer responsible. It is important to note that the guidance is in place and is clear as to what is expected of services, but it is down to services how they apply that in practice.

Gaps in Guidance

99. The YJB considers there are gaps in how the system responds to children presenting with unclear ideology or a fixation on violence.

100. Existing approaches are too narrowly focused, particularly within PREVENT, and are not designed to deal with children with mixed or unclear ideologies or an obsession with violence. A large proportion of children referred into PREVENT are categorised as having "vulnerability present but no ideology", demonstrating a mismatch between existing

frameworks and the risks presented by this cohort **[SRB2/47 – YJB000195]**. The YJB feels that this approach is too static and does not consider the risks posed by individuals who are referred.

101. The continued prevalence of the 'no ideology identified' category, accounting for 56% of referrals in 2024–25, alongside relatively low Channel adoption rates" (7%, or 330 of 4,917 cases) **[SRB2/48 – YJB000159]**, raises questions about the effectiveness of using fixed criteria to identify and support these children. It may instead point to the need for a greater emphasis on professional curiosity and nuanced, context-led assessment, which can be constrained by rigid frameworks.

102. There are also limitations in governance and accountability at an operational level, including inconsistent thresholds, limited information sharing, and a lack of clear responsibility across agencies. This can result in risks not being effectively managed, with children falling between services. This reflects wider evidence that agencies apply different thresholds and responsibilities, leading to gaps in support. These issues are reinforced by wider structural gaps, including fragmented national responsibility and limited cross-government coordination, which can constrain how effectively agencies work together.

103. Proposals such as Youth Diversion Orders further highlight the need for greater clarity about how new powers would operate within existing frameworks and who would be accountable for their oversight **[SRB2/47 – YJB000195]**. The YJB is continuing to work with Counter Terrorism Policing and Home Office, however, agreement has been reached that Youth Diversion Orders for under 18s will be managed through YJSs. This means that Youth Diversion Orders will be embedded within existing frameworks. The current timeline is such that these are expected to be launched in October.

104. Overall, this limits the system's ability to identify, assess and respond consistently to children presenting with complex and emerging risks.

Information Sharing

105. Information sharing between YJSs and partner agencies is supported by the statutory multi-agency framework established under sections 38 and 39 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 **[SRB2/49 - YJB000160 ; SRB2/50 - YJB000161]**.

106. These provisions require Local Authorities, Police, Health and Probation Services to cooperate in the provision of youth justice services and establish multidisciplinary YJSs that include representatives from Police, Social Care, Health and Education:

Section 38 Crime and Disorder Act 1998

(1) It shall be the duty of each local authority, acting in co-operation with the persons and bodies mentioned in subsection (2) below, to secure that, to such extent as is appropriate for their area, all youth justice services are available there.

(2) It shall be the duty of—

(a) every chief officer of police or local policing body any part of whose police area lies within the local authority's area;

(aa) the Secretary of State in relation to his functions under sections 2 and 3 of the Offender Management Act 2007;

(ab) every provider of probation services that is required by arrangements under section 3(2) of the Offender Management Act 2007 to carry out the duty under this subsection in relation to the local authority; and

(b) every local probation board, integrated care board or Local Health Board any part of whose area lies within that area,

to co-operate in the discharge by the local authority of their duty under subsection (1) above.

(3) The local authority and every person or body mentioned in subsection (2) above shall have power to make payments towards expenditure incurred in the provision of youth justice services—

(a) by making the payments directly; or

(b) by contributing to a fund, established and maintained by the local authority, out of which the payments may be made.

(4) In this section and sections 39 to 41 below "youth justice services" means any of the following, namely—

(a) the provision of persons to act as appropriate adults to safeguard the interests of children and young persons detained or questioned by police officers;

(aa) the provision of assistance to persons determining whether youth cautions should be given under section 66ZA below;

(b) the assessment of children and young persons, and the provision for them of rehabilitation programmes, for the purposes of section 66ZB(2) or (3) below;

(ba) the provision of assistance to persons determining whether youth conditional cautions (within the meaning of Chapter 1 of Part 4) should be given and which conditions to attach to such cautions;

(bb) the supervision and rehabilitation of persons to whom such cautions are given;

(c) the provision of support for children and young persons remanded or committed on bail while awaiting trial or sentence;

(d) the placement in local authority accommodation of children and young persons remanded to such accommodation under section 91(3) of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012;

(e) the provision of reports or other information required by courts in criminal proceedings against children and young persons;

(ee) the performance by youth offending teams and members of youth offending teams of functions under sections 25 to 27 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003;

(f) the provision of persons to act as responsible officers in relation to parenting orders, child safety orders and reparation orders;

(fa) the provision of persons to act as responsible officers in relation to youth rehabilitation orders under Chapter 1 of Part 9 of the Sentencing Code;

(fb) the supervision of children and young persons sentenced to a youth rehabilitation order under that Chapter which includes a supervision requirement (within the meaning of that Chapter);

(h) the supervision of children and young persons sentenced to a detention and training order (including an order under section 211 of the Armed Forces Act 2006);

(i) post-release supervision in accordance with a licence under section 31 of the Crime (Sentences) Act 1997 or section 250 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 of a person sentenced to detention under section 90 or 91 of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000, section 226, 226B or 228 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003, section 250, 252A, 254 or 259 of the Sentencing Code or section 209, 218, 221, 221A or 222 of the Armed Forces Act 2006;

(ia) post-release supervision under section 256B of the Criminal Justice Act 2003;

(k) the implementation of referral orders within the meaning given by section 83(1) of the Sentencing Code.

(5) The Secretary of State may by order amend subsection (4) above so as to extend, restrict or otherwise alter the definition of "youth justice services" for the time being specified in that subsection.

Section 39 Crime and Disorder Act 1988

(1) Subject to subsection (2) below, it shall be the duty of each local authority, acting in co-operation with the persons and bodies mentioned in subsection (3) below, to establish for their area one or more youth offending teams.

(2) Two (or more) local authorities acting together may establish one or more youth offending teams for both (or all) their areas; and where they do so—

(a) any reference in the following provisions of this section (except subsection (4)(b)) to, or to the area of, the local authority or a particular local authority shall be construed accordingly, and

(b) the reference in subsection (4)(b) to the local authority shall be construed as a reference to one of the authorities.

(3) It shall be the duty of—

(a) every chief officer of police any part of whose police area lies within the local authority's area;

(aa) the Secretary of State in relation to his functions under sections 2 and 3 of the Offender Management Act 2007;

(ab) every provider of probation services that is required by arrangements under section 3(2) of the Offender Management Act 2007 to carry out the duty under this subsection in relation to the local authority; and

(b) every local probation board, integrated care board or Local Health Board any part of whose area lies within that area,

to co-operate in the discharge by the local authority of their duty under subsection (1) above.

(4) The local authority and every person or body mentioned in subsection (3) above shall have power to make payments towards expenditure incurred by, or for purposes connected with, youth offending teams—

(a) by making the payments directly; or

(b) by contributing to a fund, established and maintained by the local authority, out of which the payments may be made.

(5) A youth offending team shall include at least one of each of the following, namely—

(a) an officer of a local probation board or an officer of a provider of probation services;

(aa) where the local authority is in England, a person with experience of social work in relation to children nominated by the director of children's services appointed by the local authority under section 18 of the Children Act 2004;

(b) where the local authority is in Wales, a social worker of the local authority;

(c) a police officer;

(d) a person nominated by an integrated care board or a Local Health Board any part of whose area lies within the local authority's area;

(da) where the local authority is in England, a person with experience in education nominated by the director of children's services appointed by the local authority under section 18 of the Children Act 2004;

(e) where the local authority is in Wales, a person nominated by the chief education officer appointed by the local authority under section 532 of the Education Act 1996.

(6) A youth offending team may also include such other persons as the local authority thinks appropriate after consulting the persons and bodies mentioned in subsection (3) above.

(7) It shall be the duty of the youth offending team or teams established by a particular local authority—

(a) to co-ordinate the provision of youth justice services for all those in the authority's area who need them; and

(b) to carry out such functions as are assigned to the team or teams in the youth justice plan formulated by the authority under section 40(1) below.

107. Information that is shared on a statutory basis is done so through case management processes, safeguarding arrangements, multi-agency meetings and local information-sharing protocols to support risk assessment, safeguarding and coordinated intervention.

108. The YJB is responsible for promoting effective multi-agency working, ensuring appropriate information-sharing arrangements are in place, overseeing risk management and safeguarding processes, and holding partner agencies to account for their contribution to the delivery of youth justice services. It also provides a mechanism for reviewing lessons learned and strengthening partnership responses where issues are identified, alongside delivery of a local Youth Justice plan.

109. In many cases, the statutory data sharing arrangements between agencies are done through locally agreed Memorandums of Understanding **[SRB2/51 - YJB000162].**

110. The Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2026) Statutory Guidance states **[SRB2/52 - YJB000163]:**

Practitioners should be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess, and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children.

111. Every local authority, integrated care board (ICB) and constabulary hold a joint and equal duty to form a multi-agency safeguarding arrangement under Section 16E of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance also states:

There are interdependencies between local arrangements and other strategic partnership work happening locally to support children and families. This will include but not be limited to other public boards, including Health and Wellbeing Boards, Adult Safeguarding Boards, Channel Panels, Improvement Boards, Community Safety Partnerships, the Local Family Justice Board, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Strategic Management Boards, Combatting Drugs Partnerships, Domestic Abuse Partnership Boards, Corporate Parenting Boards, Youth Offending Management Boards and, where relevant, Violence Reduction Units. It is for local areas to decide how best to coordinate these boards and partnerships to reflect local need. Each safeguarding partnership should be clear on the roles and responsibilities of these strategic partners and how each of them informs strategic decision making.

112. YJSs are permitted to share case-level information with partner services via AssetPlus. The YJB Case Management Guidance states: **[SRB2/23 – YJB000139]**

When you share information with other agencies and individuals about a child, you must consider:

a. *necessity and proportionality: personal information should only be shared when necessary to promote the safety of an individual or the public*

b. *consent: wherever possible this should be obtained in advance, but lack of consent may be overridden where there is a safety concern*

c. *data protection: You should be aware of your duties under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and local policies and procedures*

113. Clause 4 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 brings two new provisions into the Children Act 2004 which strengthens the legal duty to share information:

113.1. **A duty to share information for safeguarding/welfare purposes (new s16LA)**

A "relevant person" (defined largely by reference to the Section 11 list) must disclose information they hold about a child if they consider it relevant to safeguarding/promoting welfare and the disclosure may facilitate another relevant person's safeguarding/welfare function, but only so far as it may facilitate that function. A key safeguard is a balancing test: the duty does not apply where the holder considers disclosure would be more detrimental to the child than not disclosing. It also requires regard to Secretary of State guidance, states disclosure under the duty does not breach confidence, but does not authorise/require anything that would contravene data protection law (while telling decision-makers to take the duty into account when assessing that).

113.2. **A power/duty framework to use a "consistent identifier" for children (new s16LB)**

Regulations may specify a "consistent identifier" (explicitly described as a number/code of general application). If designated by regulations, a person must include the identifier in information they process where it is likely to facilitate safeguarding/welfare functions, again subject to: *"more detrimental" exception, a practical "don't cause unreasonable delay" exception, and data protection compliance.*

114. While the legal basis outlined above may increase confidence in information-sharing between services, it will only be effective in managing children at risk of causing serious harm if services work together and agree a coordinated approach to mitigating that risk. The YJB has not undertaken a specific national review of information-sharing arrangements in cases involving children who present a risk of serious violence. Through our engagement with YJSs, safeguarding partners, PREVENT, Channel and Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP), we have observed many examples of effective multi-agency information-sharing and risk management arrangements.

115. In relation to children who may pose a risk of serious harm to others, we believe that safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance remain open to interpretation as to whether they apply to this cohort. This was recognised in Phase 1 of the Inquiry. While we have outlined the legal basis for information sharing under agencies' safeguarding duties, uncertainty will remain unless the legislation and guidance are revised to provide greater clarity.

116. A HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICRS) report into multi-agency responses to serious youth violence concluded that **[SRB2/53 – YJB000164]**:

> *The current child protection system is still very much focused on risk within the family. We saw examples where professionals were struggling to understand what pathways and options were open to children at risk of serious youth violence. Some children's services identified these children as children in need and some as children who needed a child protection response. In the worst examples, serious youth violence was not recognised as a safeguarding issue and children and families were not referred for support of any kind.*

117. The HMICFRS report was largely concerned with children involved in serious violence who were themselves vulnerable and often victims of exploitation, abuse or violence. Yet even in these circumstances, agencies did not consistently recognise serious youth violence as a safeguarding issue, resulting in some children and families receiving no support at all. This raises significant concerns about whether safeguarding frameworks,

will be applied to children for whom the system identifies as primarily interested in serious violence or who are considered to pose a risk of harm to others.

Shortcomings

118. In many areas, YJSs play a significant role within local PREVENT structures, with some Heads of Service sitting on PREVENT Boards and, in certain areas, chairing or co-chairing Channel Panels. There is also established collaboration between YJSs, PREVENT and CTP at local, regional and national levels, supported by strategic engagement and professional networks across England and Wales.

119. Information-sharing arrangements are typically delivered through local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, PREVENT and Channel processes, MAPPA arrangements where applicable, and locally agreed information-sharing protocols. Whilst many areas demonstrate strong partnership working, the effectiveness of arrangements can vary depending on local structures, relationships and systems. As with other complex areas of multi-agency practice, challenges can arise where information needs to be shared across multiple organisations with different systems, responsibilities and legal frameworks.

120. The YJB continues to work strategically with partners across government, policing and the youth justice sector to support effective multi-agency working, strengthen professional understanding of emerging risks, and promote timely and proportionate information-sharing in support of safeguarding, risk assessment and public protection.

AssetPlus Guidance

121. The YJB's Case Management Guidance is very clear on expectations of YJSs, their role and responsibility, within the remit of GDPR, consent and within what is necessary and proportionate **[SRB2/23 – YJB000139].** The YJB acknowledged during Phase 1 of the Inquiry that AssetPlus required updating. When put into a PDF version, this can appear lengthy and inaccessible to other professionals **[SRB2/43 – YJB000156]**.

122. The PDAT is designed to be a more appropriate and proportionate assessment using language that can be easier to understand by children, parents and carers. It is therefore more accessible and better understood by other professionals - it is designed for a different cohort of children to AssetPlus.

123. The YJB considers the following as being relevant to issues regarding information sharing, as identified in the Phase 1 report at Chapter 1, paragraphs 20-22 and Chapter 7, paragraphs 154-161:

123.1. Where parental consent is withheld or withdrawn, information sharing is likely to be more difficult to coordinate in practice, particularly where services rely on voluntary or consent based processes and information is held across multiple agencies.

123.2. Statutory guidance is clear that effective information sharing is essential, as no single practitioner will have a complete picture of a child's needs. Practitioners are expected to share information proactively where there are concerns about safety or welfare, and consent is not required where there is a lawful safeguarding basis. Concerns about sharing must not prevent action to protect children **[SRB2/52 – YJB000163].**

123.3. Local safeguarding frameworks and processes provide a basis to address these issues, but their effectiveness depends on consistent application and a clear understanding in practice.

123.4. There are systemic challenges, including the need for improved information gathering and sharing across agencies to support effective decision-making and risk management. The YJB's view is that while consent can influence information sharing, the main barriers are wider system factors such as coordination across agencies and the effectiveness of information-sharing arrangements. Local safeguarding frameworks and processes provide a basis to address these issues, but their effectiveness depends on consistent application and a clear understanding in practice.

IDENTIFYING VIOLENCE FIXATED INDIVIDUALS AND THE RISK THEY POSE

124. Children who present a high risk of harm to others typically have complex, overlapping needs and vulnerabilities rather than fitting into a single category.

125. When used effectively, existing youth justice frameworks, standards and guidance provide a strong and comprehensive basis for identifying and managing risk, including serious violence **[SRB2/54 - YJB000100; SRB2/22 – YJB000138; SRB2/23 – YJB000139]**. When properly implemented, these frameworks enable YJSs to recognise and provide intervention to children who pose a high risk of harm to others. However, across local services there is evidence of inconsistent approaches, including variations in thresholds, decision-making and access to services.

126. Through their work on prevention and diversion, YJSs are increasingly equipped to identify and engage children who may be at risk of violence before they enter the statutory youth justice system. This has been supported by Turnaround, an MoJ funded early intervention programme delivered by YJSs across England and Wales for children who are on the cusp of entering the youth justice system but are not on statutory youth justice caseloads. Since December 2022, the programme has funded tailored interventions for this cohort. Between December 2022 and December 2024, Turnaround received 38,704 referrals, with 55% progressing to assessment and 87% of assessed cases progressing to intervention. The programme has been extended to March 2029 following initial funding to support up to 20,500 children by March 2026, with a further 12,000 children expected to be supported. Future delivery arrangements in Wales may be affected by devolved funding changes from 2027. Prevention and diversion now form a significant part of the YJSs' work, with around half of caseloads relating to non-statutory activity and most services operating diversion schemes **[SRB2/2 – YJB000134]**. This reflects the increased emphasis across the youth justice system on early intervention for children, alongside long-term reductions in first-time entrants and formal youth justice contact.

127. There is good evidence that early, proportionate and relationship-based interventions delivered through these approaches can reduce offending and prevent escalation where implemented effectively **[SRB2/55 – YJB000165]**. However, engagement at the pre-

offence stage remains inconsistent. Prevention activity is largely voluntary and referral based, meaning YJSs do not have full visibility of all children at risk, particularly compared to statutory cohorts where children are subject to structured assessment and oversight.

128. This is compounded by emerging risks, including online harms, with evidence showing high exposure to harmful, violent and misogynistic content which can shape perceptions of risk and safety, often outside the view of services **[SRB2/31 – YJB000146]**.

129. There are also limitations outside statutory youth justice involvement, where children may not meet thresholds for other services such as mental health or social care, leading to gaps in provision and clarity of responsibility, particularly where engagement is voluntary. Furthermore, there is a need to consider emerging patterns of behaviour, including online activity, which may mean some children present later and at a higher level of risk; this can challenge timely identification and appropriate responses.

130. The YJB Case Management Guidance includes advice on working with children with disabilities, including neurodevelopmental conditions and mental health needs. It states that every effort should be made to enable children to engage with support by tailoring services to meet their individual needs. The guidance provides examples of adaptations that may support engagement, including shorter sessions, the use of written, pictorial and activity-based resources, regular breaks, and involvement from specialists such as speech and language therapists or mental health professionals.

131. The guidance therefore supports adapting practice to meet a child's needs and promote engagement. It does not indicate that mental health conditions or neurodivergence remove the requirement for children on statutory orders to participate in supervision. A draft amendment is being developed to make this position more explicit.

132. Proportionate and relationship-based interventions delivered through these approaches can reduce offending and prevent escalation where implemented effectively **[SRB2/56 – YJB000166].** The following are examples of where this has taken place:

132.1. Diversion practice guidance **[SRB2/57 – YJB000167]**;

132.2. Centre for Justice Innovation. (2024). 'Valuing Youth Diversion: A toolkit for practitioners' **[SRB2/58 – YJB000168]**; and

132.3. HM Inspectorate of Probation. Joint inspection finds a "fragmented and inconsistent" system for children receiving out-of-court disposals **[SRB2/59 – YJB000169]**.

133. Working with neurodiverse children is covered in the YJB Case Management Guidance. While neurodevelopmental conditions and mental health conditions do not excuse behaviour, practitioners should recognise that it is a communication need. This might mean making allowances for what 'active participation' looks like but should never impact on the services duty to adequately supervise a child. The Case Management Guidance stipulates that every effort should be made to enable engagement with support, tailoring the service to meet the child's mental health or neurodiversity needs. The guidance does not state that non-engagement can be excused in cases of poor mental health and neurodiversity.

134. There is a section in the 'How to work with children' chapter of the case management guidance **[SRB2/32 – YJB000147]** which gives guidance on how to adapt supervision of children on statutory orders for disabilities including neurodiversity. This might include for example shorter sessions, a mixture of written, pictorial and active learning resources and regular breaks when working with children with additional needs. It might also include calling on the expertise of speech and language or mental health specialists to tailor approaches and resources. The guidance does not say that neurodivergent conditions excuse a lack of engagement, and a draft amendment is in process to state this explicitly in the guidance.

135. The provision of training, policies or guidance regarding the approach to Autism Spectrum Disorder, other neurodevelopmental conditions and/or mental health concerns in the assessment of risk posed by children, who may have an interest in violence, varies nationally according to the funding available and the local service need. Practitioner training and professional development is managed at the local level, and there is no national roll out specific to Autism Spectrum Disorder and/or other neurodevelopmental conditions.

136. The Child First evidence framework seeks to identify and respond to neurodevelopmental, mental health and trauma-related needs at the earliest opportunity. These approaches focus on understanding the child, improving access to specialist support and strengthening partnership working, all of which help to ensure that children and their families receive the right support at the right time.

137. The following are examples of policies that have been applied:

137.1. Neurodevelopmental Assessment Service – Cwm Taf Youth Justice Service and Cwm Taf Morgannwg Neurodevelopmental Service: The Neurodevelopmental Assessment Service provides dedicated assessment and clinical support for children with suspected neurodevelopmental needs across the region. The partnership has reduced assessment waiting times from 18-24 months to 6-7 months, enabling earlier diagnosis and intervention, supporting informed court decision-making and improving outcomes for children, families and professionals **[SRB2/60 – YJB000170].**

137.2. Children and Young People Positive Health Pathway Service - NHS Greater Manchester: The Pre and Post Harm Support Service was established across Greater Manchester to ensure children do not miss out on support following police contact, providing early health-led assessments, tailored interventions and help to access wider services such as CAMHS and speech and language therapy **[SRB2/61 – YJB000171].**

137.3. Trauma-Informed Practitioner role - York Youth Justice Service: York YJS introduced a dedicated Trauma-Informed Practitioner role to strengthen understanding of trauma and its impact on children's behaviour and wellbeing. The role provides support to children, parents and practitioners, as well as delivering training to partners **[SRB2/37 – YJB000152].**

138. The YJB is aware of barriers to mental health treatment and support for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and wider neurodivergence, which are relevant to children presenting complex or atypical behaviours, including those who may have a

fixation on violence. Evidence indicates that a key barrier is the under identification of neurodivergence, including difficulties in accessing timely screening and assessment, which can result in unmet needs and reduced access to appropriate support and adjustments.

139. The absence of formal screening and assessment can be particularly evident where children are not engaged in education settings, reducing opportunities for needs to be recognised and supported at an early stage, and resulting in unmet need and reduced access to appropriate mental health and ASD-specific interventions **[SRB2/62 – YJB000172; SRB2/63 – YJB000173]**.

140. There are also barriers relating to the understanding and interpretation of behaviour, with evidence that neurodivergent needs may be misidentified as disruptive or non-compliant behaviour rather than recognised as underlying developmental need. This can affect both identification and the nature of the response, limiting access to appropriate support and intervention **[SRB2/63 – YJB000173]**.

141. In addition, barriers arise in relation to the accessibility and suitability of services. Evidence indicates that traditional models of provision are not always accessible or appropriately adapted to meet neurodivergent needs, and that support is not consistently designed or available across areas. This includes variation in access to specialist and multi-disciplinary input, as well as a lack of flexibility in how services are delivered **[SRB2/63 – YJB000173]**.

142. These issues are further reinforced by wider factors, including poorer mental health outcomes and higher levels of exclusion from education, which can reduce access to early identification, assessment and ongoing support, and increase the likelihood that needs remain unmet **[SRB2/62 – YJB000172]**.

143. This suggests that barriers to mental health and ASD support relate not only to access, but also to identification, understanding of need, the suitability of provision and the consistency of delivery. These challenges are particularly relevant in cases involving

complex or atypical risk presentations, where difficulties in recognising and responding appropriately to needs may affect how risk is understood and managed.

144. The YJB is aware of inconsistencies across YJSs and partner agencies, particularly in relation to thresholds for intervention, referral pathways and information sharing. In practice, different agencies and areas may apply varying thresholds, which can result in children being assessed as too high risk for some services but not meeting the criteria for others, leading to gaps in support.

145. There is also variation in how and when referrals are made into YJSs, particularly within prevention and diversion practice, where funding and provision are inconsistent. This is reflected in differences in information sharing between partners, including limited proactive sharing, especially from health and education, and a lack of clarity about the basis for sharing, which can result in higher thresholds, particularly in health services. These inconsistencies can affect the ability of services to identify and respond effectively to concerns about children presenting complex or emerging risks.

146. Current approaches are not designed around children presenting with unclear or mixed motivations. This means practitioners are not supported by a clearly defined or consistent national framework for identifying and assessing these risks.

147. As there are no specific risk assessment tools designed for these types of behaviours, meaning that practitioners rely on professional judgement in the absence of a consistently defined approach. This means that the extent to which practitioners are equipped to identify and assess risk varies depending on local approaches, experience and access to support. This highlights the importance of clearer national guidance and more consistent frameworks to support the identification and assessment of emerging and atypical risks.

148. The YJB recognises that there is significant variation in the resources available to YJSs. While total funding to YJSs increased in 2025, it remained 6.1% below the 2015 level, with reductions across several key funding streams, including Local Authority, Police and Probation contributions; Probation funding has fallen by 58.3% since 2015 **[SRB2/64 –**

YJB000174]. Stakeholder feedback indicates that these financial pressures have been accompanied by diminishing partner contributions and increasing demands on services.

149. A number of YJSs have experienced reductions in seconded police officer provision, while health provision remains variable due to complex commissioning arrangements and recruitment challenges, particularly in specialist roles such as CAMHS and Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) practitioners. Education provision, workforce models and access to specialist support also vary considerably between services. Wider evidence suggests that increasing thresholds and resource pressures across partner agencies can reduce access to early support, resulting in some children presenting with higher levels of unmet need and more complex risks.

150. While YJS practitioners have expertise in assessment, relationship-based practice, diversion and risk management, the YJB considers that diminishing and inconsistent partner contributions, alongside increasing expectations of services, can make it more difficult for some YJSs to access the information, time, specialist expertise and multidisciplinary support required to identify and assess serious harm risk consistently. This suggests that, although practitioners frequently apply professional judgement and flexibility, current levels of resourcing, system consistency and information-sharing do not always support a systematic and well-coordinated approach to identifying and assessing serious harm risk.

151. The YJB's view is that strengthening the capacity of the wider youth justice partnership, rather than solely increasing YJS staffing levels, would be most likely to improve practitioners' ability to identify and assess serious harm risk consistently. This would include more consistent partner agency contributions, improved access to specialist health and education expertise, – improved information-sharing arrangements, and sufficient workforce capacity across services to respond to increasing levels of need and complexity.

ASSESSMENT

152. At present, YJSs practitioners are expected to assess risks relating to violence and serious harm through AssetPlus, supported by professional judgement, information from partner agencies and ongoing review of emerging concerns. AssetPlus requires practitioners to gather, analyse and assess information relating to offending behaviour, behaviours of concern, vulnerability, safety and wellbeing, and risks of harm to others. It places particular emphasis on understanding the factors driving a child's behaviour and the circumstances that may increase or mitigate risk. In completing assessments, YJSs are expected to draw on information from a range of sources, including the child, parents or carers, education, health, children's social care and policing partners.

153. Where significant concerns are identified, YJSs should work within local multi-agency safeguarding and public protection arrangements to ensure information is shared appropriately, risks are understood collectively, and proportionate interventions are put in place. The YJB would expect any assessment of violence-related risk to be informed by a holistic understanding of the child, consistent with Child First principles and the wider safeguarding context.

154. The approach taken is that concerns relating to fixation on violence would be considered within existing assessment, safeguarding and risk management frameworks, with practitioners expected to exercise professional curiosity and judgement when evaluating behaviours that may indicate an escalating risk of serious harm.

155. The YJB have made updates to AssetPlus which have been shared with the Case Management Providers who will then update the systems accessed by the YJSs. This is part of the annual upgrade process which for some providers this has already been completed and for others, completion will be due by the Autumn. The updates include more child friendly language, questions about the use of internet in more detail and their personal experience discrimination and any displaying and use of discriminatory language that they may be using.

156. PDAT and AssetPlus continue to be utilised, but there is work to be done which would improve both. Any changes we propose must go to the relevant Case Management System (CMS) commercial providers who will then make amendments to their software. This process currently takes time, and changes can take up to a year to become embedded into the CMS.

157. AssetPlus was not designed specifically to identify or assess children against one element of risk and the YJB is not aware of any nationally mandated youth justice assessment tool specifically developed for that purpose. Concerns relating to fixation on violence, intent to cause harm, or escalating risk would therefore be assessed through the existing AssetPlus framework and informed by information from partner agencies, safeguarding processes and professional analysis. AssetPlus can capture indicators relevant to escalation of risk, intent to cause harm and risk posed to others where these are identified and evidenced. However, the effectiveness of any assessment depends on the quality of information available, effective information sharing between agencies, and practitioners' ability to analyse and respond to emerging concerns.

158. The section of AssetPlus that would look to assess and manage potential violence by individual children would currently be the Risk of Serious Harm (RoSH) section of the assessment.

159. PDAT also enables YJSs to address violent behaviour through the assessments specifically relating to the safety of others.

160. The information gathering section of the assessment would be where the information from other agencies is pulled together and then a RoSH judgement is made. This also links to any MAPPA arrangements in a local area.

161. Local Authorities have multi-agency risk panels where concerns around violence towards others can be monitored.

162. Provided as **[SRB2/65 – YJB000175]** are screenshots of the full questions practitioners would use when using AssetPlus.

163. We recognise that AssetPlus requires further development and modernisation to ensure that it continues to support practitioners in identifying, assessing and managing emerging risks and vulnerabilities effectively. However, delivering meaningful improvements will require appropriate investment in both the system itself and the supporting infrastructure. This includes investment in design and development, user testing, training and implementation support, as well as ongoing maintenance to ensure that any changes are evidence-based, operationally effective and aligned with wider youth justice policy and practice. Without dedicated resource, there is a risk that enhancements are limited to incremental changes rather than the more comprehensive updates needed to meet the evolving needs of practitioners and children in the youth justice system. In the changes we have asked for in AssetPlus we now refer to a judgement in relation to the safety of others rather than RoSH. This language is consistent with the approach and terminology used in the PDAT. It is also the language used by HMIP.

MANAGEMENT OF RISK: MULTI AGENCY WORKING

164. Children who present a high risk of harm to others typically have complex, overlapping needs and vulnerabilities rather than fitting into a single category.

165. As was stated earlier in this statement, it is important to note that given the events which led to this Inquiry took place in England, our reply is framed within the statutory framework that applies in England. However as stated already, we recognise and would urge consideration of the differences with arrangements in Wales and how any actions leading from the learning need to be considered for varying impact in Wales.

166. Children known to youth justice as high risk of causing serious harm to others would be covered by the YJS's multi-agency arrangements (explained below), provided they sit within the service's statutory caseload.

167. As previously described, YJSs are multi-agency partnerships, with representatives from the Police, Probation, Children's Social Care, Education and Health sitting on the management board as statutory partners. This arrangement allows YJSs to access

information held by partner agencies, provide specialist support through seconded staff, and coordinate referrals to additional services where needed.

168. However, this model can be undermined by gaps in provision, such as long-standing vacancies in seconded specialist roles or limited engagement from partner agencies. Where this occurs, issues should be escalated to the Management Board and YJB oversight teams. In practice, difficulties are particularly evident in relation to Health and Probation services.

169. YJS case managers are responsible for carrying out comprehensive assessments of a child's needs and risks, and for putting appropriate support in place. Generally, this is done well for children who are engaged with statutory YJSs. The greater challenge arises when a child is not open to statutory services, as access to assessment, intervention and support can be more limited.

170. A particular challenge can be the threshold criteria applied by some partner agencies. For example, children's social care services may close cases where a child is under YJS supervision on the basis that the YJS can meet their needs, despite safeguarding concerns remaining. Similarly, CAMHS often operate models that require children to attend appointments in clinical settings and may close cases following missed appointments. This can create barriers for children, their families and carers who struggle to engage with traditional service models and may have some of the highest levels of need.

171. Support available to children often reduces significantly when they turn 18, creating a cliff edge between children's and adult services. Once a child has transferred over to adult services, they are no longer eligible to receive the same level of support provided by the justice service (for example, CAMHS and specific child-focused resettlement programmes). This is often compounded by multiple other transitions that a child will face upon turning 18, including being closed to children's services and leaving education. Further practitioners in adult services may not have the specialist training needed to work effectively with young people, despite the fact that the evidence indicates the 18 year olds in their care are not fully neurologically developed until at least the age of 25.

172. In addition, when a child enters custody, they can lose access to community-based provision and support networks. Re-establishing these services on release is difficult, even where the child is not ultimately convicted. For example, of the 50 planned releases at Feltham Young Offenders Institution (YOI) since the 2026 HMIP inspection, only 25 had accommodation secured 10 days before release. As a result, only nine of these children left Feltham with something productive to fill their time **[SRB2/66 – YJB000176].**

173. In some areas, overly restrictive gatekeeping arrangements for MAPPA Levels 2 and 3 can act as a barrier to effective multi-agency risk management, limiting access to enhanced oversight and coordinated planning for children who may benefit from this level of multi-agency involvement. This is particularly important to address as youth justice led multi-agency management of risk only applies to cases in the service's statutory caseload, and MAPPA should be available if needed when children leave youth justice supervision.

174. Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) is a not a youth justice statutory partner under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, only local police forces. This means they do not attend YJS Management Boards, which provide a core opportunity for multi-agency working regardless of cases on the statutory caseload.

175. As explained in paragraph 49, responsibility for overseeing the risk of serious harm posed by a child would rest with the YJS where the child is on the statutory caseload. Whilst the individual youth justice case worker is responsible for completing the Risk of Serious Harm (RoSH) section of the assessment, managing risk is a shared responsibility across the statutory partners that make up the multi-agency YJS. The YJS would therefore act as the lead authority, coordinating the multi-agency response and ensuring that risk is managed appropriately.

176. Where a child is subject to MAPPA, responsibility for managing the risk of violent offending is set out in the relevant guidance **[SRB2/67 – YJB000177],** which identifies the Police, Prison Service and Probation Service as the responsible authorities. In practice, the YJS takes the place of Probation in cases with children, although the guidance does not stipulate this. A key strength of MAPPA is that other agencies, such

as Health and Housing Services, have a statutory duty to cooperate. This means they are required to contribute to and provide the support agreed through MAPPA arrangements, without the need for children or families to meet separate service thresholds.

177. For a child to be eligible for MAPPA, there has to have been an offence leading to conviction or Out Of Court Resolution. It is a route to manage children who pose a high risk of harm, even past the end of an order if the risk is continuing and the need for multi-agency management is there.

178. However, where a child is not under the supervision of either the YJS or MAPPA, the respective roles and responsibilities of different agencies become less clear, including where ultimate accountability for managing risk lies.

179. The Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance states:

> *There are interdependencies between local arrangements and other strategic partnership work happening locally to support children and families. This will include but not be limited to other public boards, including Health and Wellbeing Boards, Adult Safeguarding Boards, Channel Panels, Improvement Boards, Community Safety Partnerships, the Local Family Justice Board, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Strategic Management Boards, Combatting Drugs Partnerships, Domestic Abuse Partnership Boards, Corporate Parenting Boards, Youth Offending Management Boards and, where relevant, Violence Reduction Units. It is for local areas to decide how best to coordinate these boards and partnerships to reflect local need. Each safeguarding partnership should be clear on the roles and responsibilities of these strategic partners and how each of them informs strategic decision making.*

180. Wales operates under a similar model where it is for local areas to decide how best to coordinate agencies to support children and families. Part 9 of Statutory Guidance (Partnership Arrangements) (Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to make arrangements to promote co-operation with their relevant

partners and others, in relation to adults, children and carers with needs for care and support. It places a duty on relevant partners to co-operate with and provide information to local authorities for the purpose of their social services functions.

181. Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) are intended to provide the appropriate forum and environment to enable health, social care and wellbeing partners to come together and share information and resources in order to develop integrated approaches to planning, commissioning and organising community health, care and well-being services for their population. This statutory guidance will not define details around how the partnership bodies or RPBs should tailor their approach to manage partnership business and meet regional priorities.

182. The number of potential strategic partners listed in the Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance demonstrates how complex and crowded the safeguarding landscape is, and how children could slip between agencies when there is not strong leadership from the statutory safeguarding partnership (the local authority, integrated care board, the chief officer of police for an area).

183. This model can lead to regional variation in how safeguarding partnerships operate. While this flexibility is beneficial in allowing services to respond to local needs, it may also result in inconsistencies in how risks to the wider community are managed across the country. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) conduct joint targeted area inspections (JTAI) with Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and, in some instances, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, to assess how Local Authorities, Police and Health Services, and Probation Services in England work together to help and protect children.

184. It would be helpful to understand whether the newly legislated Child Protection Authority (CPA) will hold responsibility for assessing the extent and impact of this variation in England.

Single Assessment Tool

185. A consistent approach, with a single, shared multi-agency risk-assessment tool that is clear, accessible and suitable for use across public sector services would require substantial work and planning. It would require the publication of clear national guidance/protocol complimented by in person events across England and Wales with services and keys partners to discuss and agree the application of this operationally to facilitate consistent understanding and application.

186. The YJB moved to one standard assessment tool for prevention and diversion cases at the beginning of 2024; PDAT is the most contemporary tool for children involved with YJSs and more user friendly for practitioners than previous tools. It also enables children to collaborate and engage with the assessment process and understand it is about them. The assessment also covers the areas of concern relating to the children and to all others:

    186.1. Concerns around the safety of the child.

    186.2. Concerns about the safety of others.

    186.3. Concerns about future offending.

187. As currently drafted, the PDAT assessment would cover many of the concerns relating to interest in violence or potential violent behaviour. PDAT is easier to be shared and understood by other agencies. There would be benefit in investment in making Case Management Systems (CMS) more user friendly and intuitive so that YJSs and their partners can have clear oversight and analysis in relation to the children they are working with.

Identifying Responsibility

188. In the statutory system, responsibility is clearly defined. The YJS case manager undertakes the assessment, develops a plan, and coordinates the delivery of services. However, this work is constrained by the type and duration of a child's order, as well as

practical challenges such as other agencies declining involvement because the child is already engaged with the YJS. Once an order ends, or where a child is not subject to a statutory order, there is often no single professional with overall responsibility for coordinating support. Whether the child goes on to receive support from children's social care is subject to an assessment of need. It is at this point that gaps in oversight and service provision can emerge.

189. The YJB believes that it is beneficial to identify a specific service or agency with lead or primary responsibility for children who pose a high risk of harm to others while also being vulnerable and experiencing unmet needs. Where a child is engaged with a YJS, we believe that the "duty holder" should be that YJS. A clear "duty holder" already exists where a child is supervised by a YJS or is subject to MAPPA arrangements.

190. As outlined previously, children who present a serious risk of harm to others often have complex and overlapping needs that cannot be addressed through police oversight alone. Effective support therefore requires a multi-agency response, as is already recognised within both youth justice and MAPPA arrangements.

191. For the small number of cases that fall outside these frameworks, the YJB considers that local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, which bring together the local authority, police and health partners and have a statutory duty to coordinate safeguarding activity, are best placed to identify and assign a lead agency. In practice, this role would likely sit with children's services.

192. This would require a clear definition of the cohort to whom the arrangements apply, for example children in need who present a significant risk of harm to others and whose needs exceed the expertise or capacity of a single service. It would also require a mechanism to ensure that responsibility cannot simply be discontinued through case closure, leaving no agency with oversight of the child. Similar principles already exist within MAPPA, where clear accountability for risk management is established through designated lead responsibilities.

193. The duty-holder, in the view of the YJB, should be the person who is most appropriate to engage with the child and their family; this may well be a YJS worker. Individual cases should be considered on their own facts, with a view to achieving the shared objective of meeting the child's needs.

194. Multi-agency panels help create a culture of shared responsibility, reducing the risk of services simply referring a child elsewhere. Even where one agency is designated as the 'duty holder', decisions and accountability are shared across partner agencies. Naming agencies in statutory guidance further strengthens risk management. For example, under MAPPA, partner agencies have a statutory 'duty to cooperate', meaning they must work together to address an individual's needs rather than relying on referral thresholds or passing responsibility to another service. This helps ensure that risks are managed collectively and that no single agency can simply refer the case onwards.

195. Effective management of children displaying violence-fixated behaviours requires a robust, multi-agency approach to risk assessment, intervention, and oversight. Where a child is known to YJSs, the service plays a central role in coordinating multi-agency assessment and risk management activity, ensuring that concerns are appropriately escalated and subject to defensible decision-making processes.

196. As a matter of good practice, YJSs should consider engaging with MAPPA colleagues, including consideration of referral where appropriate and to provide constructive challenge and independent scrutiny of risk management plans. Access to Level 3 MAPPA coordinators can offer valuable expertise in assessing the adequacy of proposed interventions, while also ensuring that consideration is given not only to the child's needs but also to the potential impact on victims, the wider community, and public safety. It should be noted that any child open to a YJS following conviction can be considered for management under MAPPA Category 3 where they are assessed as posing a risk of serious harm to the public. This route does not depend on a specific conviction type but on a multi-agency assessment of risk, although in practice there is variability in awareness and use of this provision.

197. The YJB's evidence regarding trauma-informed holistic wraparound support with accommodation was not advanced primarily as a risk management model for children

posing a risk of serious violence. Rather, the example referred to was the London Accommodation Pathfinder (LAP), which was designed principally to address accommodation needs and provide courts with confidence that a child can be safely managed in the community rather than remanded to custody.

198. The LAP demonstrates how a trauma-informed residential environment can contribute to risk management where required. Features such as intensive staffing, structured routines, curfews, supervision and access to specialist support can provide stability, oversight and opportunities for engagement with services. These features may be relevant where there are concerns about escalating risk to others. However, the model is only available to children who meet the specific eligibility criteria, including age, residency and accommodation need, and is therefore not a general mechanism for managing children assessed as violence-fixated or otherwise presenting a significant risk of harm.

199. More broadly, there may be merit in considering whether a dedicated model of residential trauma-informed support for children assessed as presenting a high risk of harm to others could be developed. Such a model may have similarities with welfare-based placements in secure children's homes. However, this would likely involve very significant costs and would require careful consideration of legal powers and whether placement could occur in the absence of a court order or other statutory basis.

200. The YJB would also note that there are existing non-residential approaches which incorporate intensive supervision and support. For example, Intensive Supervision and Surveillance (ISS) provides a community-based alternative to custody involving measures such as electronic monitoring, structured curfews and intensive daily intervention. However, ISS is generally linked to a court order or bail package and therefore does not address the cohort of children who are outside the statutory youth justice system but who may nevertheless present significant concerns.

201. The wider principle underpinning these models is that children who present complex risks often require coordinated, trauma-informed and highly intensive support. However, the YJB would be cautious about presenting accommodation-based provision as a

standalone solution to VFI-type concerns, particularly where the child is not already within a statutory framework.

202. The YJB sees value in approaches that minimise the number of practitioners with whom a child and family must engage and that promote continuity of relationships. The "guide" model, including approaches such as SHiFT, reflects the principle that a child or family should have a single trusted lead professional wherever possible, with other agencies contributing specialist expertise around that relationship.

203. Such a model may assist in managing children who present concerns relating to fixation on violence or other serious violence risks because it:

203.1. promotes continuity and trust;

203.2. reduces the need for children, their families and carers repeatedly to retell traumatic experiences;

203.3. enables information and concerns to be coordinated through a single point of contact;

203.4. reduces fragmentation between agencies;

203.5. supports earlier identification of escalation in behaviour or risk; and

203.6. helps ensure that interventions form part of a coherent plan rather than multiple disconnected responses.

204. The principle is not unique to SHiFT **[SRB2/68 – YJB000131]**. Similar approaches have been adopted elsewhere, including in Camden, where the professional who has the strongest existing relationship with the child remains the primary contact even when other services become involved. For example, where a child already has an established relationship with a social worker and subsequently enters the youth justice system, the social worker may remain the lead relationship holder while youth justice practitioners provide specialist support behind the scenes. In addition, the Turnaround evaluation highlights the importance of clear lead responsibility, effective coordination between agencies, and avoiding overwhelming families with multiple plans or interventions. It also emphasises the importance of sustained, trusting relationships between children and practitioners **[SRB2/69 – YJB000178]**.

205. This model may be particularly relevant in complex cases involving multiple agencies because it can help ensure that responsibility for coordination remains clear. One of the challenges identified in a number of safeguarding reviews and reviews of child deaths in custody is that vulnerable children may come into contact with very large numbers of professionals over time. Frequent changes in professionals, services and transitions can make it difficult for any trusted adult relationship to endure. Models based on a single lead practitioner seek to address that challenge.

206. While the YJB is aware of examples of this approach being used in practice, it has not undertaken a specific evaluation of the model. The rationale for such approaches is grounded in relational practice, consistency and better coordination between services.

207. The YJB would identify youth justice case management itself as a well-established example of structured multi-agency practice.

208. Within YJSs, an allocated practitioner is responsible for:

208.1. assessing need and risk;

208.2. developing intervention plans;

208.3. coordinating services around the child;

208.4. reviewing progress and emerging concerns; and

208.5. bringing together specialist expertise where required.

209. This may include contributions from mental health services, substance misuse specialists, education providers, speech and language professionals, physical health services and victim-focused practitioners. The model provides a clear framework for assessment, planning and coordinated intervention and can operate effectively for the duration of a statutory order.

210. The principal limitation is that access to this level of structured case management is generally linked to a child's involvement in the statutory youth justice system. As

highlighted in Phase 1, there may be a gap for children presenting significant concerns who are not subject to a court order, bail package or other statutory intervention.

211. The YJB would therefore suggest that the key lessons from existing good practice are less about the creation of specialist Violence Fixated Individuals teams and more about the underlying principles that appear consistently beneficial across systems:

    211.1. clear ownership of risk;

    211.2. strong multi-agency information sharing;

    211.3. coordinated case management;

    211.4. minimising the number of practitioners involved with the child;

    211.5. maintaining trusted relationships over time; and

    211.6. providing access to specialist support through a coordinated lead practitioner.

212. These principles are reflected in youth justice case management, trauma-informed accommodation models such as the LAP, and relational approaches such as Shift and similar single-lead-worker models. Together, they provide examples of practice that may be relevant when considering how best to respond to children presenting serious and escalating risks, including those associated with violence fixation.

EFFECTIVENESS OF CURRENT LAWS AND SYSTEMS FOR IDENTIFYING, MONITORING AND DISRUPTING THE ACTIVITIES OF VFIS

213. The YJB does not believe that existing arrangements adequately support the identification, monitoring and disruption of children and young people who may present a serious risk of violence before harm occurs.

214. It is clear that the current framework is not consistently applied for managing children who present emerging or concerning risk factors that fall below criminal, civil, or safeguarding thresholds.

215. Strengthening early intervention pathways, enhancing specialist expertise in violence fixation, and improving multi-agency coordination before offending occurs may be as important as creating additional legal powers. The principal challenge is less about the absence of powers and more about the ability to identify, assess, and coordinate responses to need and risk at an earlier stage. There are persistent challenges in the early identification of these behaviours and the risks they present, particularly where indicators emerge across multiple agencies but do not meet intervention thresholds within any single system. There is also the added complication of online spaces and the monitoring of this in terms of access to harmful information. This is compounded by differing thresholds and responsibilities across criminal justice, safeguarding, and health systems, as well as variability in local capability, information sharing, and practitioner confidence in assessing and responding to such behaviours.

216. The use of structured assessment tools, such as PDAT and AssetPlus, is critical in ensuring that the nature, severity, and trajectory of risk are thoroughly understood and that plans are informed by a comprehensive analysis of offending-related behaviours and wider vulnerabilities.

217. Alongside risk management, there must be a clear focus on identifying and responding to underlying needs. This includes referral to specialist services, such as FCAMHS, where clinically indicated, and consideration of any neurodevelopmental, mental health, or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) factors. However, these factors should be understood as contributing elements within a complete assessment of the child's circumstances rather than as explanations that minimise or diminish concerning behaviour. YJSs also contribute to information sharing with policing and partner agencies to support proportionate disruption activity where appropriate, including in relation to online behaviour, access to weapons, or association with harmful peers.

218. Alongside identifying a child's underlying needs, strengthening positive factors in their life can act as a protective influence, helping to reduce the risk of harm to others. Having a higher number of positive childhood experiences (PCEs), is associated with a decrease in likelihood of committing an act of serious violence. Positive childhood experiences include factors such as positive peer experiences, good school connectedness, activities and hobbies, and a safe neighbourhood. Having three to four PCEs compared to zero to two PCEs reduced the risk of assault perpetration by 12%, weapon involvement by 33%

and gang involvement by 28%. Having six to seven PCEs reduced the risk of assault perpetration by 35%, weapon involvement by 66% and gang involvement by 59% **[SRB2/70 – YJB000179].**

219. Given the dynamic nature of risk, regular review by multi-agency partners is essential. This should include ongoing oversight to enable agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, respond to emerging concerns, address gaps in service provision, and adapt risk management strategies where required to ensure they remain proportionate, responsive, and effective.

220. The current system provides a range of mechanisms that can be used to disrupt risk and manage concerning behaviour. These include police powers, safeguarding interventions, multi-agency information sharing, MAPPA arrangements for qualifying offenders, including Category 3 management for individuals assessed as posing a risk of serious harm, and access to specialist assessment and support services. MAPPA, in particular, provides a statutory framework for the assessment and management of sexual, violent and other dangerous individuals through coordinated multi-agency oversight. This includes children open to YJSs who can be considered for Category 3 management based on assessed risk, although in practice this route is not always used consistently.

221. However, currently, the effectiveness of these arrangements is often dependent on an individual already meeting a statutory threshold, whether through offending behaviour, eligibility for MAPPA, or safeguarding concerns. Many individuals with a fixation on violence come to professional attention during a pre-criminal phase, where there may be evidence of fixation, grievance, fascination with violence, or concerning online activity, but insufficient grounds for enforcement action. In these circumstances, agencies can find themselves with limited formal powers to intervene, despite recognising an elevated level of concern. As a result, there is a disconnect between professional concern and the availability of formal mechanisms to manage that risk.

222. For children, this challenge is amplified by the fact that YJSs are predominantly engaged after an offence has occurred, although most services also contribute to prevention and diversion activity. As a result, opportunities for early intervention often rely on the effectiveness of wider safeguarding systems, including education, children's social care,

health services, and policing. While these structures can provide support and monitoring, there can be variability in local expertise, information sharing, and confidence in assessing violence-fixated behaviours.

223. There is also a risk that individuals who fall below criminal justice thresholds may not meet the criteria for specialist mental health intervention or statutory safeguarding responses, creating a gap between identified risk and available intervention options. This can leave agencies reliant on voluntary engagement, monitoring, and informal disruption activity rather than more robust risk-management measures.

224. The issue is arguably less about the absence of legal powers and more about the limitations of existing systems in identifying, assessing, and managing emerging risk before criminality occurs. The current powers and structures are generally sufficient for higher-risk individuals who meet statutory thresholds, but they are less effective for managing those whose behaviour is concerning but remains below those thresholds. Strengthening early intervention pathways, specialist assessment capacity, multi-agency coordination, and practitioner understanding would therefore enhance the system's ability to manage risk proactively rather than reactively.

225. The YJB feels that the following limitations arise from the fact that YJSs are primarily engaged post-offending:

225.1. Late identification of risk: Children who are developing concerning behaviours involving weapons, mass casualty events, or violent ideologies may not come to the attention of YJS until their behaviour has escalated into offending. This can reduce the scope for early prevention and diversion.

225.2. Missed opportunities for safeguarding: behaviours presented by children that present concerns are almost without exception often associated with a range of underlying vulnerabilities, such as trauma, social isolation, mental health difficulties, neurodevelopmental conditions, adverse childhood experiences, or exposure to harmful

online content. If YJSs only become involved post-offending, these issues may go unaddressed for a prolonged period.

225.3. Limited reach to non-offending children not in contact with YJSs: Children who may pose a risk to themselves or others. Many children fixated on violence may never commit an offence but may nevertheless pose a risk to themselves or others. YJSs are not generally positioned to identify or support these children, leaving schools, health services, social care, and policing to detect concerns.

225.4. Entrenchment of behaviours: By the time a child reaches YJSs, violent thinking, grievance narratives, fascination with violence, or harmful peer and online influences may be more deeply embedded, making intervention more complex and resource intensive.

225.5. Reduced effectiveness of prevention strategies: Earlier multi-agency interventions can often address risk factors before they develop into offending behaviour. Post-offence engagement may be less effective than upstream approaches focused on prevention, resilience-building, and safeguarding.

225.6. Potential stigmatisation: Once a child enters the justice system, they may experience labelling effects, which can complicate engagement and rehabilitation. Earlier support through universal or safeguarding services may avoid these consequences. These limitations reinforce the reliance on wider safeguarding and partner agencies to identify and respond to early risk and highlight the importance of consistent use of available multi-agency mechanisms, where appropriate, to bridge the gap between emerging concern and statutory intervention.

Referral Orders

226. The YJB acknowledges that the options available to the judiciary of either a Referral Order (RO) or custody for a guilty plea for a first offence may appear too restrictive. However, we would emphasise that it is the appropriate and robust application of the RO that most significantly supports its effectiveness.

227. Referral Orders are based on the principles of restoration, reparation and reintegration, with professionals delivering interventions with children to support this. ROs can be of varying lengths and intensities, including a version which is the RO equivalent of Intensive Supervision and Surveillance (ISS), the most intensive option available. They are designed around the child's individual needs, and if used appropriately, highly flexible to meet needs and structured to address, mitigate and manage risks to others.

228. In the view of the YJB, legislation in respect of referral orders is adequate in the vast majority of cases and has the potential to work effectively even in cases where children require stringent supervision. The issue is that guidance is not consistently implemented - we would call for the MoJ to review and update the Referral Order guidance, this would support strengthening how robustly caseworkers apply the orders. This could include quality assurance arrangement to improve practice and application.

229. The YJB would still support revisiting the sentencing framework for cases where a child is found to be carrying a knife with intent to cause harm. The Inquiry should take into consideration that the MoJ 'Cutting youth crime, changing young lives' White Paper, published May 2026, commits to review the youth sentencing framework as part of the reforms **[SRB2/19 – YJB000136]**.

Civil Orders

230. No civil order or injunction, also known as ancillary orders, exists specifically in respect to children who have an interest in violence.

231. It is also worth noting that the use of civil court orders and injunctions has decreased over time and are rarely used in child cases, likely due to the lack of substantive evidence that orders are an effective way of changing behaviour. A University College London report on the Metropolitan Police's use of Knife Crime Prevention Orders did not find any statistically significant differences in rates of re-offending between those who received a KCPO and those who did not **[SRB2/71 – YJB000180].** Instead, Youth Rehabilitation Orders are the preferred sentence type where restrictions or mandatory action plans are placed on a child.

232. We cannot quantify the extent to which civil court order or injunctions are utilised by relevant agencies as they are not included in the annual statistics. This is due to a long standing practice of only collecting data on 'substantive outcomes', which result in a child getting a criminal record. A civil order is 'non-substantive.' However, should a child breach a civil order, this would be counted as a substantive outcome and recorded in the YJB annual stats.

233. The following civil orders and injunctions, which could relate to serious violence, are available for children:

Civil Injunctions

233.1. **Anti Social Behaviour Injunction** (Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014) **[SRB2/72 – YJB000181]** can be granted against a person aged 10 or over if:

i. The court is satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that the respondent has engaged or threatens to engage in anti-social behaviour.

ii. The court considers it just and convenient to grant the injunction for the purpose of preventing the respondent from engaging in anti-social behaviour.

This can prohibit and require the respondent from doing anything described in the injunction.

233.2. **Gang injunctions** (Part 4 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009) **[SRB2/73 – YJB000182]** allow Courts to place a range of prohibitions and requirements on the behaviour and activities of a person involved in gang-related violence. A court may grant an injunction under this section against a respondent aged 14 or over if the first and second conditions are met:

i. The first condition is that the court is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the respondent has engaged in or has encouraged or assisted:

- Gang-related violence; or
- Gang-related drug-dealing activity.

ii. The second condition is that the court thinks it is necessary to grant the injunction for either or both of the following purposes:

- to prevent the respondent from engaging in, or encouraging or assisting, gang-related violence or gang-related drug-dealing activity; or
- to protect the respondent from gang-related violence or gang-related drug-dealing activity.

Orders

233.3. **Youth Diversion Order** (Crime and Policing Act 2026) **[SRB2/74 – YJB000183]** which police may apply to an appropriate court for a person aged 10 or over but under the age of 22 if:

i. The court is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that—

- the respondent has committed a terrorism offence,
- the respondent has committed a relevant offence with a terrorist connection, or
- the respondent has engaged in conduct likely to facilitate the commission (by the respondent or anyone else) of a terrorism offence, and

- the court considers it necessary to make the order for the purpose of protecting members of the public from a risk of terrorism or other serious harm.

ii. As this is a new civil order, we do not yet know how utilised it will be by agencies. It is designed to be used in cases where a child poses a risk of harm to others but only in relation to TACT offences. The final statutory guidance has not yet been published but the conditions will prohibit and require the respondent from doing anything described in the order and be in place for up to 12 months, extendable up to 2 years. Prohibitions might include:

- association and communication with specific individuals;
- the subject's use of electronic information devices;
- the subject's presence in, or access to, a specified area or place;
- requirement for the subject to attend appointments or participate in activities;
- requirement for the subject to answer questions, provide information, or produce documents;
- curfew requirements;
- requirement to give notification around address, education, or place of work; and/or
- limiting the subject's travel.

233.4. **Stalking Protection Order** (Stalking Protection Act 2019) **[SRB2/75 YJB000184]** A stalking protection order is an order which, for the purpose of preventing the defendant from carrying out acts associated with stalking. The criteria for applying for an order are set out in section 1(1) of the Act. The police should consider applying for an order where it appears to them that:

i. The respondent has carried out acts associated with stalking;

ii. The respondent poses a risk of stalking to a person; and

iii. There is reasonable cause to believe the proposed order is necessary to protect the other person from that risk. (The person to be protected does not have to have been the victim of the acts mentioned above.)

A magistrates' court may make an order only when the similar criteria in section 2(1) of the Act are met.

233.5. **Community Protection Notice** (Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014) **[SRB2/76 – YJB000185]** can be given to a child aged 16 or over, with the aim of reducing anti-social behaviour (ASB). Unlike other ancillary orders, there is no maximum length for a CPN, and it is not necessary for a criminal sentence to have been given. CPNs are usually given by council ASB officers; but may also be given by police officers or registered social landlords. No court process is necessary for a CPN to be given.

233.6. **Criminal Behaviour Order** (Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014) **[SRB2/77 – YJB000186]** can be given to a child aged 10 or over on conviction for a criminal offence, where the court considers it is necessary to prevent behaviour which may cause harassment, alarm or distress, proved to the criminal standard ('beyond reasonable doubt').

233.7. **Sexual Harm Prevention Order** (Sexual Offences Act 2003) **[SRB2/78 – YJB000187]** - a court can make a Sexual Harm Prevention Order (SHPO) if a child has been sentenced or cautioned for an offence listed in Schedules 3 and 5 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and it considers it necessary to protect the public from sexual harm. SHPOs are imposed for a minimum of five years and must be necessary and proportionate so it is unusual for one to be used in relation to a child.

233.8. **Knife Crime Prevention Order** (KCPO) (Offensive Weapons Act 2019) **[SRB2/79 – YJB000188]** can be given to a child aged 12 years or more if the court considers on the balance of probabilities that the child has carried a knife (or other bladed article) at least two times; and

that the order is necessary to prevent further incidences and protect the public. The YJS must be consulted when a KCPO is proposed.

Gaps and Omissions in Data

234. There is no definition or marker for the term Violence Fixated Individual or data recorded to understand the numbers of children in the category of Violence Fixated Individual. Children are assessed against their needs and vulnerabilities, but this does not mean they will become violence fixated even if their behaviour is violent.

235. The risk assessments undertaken by case managers consider a range of collective factors affecting an individual child. However, the YJB believes the premise that broader conclusions could be drawn from sentencing data relating to children identified as being 'fixated' on violence is flawed. This is because, in isolation, such a characteristic does not provide a meaningful indication of a child's likelihood of committing serious violent offences.

Better Outcomes for Linked Data (BOLD)

236. BOLD's youth justice work has three workstreams:

    236.1. Preparing AssetPlus data for linkage to Data First;

    236.2. PAYJAP (Preventative Analytics for Youth Justice Advisory Panel), an independent panel providing expert advice on the use of advanced analytics to support early intervention and prevention in youth justice; and

    236.3. Identifying local use cases for data linkage pilots.

237. All three workstreams are still in their early stages, and therefore the impacts so far relate to progress in made in understanding and articulating data gaps and needs, rather than having reached the point of impacting practice. It is therefore too early to identify any

impact from BOLD on understanding and supporting children at risk of becoming involved with violence.

Improving Data Quality

238. Ongoing work on AssetPlus data led by the MoJ BOLD team will both help us improve the useability of data as well as enable us to better understand what quality improvements might be needed in that data.

239. The current Referral Order guidance is outdated. The YJB hold operational expertise in this area and have highlighted the need for the update. Responsibility for the guidance sits with the MoJ rather than the YJB. Discussions have taken place regarding future ownership and updating of the guidance, but responsibility remains with the MoJ and no update has yet been progressed.

240. The YJB Public Bodies Review conducted by Steve Crocker highlights to the MoJ as its commissioners, that the YJB has not been resourced to explore and prepare for publication any of the AssetPlus data due to the broader demands to prepare other datasets such as the Ministerially commissioned KPIs **[SRB2/80 – YJB000189]**. This resourcing challenge continues, but we have been receiving support from the MoJ's BOLD team to prepare some of the variables from AssetPlus for linkage with Data First, a pioneering data-linking, research and academic engagement programme led by the MoJ and funded by ADR UK. This work is ongoing, but once complete this will improve the ability of the YJB and others to use and link some elements of the AssetPlus data.

241. The YJB writes directly to MoJ officials and Ministers when publishing reports. We have recently published 'The use of diversionary outcomes with youth justice service involvement', as well as evidence and insights packs on the topics of 'Knife Crime', 'Online harms affecting children' and 'Harmful Sexual Behaviour, Misogyny and Violence Carried Out by Children' **[SRB2/30 - YJB000112; SRB2/31 – YJB000146; SRB2/81 – YJB000190]**.

242. In these we signpost data and evidence gaps as follows:

242.1. Our new statistics on diversionary outcomes report only on those with YJS involvement, which is what we hold the data for. We are therefore unable to provide a complete picture of diversionary activity across all agencies, including the police and other partners.

242.2. Knife crime as a broad issue requires the integration of data from a range of other departments to fully understand it, with no single dataset able to provide the full picture alone. For example, data on hospital admissions for assault by sharp objects is focused on the age of the victim but is not able to identify whether the perpetrator was a child or adult.

242.3. There is a need for further UK-based evaluation to determine which approaches are most effective at keeping children safe online and can reduce harmful online behaviours and violence.

242.4. Limited UK evidence on misogynistic attitudes among children under 18; how algorithmic exposure to misogynistic or sexual content translates into offline abuse; how factors such as ethnicity, disability and sexuality shape the relationship between misogyny and violence; and whether there is a causal pathway between misogynistic attitudes in childhood and later sexual or non-sexual violence **[SRB2/81 – YJB000190]**.

Approaches for those assessed as posing Escalating Risk

243. The YJB is not aware of a recognised threshold for "Violence Fixated Individuals" as the term does not currently have a formal legal or operational definition. However, where a child presents a risk of harm to others or themselves, local agencies have a range of mechanisms available to assess, manage and mitigate that risk, even where the criminal threshold for prosecution has not been met. Cross government work to provide oversight to a system response to the learnings of Phase 1 of the Inquiry has begun to use the term Non-Ideological Extreme Violence. We are not aware of an agreed definition for this term.

244. As mentioned earlier in this statement, one potential mechanism for those assessed as posing escalating risk is the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), which enables relevant agencies to share information and coordinate the management of individuals who present significant risks. This can include cases managed under MAPPA Category 3 ('other dangerous offenders'), where an individual is assessed as posing a risk of serious harm to the public, notwithstanding that they do not fall within the sexual or violent offender categories. In exceptional circumstances, a child who has not been convicted of an offence may be managed under MAPPA Category 3 as an "other dangerous offender". In exceptional circumstances, a child who has not been convicted of an offence may be managed under MAPPA Category 3 as an "other dangerous offender".

Required Changes to Policy, Guidance, Legislation and Practice

245. Consideration could be given to whether arrangements such as MAPPA Category 3 are sufficiently flexible for a small number of children presenting particularly serious risks.

246. Some children may appropriately sit within PREVENT where there is a terrorism or radicalisation concern, but others may not, particularly where ideology is absent or unclear. We therefore suggest PREVENT is extended to include non-ideological motivations.

247. Online behaviour should be included where it is relevant to serious violence risk. The evidence is stronger that online spaces can expose children to violent content and amplify vulnerability. It is weaker on proving that online exposure directly causes offline serious violence. For that reason, online activity should be treated as a risk signal to explore, not proof that a child will offend, and this should trigger a safeguarding response and not just a justice one.

248. Interventions should be tailored to the child, rather than built around a generic “Violence Fixated Individual” programme. Examples could include mental health support, neurodivergence assessment and support, family work, school re-engagement,

mentoring, positive peer activity, crisis planning, support to reduce access to weapons, and work to move the child away from harmful online spaces or violent peer networks. Any new policy, legislation or practice model should therefore include evaluation from the start.

249. The justice system for children is set up to prevent children offending and to balance welfare with reducing risk of further offending, and both need to be kept in mind.

250. For children presenting a serious violence risk, there remain evidence gaps around:

250.1. Which diversionary 'pathways' are appropriate: The evidence gap is not whether diversion works in general, but how diversion should be designed for this specific group of children, including the thresholds, safeguards, multi-agency ownership and escalation arrangements needed where there are concerns about violent fixation or attack planning.

250.2. Which interventions reduce future serious violence: there is a wider evidence base on interventions for serious youth violence, and that should inform the response to this cohort. Focused deterrence, restorative justice, family therapeutic work etc may be useful depending on the child's needs and circumstances. However, this evidence is not "Violence Fixated Individual" specific, and some of it is mixed or context dependent. There does not appear to be any tested, named intervention or programme for children showing "violent fixation", attack planning or fascination with mass casualty violence.

250.3. What long-term outcomes follow different justice responses: evidence shows that formal involvement in the youth justice system can have negative impacts on children and increase likelihood of offending, and that diversion is associated with reduced reoffending. However, there is limited evidence about which diversion approaches work best for different children, little assessment of cost-effectiveness, and insufficient outcome tracking to understand longer-term impacts.

IMPROVEMENTS

251. The YJB could support practical improvements through its role on Responsible Authorities National Steering Group (RANSG), continued development of Case Management Guidance, and updating the Referral Order guidance. However, responsibility for MAPPA and Referral Order guidance sits outside the YJB, and future ownership of Case Management Guidance work requires clarification under the Youth Justice Reform Programme.

252. Also, the YJB is best placed to review PDAT and AssetPlus as well as supporting the changes in mechanisms required for the earliest deployment of these assessment tools - again, this is subject to decisions as part of the Youth Justice Reform Programme.

OTHER MATTERS

253. The YJB identified some inaccuracies in the Phase 1 evidence, including references to the scaled approach being used in 2020, generic action plans being standard practice, and Referral Order guidance having changed since 2020, when this was not the case.

254. The YJB supports the Government's commitment to strengthen public services, identify, assess and respond to children who present complex needs that could lead to escalating risks. We are ready to support YJSs to translate the outcomes from this response to ensure frontline practice is informed by evidence, learning is shared quickly, and services are equipped to respond effectively to emerging risks and vulnerabilities.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings many brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signed:

SIGNATURE

Dated: 31 July 2026