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POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER



VRP Violence
Reduction
Partnership
Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire

An exploratory research study to understand the numbers of First Time Entrants into the Youth Justice System in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County

Final Report – November 2024

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Executive Summary

This report shares the findings from **an exploratory research study to understand the numbers of First Time Entrants into the Youth Justice System in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County**. Nottingham Trent University (NTU) were commissioned by Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Violence Reduction Partnership (NNVRP).

Initial quantitative analysis, when comparing 2021-22 and 2022-23¹ data, identified that **whilst Nottingham City has a higher rate of FTEs compared to like-cities, the number of FTEs are decreasing faster than like-cities**. However, rates of custodial outcomes are increasing. **Nottinghamshire County has a lower rate of FTEs compared to like-counties** and a lower rate of custodial sentences than like-counties, which remains low.

Qualitative data was collected from **stakeholders (30), practitioners (15) and young people (35)** and was analysed for individual, community and organisational factors that impact upon FTEs. A literature review and synthesis of national data sets enabled the research to pinpoint specific factors in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County context – such as Nottingham City **youth service cuts, school exclusion and homelessness** – and makes comparisons with national data.

The findings responded to five key questions set out the research tender. A brief synopsis and summary of key findings are reported below:

Section 1: Comparative trends in the numbers and rates of FTEs.

The national picture was considered alongside gender, ward, school exclusion, NEET and ethnicity data using Youth Justice Board (YJB) data. Nottingham City has higher rates of FTEs compared to like cities and counties. However, between 21-22 and 22-23 rates of **FTE decreased for both Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County, with like counties seeing an increase²**. Key findings from the qualitative data in relation to **gender, ethnicity, school exclusion and NEET (Not in Employment, Education and Training)** for Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County include:

- There are young people in the city from refugee backgrounds or from minoritized communities involving themselves in drug dealing to help their families with household bills.
- City ethnic minority children are more likely to invoke the 'no comment' response in police interviews and to subsequently plead not guilty. It would be useful to investigate the extent of this and the subsequent ramifications in terms of disposals.

¹ The most recent counting year at the time of the commission.

² According to 2022-23 data.

- There is a theoretical risk of adultification of ethnic minority children; particularly black females which may be connected to their involvement in Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).
- School policies on challenging behaviour and exclusion are considered to be exceptionally punitive by the majority of stakeholders and are out of kilter with the 'Child First' initiative.
- Alternative Provision (AP), whilst useful, can create more problems, leading to FTEs because of inappropriate placement or the length of time taken to source the AP.
- There are a multitude of reasons why children are Not in Employment Education and Training NEET in both the city and county including the experience of being bullied in school and undiagnosed conditions of neurodiversity.
- Care-experienced children are heavily NEET.

Section 2: Patterns of offences for FTEs coming into Youth Justice Services

Considering patterns of offences in Nottingham City 2021-22 and 2022-23, **the rate of violence against the person is higher than the national average.**

However, this rate is lower than the average violence rate across similar police force areas³. Despite a national decrease in knife or weapons possession, in **all** Practitioner interviews from both Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County 'knife crime' was mentioned, and young people shared their **perceptions of knife crime**. Being present in their everyday consciousness, young people in focus groups talked about being more aware than the police in identifying intention to use rather than 'showing off'. Young people in both Nottingham City and Nottingham County identified increased opportunities (such as apprenticeships, recognised community work and organised trips out of Nottingham), safe spaces and youth service activities as key factors for **de-escalating violence**. Other key headlines are as follows:

- Violence against the person is higher than the national average in Nottingham City.
- Young people associated knife crime with lack of positive opportunity and also linked other societal aspects such as poverty, and drugs and homelessness, that they see every day.

Section 3: FTE Cohort Characteristics

Cohort characteristics, most associated with FTEs, such as **school exclusion** and **SEND characteristics** are considered from quantitative data provided by Nottingham City Youth Justice service and Nottinghamshire County Council⁴. Strongly evident in the qualitative data is the narrative from young people about **negative experiences of both schools and the police** that can impact upon FTEs. This included **peers and influence, stop and search** and **retaliation**.

³ <https://www.police.uk/your-area/nottinghamshire-police/performance/compare-your-area/?tc=31-51>

⁴ When comparing SEND Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County have different processes, funds and approaches which makes a comparison challenging.

Young people's focus groups highlighted key vulnerabilities that might lead to FTE, including **stereotypes, social media and grooming**. In addition, local disadvantages such as **boredom due to lack of out-of-school activities, lack of safety and lighting and the prevalence of homelessness and crime** were communicated. Findings related to young people's vulnerability and disadvantage include:

- Lack of trust in adults was identified as a key issue for young people.
- Violence and retaliations are seen as a by-product of increased internet and social media access.
- Practitioners cited lack of funding and short timeframes to work with young people as a barrier to building trust and achieving positive outcomes.
- Funding cuts to youth services in Nottingham City have left young people feeling bored, with a lack of things to do in their area.
- Nottingham City young people reported high levels of visible violence, drug use and homelessness in the areas in which they lived that impacted their feelings of safety.

Section 4: FTEs and preventative and diversionary disposals

Through synthesis of the quantitative and qualitative findings it was evident that there were differences in how Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County use Youth Conditional Caution, and Referral orders. In Nottingham City there was a greater use of Youth Caution and Youth Conditional Caution, whereas in the County there was a greater use of diversionary measures. However, these outcomes could be a response to the National Police Chiefs' Council's Child Gravity Matrix⁵, which requires that certain offences must be addressed in court, even if the young person is a first-time entrant. **Custody rates** in Nottingham City increased, with an over-representation on non-white minorities, compared to Nottinghamshire County, where custody decreased. **Outcome 22**, an informal disposal, essentially 'no further action', which was introduced to impact first-time entrants where it is not in the public interest to try and progress the case, was a major point of discussion. The qualitative data on informal disposals, such as Outcome 22, demonstrated an even application with differing use across forces. However, how Outcome 22 is interpreted highlights a 'grey' area of understanding in lieu of publication of national frameworks and is not always reflection of intervention in the community by Youth Justice services. Young people and Practitioners also offered their perspectives on the most effective forms of **prevention**. Key findings included:

- Outcome 22 was cited as the most common informal disposal and its increased usage was discussed during interviews. **Outcome 22** is a disposal that is used in deferred prosecution and was introduced to impact first-time entrants where it is not in the public interest to try and progress the case, was a major point of discussion.

⁵ The Child Gravity Matrix is a triage tool to support decision making for officers, to assist in deciding the most appropriate outcome or disposal for those children and young people, under the age of 18 years who offend (National Police Chiefs' Council, 2023)

- Referral Orders are still used for FTEs with the Child Gravity Matrix cited as the reason behind this, with some offences exempt from pre-court disposals.
- Stakeholders reported a prioritisation of the numbers of Offences Brought to Justice. It was argued that the police might give greater attention to more easily detectable, provable offences such as Regina offences where victim input is not required.
- Targeted prevention is key to working with young people, with several projects and funding streams outlined, such as 'My Futures', 'Turnaround' and 'Another Way'.
- Youth clubs was identified as an underfunded area which significantly impacts young people, particularly during the school holidays.

Section 5: What Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County can learn from other areas to reduce FTEs

Building on key themes from our data, we signposted successful interventions from a range of Youth Offending Services (YOS) nationally, that focused on school exclusion, neurodiversity, building trust in the police and violence reduction. These were identified through literature review and interventions that had been evaluated:

- For **school exclusion**, the policies and procedures of West Notts College were praised, as well as Birmingham YOS recruitment of school-age Education Engagement Support Mentors.
- Best practice in better supporting **neurodiversity** is shown by Milton Keynes YOS, where young people receive a speech, language and communication needs assessment, and two language therapists are in post.
- Somerset YOS and Thames Valley Police have strong examples of **building trust in the police** through examples of joint working. In addition, Birmingham YOS has developed a Child First Trauma-informed assessment tool.
- **Violence reduction** programmes are explored such as the Youth Endowment Fund's 'Another Way' and Glasgow YOS' 'no violence, no weapons'.

Section 6: Recommendations

At the end of this report, we make **recommendations for reducing FTE rates in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County**. The thread that runs through these recommendations is the importance of **all** parties involved in youth justice practice, **to be aware of, understand and implement 'child first practice'**.

Recommendations **for / from young people** include:

- Better relationship building between police and young people.
- More and longer-term youth projects in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County.

- Provide education programmes for young people that can better support them to think about their futures.
- Opportunities for young people to be shown in a positive light.

Recommendations **for Youth Justice** practice include:

- Nationally lobby for an increase in the age of minimum criminal responsibility.
- Ensure that all involved in Youth Justice aware of, understand and implement 'Child First' principles.
- Eradicate the adultification of young people.
- Ensure that YOS staff, teachers, the Judiciary and the police undertake neurodiversity training.

Recommendations **for Policing** include:

- Ensure integration of Child First policy into police training.
- Initiatives that build positive relationships with young people locally.
- Consistent application of Outcome 22.
- Tackle the 'accounting culture' within the police.

Recommendations **for Schools** include:

- Better targeted Alternative Provision for young people.
- Informal screening for young people's needs pre-EHCP.
- Reduce the focus on default behaviour measures of isolation and exclusion.

Recommendations for NNVRP include:

- A **mapping exercise of the targeted youth provision** in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County.
- A **joint communications strategy** focusing on highlighting positive news stories in relation to children and young people.
- Support all agencies who provide services to children in undertaking a **self-assessment against 'Child First Principles'**.
- Gain assurance around **Out of Court Disposal processes**, ensuring a child first approach is taken.

We also recommend areas for future research focusing on racial disparities, neurodiversity training for all who work in the judicial process and Out of Court Disposals (OCD) panels.

Introduction

NTU were commissioned by Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Violence Reduction Unit (NNVRP) to undertake an exploratory research study to understand the numbers of First Time Entrants into the Youth Justice System in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County.

The basis for this commission was data that showed Nottingham City to have the highest rate of First Time Entrants (FTEs) in the country. Between Oct 21 and Sept 22 there were 486 per 100,000 children, higher than the national average of 146 per 100,000 children (research tender prepared by NNVRP).

Whilst the number of FTEs to the YJS has decreased substantially over the past ten years, Nottingham City continues to be a national outlier in reference to the number of FTEs. The contributory factors to numbers of FTEs in Nottingham City have not been comprehensively identified and described, and whilst it is widely acknowledged across the partnership, and professionals have a range of theories as to why this may be the case, little is known evidentially.

At the time of this commission, Nottinghamshire County has a rate of 141 per 100,000 of the population. Nottinghamshire County's performance has plateaued, however this is within the national picture and changes to Youth Justice Board (YJB) reporting mechanisms over the last 12 months, which have impacted performance levels and national comparisons.

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To undertake this research the NTU team was made up of Dr Frances Howard (Project Lead), Dr Vicky Palmer (Stakeholder / Practitioner focus groups), Jo

Reynolds (Stakeholder / young people's focus groups), Dr Shantey Francis (Practitioner interviews / young people's focus groups), Tadgh Tobin (quantitative data analysis) and Professor Andy Newton (Project Adviser).

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Methodology

The NNVRP commissioned this research to gain insight into the contributory factors towards the numbers of FTEs locally. The research has evaluated the impact of **individual, community and organisational factors** that may have influenced FTEs, as well as drawing on NPCC and JYB data to make **like-city/county comparisons**⁶.

The set of questions identified at the outset of this study include:

1. What are the **comparative trends in the numbers and rates of FTEs** in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County in relation to other core cities, statistical neighbours, regional and national trends?
2. What are the **patterns of offences for FTEs** coming into Youth Justice Services, and how do these compare with the types of offences seen elsewhere?
3. Within Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County, **how does the FTE cohort compare** with the wider population in relation to protected characteristics, vulnerabilities and disadvantage?
4. What is the **relationship between FTEs and preventative and diversionary disposals**? Which preventative and diversionary disposals are working most effectively to prevent young people from entering the CJS?
5. **What can Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County learn** from other areas to reduce FTEs and to reduce the likelihood of escalations to involvement in serious violence?

Quantitative data sets were shared by agreement with NPCC and open access data was sourced from the YJB in order to respond to questions 1-3.

In addition to these questions, a preference was expressed for a focus upon eliciting the experiences of those young people 'known to police' but released without charge. Contacts were shared for NNVRP funded youth projects as a way to reach groups of young people and the research team drew on their local contacts to fulfil our 'youth voice' approach to the research. One of the Research Team also had the opportunity to be an observer at a Nottinghamshire County OOC panel.

Qualitative data collection was facilitated through focus groups and interviews with the following participants detailed in table 1:

⁶ Nottingham 'like cities' include Birmingham, Bristol, Kingston-upon-Hull, Manchester, Southampton and Wolverhampton. Nottinghamshire 'like counties' include Cumbria, Derbyshire, Essex, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Staffordshire.

<i>Participant group</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Descriptor</i>
Stakeholders	16 14	City County	Youth Justice Employees, Heads of Service – Youth & Children, Education Services, Police employees (various roles)
Practitioners	9 6	City County	Youth Offending Team (various roles), Youth Workers, Alternative Education Providers
Young People	15 20	City County	Male: 23 Female: 12 Ages 12-15: 20 16-19: 15 Ethnicity: White British: 14 Ethnic Minority ⁷ : 12 Did not specify: 9

Table 1: Qualitative data collection – participants, number, location

The project received ethical approval from Nottingham Trent University, prior to data collection. To protect participant anonymity and confidentiality, no names or job titles will be used in this report. Participants will be identified through participant group (stakeholder/practitioner/young person) and area (city/county), with details on gender, age and ethnicity being added for young people where known.

This report has been structured to directly respond to these questions, as well as capturing key Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County contextual factors, comparison between City and County, and recommendations to further reduce FTEs and support ‘child first’ (Case & Haines 2021) youth justice practice.

Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County context

It is well known that Nottingham City ranks high on the indices of multiple deprivation (2019) - 11th most deprived out of the 317 districts in England and fourth most deprived of the core cities; And Nottinghamshire County has a mixture of most deprived (Mansfield ranked 46th out of 317 Lower Tier Local Authorities) and least deprived districts (Rushcliffe is within the top 3% of Local Authority Districts). However, the narrative of this report seeks to move beyond these indices, whilst acknowledging that **poverty is an intersecting factor in FTE rates**, to signpost specific contextual factors within Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County.

⁷ In with NTU’s strategy for Equality and Diversity, ‘ethnic minority’ replaces BAME.

Cuts to youth services in Nottingham City have been well documented nationally, with a 69% reduction, resulting in the loss of 4,500 youth work jobs and 750 youth centre closures since 2010 (LGA, 2022). The YMCA's 'out of service' report (2020) detailed by region the cuts to youth services funding since 2010, with the East Midlands experiencing an average area reduction of 66%. Whilst limited data exists that calculates the exact youth services reduction in Nottingham City, it was clear from stakeholder, practitioner and young people's data that the closure of youth centres and move towards commissioning youth services for the City, and reduction in provision in the County was a key driver to FTE rates. In addition, at the start of this study, **Nottingham City Council issued a section 114 notice**, whereby a budget deficit was forecast, which was deemed likely to result in further reductions in service provision.

It should be noted that youth services in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County are not comparable. Whilst Nottingham City has seen a reduction, this has not been the case for Nottinghamshire County, whose **net budget for youth services has increased** from £2.9m in 2015 and is £3.1m in 2024.

A recent report by the National Youth Agency (NYA, 2023) highlighted the social cost of youth work cuts, **putting young people at greater risk of entering the criminal justice system**. This research projected that it costs four times more for a young person to enter the criminal justice system (£200,000 by the age of 16), than it does for them to avoid it through youth work provision (less than £50,000). Research by Unison (2024) found that young people are left isolated and without advice due to the closure of over 1000 youth centre: 'being swept into gang and knife culture or taking part in anti-social activities on the streets'. Combined with Nottingham City's financial bankruptcy resulting in future cuts, the picture of support for young people is looking bleak. Qualitative data to support this is given in Section 3: cohort characteristics, of this report.

Alongside impactful reduction to young people's opportunities outside of school, **school exclusion** is a major contextual factor within Nottingham City. Using the last full year's data (22/23) nationally the rate of permanent exclusions increased from 6,500 in 2021/22 and the highest recorded annual number of permanent exclusions. This is the equivalent of 11 permanent exclusions for every 10,000 pupils⁸, or as a percentage 0.11. In the East Midlands, this was 0.12, and slightly above the national average. However, in **Nottingham City the rate was 0.2, and significantly above the national average**. In Nottinghamshire County this was 0.1 and below the national average. Statistics for the rates of suspensions also mirror this pattern. Whilst these figures do not show 'hidden exclusions', such as when Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) move pupils between their group of schools, they do support

⁸ Source: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england> (July 2024)

academic research which clearly links school exclusion to FTE rates (Johnson 2023, Bateman 2023).

Over the last decade there has also been **a large increase in homelessness**. This has impacted young people both through experiencing statutory homelessness (17.7% of homelessness is recorded by young people – CentrePoint) and through witnessing and being intimidated by rough sleeping in the areas where they live. Nationally 1.87 households (per 1000) are assessed as homeless, with **Nottingham City recording nearly double at 3.27**. Rough sleeping, which is harder to quantify through one-night headcount figures, which are often underestimated, shows that nationally rough sleeping has risen by 27% (2022-23), but for this East Midlands, this was significantly higher at 35%.

It is within this context of sustained cuts to youth services, high rates of school exclusion and above national average rough sleeping, that we draw up Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County comparisons in the next section, to further analyse the comparative trends in the numbers and rates of FTEs.

Section 1. Comparative trends in the numbers and rates of FTEs

In the following 5 sections, we refer to young people as ‘children’ in line with child first guidance (YJB, 2022). The data contained within these sections has been collated from various official sources, and represents collated data from Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire County and their like cities and counties, respectively. *All data has been given to 3 significant figures, where appropriate.*

For all figures, the most recent available data was used. For comparisons, the two most recent counting years were used. For some figures, the most recent counting year is 2022-23 and others it is 2021-22. For ease, this has been clarified throughout.

21-22, 21-22 and 22-23 refer to the counting years of October 2020-September 2021, October 2021-September 2022, and October 2022-September 2023, respectively.

The National Picture

Youth Justice Statistics 2022 to 2023 (gov.uk, published Jan 24) showed that in the year ending December 2022:

- There were just under 8,400 child first time entrants (FTEs) to the youth justice system. For the first time in the last ten years, the number of child FTEs increased (by 1%) compared with the previous year, though this is still the second lowest number in the time series.
- Compared with the previous year, the number of child FTEs aged 10 to 14 increased by 7% (or 160) to around 2,300, the first year-on-year increase in the last ten years while the number of child FTEs aged 15 to 17 decreased by 1% (or 60) to around 2,100.
- While there was a 2% increase in the number of White child FTEs, the number of child FTEs from each ethnic minority group fell with Black child FTEs seeing the biggest decrease of 8%, followed by Asian child FTEs falling by 6% and Other child FTEs falling by 4%.

The national FTE rates demonstrate that the number of child FTEs to the youth justice system increased by 1% to just under 8,400 compared with the previous year, the first year-on-year increase of the last ten years. However, this was still the second lowest number of child FTEs in the time series, and 72% lower than the year ending December 2012. Children accounted for 10% of all FTEs to the criminal justice system in the year ending December 2022, compared to 16% in the year ending December 2012 and up from 9% in the previous year.

Nottingham City recorded 291 FTEs during this period.⁹

Nottinghamshire County recorded 97 FTEs during this period.

Nottingham City cohort data

This section discusses the quantities and demographics of first-time entrants within Nottingham City. Here there is a breakdown of gender, ward, school exclusion, NEET and ethnicity.

The statistics have shown that, generally, most first-time entrants are male (see figures 1 & 2), white (see figure 6), and the majority are probably from Aspley¹ (see figure 3). The majority of these entrants were excluded from school, with the most being excluded exclusively before becoming an FTE (rather than after or both before and after, see figure 4).

In terms of Nottingham City's Wards, Castle had the youngest average FTE age (mean = 13 years), with Netherfield having the highest average age (mean = 17)². Clifton West had the highest average offence severity score (mean = 2.44, SD = 0.509), with Lenton and Wollaton having the highest offence severity score (mean = 3.8, SD = 1.13). Castle, Larklands, and Leen Valley share the lowest average number of offences (mean = 1)², with Netherfield having the highest number of offences (mean = 9).

Gender

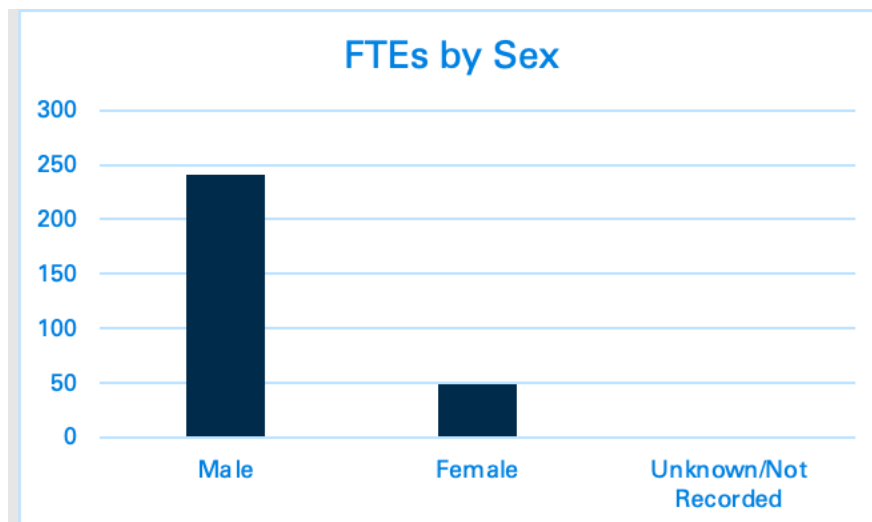


Figure 1: Nottingham City FTEs by Sex 1 (vertical axis = number)

⁹ Various data sets had conflicting numbers. Above are the highest number that relates explicitly to FTEs (not outcomes or disposals) for Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County. These numbers were found by counting the number of unique service references/IDs within the data sets given.

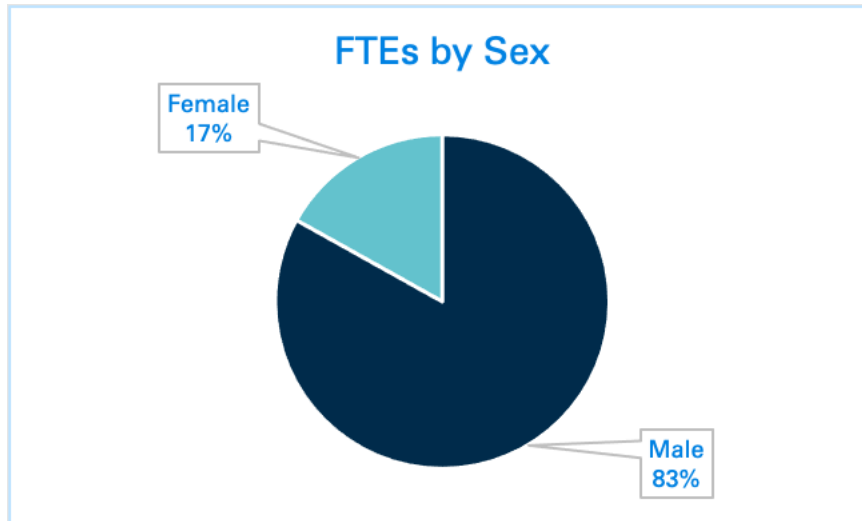


Figure 2: Nottingham City FTEs by Sex 2

Ward

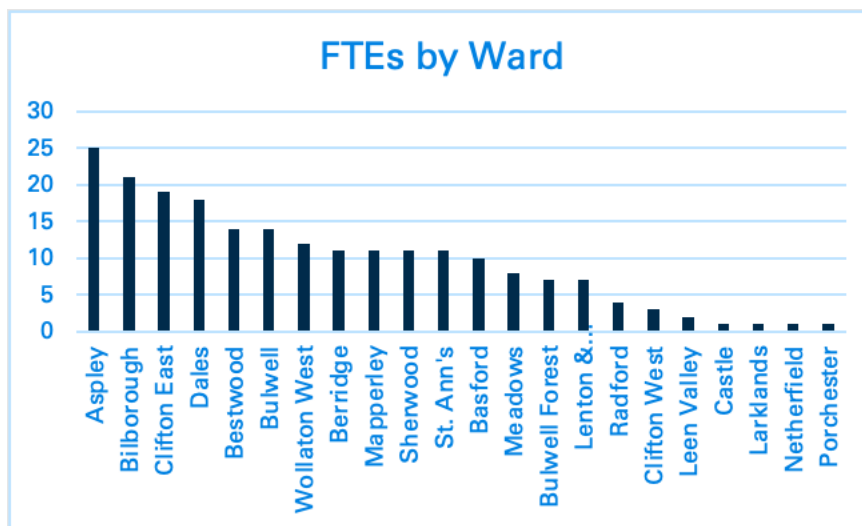


Figure 3: Nottingham City FTEs by Ward (vertical axis = number)

School Exclusion

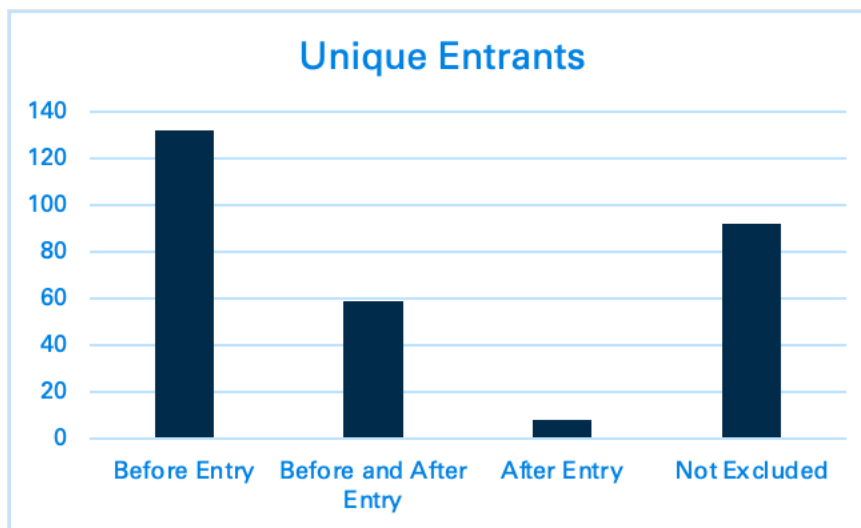


Figure 4: Nottingham City FTEs by School Exclusion (vertical axis = number)

Not in Employment Education and Training (NEETs)

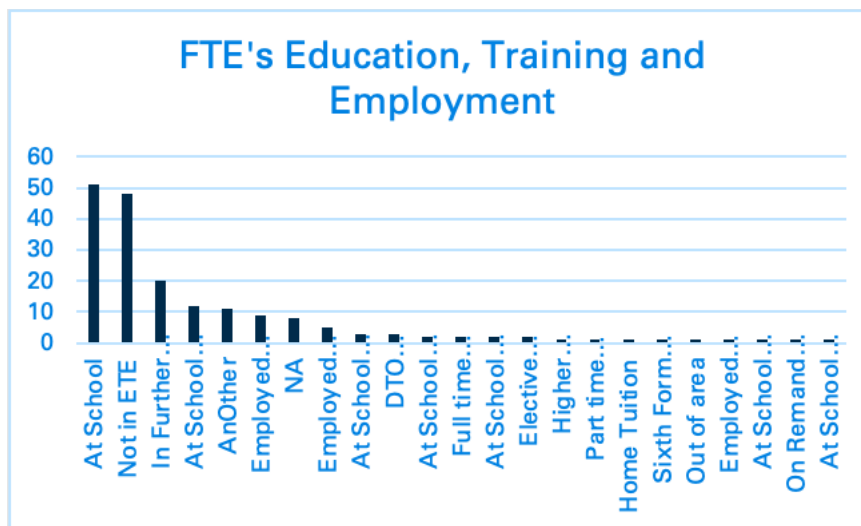


Figure 5: Nottingham City FTEs by NEET (vertical axis = number)

Ethnicity

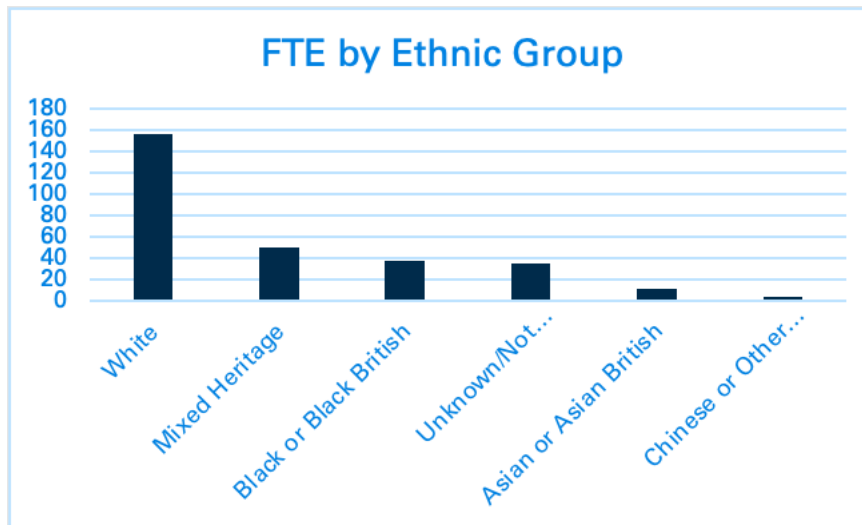


Figure 6: Nottingham City FTEs by Ethnicity (vertical axis = number)

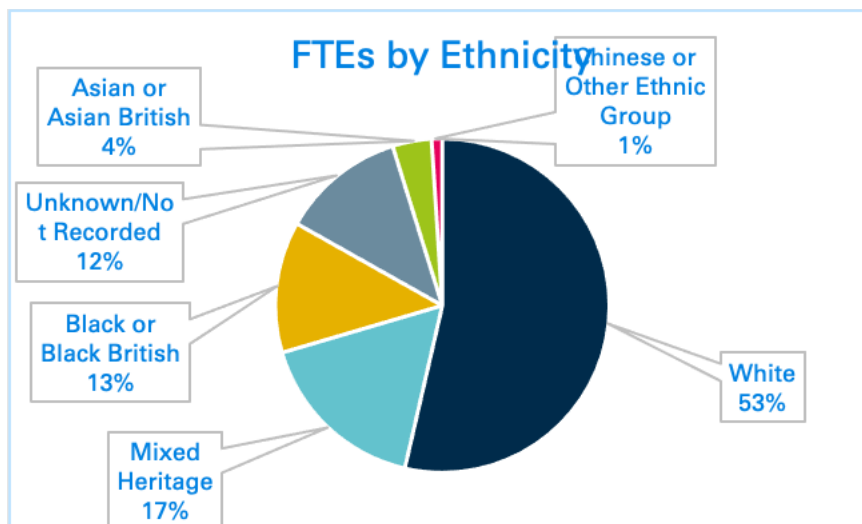


Figure 7: Nottingham City FTEs by Ethnicity %

Nottinghamshire County cohort data

This section discusses the entrants from Nottinghamshire County. Here, there is a breakdown of the gender and ethnicity. Due to limitations with the way data analysts were able to draw down comparable data.

In Nottinghamshire County, there is a slightly lower rate of female FTEs compared to Nottingham City. There is also a much higher percentage of FTEs that are white, and much lower percentages of FTEs from minoritized ethnic groups. The average age of an FTE in Nottinghamshire County is 15.3 years old (SD = 1.56).

Gender

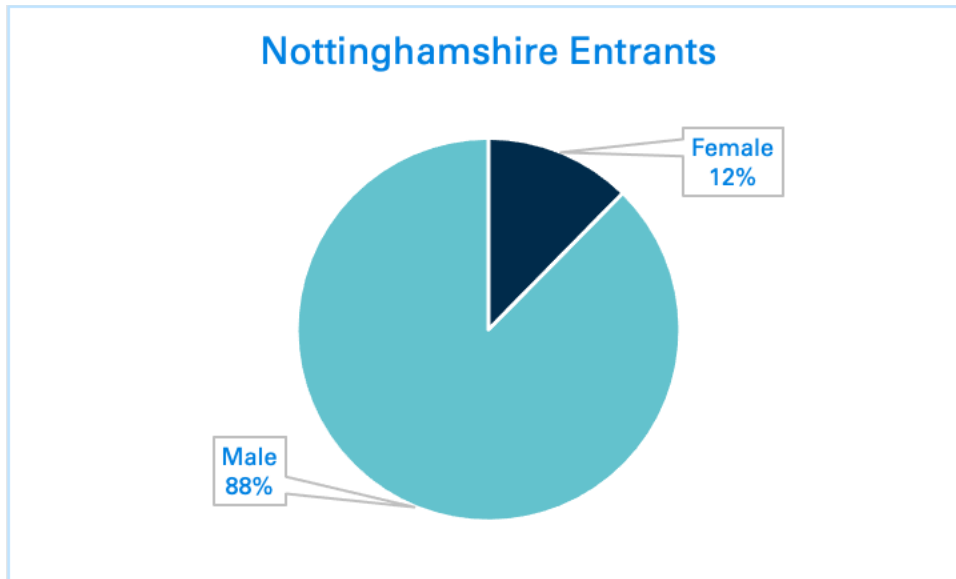


Figure 8: Nottinghamshire County FTEs by Sex %

Ethnicity

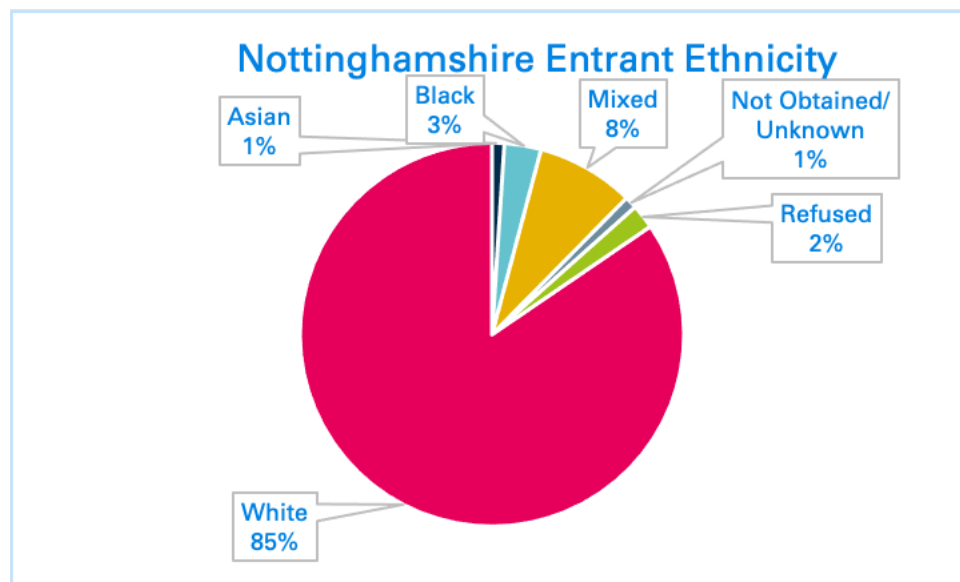


Figure 9: Nottinghamshire County FTEs by Ethnicity %

In Nottinghamshire County, 89.5% of the population is white, and 90% of FTEs are also white. Whereas 10.5% of the population are non-white minorities, but 9.68% of the FTE population are non-white minorities. Like counties had an average white population of 90.0%, and a white FTE population of 85.4%.

National FTE Comparisons

Between 21-22 and 22-23, Nottingham City saw an overall decrease of 62.00 FTEs per 100 000 people, reducing from 537.34 to 475.34 per 100 000 people. In the same time frame, like cities saw a decrease of 5.68 FTEs per 100 000 people (from 215.52 to 209.84) and the family¹⁰ saw a decrease of 10.36 FTEs per 100 000 people (from 242.34 to 231.97). Nottingham City experienced one of the most significant decreases in the family.

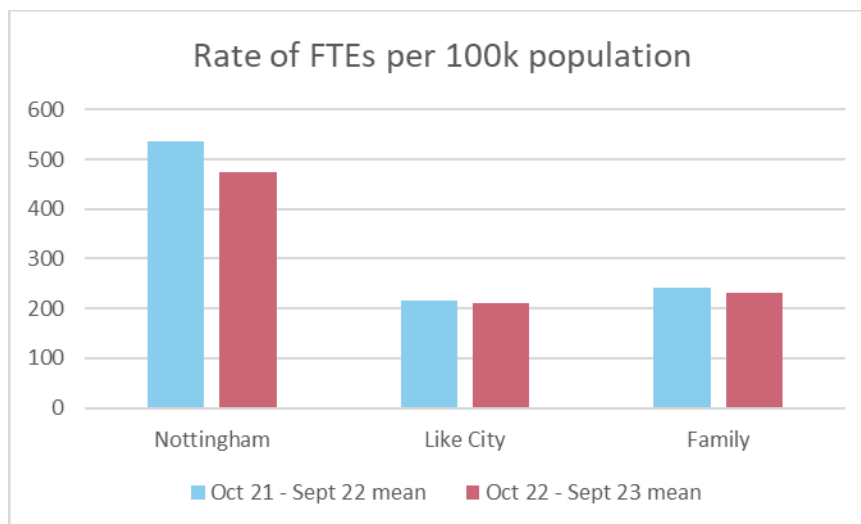


Figure 10: Nottingham City rates of FTE with like and family cities

Between 21-22 and 22-23, Nottinghamshire County saw a decrease in the rates of FTEs entering the system from 194 per 100 000 population to 154 per 100 000 population. By comparison, like counties saw a rise from 174 to 189 per 100 000 population, and the family average increased from 176 to 186 per 100 000 population in the same period. There is a decrease in county-family average, and a decrease in Nottinghamshire County FTE rates per 100 000 population.

¹⁰ **Family** refers to the complete set of like cities, including Nottingham City's statistics and figures.

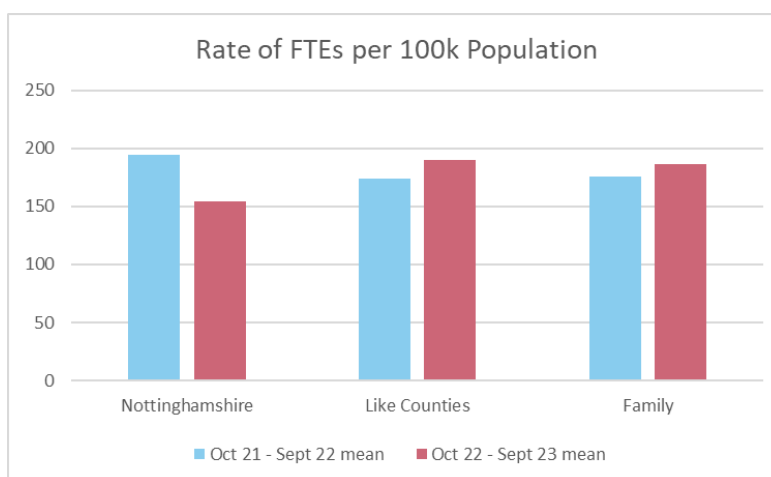


Figure 11: Nottinghamshire County rates of FTEs with like and family cities

The following table compares gender, age (where known) and ethnicity, across National, Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County cohorts.

	National	Nottingham City	Nottinghamshire County
Gender			
Boys %	85%	83%	88%
Girls %	15%	17%	12%
Age			
10-14	2,300	16.5 years average	15.3 years average
15-17	2,100		
Ethnicity			
White	76%	53%	85%
Black British	16%	13%	3%
Mixed Heritage	-	17%	8%
Asian	7%	5%	1%
Not known/other	1%	12%	3%

Table 2: National, City and County comparison of FTE gender, age and ethnicity

Research has shown that there have always been more boys than girls who are child FTEs (Matthews & Smith, 2009). In the year ending December 2022, boys comprised 84% of the total child FTEs nationally. The number of child FTEs has fallen for both boys and girls over the last decade, with the larger percentage

decrease seen in girls. The figures for both Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County mirror these percentages.

Nationally, compared with the previous year, the number of FTEs aged 10 to 14 increased by 7% (or 160) to around 2,300, the first year-on-year increase in the last ten years while the number of first time entrants aged 15 to 17 decreased by 1% (or 60) to around 2,100, continuing the year-on-year decreases of the last decade, albeit the smallest annual fall in FTEs for this age group. This national picture was not mirrored by Nottingham City or Nottinghamshire County whose average FTE age fell into the older category (15-17). The difference between was a lower averaged age of FTEs for Nottinghamshire County compared to Nottingham City.

Nationally, there has been a downward trend in the number of child FTEs for each ethnicity over the last ten years. Compared with the previous year, there was a 2% increase (from around 5,300 to around 5,400) in the number of White child FTEs, whilst the number of child FTEs from each ethnic minority group fell, with Black child FTEs seeing the biggest decrease of 8% (from around 1,200 to around 1,100), followed by Asian child FTEs falling by 6%, and FTEs from an Other ethnic background falling by 4%. Although data from Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County has expanded ethnicity categories to include 'mixed heritage', the national picture of majority White FTEs is mirrored. A more details analysis of the average population is given in Section 3. cohort characteristics.

Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County FTE comparative trends

Retaining the data themes from above: gender, ethnicity, school exclusion and NEET- are explored in following section across both City and County, sharing aligning qualitative data from Stakeholders and Practitioners.

Gender

From the participant narrative regarding gender, boys form the major demographic in terms of FTEs in both the city and county, reflecting the picture nationally. However, regarding crimes of violence against the person, the county has noted a recent pattern of more girls involving themselves in violent offending. Interestingly, these girls are not committing these offences as lone perpetrators, and instead they are operating in groups, as indicated by a participant in the county Stakeholder Focus Group, *'It's never just one-on-one, it's very much a group thing, it's happened in a park and there's lots of children standing around videoing it'*. There was no indication in either the city or county

that girls featured in those FTEs found to be in possession of a bladed article, although one city stakeholder recalled the case of a 16-year-old female found in possession of a knife which she intended to use to self-harm. Despite the intended impact being directed solely internally, this girl was charged with a possession offence owing to a ruling made by the Chief Constable that all children aged 16 and over must be 'charged to court' if apprehended being in possession of a knife, meaning that there was no room for flexibility or discretion¹¹.

There was an anomaly extracted from the data regarding the treatment of girls in the city, where a member of the Stakeholder Focus Group maintained that '*girls do not get picked up unless it becomes as social care thing*'. However, another member of the same focus group asserted that there are concerns with Child Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation for black natural heritage girls who are being charged with criminality. This contradictory finding may benefit from further unpicking since it is not clear which ethnicity the former stakeholder was alluding to.

Ethnicity

Within the county, the study revealed that their ethnic demographic was predominantly white, although they have a large travelling community to the north. Hence, much of the narrative regarding ethnicity was concentrated on city children. Mention was made of groups of young people in the city from refugee backgrounds or from minoritised communities involving themselves in drug dealing to help their families with household bills. This is also recognised as a national issue (YJB, 2022). The issue was also raised concerning the observation from county and city stakeholders that, '*there's been evidence to suggest that particular ethnic groups are more likely to go no comment, not guilty*' and this has been much more evident with black and mixed heritage boys compared to their white counterparts. Practitioners reported that ethnic minority boys are not benefitting from those out of court disposals that require an admission to the offence, nor are they receiving any credit in court for their pleas of guilt; potentially leading to a harsher sentence. Further data is required to support this supposition, and therefore this area of investigation is considered in Section 6: Recommendations. This situation may be unlikely to change since it was evident from the data provided by city stakeholders that ethnic minority children lack trust and confidence in the police, and they believe themselves to be the subject of systemic racism. Although one city stakeholder observed there to be an over-representation of ethnic minority

¹¹ This policy was changed in 2023, and is now compliant with the NPCC guidelines: https://library.college.police.uk/docs/NPCC/Guidelines_Cautions_Charging_Knife_Crime_Offences_2022.pdf. As a 16 year old in possession of a bladed article the guidance states that they would be charged unless it is simple possession and no previous violence, knife or weapon offending and then a YCC given in exceptional circumstances.

boys in custody, there was the caveat that the severity of the offence often warranted this. Finally, an issue was raised by a city stakeholder that there is often a systemic adultification of ethnic minority children, particularly black females. This stakeholder did not make mention of which agency perpetuates this form of adultification, however it is clear that the 'Child First' policy embraced by youth justice practitioners and the YJB should be non-discriminatory; applying to all children.

School Exclusion

Overwhelmingly, all of the study participants were keen to outline their frustration with both city and county schools' challenging policies regarding zero tolerance (i.e. permanent exclusion is a given) for both possession of drugs and knives on school premises, maintaining that context was rarely if ever taken into account. There appeared to be little distinction between city and county from the participants' narrative between levels of exclusion; each maintaining that levels were very high. The County Practitioner Focus Group observed that both fixed-term and permanent exclusions were becoming more frequent, and children were being made subject to them for more minor matters. For example, one participant in this group was aware of one school that had excluded a child for throwing a pencil and that the school had failed to take into account the context of incident which was as follows:

'if you talk to the young person, you'll find that he's got an autism diagnosis and he's really stressed and he's just been stimming and the pencil has come out of his hand.... that's very different than it would be to stab somebody with a pencil.'

(Practitioner, County)

Potentially, what we are seeing here is schools operating in a more punitive manner than the police and youth courts. Schools are in effect, in their current policies and procedures, operating in a manner akin to what became known as the 'punitive decade' for youth justice seen between 1998 to 2008 (Muncie, 2021) where police routinely prosecuted children for minor matters such as breaking a branch in a tree in a public park and chalking a hopscotch grid on the pavement (Palmer, 2010). This punitive turn no longer features in youth justice and should be reflected in schools. Instead, what we appear to be seeing is schools operating with inconsistencies, for example, a county practitioner revealed that:

'I was at a meeting the other day with the Ed Psych services and they've got this new programme called 'attend' and the Ed, Ed. Psych services have rolled it out across all the all the schools in Nottinghamshire. There's two schools that won't buy into it.'

(Practitioner, County)

It would seem sensible then for both city and county schools to consider the potential to generate and utilise policies and procedures with absolute consistency to ensure that all children are treated equally as required by the Equalities Act 2010 where age and disability are inherent protected characteristics.

Once children are permanently excluded from school, many are placed in Alternative Provision (AP). But as a member of the City Stakeholder Group asserted, 'you put a child in an alternative provision, It's literally like a breeding ground, It's like welcome to youth justice'. The length of time that it can take to place a child in AP can have a detrimental affect also, meaning that children can lose significant and crucial periods of education. A member of the County Practitioner Focus group disclosed that one boy:

'had not had a full education this year and now they're still saying we're trying to find an alternative provision but they've not been able to place him anywhere for a whole year. Unbelievable.'

(Practitioner, County)

In the city however, it would appear that such allocations of children to AP are faster-paced and more efficient, as explained by a member of the City Stakeholder Focus Group:

'we have the AP task force in Nottingham, which is a Department of Education funded program where we have a youth justice staff that are seconded to our Deenwood, which is the provision that oversees children that are permanently excluded. And from there they're allocated to alternative provisions.'

(Stakeholder, City)

NEET

Alongside school exclusion, NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) was a common occurrence for children observed **by both city and county respondents** with a typical response being,

'We get a lot of young people that aren't educated and don't engage in education as much as what they could be doing, or the education system isn't engaging with them as much as what it could be doing'

(Stakeholder, County)

There were various reasons given by the participants as to why children are not attending school, and again, this was evident both in the city and county. One of the reasons that participants shared was that of bullying:

'I've had kids that go to school are getting beaten up so their mums are saying, I'm not going to send him back to school and school will go, well. It's not

authorised. We'll not send you any work. So again, they're missing out on work and it's a real problem. I've seen that with a lot of my cases'

(Practitioner, County)

Another reason provided as to why children were not accessing education was around the issue of undiagnosed neurodiverse conditions, often owing to their parents' inability to push for or secure an assessment. One practitioner from the County Focus Group explained why this may be:

'From my experience, one of them is the inability of parents and carers who don't have the communication ability to be able to demand that they get the service. I mean you know the middle class, we'll probably do a bit better. You know we'll bang the table, we'll use the right language, maybe even put something on paper and write it, because then they know they've got them over a barrel.'

(Practitioner, County)

As a result, there are neurodiverse children displaying challenging behaviour in school, or who are not accessing their education because they cannot cope with sensory overload of the school environment. This not only impacts significantly on the children themselves, but can also affect the whole family, as another County Practitioner illustrated:

'one of the families I'm working with, nobody in the family can read or write. You know, the only one who can read or write is the young person who's excluded from school. That's classic.'

(Practitioner, County)

Where such children were still able to access education, the timetable made available to them was often severely limited as highlighted by another county practitioner:

'and when we get any information from schools and they'll say things like, oh yeah, they're having two hours a day and it's like, right, what's happening for the other five then?'

(Practitioner, County)

Care-experienced children are heavily NEET with one of the County Stakeholders explaining that following a review of 'Looked After Children' that are FTEs over a 12-month rolling period, *'Eight were NEET at the time of the offence; two others were intermittently in school / not being engaged'*. It would appear then that despite the government's best efforts to reduce the number of care-experienced children entering the YJS (UK Government, 2018), little has been achieved.

Key Findings for FTE comparative rates

- At the time of this research, there is an issue with groups of girls committing violent offences in the county. However, the participants added that this was an isolated and time-limited issues and was not considered to be the norm, with only 12% of FTEs being females and the majority of violent offences committed by males.
- Over 16s are routinely being stopped with possession of a bladed article in the city. National guidance states that young people would be charged unless it is simple possession and no previous violence, knife or weapon offending and only given a Youth Conditional Caution in exceptional circumstances.
- There are concerns over the criminalisation of ethnic minority girls in the city for their involvement/recruitment into CCE (Child Criminal Exploitation and CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation)).
- There are young people in the city from refugee backgrounds or from minoritised communities involving themselves in drug dealing to help their families with household bills.
- City ethnic minority children are more likely to invoke the 'no comment' response in police interviews and to subsequently plead not guilty. It would be useful to investigate the extent of this and the subsequent ramifications in terms of disposals.
- Ethnic minority children lack confidence and trust in the police.
- There is a theoretical risk of adultification of ethnic minority children; as it was noted by one participant that there was a tendency towards the adultification of ethnic minority children by the police; particularly black females. Rather than these black natural heritage girls being viewed as victims of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) or Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), this participant had noted that they were instead formally charged with a criminal offence together with young black males.
- Both city and county schools implement testing policies on zero tolerance on drug or knife possession and sometimes for more minor matters with no concession allowed for context.
- School policies on challenging behaviour and exclusion are considered to be exceptionally punitive by the majority of stakeholders and are out of kilter with the 'Child First' initiative.
- There are inconsistencies between schools in terms of their policies geared towards attendance and inclusion.
- Alternative Provision, whilst useful, can create more problems, leading to FTEs because of inappropriate placement or the length of time taken to source the AP.
- There are a multitude of reasons why children are NEET in both the city and county including the experience of being bullied in school and undiagnosed conditions of neurodiversity.
- Where some children were still able to access education, their timetables were severely limited.
- Care-experienced children are heavily NEET.

Following this analysis of comparative trends in FTEs, both nationally with like-cities and like-counties and across Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County, the next section shares data on patterns of offences.

Section 2. Patterns of offences for FTEs coming into Youth Justice Services

This section discusses the patterns of offences for First Time entrants coming into the Youth Justice Services, and how these compare with the types of offences elsewhere. This will specifically focus on Nottingham City areas, firstly exploring some statistical data highlighting demographics and offence types. Following this, the research team compiled qualitative data from practitioners, stakeholders and young people across city and county areas of Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County, that provides perspectives on areas such as knife crime and peer influence.

Offences

Nationally in the year ending March 2023:

- The number of proven offences committed by children saw an increase compared with the previous year, rising by 1% to around 34,300 proven offences.
- The offence groups with the largest increases compared to the previous year are burglary (rising by 37%) and theft and handling stolen goods (rising by 23%).
- Decreases were seen in drugs offences (falling by 16%), criminal damage (10%), and robbery (9%).
- There were just under 3,400 knife or offensive weapon offences resulting in a caution or sentence committed by children. This is a fall of 4% compared with the previous year, though 23% higher than ten years ago.

Considering patterns of offences in Nottingham City 2021-22 and 2022-23, the rate of violence against the person is higher than the national average. However, this rate is lower than the average violence rate across similar police force areas. In Nottingham City, the majority of offences committed were violence against the person offences, which occurred approximately five times more than motoring offences, which was the second most common offence. Male FTEs also committed around 76% of violence against the person offences, and nearly 100% of the motoring offences. A full breakdown of offence type and location can be seen in the following figures (12-15), that showcase the frequencies across offences.

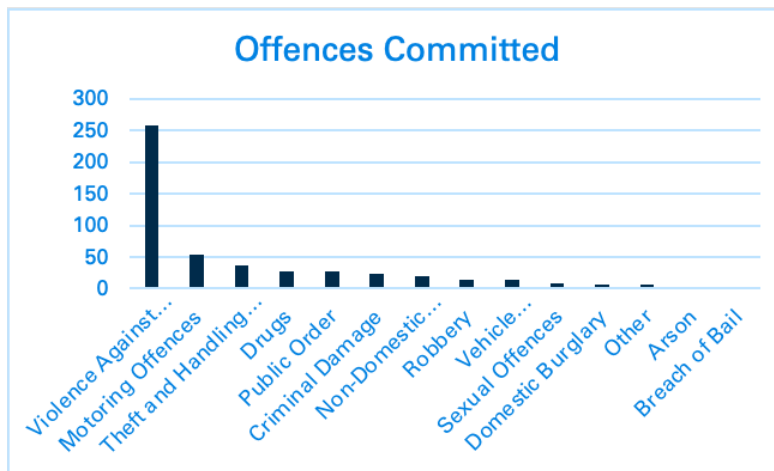
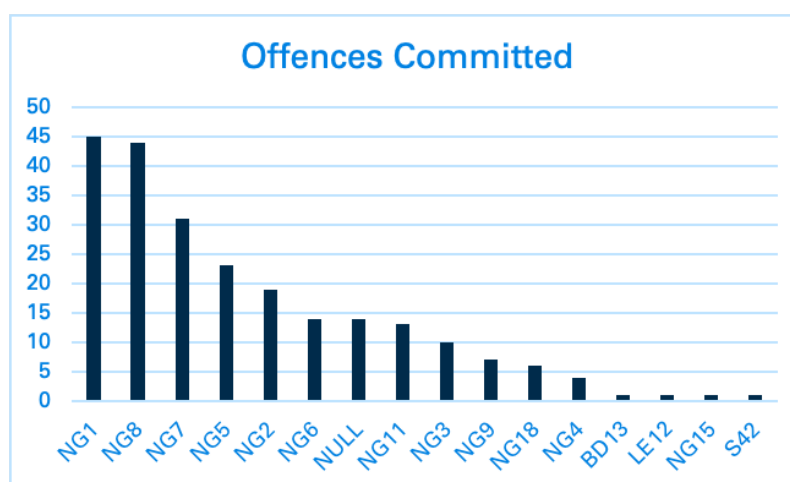


Figure 12: Nottingham City type of Offences Committed (vertical axis = number)

Most striking in the comparison between the national picture of offences committed is the high rate of **violence against persons (five times higher than the second most common offence) in Nottingham City**. Further research is required to understand this high rate of violence. However, the following qualitative data in this section will show **all** Practitioner interviewed from both Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County mentioned 'knife crime' as the most prevalent offence within this category.

NG1 (City Centre) and NG8 (Aspley, Wollaton, Whitemoor, Bilborough, Strelley) had the highest number of offences committed by FTEs of all the postcodes recorded, at 45 and 42 respectively. Of the Nottingham City postcodes recorded¹², NG15 was the least commonly occurring, though three non-Nottingham postcodes had offences committed, including Leicestershire, Derbyshire, and West Yorkshire¹³.



¹² The majority of FTEs did not have this information recorded, so this may be inaccurate.

¹³ Residential Population and Ambient Population (NTE visitors) vary and these figures are 'counts' rather than 'rates'.

Figure 13: Nottingham City location of Offences Committed (vertical axis = number)

Offence Severity

Gender

The average age of an FTE was 15.0 (SD = 1.73), with male FTEs having an average of 15.1 (SD = 1.71) and female FTEs having an average age of 14.4 (SD = 1.74). Male FTEs had a higher average severity score (mean = 3.19, SD = 0.99) compared to female FTEs (mean = 2.97, SD = 0.50), but male FTEs had a lower average number of offences (mean = 1.7, SD = 1.32) compared to female FTEs (mean = 1.78, SD = 0.99). It is noted though, that due to female FTEs being far fewer than the number of male FTEs, this average may not be entirely representative of the true scale of the number of offences committed by unique FTEs.

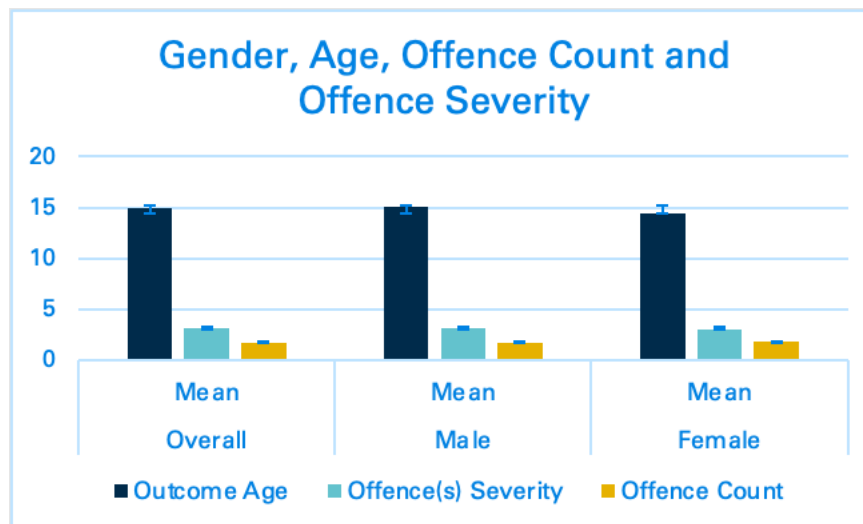


Figure 14: Nottingham City Offence Severity by Gender (vertical axis = number)

Ethnicity

Chinese and Other Ethnic Group FTEs had the youngest average age (mean – 14.3 years, SD = 1.53) and Asian or Asian British FTEs had the highest average age (mean = 16.5 years, SD = 1.04). Mixed Heritage FTEs had the lowest average offence severity score (Mean = 2.94, SD = 0.359), and Chinese or Other Ethnic Group FTEs had the highest average offence severity score (mean = 3.67, SD = 2.08). Finally, Chinese or other Ethnic Group FTEs had the lowest average number of offences (mean = 1.33, Sd = 0.577), with Asian or Asian British FTEs having the highest average number of offences (mean = 2.73, SD = 2.8).

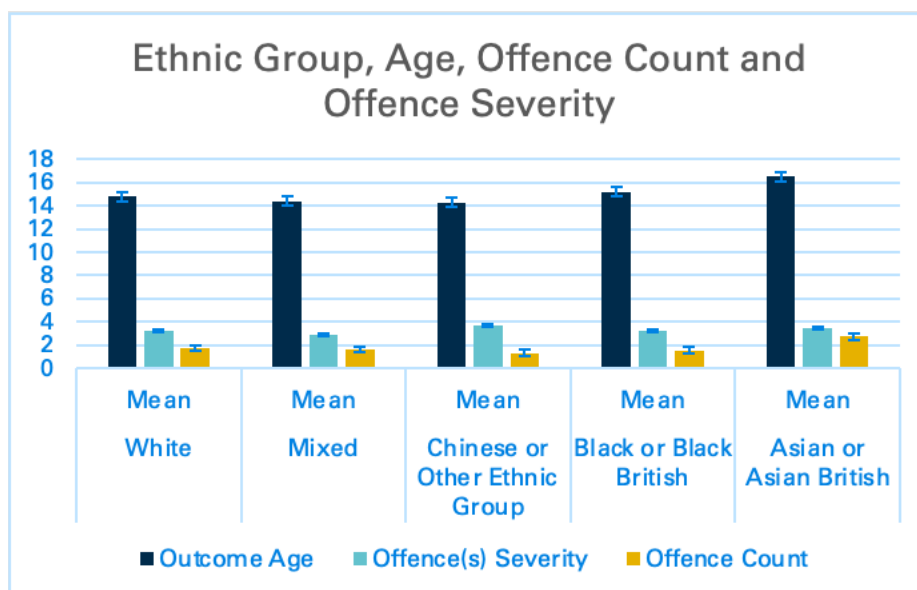


Figure 15: Nottingham City Offence Severity by Ethnicity (vertical axis = number)

In terms of Nottingham City's Wards, Castle had the youngest average FTE age (mean = 13 years), with Netherfield having the highest average age (mean = 17). Clifton West had the highest average offence severity score (mean = 2.44, SD = 0.509), with Lenton and Wollaton having the highest offence severity score (mean = 3.8, SD = 1.13). Castle, Larklands, and Leen Valley share the lowest average number of offences (mean = 1), with Netherfield having the highest number of offences (mean = 9).

Although data was not obtainable from Nottinghamshire County that details offences committed and offence severity, the following qualitative data reflects upon offence types discussed by Stakeholders, Practitioners and young people in both Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County.

Discussion of FTE offences

The following considers some of the qualitative findings from practitioners and young people's perspectives. Here, the findings consider offence type and prevalence of times mentioned by practitioners alongside perspectives on knife crime and peer influence from young people.

The following table considers type of offence and how many times it was mentioned by the practitioners who were interviewed about their work. In total there were 45 of practitioners/stakeholders interviewed. Type of offence mentioned is in order of the number of persons who identified or mentioned this.

Offence type discussed/mentioned.	Number of times mentioned or identified
Knife crime (possession more than use) was the most prevalent narrative response and the crime most mentioned.	This was mentioned by all practitioners/stakeholders interviewed.
Violence against the person was the second most prevalent.	8 mentions
Theft and handling of stolen goods was joint second	8 mentions
Public order offences was in 3 rd place (4 mentions)	4 mentions
Sexual offences (often online) were in joint 3 rd place.	4 mentions
Motoring offences (not TWOC) and criminal damage came out at joint 4 th .	3 mentions of each offence.
Breach of bail and drug offences came last.	1 mention of each offence

Table 3: Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County mentions of Offences (qualitative data)

Perceptions of knife crime

The findings from the interviews and focus groups with practitioners and young people discussed knife crime and its perceptions. It was interesting to see how the practitioner perceived criminal records as a badge of honour that knife carrying can bring to some young people, and in the case below, the practitioner discussed this as rite of passage and a sense of status.

“Many young people will be bothered about, you know, having the criminal record. I think you know, some young people feel it's a badge for some of the other young people it's like, well, it's not going to happen to me. It doesn't matter.

I worked with one young person who got caught with a knife 2/3 times. And he couldn't see it was an issue, that he was only joking. (to get money). (the practitioner mentioned that the young person said) “It's not a problem. Everyone carries a knife.” ...until he got charged, he was adamant it's not going to happen because he knew lots of people who got caught but didn't get a criminal record. And you know, it's what people do. And then you get to 17/18 and you stop doing it. That was, that was his mindset. But there's almost like it's a norm for them to do that. It's just part of growing up, you know, with certain friendships.”

(Practitioner 1, City).

The discussions that young people had about knife crime also painted a similar picture to that of the practitioner above. The young people were very open about their opinions and perceptions of knife crime and there was an overarching understanding that young people were open about carrying knives if needed and explicitly for safety only and not with the intention to use it.

There is a common understanding amongst the young people who took part in the research that they feel safer with a knife rather than without one. But This does bring up broader questions about safety which is addressed in section three of the report.

“Yeah. A knife can save you. It actually can save you. Like if I never had my knife and them lot had their knife, I would’ve been dead. Even seeing videos of stuff like the people that are backing out of knives are running, they either are both running or gonna use em. I think a knife can save you still.”

(Male, 16, City)

“So you feel you feel safer as a group with a, with one, with any type of weapon rather than with nothing.”

(Researcher)

“Yeah. Yeah.”

(Group)

“Realistically, if you're carrying a knife, you've got one in your pocket, you know when that knife comes out, you're going to get arrested.”

(19 Black Male, City)

It was made clear that none of their personal friends would carry knives, but they do know people who have. Young people explained that the main reason for carrying knives was to 'show off'. But then said there was also a need for protection, as demonstrated in the quotes below. They rated this 50/50 showing off, compared to protection. The discussions surrounding safety continued to be geared towards protection or the need to protect themselves from others. Furthermore, this was tied up with the feeling of being let down by police when incidents have happened.

“Kids have to carry knives for their own protection”

(Young person, City)

“I would use a knife on my op if needed” (the 'op' is an issue this young person has with another young person’)

(Young person, City)

"All young people should be able to carry knives for protection, you are allowed to have knives in your house!"
(Young person, City)

"I've been threatened with a knife and my friend got robbed a knife point – 'nothing was done about it' 'the police didn't care about it'"
(Young person, City)

"I don't think that the police in fact understand the situation (knife crime). They give the same punishment to everyone and some people, no matter what punishment you give them, they're not gonna stop."
(15 Black Male, City)

As discussions moved forward it was revealed that postcode rivalries were an aspect of city living that some young people are contending with, and others are unclear about why such things are happening. This not only links to feeling of safety but also around aspirations which is further discussed in section three of this report.

"Rivalries exist within postcodes" (At this point a young person showed me postcode signs with his hands (he alluded to being in a gang but wouldn't discuss it further).
(Young person, City)

"Kids don't know what they're fighting for, it's sad really."
(Young person, City)

It was important for the researcher to clarify with young people about the use of knives or weapons. The younger ones in the group were discussing it in terms of safety but the dialogue they created was framed around an action like experience, which highlights their innocence and lack of understanding surrounding the impact of knife crime which the older ones in the group quickly corrected and highlighted as an issue.

"Like just to protect my safety: Like if some guy comes at me and pulls his shirt up, what now yeah? I'm just gonna back it out."
(Male 13, City)

"Yeah, if he grabs it puts it to my throat, I'm just gonna grab..."
(Male, 13, City)

"...See how he's saying it, he's like being like being like movie bro, but when you back a knife certain man will be running or

have butterflies in their stomach, like it's not easy to stab someone on the road."

(Male, 16, City)

"like when you have shank this big yeah, and you're stabbing someone coming out the back. You're not gonna wanna see that bro, when you pull the knife out, you gonna see all the all that. You don't wanna see that."

(Male 15, City)

The focus groups were held in city and county areas of Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County, as a result, findings showcased how the topic of safety was equated with knife crime. Yet young people within county areas discussed how knife crime was not necessarily an issue that they noticed, but recognised the problems it can cause. Whereas within the city, knife crime was also discussed alongside other societal aspects such as poverty, and drugs and homelessness., that they see every day.

'Violence happens in my area Sutton-in-Ashfield'

(Young person, County)

'Knife crime and selling drugs is an issue around here'

(Young person, City)

'It's very common'

(Young person, City)

Furthermore, the concern young people have around the welfare of other young people was a strong finding within some of the focus group data, and that labels of bad kid can have a negative impact on how that young person may be perceived or treated.

"I think that carrying knives is something that will always happen, in the same way drugs is always going to be something that happens. We've had a war on drugs for how long now? And it's not looking like it's slowing down. And you can see it's going the same way now people with weapons, even though the police make it harder, they can make the prison sentence longer. Some people are still going to carry... You see on the news all the time, everyone knows the consequences of it. So, I think it's time for more young people to take responsibility for their actions."

(19 Black Male, City)

"Some young people wanna be cool in front of their friends and stuff. But then, when it does go down, sometimes there might be a real reason (why they would be carrying a knife).

This is something that we should stop, some kids are just bad to other kids and just want to do bad stuff and some are actually in danger. I think that's something we should differentiate."

(16 Black Male, City)

"I feel like it depends on the situation. If someone is being groomed, I feel like leniency should come in, but if it's just some guy trying to be cool, that's not ok. Because in the end, there's other people who are actually gonna be hurt."

(15 Black Male, City)

"It's kind of obvious which kids are actually in danger. From a social care point of view, the people around you would know what the danger is and it can be a really complicated thing. And in those meetings you can actually take that into consideration, when you're talking to these kids. But sometimes they just have bad child that just wants dealing with."

(16 Black Male, City)

Additionally, there was a sense of hopelessness that came with discussing knife crime and was compared to the failing war on drugs. Furthermore, the easy availability of sharp objects and knives were also a cause for concern and how easy and available knife buying or selling is, especially online.

"They shouldn't be allowed to sell knives online"

(Young person, County)

"You can get a 15-inch machete from knife warehouse for 15quid' 'it's like getting a parcel from Amazon."

(Young person, County)

Deescalating Violence

In all of these discussions it was interesting to see how violence could be deescalated from the perspective of young people. Young people are very acutely aware of the societal and financial circumstances of their city. As such, they felt that more money should be placed within community contexts as they are very aware of how council bankruptcy, poverty and the state of living alongside cuts to services have impacted young people.

“ One of the factors that effects young people offending is when they get their activities cancelled or like the youth centre is shut down... I think there should be like more activities in school, because you don't do anything at school. It's just kind of boring and you see people escalating stuff just for the sake of it.”

(16 Black Male, City)

This section has highlighted how violence against the person is higher than the national average in Nottingham City and the gravity of offence is higher per age. From the qualitative data knife crime is associated with lack of opportunity, especially healthy ways to spend time, youth clubs closing, or lack of safe spaces have impacted young people of Nottingham City, and Nottinghamshire County. It is clear that young people acknowledge the risks of carrying knives and are aware of the devastating impacts such objects can have. Some are empathetic about knife carrying and understand the challenges that are often linked with neighbourhood or societal factors such as poverty, drugs and wider crime or exclusion. As such this aligns closely with the quantitative data, and it could be argued that lack of healthy outlets and youthful frustrations could be adding such statistics. Such issues are recognised and discussed within the recommendations portion of the report.

This section has highlighted patterns of offending behaviour alongside perceptions of knife crime. Although these two are separate findings the quantitative data highlights how violence against the person is higher within Nottingham City compared to the national average, which could be contributing to the FTE's statistics. Accordingly, young people are expressing the lack of opportunity and visible poverty they see in and around some of their neighbourhoods. Such issues are not a youth issue, but a societal and government issue, as these problems have been persistent long before young people were there, and arguably could therefore also contribute to FTE statistics.

Key findings for Patterns of Offences

- Violence against the person is higher than the national average in Nottingham City and more understanding is required on this offence
- Gravity of offence increases with age of child.
- Young people associated knife crime with lack of positive opportunity and also linked other societal aspects such as poverty, and drugs and homelessness, that they see every day.

The following section explores FTE cohort characteristics, synthesising both quantitative and qualitative data.

Section 3. FTE cohort characteristics

The findings outlined in section two of the report highlighted the pattern of offences but within that discussion, were mentions of social, economic and neighbourhood factors that can impact how one navigates their neighbourhoods. This section builds on these discussions utilising findings from the qualitative research conducted with stakeholders, practitioners and young people within city and county settings.

Our quantitative analysis, and what is known from previous research, aligns the likelihood of offending with school exclusion. Young people and Practitioners reported that **zero tolerance behaviour policies in schools** were resulting in increased rates of exclusion. As a result, young people manifested negative attitudes towards school and towards teachers, which in turn translated into a **lack of trust in adults**. This **generational divide** is indicated as one of the main barriers to effective youth justice practice.

Such debates are covered across several themes in this section including vulnerabilities, disadvantage, protected characteristics, school experiences, school exclusion, and perceptions of the police. Such themes provide a thorough account of perceptions and opinions on protected characteristics, vulnerabilities and disadvantage that is experienced across Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County.

School experiences and school exclusion

In the academic year 2021/22 new figures (ONS 2024) on permanent and fixed term exclusion were released showcasing the familiar patterns that mirror the social inequalities present today.

It has been identified that young people who are from marginalised backgrounds including those who are eligible for free school meals, special educational needs and disabilities or certain ethnic groups are all more likely to be excluded from school than their peers. Such trends have been consistent for many years and can negatively impact young people, many of whom experience exclusion, have a higher likelihood of becoming a first-time entrant at an earlier age within the youth justice system.

Data from Nottingham City explored whether or not FTEs had been excluded from school. It was found that FTEs who had not been excluded had the highest age of entry (mean = 15.6, SD = 1.46), and the highest offence severity score (mean = 1.8, SD = 1.35) (see figure 16). By comparison, FTEs excluded after entry had the lowest age of entry (mean = 12.6, SD = 1.69) and the lowest average severity score (mean = 1.38, SD = 0.518). FTEs excluded both before and after first entry had the highest average offence count (mean = 3.33, SD =

1.02), with those excluded after entry having the lowest (mean = 2.88, SD = 0.354).

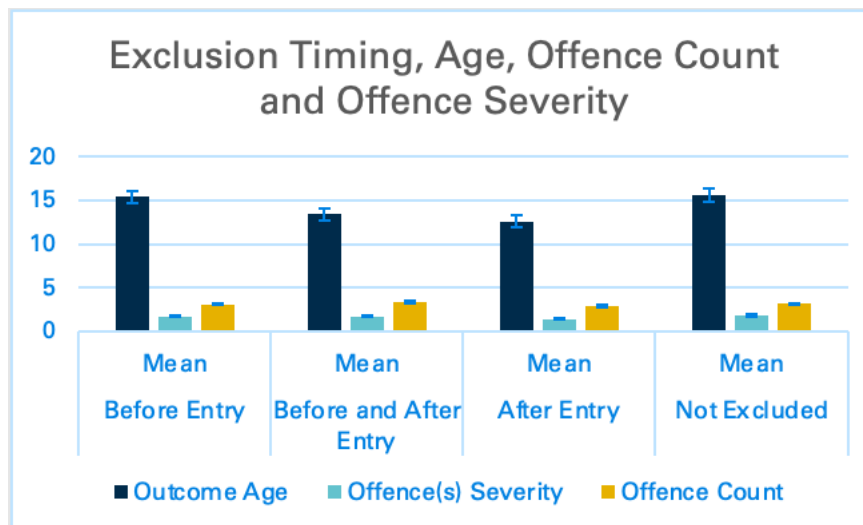


Figure 16: Nottingham City FTEs by Exclusion Timing, Age and Offence (axis = number)

Barriers within and outside the school system

Our findings suggest that there is a continuous struggle within the school system, not only for pupils but for practitioners who work with children and young people who have experienced exclusion.

“A lot of the young people we work with really struggle with school system, and they go from Primary school, where it’s a very almost mummified. And you know, we’ll look after you.... so people aren’t learning the skills coping skills. I don’t think people are learning to kind of understand that. And then they get into a secondary school where it’s all about academic achievement and, you know. If you feel you’re behind your peers, you are trying to avoid those situations. Or you just keep your head down and, you know, try and go under the radar.”

(Practitioner, City)

With school systems having a focus on academic achievement young people who have **SEND characteristics** can struggle. In particular, Practitioners reported problems with speech and language not being reported by schools and communication needs that are not being met or taking a long time to diagnose. Young people corroborated that **being at school** with an unmet need or an undiagnosed SEND characteristic, meant they were often bullied, did not fit in or acted out in certain situations. Families reported being let down by schools not attending to their children’s needs and too easily opting for exclusion measures. However, it is challenging to make comparison between

Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County as both have different processes, funds and approaches.

For Practitioners having a high proportion of young people with **SEND characteristics** was likely to influence the rate of FTEs. But often, referrals from schools are sent too late, and they find school exclusions to be problematic and should only be used a last resort:

"I think quite often we get referrals in a little too late, so they're weak. You can see it's just a tick box. You know for some schools or for some services, you know the next step is to mess up again and then this is what's going to happen. We're given like 2-3 weeks to try and turn things around. So, exclusions is a big one. It's almost, you know. Get them out of the school. They're on the streets and then it's someone else's problem."

(Practitioner, City)

Young people's experience of school and exclusion

Young people were open about discussing exclusion, they were aware of students that had experienced exclusion, and also understood the need for it at times, especially as you progress through the school system and get closer to exams, the strict rules are accepted by the young people, as they understand the importance of it. Yet, the young people were aware of students being excluded including friends and the pattern or series of unfortunate events that can follow because of exclusion. One participant mentioned that eleven students were permanently excluded within one week:

"I feel like that's a pattern because a lot of students who have been excluded from our school. So, like in year eight or year nine, they're now involved with crime."

(16 Black Male, City)

The pressure for teachers to get students through exams is noticed by students, which at times can limit the pastoral and academic support some students may need. The result of frustration encased in 'disruptive behaviour' ends up with children and young people being excluded and out on the streets where there is a lack of positive guidance and not much to do in order to fill their time or fulfil their potential, as the below demonstrates:

"When they get kicked out of school, they have a lot of time on their hands to do absolutely nothing. And that's when they put all their energy and the stuff into the wrong places."

(16 Black Male, City)

Young people's experiences of the school system can have long lasting impacts that have the potential to negatively impact throughout teenage years through to adulthood. At times it can feel alienating or something that you just need to get through.

It became apparent from talking and listening to young people that those whose aptitudes or interest did not align with the aspirations or subjects of contemporary schooling were seen as a problem, as shown in the quotes below. In addition, recent research (McPherson et al, 2023) suggests that broader school cultures are experienced as discriminatory and unsupportive for some young people.

"In secondary school you have two ways you go the bad way or you can go the good way. But that's just how it is.

(Male, 16, Mixed Race, City)

"Always have them. You have the good kids that will sit there in the corner doing what they're doing."

(Male 15, Black, City)

"That's what happened. Normally they can sit right at the back, so they distract no one. And then you got all the good kids right in front so they could do their work and listen to the teacher."

(Male, 14, White, City)

Recognition or respect within school settings

Whilst we had opportunity to explore aspects of school experiences, a more in-depth exploration of this would be beneficial for future research. Yet, what had emerged were feelings of (lack of) recognition or respect at school. The young people we spoke to who ranged in ethnicity discussed how they did not feel seen or valued in schools, and the discussion below highlights how young people from ethnic minority backgrounds feel devalued and this was agreed upon by the group.

"But it's mostly coloured people that will get picked on. I would say it's the coloured kids that get picked on (by teachers in schools)."

(Male, 16, Mixed Race, City)

"Yeah" (Head nods from rest of group)

(Male, 15, Black, City)

The lack of understanding within mainstream school was something felt by young people who we spoke to who also attended an alternative provision. This

lack of understanding was built upon teachers who they perceive to silence their voices, this made these young people lash out. This seemed especially true for the young boys who had been in trouble previously or known to be 'troublesome', as the below quotes show:

"Was like 20, 30 in the class, yeah. Bro, we're all talking. Yeah, teacher, I'm the only black person in this class. And teacher points. And tells me stop talking innit, and I see everyone around talking and she gets onto me, talking about get out my class, so I picked chair dashed it up in the air, picked up the table dashed it up, got the paper clips, dashed them all in her face yeah, and told her to 'fuck off I'm never going to the class again!"

(Male, 15, Black, City)

"I felt like oh they're picking on me for no reason., I have a right to speak, but I couldn't."

(Male, 15, Black, City)

"That's like me in year 8 I used to mess about I used to go to some lessons and mess about in there, everyone else would be speaking, but they'd point at you just for speaking fam. And in year 9, it was always pointing at me because of year 8, and one time a teacher pointed at me, and I flipped a table because she wasn't listening to me."

(Male, 14, White, City)

The young people were discussing how teachers within mainstream school are too strict and that they do not feel they take the time to understand you, or your behaviour.

"Mainstream teachers are just too strict. (group nods). They are some yeah that try and understand you, and some that won't get you and won't try."

(Male, 16, Mixed Race, City)

"I had a teacher she got me. My head of year."

(Male, 14, White, City)

The boys within this focus group were open and honest about their personal experiences of school and how they felt. There seems to be a broader sense of young people feeling alienated at school. The use of isolation was not only an aspect of punishment but highlighted negative behaviours and lack of understanding.

As is illustrated above and below, some young people's narratives did imply they felt mistreated, unheard due to their characteristics, but for the most part young people within these focus groups mainly felt picked on by adults who should be understanding them and aid their learning. As a result, some ended up in isolation or being excluded and the group agreed "that is was useless" and it did not work. The below quotes for young people highlight this:

"That (isolation) would make you worse."

(Male, 16, Mixed Race, City)

"I'll be back in there again."

(Male, 15, Black, City)

"I used to jump out of school about 4 times a day, jump the back gate. There was literally a little gap where everyone slid a lot and no one found out at all. Some little kid snitched that their kids are jumping under the gate and teachers like they caught me jumping back in and then some other kid banged out the kid who snitched."

(Male, 14, White, City)

"The teachers used to just pick on me innit."

(Male, 15, Black, City)

"If your bad at the start, you already have picture painted of you, so it's going to be hard to change that really, so you do something good, then something bad kicks off, you're the first one they think of."

(Male, 16, Mixed Race, City)

School experiences vary between young people, but overall, there is a sense of alienation and exclusion which is bound with narratives of being picked on and overlooked, and in some cases, silenced. These personal experiences are worrying not only due to the lack of support these young people have in school, but how this has the potential to impact wellbeing, educational experiences and how such young people further respond to authority figures as they grow into early adulthood.

Young People's Perceptions of the Police

Within both City and County, practitioners reported that the **closer the proximity of police station** to the local community, the more arrests are made.

Despite some young people reporting **positive relationships with the police** – this may be the one representative that comes into school assembly or attends the youth club – the majority had **experienced negative behaviours** towards them. Whilst some practitioners had recognised that some police officers were working hard to break down barriers and stereotypes, whereas others were targeting young people. For young people from minority ethnic groups, in particular, a **strong distrust of the police** was expressed, which often ran generations deep. This issue has also been recognised nationally¹⁴. Some practitioners cited an institutional racism that had reinforced stereotypes of certain ethnicities.

The below quote was prefaced by the question: 'What's young people's relationship with the police?'

“Negative one. Yeah. Conversations that they've had on negative behaviours they've seen from police, I think there's very few young people feel like they have a good relationship with these... (police). A lot of young people we work with, if you're from Black background, or mix. It's almost inherent (distrust of police)...There's lots of conversations that are generations deep. And I do know that that the police are working hard at trying to change that, but are they doing enough, I don't know.

So, you know I see both sides, you know, work as closely as I can to the police and that, you know, some people within that service are concerned about it and they're trying to make that change. Some people don't. I think one of the worst problem is you know, a lot of people don't see that institutional racism and don't see how you can come across to certain people and I think we, umm yeah again everywhere we go there is there's a language that can reinforce stereotypes even though people don't mean it. And I think a lot of people don't really think about what they say. And I think we're becoming a bit more aware of how language matters, and sometimes how institutions try and manage can reinforce negative stereotypes as well.

(Practitioner, City)

As young people are at that delicate and somewhat tumultuous stage in their life experiences with authority such as police can be rather determinative. Coming into direct and negative contact with police can arguably have the potential to

¹⁴ <https://www.college.police.uk/support-forces/diversity-and-inclusion/action-plan>

solidify attitudes about them. As discussed previously, this could also form part of the generational attitudes and traumas.

“So when did your feelings about police become clear or like negative? Was there, like, an age where you felt you couldn’t trust them anymore?”

(Researcher)

“Yeah when I was 8 years old. Me and my mates were on the street, and they pulled up on us because apparently, there was a noise complaint for us. Well, there wasn’t. They just pulled up on us because we were little kids. So that’s when that everything changed, at 12 years old, there’s kids that are getting arrested for no reason.”

(Male, 14, White, City)

It was interesting to hear about experiences young people or their friends had at a very young age, some of them being in primary school. One focus group was an all-female, white county focus group and discussed how the young people they knew who had been in trouble with police started around ages eight or nine. They discussed from their understanding that contact with any form of the justice system at that young age would usually be due to anti-social behaviour and in their case, being loud.

“Loud or there’s like a big group of us. If were too loud, or of were all stood at the tram stop and loud, we get an announcement saying we are being recorded. It is mainly like if one person did it, the whole group would be made to miss the tram. We have to wait for the next one.¹⁵”

(Female, 14, White, County)

Although anti-social behaviour can be one way of alerting police attention, there was also a strong sense of young people, especially within city settings feeling as though police target them, forms of stereotyping taking place because of certain clothing, or garments worn. This type of target culture can have negative impacts on arrest rates and opinions of police.

“My area, police are everywhere. At night, it’s everywhere. I can’t lie as soon as I open my door, I’m hearing sirens, that’s how bad it’s getting.”

(Male, 15, City, Black)

“Oh, rubbish (perception of police). They see teenagers as intimidating people. Yeah, right. They like, they take it really seriously, but then they don’t. I don’t know how to describe it they only take one side and they don’t listen to you.”

¹⁵ Please note: the tram announcement is controlled by NET, not Notts Police.

(Female, 14, County, White)

"Some police officers profile you because of what you are wearing' – 'they think everyone who wears a tracksuit has got a knife on them' – ' anyone could have a knife."

(County, focus group)

'If you wear a bally (balaclava) in Winter, the police automatically assume you are up to something'

(County, focus group)

This targeted feeling then translated into a lack of trust for police with few young people in both county and city settings, feeling they could not rely on them. Rather they feel victimised or feared becoming a 'criminal' if they asked for police help, and most would only so if absolutely necessary. This felt especially true for young people within city settings, as the below conversations shows:

"Would you feel comfortable approaching a police officer for help?"

(Researcher)

"In my opinion they don't take stuff seriously. If you're a young girl or boys, like our age (14) they just don't take you seriously. More if you're a boy than a girl, if you're a boy they wouldn't take you as seriously. They're (police) calmer with girls."

(Female, 14, White, County)

"Can I just ask, is there anything positive about the group about police?"

(Researcher)

"No, not one thing." No, they're just bullies they like to bully little kids."

(Male, 14, White, City)

"Unless they are going to help my life when I'm at risk I'm not even calling the police."

(Male, 15, Black, City)

All too often, police are seen as enforcers first, rather than those you call when you need help and support. As such, this translates into young people especially within the city focus groups, who do not trust the police.

"So you wouldn't call them even if you were in trouble?"

(Researcher)

"Nah (to calling police), because your just gonna get yourself in more trouble."

(Male, 16, Mixed Race, City)

"I'll just rather sort it out myself."

(Male, 14, White, City)

"I would only ring 999 if I absolutely had to."

(County focus group)

"The police are slow and useless, we deal with the issues ourself unless it's serious"

(City focus group)

"They are not going to areas which need it, they are being taken over by 'roadmen' "police are worrying more about kids on scooters than drug dealing and serious crime."

(City focus group)

Following this targeted feeling, both city and county young people reported issues with the police, where most of the discussion continued around the negative treatment, they receive from the police. The below quotes highlight this feeling:

"Some police officers treat you like shit because they are bored"

(County focus group)

"You are like a pawn in their game"

(County focus group)

"Some police officers threaten you, even when you are not in the wrong"

(County focus group)

The young people spoke about a police officer who they liked who had a good community presence in the Summer. However, the young people explained that they no longer see Ethan and do not know why this is.

There is a deep consensus amongst young people that respect is earned and not given, and the way they treat police is mirroring how they are or have been treated by them currently or previously. If a teacher or a police officer

disrespected you, then this attitude is reciprocated, as the below quotes demonstrate.

"If a police officer was disrespectful, then you would be disrespectful back."

(County focus group)

"Then I would be nice back (If they were nice to me), it's all about respect."

(County focus group)

"Some officers are ok"

(City focus group)

Key to understanding these quotes above is the need for a regular and long-term form of engagement between police and young people that can develop to be meaningful, instead of tick-box or tokenistic efforts that fall by the waist side. It can be argued that few people or specifically children and young people are as vulnerable as those who come into contact with the Youth justice system, and having officers who are not consistent can add to feelings of abandonment or lack of care. These are those whose lives are often embroiled within chaos, social deprivation and at time abuse or neglect:

"There are meant to be police officers who come to the youth club on a regular basis, but they never turned up."

(County focus group)

Stakeholders signposted a range of free activities provided for young people locally such as Community Kicks, anti-knife crime events, Cadets, Police fun days and 12 week youth engagement programme. However, these engagement opportunities were not listed by young participants in the study, when asked 'what is there to do in your area'? This suggests that more promotion of these events is required, alongside evaluation of the reach and impact of these activities.

Peers and Influence

Furthermore, there is scope for police to learn from those who have lived experience of child criminality. Often working within a network of support services such as victim and health support, ensures police have others to call on for a variety of situations who may seem less imposing or intimidating and therefore young people may be more likely to discuss their needs with them.

"Yeah, you can't let people influence you...unless they're elders Then they can. Then I'll have a kind of listen to them. Maybe..... Ye maybe 20's 30's... So, they got that story init. Yeah."

So, you would more likely listen to them. Like my dad's mates and all that."

(Male, 16, White, City)

"Yeah, they told me this is not going. Trust me. I've been through it. They've always say. There's a guy that used to come here (take 1 studies) and also went to the same school, I'd rather listen to him because he's been through it."

(Male, 14, White, City)

During teenage years peer groups can play a crucial role in shaping individual beliefs, behaviours or attitudes. Not only can they be a source of social support but provide acceptance and status, whereby attaining the groups norms and values at times can be key to attaining such acceptance. These forms of social learning including 'negative' behaviour such as criminal or anti-social activity can be observed and reciprocated within the peer group:

No, they (peers) don't have an influence on, I'm not going to lie. Some of them influence me to be good, yes. Yes. So I try to stay with the good ones. But the bad ones always end up appearing. I'm not going to let people tell me what to do. I'm not. Want me to talk. I've got my own mouth."

(Male 16, City)

Stop and Search

As problematic as the above discussions can be it can be argued that issues run far deeper than lack of communication or relationship building between young people and police. Aspects of policing such as stop and search can arguably be influenced by personal biases, public perceptions of youth and their culture, racism and a range other stereotype, some of which have been discussed above such as clothing.

"Have you all been stopped? Searched."

(Researcher)

"Yeah. Once, maybe twice. like when your over on Harvey Hadden and your with the olders who carry (weapons), they'll always stop and search ya"

(Male, 14, White, City)

"I've been stopped and searched probably around like 10 times, cuz like when I've been arrested, they always have it stop and search me innit to see if I have any weapons."

(Male, 15, Black, City)

"Ye, about four times. Not bothered anymore, they never find owt"

(Male, 16, White, City)

One young person mentioned how they have been stopped and searched before and how they have been treated. Some other young people alluded to race being factor as to why they get stopped and searched.

"Normal police is ok, but when you have armed police that's different, like it happened one time, they swear at you as well, like 'get the fuck on the floor!'"

(Male, 16, Mixed Race, City)

"I don't like how to the police can just stop and search you for anything"

(City focus group)

"I have been stop and searched on several occasions' I think there is a racial element to it' 'they were all white police officers."

(City focus group)

Other young people who were older understood the necessity of stop and search, and at the time although they found it inconvenient understood how it was part of their job, demonstrated by the quote below.

"I think the area has calmed down from previous years. Realistically, unless you're doing wrong, the police are going to leave you alone. They might see you and say 'you fit the description', but if you're not doing wrong and they catch you, they just let you go."

(Male, 19, Black, City)

The findings from this section highlights that for young people encounters with criminal justice or police more specifically can have either positive or negative lasting effects. Out of 35 young people participating in this study, 9 young people reported negative experiences, whereas 3 reported positive experiences. It has highlighted that equal and fair treatment have the possibility of generating belongingness and acceptance whereas treatment perceived unfair or in any way prejudicial or lacking clarity generates negative feelings and exclusion. It is clear that participants have on occasion noted

where police interaction was friendly and respectful; and these are important to acknowledge but seem few and far between. In situation where respect was lacking highlighted feelings of resentment, and this was especially true for males of colour within city settings.

Vulnerabilities

The following section shares qualitative data from young people and Practitioners on the specific vulnerabilities that FTE cohorts, and wider young people in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County.

Low Aspirations and Ambitions

Feelings of boredom and frustration, in turn, had an impact upon young people's self-esteem where they reported **lower aspirations, lesser ambitions** and often struggled to deal with **different emotions**. The quotes from Practitioners below articulate these dilemmas:

'They believe that they're not gonna achieve because they're around all these high achievers and you know people who've got the pathways planned out. And it's almost like, well, I'm totally not going to fulfil any kind of ambition. So I might as well almost kind of go into that cycle of, you know, self-prophecy'
(Practitioner, City)

"I think a lot of young people we work with, really struggle to articulate themselves and to recognise emotions so that they're sometimes only emotions they can show can be seen as aggressive and being upset and angry. And I think if that's all you know and you don't know how to, then explain how you feel and you don't know how to kind of offload correctly..."
(Practitioner, City)

That being said, in one City youth focus group, there was an inspiring level of ambition with one young person wanting to work as a trader in finance, another in medicine and another with a keen focus on social justice. However, young people reported a lack of direction around how they might achieve their goals.

'I want to open more mosques and places of worship for the younger generation to be better people'
(Black Male, 15 City)

Stereotypes

Practitioners felt offending pathways would be easier to fall into, with cycles of crime being prevalent in some City areas. Practitioners feedback that it was increasingly important to challenge **young people's mindset** that they are not 'bothered' about having a criminal record. This sense of **self-fulfilling prophecy** was reported by both young people and practitioners and was strongly linked to expected stereotypes that many had witnessed through social media. Several young people had **experienced threats** made through social media and had felt the need to protect themselves with weapons possession in particular, as the below highlights:

'There's lots of sometimes empty threats, but sometimes you know, I'm quite serious with threats being made and young people feel that they need to protect themselves'

(Practitioner, City)

Social Media and Retaliation

The **influence of social media**, on weapons possession specifically, was reported by both stakeholders and practitioners. Recent videos of young people wielding machetes was seen as emblematic of this issue. Practitioners signposted **high levels of unregulated internet access** for young people and lack of parental education and guidance to enable restriction of potentially harmful content.

"With social media in Nottingham City, I think it's a very small place. So everyone's like linked together. And people will just post stuff on like snapchat and just fight for the sake of looking cool"

(16 Black Male, City)

"Because of Covid, because everyone was stuck inside their house, they just got a bit bored and started provoking other people. I think it has a knock-on effect as one person might provoke someone else, they might force you to come off social media, and maybe one person might not be serious but another person might take it personal. And then that guy might look for retaliation"

(15 Black Male, City)

The threat of violence perpetrated through social media is significantly high. With 4 in 10 teenage children describing social media as a major factor driving violence (Youth Endowment Fund, 2023). Put simply, it is difficult for young people to walk away, if you are insulted on social media, it is public and makes a retaliation more likely.

Retaliation was linked to encounters in the local area, with some young people describing how certain looks or reactions from people in the street can lead to violence, as shown in the quotes below.

'See me personally. I don't get along with so many people. I get along with you, but that if you look at me and you have that face that I just don't like or like, you get all that. You just look at me in a certain way. I'll tell you. Like what you looking at, bro?'

(Male, City)

I hate people looking at me like if I don't know you like, If I meet you, I will speak. You are cool, but if you're a random person and I'm walking straight here and I see you looking and I turn around and you still look at me. I'm gonna ask you, like, do you have a problem? 'cause you're looking at me so many times, it's like you've got a problem with me at this point. And if I get a little bit (aggy) you get a slap.

(Male 15, City)

It is vital young people are given support in their early years about how to address their emotions and explain how they feel, this was described by a Practitioner as a vital element of preventative work:

"I think having people around them from an early age helping. Helping them deal with you know their emotions, I think you know. If, we can help young people articulate how they're feeling from a young age, maybe we can, you know, help address certain barriers."

(Practitioner, City)

Grooming

In one City focus group, young people cited 'grooming' as one of the reasons young people become involved in the justice system, as the following quotes demonstrate

'People say grooming, like you know when you're getting groomed that you can't, you won't be able to tell me you're not getting groomed. Some people let their grooming happen and stuff, but most people just want the money. That's how it begins like, rah I need money fam. What they don't realise that you're in debt, and you need to pay it back, and if you can't you're working for free (to the groomers) to pay it back. That's how it gets you'

(Young person, City)

"I do feel that money does come into it, because when you're young, money seems like the ideal thing. They might see crime as an easy option to like get the things that they want."

(15 Black Male, City)

Child criminal exploitation is on the rise, based upon research in 2019, it has been estimated that 30 to 50,000 children are being criminally exploited by county lines gangs (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2023). School attendance is cited as a protective factor, which is concerning due to the high level of school exclusions in Nottingham City.

One young person described how a friend 'drifted into' trouble and mentioned grooming:

" your friends can start hanging out with people they don't really fully know. And then get peer pressured into making decisions.

(19 Black Male, City)

Lack of Trust in Adults

A prominent theme which emerged from a practitioner working in a mentoring capacity, was frustration that often they did not have enough time or funding to make a meaningful difference to young people's lives, shown in the quotes below from Practitioners. With one citing that 12 weeks is an ideal time frame, rather than 6 weeks owing to funding restraints.

"If I'm honest, I don't think six weeks is a long time. There's some success. There are some yeah. Having the money to fund a longer project that's going to be impactful and beneficial to you. You know you're looking minimum 12 weeks if not longer."

(Practitioner, City)

"I think most young people from my experience. Want to talk about it. Want to kind of almost get things off the chest. Want to kind of almost have the opportunity to talk about what's going on in their lives. But for us as a

mentoring organisation we struggle to invest in the right amount of time to make it different. That's why with more funding comes in that helps with that, because then you can."

(Practitioner, City)

It was stated that young people might start to build trust and then funding ends which can impact any progress made. Further, practitioners stated that they often start working with the young person when it is too late to make positive changes, such as the quote below:

"And I think by the time we get to work with a lot of young people, they are very close to being excluded anyway. They've given up interest in a lot of adults."

(Practitioner, City)

Disadvantage

Further to specific vulnerabilities that young people faced, which impacted upon FTE rates, there were a considerable number of disadvantages experienced by young people because of living in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County as the following section shows.

Boredom

Young people reported **boredom** as a factor in first time or low-level offending, with many local youth services having been shut down or reducing provision to one night per week. Practitioners agreed that a lack of positive ways to spend their spare time, left the door open for more negative behaviours. Young people, especially in the City, often communicated that they felt there was 'nothing for them' in their local areas, with a **lack of choice** or free activities.

This was very evident in all youth focus groups, County and City young people all expressed dismay at the lack of services available to them in their area. This was a particular issue in the City with young people stating that nothing is free, and they have to pay for youth services. The impact of the cut to youth services is felt by young people, as the below conversation with the Researcher shows:

What is there to do in your local area?

(Researcher)

'nothing, absolutely nothing,' 'we have a youth club once a week and that's it'
(14 White British male, County)

Why do you think young people in your area might get in trouble with the police?
(Researcher)

'because that's the only fun thing to do' 'I just want to do something to make myself feel entertained'
(15, Male, County)

Not enough services in Nottingham City for young people' 'only 3 Mosques'
(16, Black Male, City)

'You have to pay for youth clubs, nothing is free'
(14, Black Male, City)

City practitioners agreed that there is not much for young people to do and there is a cost element to some services which young people are unable to afford.

'I don't think there's enough for young people to do, you know, even just to pass on playing football. There are no fields that can go on. If you want to go and kick the football around, with your friends and hire a court, it's £45.00 to for an hour. So, you know, there's not much young people can do. And then when they're just hanging around in groups on the streets because they can't do anything else'
(Practitioner, City)

Safety and Lighting

At community level, young people expressed high levels of dissatisfaction with where they lived, particularly within the City boundary. Often this was due to lack of things to do in the areas, which was echoed by practitioners, but also **lack of feeling safe.**

In the interviews, City young people had few positive things to say about their community, with areas such as Radford, Sneinton and Bestwood being cited negatively. Below are two examples of these negative feelings”

‘nothing good about this place’ (14, Black Male, City)

‘As soon as I’m 18 I’m out’ (16, Black Male, City)

Safety came up as an issue for City young people which is highlighted by the conversation below:

‘I feel safe in my area it's just certain places innit, I don't really have a problem, but my area is just full of gang violence, drug dealers, crackheads. Beggars, psycho people that run around naked. Radford and top valley is just the worst.’
(Male, City)

‘you (responding to the other young person) might feel safe in your area (forest fields), but I definitely would never feel safe in your area’ (Male, City)

‘Well I don't feel safe in NGX¹⁶. Cuz I was with my mates, and I still wouldn't walk round with my mates in [name of place], cuz summat happens still. Because the last time I walked through [name of place] I got punched. Near [name of location] I wouldn't feel safe walking near there’
(Male, City)

In a separate City focus group, safety and lack of CCTV cameras available or recording was cited as an issue. One young person described how he sees violence on every corner of his community, but nothing is captured on CCTV or is done to rectify the issues in the area.

‘I’m walking down the road and I’m seeing a guy getting pressure, then I walk around the corner and I see a drug deal, I see a giant camera, but it looks fake and it’s not recording anything’
(14, Black Male, City)

For young people in the County, **lighting levels** was an issue that added to feelings of unease but also to opportunities for low level offending behaviour. In the County interviews, there seemed to be a genuine fear of going out at night, expressing how unsafe they felt if it was dark. Lighting also added to the lack of opportunities in their area, with one young person expressing that he would play football to occupy him if there was lighting at night.

¹⁶ This quote has been anonymised and details of locations removed.

'we need more lighting in the village as it's too dark at night'
(12 Female, County)

'we need more lighting in the football cage so we can play football at night' **(17, Male, County)**

In a separate County focus group, young people mentioned the fear around 'roadmen' (roadmen are young people on bikes wearing black masks covering their faces). Young people stated that they feel that there are no consequences for the harassment from 'roadmen' and other young people their age.

'we are more scared of people our age, especially 'roadmen'
(14, Female White British)

'This is one of the reasons why I don't go out, as I'm scared of being harassed by young people I know and some I don't'
(14, Female White British)

'I'm scared to leave my house sometimes'
(13, Male White British)

Homelessness and Drug Use

For City young people, close proximity and daily exposure to **homelessness and drug use** on the streets was problematic. Young people were acutely aware of the social issues plaguing Nottingham City currently and offered suggestions on what might help with this. Young people mentioned that they often witnessed drug taking on their doorstep. This was particularly evident for young people who live in Radford and St Ann's area of Nottingham City:

I'm seeing needles on the floor outside, on parks where kids are walking. Seeing them everywhere, Radford, St Ann's'
(14 Female White British, City)

'St Ann's is very dirty' **(15 Black Male, City)**

'Homelessness is a really big problem' **(14 Black Male, City)**

'we need a scheme to support homeless people to get back into work'
(15 Black Male, City)

In a separate City focus group, young people also identified homelessness as an issue and all agreed that homelessness had increased, particularly around the 'shops' area and it was making them feel unsafe.

"It's a good place, however, it does also have these negatives. Since I've been living there, in the first few years like it was good. But I've noticed that like crime and rough sleeping is increasing"

(15 Black Male, City)

Young people said they would ask for a homeless shelter in their area to help improve this issue.

Poverty

Practitioners further reflected upon the **distinct geographical divides** within the City between "children of millionaires" and "social housing" and the enduring existence of **postcode rivalries**. The stakeholders' group was highly aware of the adverse **impact of poverty** as a significant contributing factor to FTEs in the City. With 80% of families living in the lower council tax bands A and B and the local authority facing bankruptcy and further cuts to services for young people. One Practitioner reflected that:

'They aren't really that different despite the areas 'cause even though on the face of it Rushcliffe is quite affluent, there's pockets of social housing, but they'll go to schools with Children of millionaires. So there's a different level of umm i guess self-esteem for some, but they'll be facing some similar things that young people face in the city"

(Practitioner, City)

Parents in Nottingham City whose children are in the youth justice system often face additional layers of hardship due to poverty. Many of these families struggle with financial instability, which can exacerbate the challenges their children face. Practitioners argued that parents often feel let down by the system and are unheard by authorities:

"There are a lot of people feel left on their own by governments and they quite often see a lot of agencies as, umm threats. Yeah, they're gonna lose their child. They're gonna do this. So I think it becomes a lot of dishonesty in conversation with some parents suffering in silence."

(Practitioner, City)

Key Findings on FTE cohorts, vulnerability and disadvantage

- Young people typically had low aspirations and ambitions. However, in one City focus group, aspirations were high but struggled to obtain direction on how to achieve their career ambitions.
- Violence and retaliations are seen as a by-product of increased internet and social media access.
- Young people cited 'grooming' as one of the reasons behind offending behaviour, with the desire for money being the principal motivator.
- Lack of trust in adults was identified as a key issue for young people. Practitioners cited lack of funding and short timeframes to work with young people as a barrier to building trust and achieving positive outcomes.
- Funding cuts to youth services have left young people feeling bored, with a lack of things to do in their area.
- Young people were left feeling unsafe in their area because of the lack of lighting available at night, this was a particular issue for young people in the County.
- City young people reported high levels of visible violence and stated that a lack of CCTV impacted their feelings of safety.
- Young people had very few positive things to say about their area with many (mostly City young people) wanting to leave as soon as they turn 18.
- City young people noted a rise in homelessness and drug use, especially in the Radford and St Ann's area of Nottingham City and stated that this made them feel unsafe.
- Practitioners reflected on the geographical divides and issues with poverty for young people in Nottingham City. Practitioners argued that parents often feel let down by the system and are unheard by authorities.

Having considered data from both young people and practitioners on FTE cohort characteristics and the vulnerabilities and disadvantages of wider cohorts of young people, the next section sets out findings on FTEs and preventative and diversionary disposals.

Section 4. FTEs and preventative and diversionary disposals

This section highlights the findings from the qualitative research conducted with Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County stakeholders and County practitioner focus groups. Interviewees were asked what disposal is most prevalent in their area and what works to prevent further offending. The overwhelming theme was around the increase in Outcome 22 disposals in their area and the importance of targeted prevention. This was a trend within Police recording, rather than intervention by the Youth Justice service. It is important to note that one of the research team attended an Out of Court Panel meeting in Nottinghamshire County to understand how panels are coordinated and the process behind disposal decisions.

Outcome 22¹⁷ is a disposal that is used in a deferred prosecution and was introduced to impact first-time entrants where it is not in the public interest to try and progress the case. It seeks to reflect and respond to potential biases in the criminal justice system, which research suggests leads to children from ethnic minorities receiving formal criminal justice outcomes (YJB, 2022). An Outcome 22 negates the FTE status, which is acquired through more formal disposals such as, Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions. However, to qualify for Outcome 22, recipients must complete tailored diversionary, intervention, or educational tasks related to their offence, making it a more constructive, child-centered alternative for young people.

Although Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions were mentioned during interviews, the focus of discussion was around how the same diversionary activities offered to FTEs, are being offered to Outcome 22 recipients as well.

The following section shares quantitative data, with narrative on FTE outcomes, custody rates with ethnic disparities and disposals for Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County.

Nottingham City

FTE Outcomes

¹⁷ Outcome 22 is the Home Office outcome code, intended to reflect where a diversionary intervention has been used to result a case that does not meet the public interest test to take any further action. It is an informal outcome that results in an NFA, for use with both adult and youth cases. 'Diversionary, educational or intervention activity, resulting from the crime report, has been undertaken and it is not in the public interest to take any further action'. [Crime outcomes in England and Wales: Technical Annex - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101447/crime_outcomes_in_england_and_wales_technical_annex.pdf)

As figure 17 below demonstrates, in Nottingham City Youth Caution is the most frequent outcome with Referral Order and Young Conditional following closely behind.

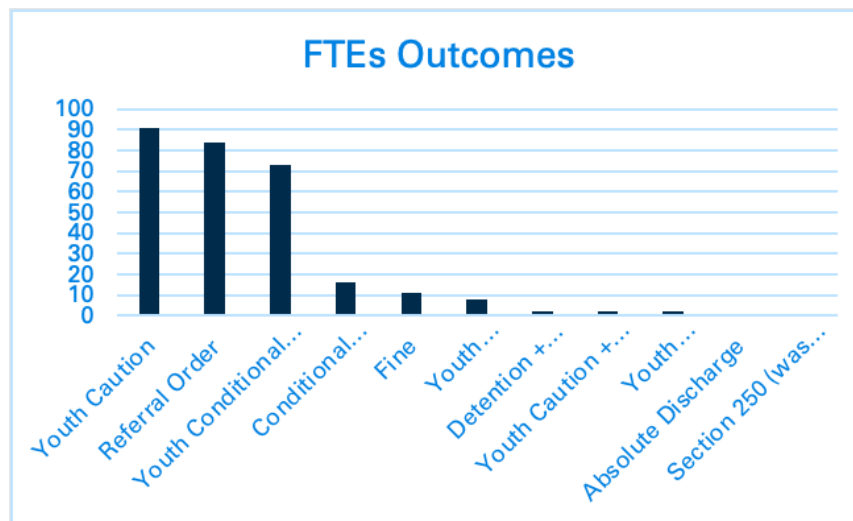


Figure 17: Nottingham City FTEs Outcomes (vertical axis = number)

Outcomes and ETE types with no data have been removed. Absolute Discharge and Section 250 outcomes both have a single case, though they do not appear to have any data.

Note: We were unable to access/generate comparable data around the use of informal disposals such as Outcome 21 and 22.

In terms of outcomes, Nottingham City is more likely to apply all outcomes other than Drug Testing, Drug Treatment, and No Requirement YROs compared to both Like Cities and Family Averages (see figure 18). That said, Nottingham City does also have a higher number of YROs compared to Like City and Family averages.

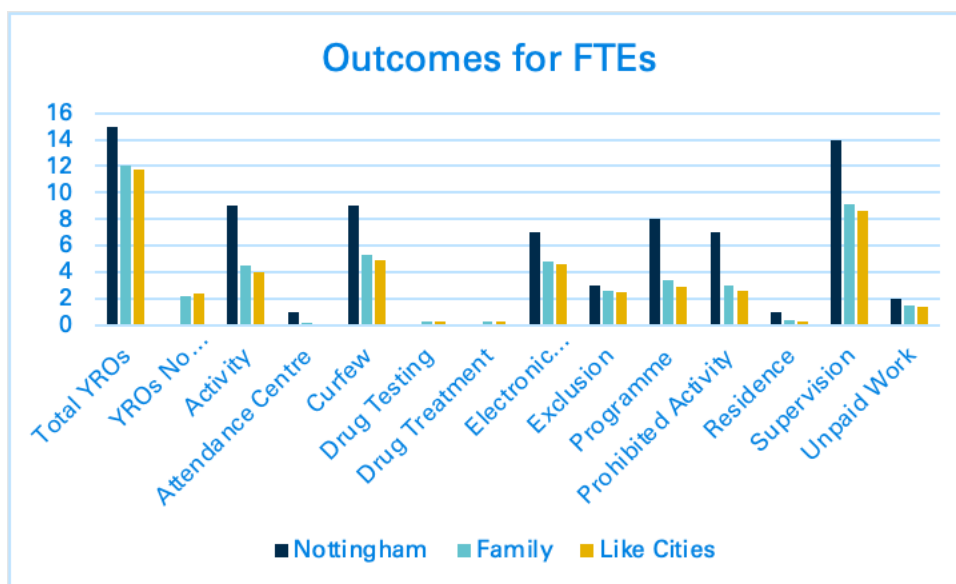


Figure 18: Nottingham City Outcomes for FTEs (vertical axis = number)

Note: Education has been excluded from presentation on this graph as it has not been used by any of the authorities compiled within this dataset.

Custody Rates

Rates of FTE and Police Custody Use: Between 21-22 and 22-23, Nottingham City saw an overall decrease of 62.00 FTEs per 100 000 people, reducing from 537.34 to 475.34 per 100 000 people. In the same time frame, like cities saw a decrease of 5.68 FTEs per 100 000 people (from 215.52 to 209.84) and the family saw a decrease of 10.36 FTEs per 100 000 people (from 242.34 to 321.97) (see figure 19). Nottingham City experienced one of the most significant decreases in the family.

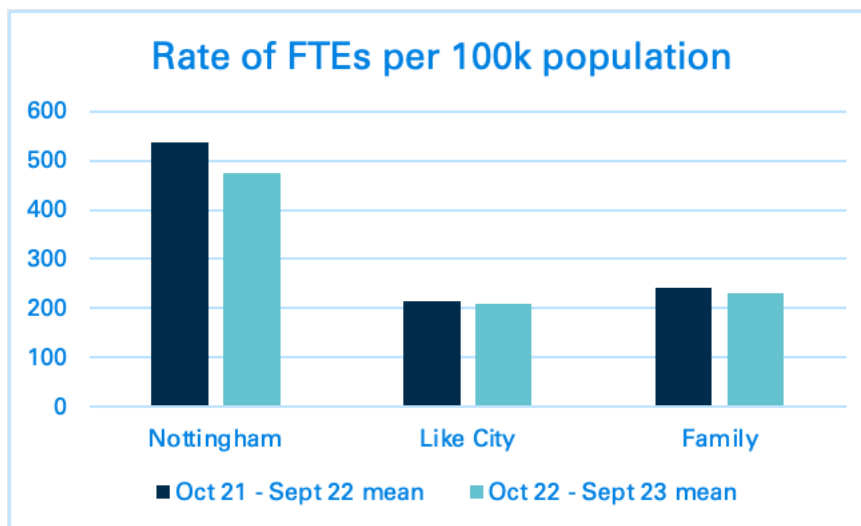


Figure 19: Nottingham City rate of FTEs per 100K population

Conversely, custody outcomes increased in all three regions. Between the years 21-22 and 22-23, Nottingham City saw an increase of 0.13 custody outcomes per 1000 people (from 0.24 to 0.38), compared to like cities' 0.08 increase (from 0.18 to 0.26) and the family's 0.08 increase (from 0.19 to 0.27) (see figure 20).

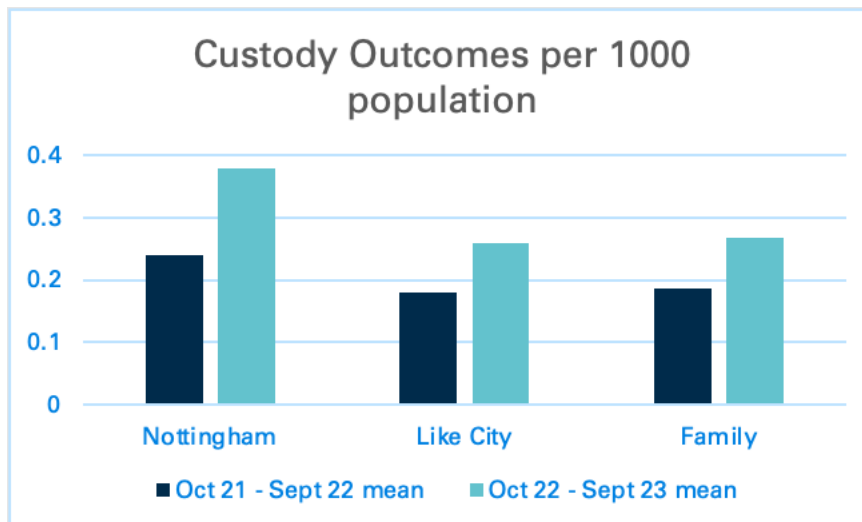


Figure 20: Nottingham City Custody Outcomes per 1000 population

Ethnic Disparities

Nottingham City has an approximately 51.2% white population, and 50% of FTEs are white, however these white FTEs only make up 42.9% of the custodial sentences distributed. Non-white minorities, however, make up approximately 48.8% of the population, represent 42.6% of FTEs, and receive 57.1% of the custodial sentences.

The like city average population was approximately 60.9% white, and 59.1% of FTEs were white, making up 27% of custodial sentences distributed (see figure 21). Non-white minorities, by comparison, make up 39.1% of the population, 36.9% of the FTE population, and yet 52.1% of the custodial sentences. The family average population is 60.1% white, which makes up approximately 58.3% of the FTE population, and received about 29.2% of the custodial sentences. By comparison, non-white minorities constitute 39.9% of the population, and 37.5% of the FTE population, receiving 52.6% of the custodial sentences.

As can be seen from the figure below, though Nottingham City does have a slightly disproportionate rate of custodial sentences for non-white FTEs, this is much lower than the like cities and family disparities.

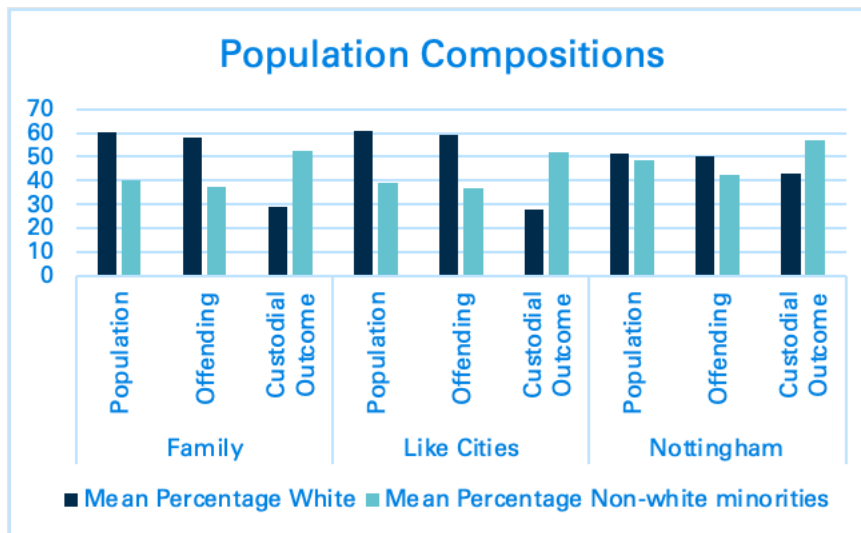


Figure 21: Nottingham City Custody rates per Population

Disposals

Nottingham City – as well as the like city and family averages – have seen a small decline in the number of offences between the 20-21 and 21-22 counting years, as shown in table 4 below.

Region	2020-21	2021-22
Nottingham	377	299
Like Cities	396.3	295.9
Family	394.5	296.1

Table 4: Nottingham City Disposals with like cities and family

The ratios of disposal types have also changed between these two years, but this is not overly noticeable. Nottingham City has seen an 12.5% decrease in custody disposals (from 8% to 7% of total disposals), and a 125% rise in community disposals (from 4% to 9% of total disposals). First tier disposals have not changed (maintained at 48%) but pre-court disposals have decreased by 105 (from 40% to 36%), accounting for the rise in community disposals (see figures 22 & 23).

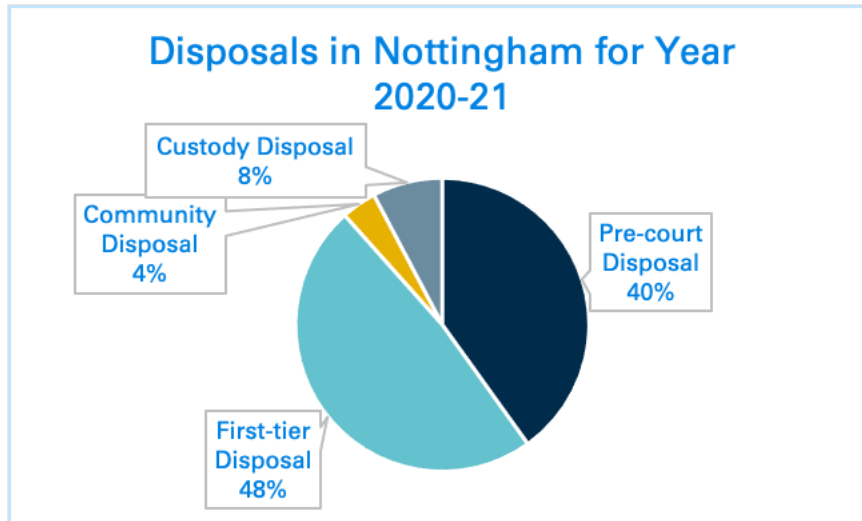


Figure 22: Nottingham City Disposals 2020-21 by %

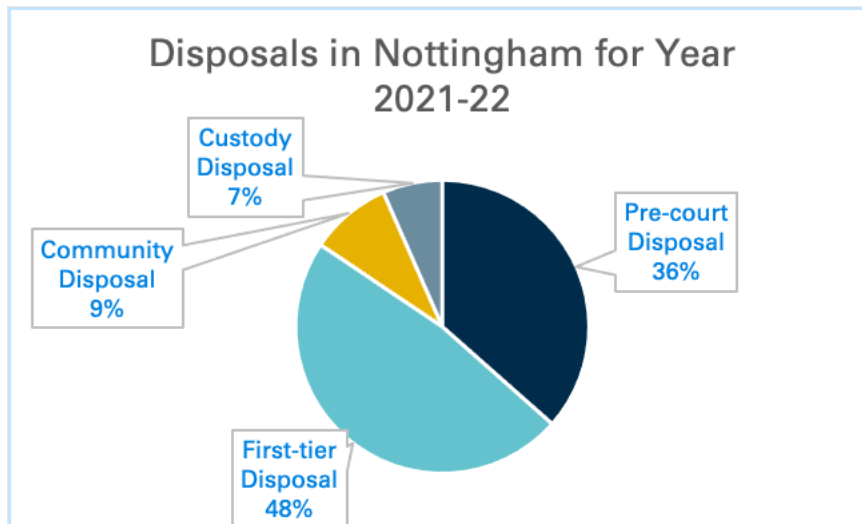


Figure 23: Nottingham City Disposals 2021-22 by %

Between 2020-21 and 2021-22, the number of offences committed by FTEs has also fallen in Nottingham City, the like-counties, and the family. The proportion of case disposals has also risen across all three categories, as seen in table 5.

	2020-21						2021-22					
	Total Offences	Pre-court Disposal	First-tier Disposal	Community Disposal	Custody Disposal	Total Disposal	Total Offences	Pre-court Disposal	First-tier Disposal	Community Disposal	Custody Disposal	Total Disposal
Nottingham	377	83	100	8	16	207	299	61	80	15	11	167
Like City Average	396.30	56.10	111.90	32.40	12.60	213.00	295.90	41.60	78.40	27.10	9.10	156.20
Family Average	394.55	58.55	110.82	30.18	12.91	212.45	296.18	43.36	78.55	26.00	9.27	157.18
	2020-21						2021-22					
Total Offences	Pre-court Disposal	First-tier Disposal	Community Disposal	Custody Disposal	Total Disposal	Total Offences	Pre-court Disposal	First-tier Disposal	Community Disposal	Custody Disposal	Total Disposal	
Nottingham	100.00	16.18	21.22	3.98	2.92	44.30	100.00	20.40	26.76	5.02	3.68	55.85
Like City Average	100.00	10.50	19.78	6.84	2.30	39.41	100.00	14.06	26.50	9.16	3.08	52.79
Family Average	100.00	10.99	19.91	6.59	2.35	39.84	100.00	14.64	26.52	8.78	3.13	53.07

Table 5: City-level disposals for comparison between Nottingham City, like-cities and family average for the years 2020-21 and 2021-22. Expressed in numbers (upper) and as percentages (lower).

Nottinghamshire County

FTE Outcomes

Looking at the data below Referral Order was most frequently used with Youth Conditional Order and Youth Caution receiving half of the amount as FTE outcome (see figure 28). In comparison with Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire County is utilising more OOCs and drawing upon more preventative and diversionary disposals. The qualitative data, that follows in this section explores the differing use of the Child Gravity Matrix¹⁸ across police forces in relation to outcomes. However, it should be noted that the below figure only shows substantive FTE outcomes, rather than showing the numbers of children diverted, with Nottinghamshire seeing more children become FTEs through Court Referral Orders than Out of Court Disposals.

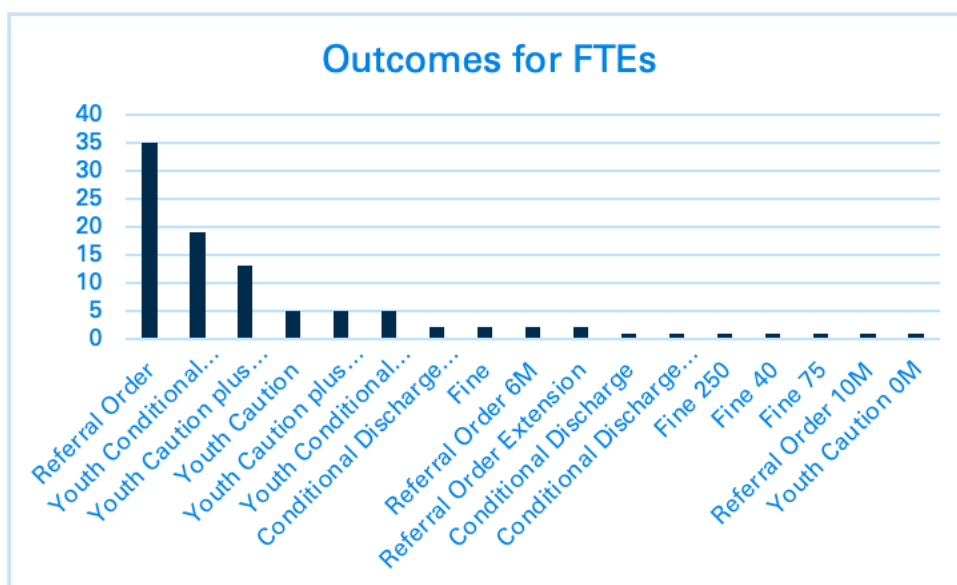


Figure 24: Nottinghamshire County Outcomes for FTEs (vertical axis = number)

In terms of outcomes, Nottinghamshire County is more likely to apply YROs with no requirements, Programmes, and Unpaid Work compared to Like County and Family averages (see figure 29). All other outcomes are utilised more frequently by Like Counties within the family, however, this needs to be acknowledged within the context of 7 FTEs.

¹⁸ The Child Gravity Matrix is a triage tool to support decision making for officers, to assist in deciding the most appropriate outcome or disposal for those children and young people, under the age of 18 years who offend (National Police Chiefs' Council, 2023)

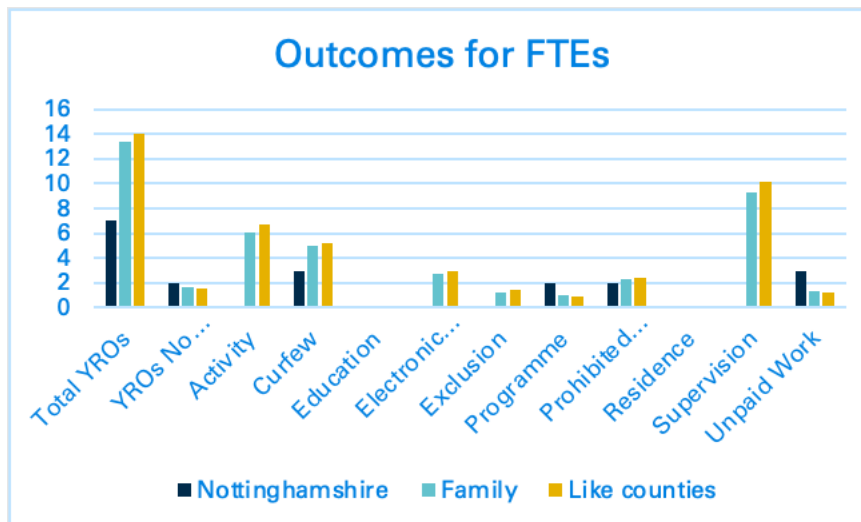


Figure 29: Nottinghamshire County Outcomes for FTEs (vertical axis = number)

Attendance Centres, Drug Testing and Drug Treatment Orders were unused by any authority in the family and have therefore been excluded from comparison.

Custody Rates

Between 21-22 and 22-23, Nottinghamshire County saw a decrease in the rates of FTEs entering the system from 194 per 100 000 population to 154 per 100 000 population. By comparison, like counties saw a rise from 174 to 189 per 100 000 population, and the family average increased from 176 to 186 per 100 000 population in the same period (see figure 25).

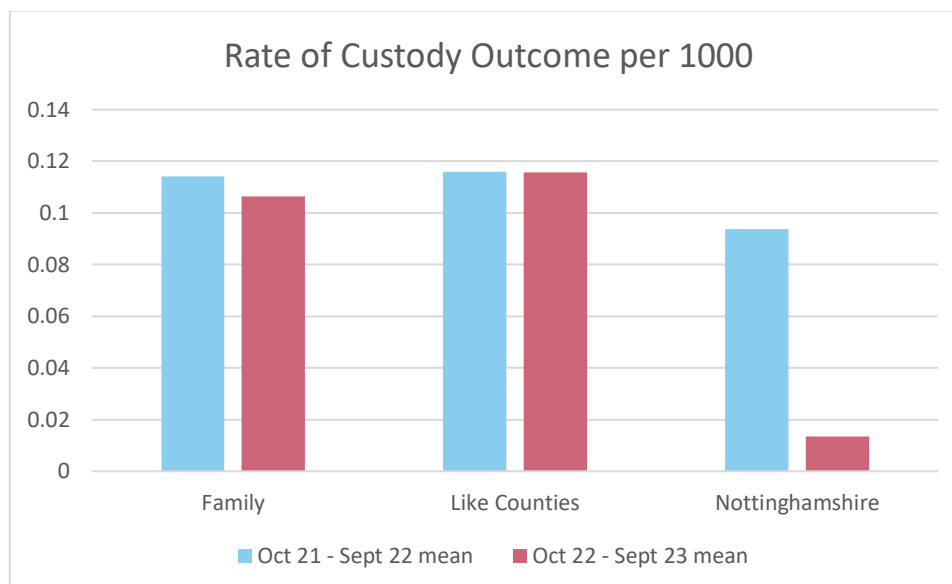


Figure 25: Nottinghamshire County Custody rates by like counties and family

Nottinghamshire County also saw a significant decrease in the rates of custodial outcomes per 1000, decreasing from 0.0939 to 0.0134 custodial outcomes per 1000 population. In the same period, like counties saw almost no

change from 0.116 to 0.116, and the family average decrease from 0.114 to 0.106 custodial outcomes per 1000 (see figure 26).

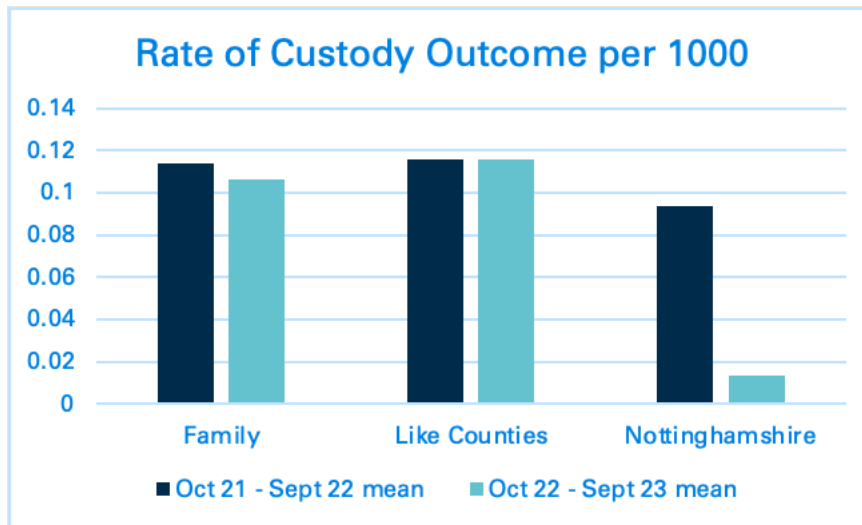


Figure 26: Nottinghamshire County Custody Outcome per 1000 by like counties and family

Ethnic Disparities

In Nottinghamshire County, 89.5% of the population is white, and 90% of FTEs are also white. Whereas 10.5% of the population are non-white minorities, but 9.68% of the FTE population are non-white minorities. In the counting year used, no custodial sentences were received by FTEs and therefore these statistics cannot be utilised for comparison. They are however presented in figure 27 below.

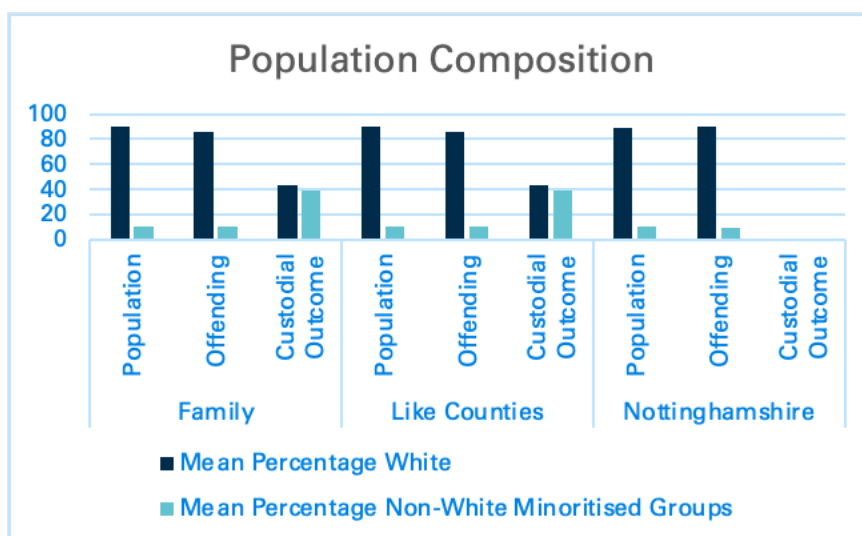


Figure 27: Nottinghamshire County Custody rates by Population composition

Like counties had an average white population of 90.0%, and a white FTE population of 85.4%. White FTEs also received 47.5% of the custodial sentences. By comparison, non-white minorities made up 10.0% of the population, and 9.81% of the FTE population. Non-white minority FTEs also received 42.5% of the custodial sentences, on average.

The family had an average white population of 89.9% white, and an average FTE population of 85.8%, with white FTEs receiving 43.2% of the custodial sentences. By comparison, non-white minorities made up 10.0% of the population, and 9.80% of the FTE population. Non-white minorities however received 38.6% of the custodial sentences received.

Disposals

Nottinghamshire County saw a marked decrease in the number of FTEs (including all disposals) between the years 2021-22 and 2022-23, as seen by table 6 below. Like Counties and the Family average however both increased over the same time period. Between 2020-21 and 2021-22, the number of offences committed by FTEs has also fallen in Nottinghamshire County, despite rising in the like-counties and county family. The proportion of case disposals has also risen across all three categories (even if only slightly), as seen in table 6.

Region	2020-21	2021-22
Nottinghamshire	283	388
Like Counties	354.6	341.7
Family	348.0	345.9

Table 6: Nottinghamshire County Disposals by like counties and family

Like counties however saw a significant decrease in the use of first-tier disposals, and an increase in custody disposals (see table 7).

		2020-21						2021-22					
	Total Offences	Pre-court Disposal	First-tier Disposal	Community Disposal	Custody Disposal	Total Disposal	Total Offences	Pre-court Disposal	First-tier Disposal	Community Disposal	Custody Disposal	Total Disposal	
Nottinghamshire	388.00	92.00	67.00	24.00	8.00	191.00	283.00	71.00	55.00	16.00	7.00	149.00	
Like County Average	341.70	77.00	103.90	23.50	60.40	198.56	354.60	58.10	105.20	20.30	6.50	190.10	
Family Average	345.91	78.36	100.55	23.55	55.64	197.80	348.09	59.27	100.64	19.91	6.55	186.36	
		2020-21						2021-2022					
	Total Offences	Pre-court Disposal	First-tier Disposal	Community Disposal	Custody Disposal	Total Disposal	Total Offences	Pre-court Disposal	First-tier Disposal	Community Disposal	Custody Disposal	Total Disposal	
Nottinghamshire	100.00	18.30%	14.18%	4.12%	1.80%	38.40%	100.00%	32.51%	23.67%	8.48%	2.83%	67.49%	
Like County Average	100.00	17.00%	30.79%	5.94%	1.90%	55.63%	100.00%	21.71%	29.30%	6.63%	17.03%	55.99%	
Family Average	100.00	17.14%	29.09%	5.76%	1.89%	53.88%	100.00%	22.51%	28.88%	6.76%	15.98%	56.82%	

Table 7: County-level disposals for comparison between Nottinghamshire County, like-counties and family average for the years 2020-21 and 2021-22. Expressed in numbers (upper) and as percentages (lower).

Building upon this quantitative data, two key themes emerged from the qualitative data which will be further explored below: the use of Outcome 22 and Prevention, which help to further explain the relationship between FTEs and preventative and diversionary disposals and which preventative, and diversionary disposals are working most effectively to prevent young people from entering the CJS.

Outcome 22

The most common disposals cited in the stakeholder and practitioner meetings were more informal diversionary disposals such as Outcome 22 or Community Resolutions. This Stakeholder explains:

'Outcome 22 was introduced to try and assist with some of the pressures on first-time entrants, if it's not in the public interest to try and progress a case'

(Stakeholder, County)

This was also evident in the Out of Court Panel meeting attended in Nottinghamshire County. Where all four cases discussed were given an informal disposal either an Outcome 22, Outcome 20 or a Community Resolution. It is important to note in this panel meeting all cases were afforded the same amount of time to discuss, despite the complexities of each case. Meaning, the disposals were thoroughly examined and not given lightly.

Conversely, City stakeholders stated that there is still a large proportion of young people going straight to Referral Orders, as Outcome 22 or Community Resolutions is not available as an option for some young people, as shown in the below quote. This correlates with City data (see figure 10) and County data (see figure 11).

'Do many [young people] go straight to a Referral Order? quite a lot of them, and that's part of the bit that's misunderstood, some people might say 'you should do more Outcome 22s or community resolutions' for quite a lot of young people this action isn't available'

(Stakeholder, City)

The City stakeholder is referring to the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Guidelines and the National Police Chiefs' Council's (NPCC) Child Gravity Matrix where certain offences have to be dealt with in court, even if the young person is an FTE.

Within the police, Stakeholders reported a **prioritisation of the numbers of Offences Brought to Justice (OBTJ)** over the understanding of the Child First policy. National metrics for police force effectiveness, such as OBTJ, held a strong legacy in the County, whereby police gave greater attention to more

easily detectable, provable offences. A Stakeholder from Nottingham City reported that:

'There was a counting rule which the police brought in called 'offences brought to justice' as a national match with recorded metric for police effectiveness... what they were trying to do was to reduce the gap between the number of crimes recorded and those for which a perpetrator was identified... So the police understandably gave greater attention to what I would call 'easily detectable, provable offences' – especially Regina offences as they don't need any victim inputs or a victim statement'

(Stakeholder, City)

Stakeholders in the County reported that Outcome 22 was not available to all forces yet and argued that there is a need for more national guidance around this, in particular, around other diversionary schemes such as 'Divert Plus'. This was cited as a scheme which is successfully delivered in other areas. However, there was acknowledgment in the City and County that they are fortunate police colleagues use Outcome 22 in their area.

It was mentioned that there are some issues with public confidence around the use of Outcome 22 as it is technically classed as 'no further action'. Despite diversionary activities being promoted for the young person there does not have to be an admission of guilt for a young person to receive an Outcome 22. This could impact the promotion and use of Outcome 22 in certain forces.

'Outcome 22 actually means that they are referred to diversionary activities.. from a trust and confidence point of view from the public.. it's recorded as a negative outcome. It looks like the police aren't dealing with offenders.. there are some complexities in it around admission'

(Stakeholder, City)

Where Outcome 22 is not a viable option, Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions are utilised, although throughout the interviews, it appears these are used less in favour of Outcome 21 and 22.

'Youth Cautions, Youth Conditional Cautions are more the exception than the rule'

(Practitioner Focus Group, County)

Despite an Outcome 22 not being a formal disposal, the interviews highlighted that every effort was made to ensure young people were given as much support as possible to discourage further offending, in the same way they would with a Youth Caution. This complexity was communicated below:

'With an Outcome 22 or a community resolution, our young people would get access to the same interventions as if they had been a first-time entry. We make this intervention bespoke to the young person not to the outcome'

(Stakeholder, County)

Prevention

In the interviews Stakeholders acknowledged the importance of targeted prevention to deter young people from entering the CJS and cited the below as a positive example of targeted prevention:

'targeted prevention might be about assertive outreach to a sibling of a child that's known to youth justice or prevention activities that might be group activities with targeted children.. to help build strengths and move away from criminal justice system'

(Stakeholder, City)

City stakeholders discussed several ways in which their team support preventative outcomes for young people:

'we have our targeted youth support team, which is our early intervention team and we have 'Another Way' which is a focussed deterrent funding stream.. we also have 'Turnaround' which is additional funding that's come from the Justice Board specifically looking at early intervention diversion from the criminal justice pathways'

(Stakeholder, City)

Likewise, County Stakeholders cited 'My Futures' as a positive prevention pathway:

'[young people] could be referred through 'My Futures'.. Police facilitate and refer to 'My Futures' to get support. That's our ideal. That's what we would want'

(Stakeholder, County)

Youth clubs was identified as an underfunded area which significantly impacts young people. County stakeholders outlined the importance of local youth clubs and mentioned that it was particularly important during the school holidays when young people are more likely to be bored and have less to do:

'youth club is so important'

(Stakeholder, County)

'the whole idea of not having them [youth clubs] open in school holidays, that's when children have very little to do, they've got so much free time and parents who probably can't afford to keep putting them in various activities'

(Stakeholder, County)

The above point links closely with Section 3, where it is outlined that disadvantage plays a significant role for young people and their offending behaviour. Boredom in particular, and lack of things to do in their area, was cited consistently across all youth focus groups. Despite this, it was clear in all

interviews that stakeholders and practitioners were passionate about working in youth justice and would consistently find ways to encourage desistance in young people. This is further exemplified by the quote below:

'We always encourage children to be part of things and to be part of a club or society gives them the whole team aspect. It gives them the idea they belong to something and it's constructive and keeps them off the streets'

(Stakeholder, County)

Key Findings for FTEs and preventative and diversionary disposals

- Outcome 22 was cited as the most common informal disposal and its increased usage was discussed during interviews. However, Outcome 22 is not available to all forces yet, so application nationally may be uneven.
- Referral Orders are still used for FTEs with the Child Gravity Matrix cited as the reason behind this, with some offences exempt from pre-court disposals.
- Stakeholders reported a prioritisation of the numbers of Offences Brought to Justice. It was argued that the police might give greater attention to more easily detectable, provable offences such as Regina offences where victim input is not required.
- Public confidence in Outcome 22 might be seen as low given its 'no further action' status and the absence of any admission of guilt. This could impact the use of Outcome 22 in certain areas.
- Targeted prevention is key to working with young people, with several projects and funding streams outlined, such as 'My Futures', 'Turnaround' and 'Another Way'.
- Youth clubs was identified as an underfunded area which significantly impacts young people, particularly during the school holidays.

The following section considers what Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County can learn from other areas to reduce FTEs.

Section 5. What Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County can learn from other areas to reduce FTEs

Although participants were not directly asked about what Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County can learn from other areas to reduce FTEs, Stakeholders, Practitioners and young people were asked for recommendations that would support the reduction of FTEs in future. Key themes of **school exclusion, neurodiversity, trust in the police and violence reduction** reoccurred across participants, with some signposting area of good practice. In addition to this, a literature search was undertaken, informed by YJB **best practice case studies** and wider sources, in order to signpost practice examples from which Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County could learn. Inclusion criteria for the examples in this section include initiatives that have undergone evaluation or research that demonstrate improvements in relation to young people's attitudes, behaviours and outcomes.

School Exclusion

It was interesting to note that the participants in this study had their own views on what could be done to reduce the numbers of FTEs in their own areas. Overwhelmingly, they felt particularly strongly over the issue of **school exclusion** with a common sentiment being as follows:

'the zero tolerance from schools and certainly academies is really quite a difficult one because I've had so many kids where it's literally been one incident of a concern. No, we can't have you back. And if we had you back, we'd have to have XYZ back. So you've got a kid who's potentially done one relatively minor offence. He was then not allowed back into school'

(Practitioner Focus Group)

Participants are well aware of the long-established close association between school exclusion and offending (Stephenson, 2007) and believed that there is a need to apply a more consistent approach across schools, both in the city and county, in terms of the reasons provided as to why pupils may become excluded. They highlighted one area of good practice – the policies and procedures followed by West Notts College - and believed that this should be held as the benchmark standard in schools universally. They have a robust system in place which works so well that their exclusion rate is minimal.

One area that has begun to use a proactive system to monitor and address school exclusions is **Birmingham YOS**¹⁹ where they have appointed a dedicated Operational Lead for 'Education, Training and Employment' (ETE). Here, all school exclusions are closely monitored, and they employ school-age Education Engagement Support Mentors. Where children have been excluded, they have sourced 3 full-time Prevention Officers whom they have seconded into Birmingham's Alternative Provision Taskforce which is based in the city of Birmingham Pupil Referral Units. They have expanded their ETE Reengagement programme to include extended work experience placements to enhance children's employability skills. This provision has met with real success, with 13 of the 16 children taking part in the first cohort completing their period of employment; all of whom have achieved their AQA qualification.

Another successful initiative developed by Birmingham YOS is their investment in a 'Music Studio Project' with the appointment of a full time Lyric writer and MC. As a result, eight children participating in the Studio Project received Koestler awards (an annual award for people in the community for showcasing their creative work in the areas of visual art, design, writing and music) for their work. In addition, 14 children have performed at their Music Showcase events and one participant of the Studio Project is about to secure a full-time apprenticeship, to work as part of the Music Project team through the Birmingham Children's Trust Care Leaver Apprenticeship scheme.

Milton Keynes YOS²⁰ has also been instrumental in addressing this area of concern and have consequently employed an Education, Training and Employment Coordinator who has links with schools and alternative education provisions, they support children who are experiencing difficulties with school attendance including advocating for children, challenging part-time timetables and providing support with core subjects such as English and Maths.

Neurodiversity

There was an overwhelming belief by the participants of this study that a significant proportion of FTEs comprised those children and young people who are **neurodiverse**, as the following demonstrates:

¹⁹ [Birmingham Youth Offending Service \(YOS\) Strategic Youth Justice Plan 2023-28 \(December 2023\) | Birmingham Children's Trust \(birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk\)](#)

²⁰ [Youth Justice Plan 2021-22 AA TEXT.pdf \(milton-keynes.gov.uk\)](#)

'It's an omnipresent experience. I've never seen as many young people continuously back-to-back with that sort of diagnosis, either from family or those that have been formally diagnosed through healthcare'

(Practitioner Focus Group)

Young people who have neurodiverse conditions are not being well served. This exposes them to risk and there is a need to improve provision for them, for their emotional and social needs, as well as their educational needs.

This is corroborated by the latest research on neurodiversity in the youth justice system which maintains that one in three young people entering the youth justice system have diagnosed or undiagnosed features (Kirby, 2021; Gray, 2024). Participants called for resourcing and training at every level to address these young people's needs and to prevent them from becoming FTEs through lack of understanding. They believe that it should be incumbent upon Higher Education and Youth Offending Teams to provide training to the police and judiciary on the recognition of neurodiversity in young people and how it may be the naive driving force behind the commission of crime. In addition, they recommended swift access to Speech and Language Therapists combined with professional mental health support.

An example of good practice that may be drawn upon is one embedded into **Milton Keynes YOS** where they employ two speech and language therapists, and all children are offered a Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) assessment. The YOS identified, following assessment, that 84% had SLCN needs that were not identified by others prior to YOT involvement. The high number of children entering the YJS in Milton Keynes with unrecognised and unmet Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) evidenced their requirement to develop a proactive outreach work, in collaboration with the Education Psychology Service, to highlight the specific risks around children being drawn into offending and criminal exploitation linked to unrecognised SLCN and SEND. **Birmingham YOS** reflect this good practice with their own appointment of Speech and language therapists.

Building Trust in the Police

This research has signposted that relationships between young people and adults need to improve. Having supportive adults in the lives of young people is important for intergenerational mistrust and celebrating what young people contribute to their communities. Trust in the Police was one theme that emerged from the data as an area to focus and build upon. It is clear from participants that children have mixed feelings about the police,

'I think perception of police is up and down, and if you chat to our children, some of them can be quite complimentary about certain police officers that perhaps they feel are alright or you get the other side of it where they're very negative about the police. It's very mixed'.

(Stakeholder Focus group)

There are however ways that trust can be built to foster better relationships between young people and the police. For example, **Suffolk** found that police became more enthusiastic about the use of 'Out of Court' models where they were involved in such disposals beyond the police custody suite stage. **Milton Keynes YOS** have been innovative in their use of their YOT Police Officer whose role is used creatively across the service including direct involvement with delivering Out of Court Disposals (OOCDS)²¹. They also undertake interventions with children to strengthen relationships between children and Police and provide key information around risks using PNC and Police intel. The role of **Thames Valley Police** in the YOT is also enhanced by their close partnership working with their Problem-Solving Team and Violence Reduction Unit.

Somerset YOS ensure that they work jointly with the police anti-social behaviour (ASB) team and have been instrumental in facilitating improved multiagency responses to mitigate further escalation in offending behaviours. They drive to achieve greater consistency in approach across the county.

Another area of concern was the belief that the police were not embracing the 'Child First' (Case and Hazel, 2023) model of dealing with young people who find themselves in difficulty with the law. A 'Child First' approach means putting children at the heart of service provision and seeing the whole child, one who will not have the capacity or maturity to think and behave like an adult until they have reached the age of 25. The following comment exemplifies this observation:

'I would love the police to understand the Child First and understand that they are dealing with children and that children behave differently from adults'

(Practitioner Focus Group 1)

Birmingham YOS have made progress in addressing this issue and have now developed practice expectations for staff and a specific, Child First trauma informed assessment with West Midlands Police. Their revised and bespoke assessment tool begins with the child first, incorporates their voice, includes the risk and desistance matrix from AssetPlus and includes a co-produced plan. The result is a high-quality system, which is professional, child first, trauma informed, and victim focused. Birmingham YOS take the view that to become

²¹ [Out-of-court disposals \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

truly Child First, trauma responsive, and relationship based in their approaches, the Child First principles must work at all levels. This commitment must extend to organisational and culture change, leadership and front-line practice.

Violence Reduction

Regarding **violence reduction** as a means of reducing the numbers of FTEs, several YOS areas are employing successful and innovative methods as an approach to reduce the levels of violent offences committed by young people. According to HM inspectorate of Probation (2024) overall, offences of violence against the person committed by young people has seen the largest proportional increase in terms of types of offences- from 21% in the year ending March 2013 to 34% in 2023. Nationally, a resource is being rolled out called the 'Youth Endowment Toolkit'; a resource which summarises the best approaches derived from research for preventing serious youth violence. The Toolkit includes an approach named 'Focused Deterrence' which recognises that most serious violence is committed by a small group of young people who are themselves victims of exploitation, trauma and living in exceptionally challenging circumstances. This approach identifies those young people most likely to be involved in violence and provides them with support to offer them an alternative route. It is acknowledged that Nottinghamshire County VRP are currently one of the sites for a major 'Focussed Deterrence' programme in terms of a randomised control trial funded by the Youth Endowment Fund entitled 'Another Way'²². It will be interesting to see the results of the evaluation of the programme once the trail is complete. This method has been successfully delivered in **Glasgow** with the offer of opportunities in exchange for a pledge of 'no violence, no weapons'. Violent offending was reduced by ½ for those young people involved in the scheme. This project also included the use of CBT techniques and social skills training. Following evaluation, it was clear that when CBT is applied to violence prevention, young people became more aware of their negative thoughts and once recognised, they are able to earn to change and manage them. So successful was this technique that it reduced violent crime by 27%²³.

West Midlands YOS employ a scheme called 'Catch 22' which comprises discussion-based workshops as part of a programme to prevent gang related violence. Part of heir suite of techniques involves a group intervention programme delivered in the community named 'ROAD' (Rehabilitation Offering Another Direction). Here, expert gang practitioners focus on reducing pro-

²² <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ACF1-Focused-deterrence-Evaluation-protocol.pdf>

²³ <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/research/article/tackling-youth-violence-research-evidence>

criminal attitudes by promoting alternatives to violence. These practitioners develop young people's consequential thinking skills by encouraging them to recognise and evaluate their past choices and the consequences that these poor choices have led to. The programme also promotes pro-social life options and opportunities. It operates over a five-day period each month to 10 – 12 participants and the activities include team building games, role play, media materials; all supported by a written element which involves the completion of workbooks. Following evaluation of the project in 2022, 80% of participants demonstrated a significant level of improvement in their behaviour²⁴.

Cybercrime arose as an issue according to the participants of this study where children are being investigated for terrorism offences and for crimes of a sexual nature. In relation to offences of terrorism, it was noted that:

'terrorism offences....a lot of what young people are charged with is something they've done online and that might only be a few clicks...in the bedroom.'

(Stakeholder Focus Group)

And in the cases of online sexual crimes, a typical response was as follows;

'there's been a higher proportion of harmful sexual behaviour cases coming through that are technology assisted...young people find themselves trapped in some of these clicking circles, of looking for particular things and then they go down a bit of a rabbit hole and when they've got loads and loads of other stuff that comes up and some are getting exploited as well into sharing'

(Practitioner Focus Group)

In order to tackle these forms of cybercrime, **West Midlands YOS** use a programme called, 'Cyber Choices', a national initiative led by the National Crime Agency²⁵. They aim to re-focus young people with cyber talent to use their skills instead to support the cyber industry and decrease future offending. It is recognised that nationally, there are many young people with fantastic cyber ability but who lack legal knowledge, leading them to slip into unlawful territory. 'Cyber Choices' support, mentor and train these individuals while providing them with a sound understanding of the law. The scheme has successfully diverted numerous young people who were on the cusp of criminality to seek successful careers in the cyber industry.

Following the consideration of these initiatives that are being delivered by other YOS areas that have been proven, to have been successful in reducing the numbers of FTEs for children and young people in those areas, we offer

²⁴ [Catch22 helps young people get on right road | CYP Now](#)

²⁵ [Disadvantaged young people gain cybersecurity know how | CYP Now](#)

recommendations, specifically for Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County in the next section.

Section 6: Recommendations

This final draw upon the findings from the overall study to make recommendations put forward by the participants in the study, including Stakeholders, Practitioners and the young people themselves. Firstly, we share recommendations by participant group, before focusing on further recommendations for Schools and the Police. Finally, we signpost future possibilities research.

The thread that runs through each of the following recommendations awareness and understanding of the Child First policy. A Child First approach means putting children at the heart of service provision and seeing the whole child, identifying the influences on offending and promoting the influences that help them to move to pro-social, positive behaviour.

Recommendations for / from young people

- 1. Better relationship building between police and young people.** Young people reported they had often been treated as a threat by police, in particular experiencing stop and search as an adult would. Whereas others had positive experiences of police officers making visits to their schools and young clubs. We recommend that all police treat young people as children in their response, in accordance with Child First policy, as well as increasing community engagement work that can build trust. Similar concerns were raised by young people at the Police Crime Commissioners' 'Big Conversation', and opportunities for young people to present their findings on what matters to them is important.
- 2. More and longer-term youth projects in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County.** Young people reported how much they enjoyed free activities such as sports, trips and arts sessions, yet these rarely lasted longer than six weeks. Bearing in mind the massive reduction in youth services in the City, a key recommendation is to increase youth activities provision in order to avoid drifting into more negative behaviours, due to boredom.
- 3. Provide education programmes for young people that can better support them to think about their futures.** Young people wanted to encourage others that there is 'more than this out there' and agreed that young people need support to 'break the cycle'. Many identified a gap between finishing school and entering the world of work, with schools encouraging 'academic' routes for all, with some preferring apprenticeship routes. Our recommendation is that organisations such as Futures be part of YOS management boards and be commissioned to support young people in this area.
- 4. Opportunities for young people and their communities to be shown in a positive light.** Young people expressed that many were involved in

charity work or doing things that showed they care about their local communities. They wanted to fight back against narratives that young people 'never do anything good'. Recommendation that YOS build connections with the voluntary sector, but also to publicise the positive work that young people do through reparation. For example, *Our Best Life Award 2024*⁶. There is a striking narrative in the report from young people themselves about how they see the city and themselves in relation to the city "bored, homeless, hopeless". Services that work with young people need to engage them in building a new narrative about the city as a great place to live, and a place of opportunity for young people.

Recommendations for Youth Justice practice

1. **Nationally lobby for an increase in the age of minimum criminal responsibility.** Research from Goldson (2013) and Brown & Charles (2021) highlights the damaging effect of this legislation with Pillay (2019) proving that the adolescent brain does not mature until 25. We recognise that this recommendation would be hard to achieve locally without national movement (which has been long discussed), but could involve the dissemination of this research locally and within partnerships that have national policy-reach.
2. **Ensure that all involved in Youth Justice aware of, understand and implement 'Child First' principles.** This includes the YJ service at strategic level, but also the wider systems that work with young people including schools and the police. Understanding of the tenants of Child First must be both horizontal across YJ services, but also vertical at strategic level. There are currently small pockets of training, such as the Youth Justice sector improvement program and the association of YOT Managers within the sector, but outside of the sector there is not much traction. An understanding of Child First will help to embed key tenants of practice and principles, which can challenge existing service delivery.
3. **Eradicate the adultification of young people.** Our quantitative and qualitative data within this report highlights an over representation of black males in custody, not necessarily in terms of FTE rates, but in relation to custody. Therefore, there is work to be done within the judiciary system, on how black males are charged. A recent report by Ipsos and Manchester Metropolitan University on research into Pre-Sentence Reports (PSRs) showed that black children were quoted differently. Within the local context, it is important for NNVRP partners who work with children to have clearer policies and safeguards to distinguish between children and adults, for example during arrest and remand processes.

4. **Ensure that YOS staff, teachers, the Judiciary and the police²⁷ undertake neurodiversity training.** Neurodiversity was overrepresented in the FTE cohorts and, in similarity with the above recommendation, there was no training for magistrates in terms of supporting young people's neurodiversity. We recommend detailed training on neurodiversity; how to recognise it and how such conditions can impact on a young person's propensity to naive involvement in offending behaviour.

Recommendations for Policing

1. **Ensure integration of Child First policy into police training.** Echoing the recommendation above that those involved in the wider sphere of Youth Justice aware of, understand and implement 'Child First' principles. This recommendation aligns with reports from young people about how police officers respond to them, as threat, rather than child. We recommend that Child First principles be incorporated within police training at an early stage.
2. **Initiatives that build positive relationships with young people locally.** Despite the amount of free engagement activity offered by the police, these required more publicity directed towards young people and evaluation of the impact of these activities. Again, echoing recommendations from young people, increasing the presence of police in social settings that young people frequent in the capacity of relationship building is important. This may through youth club or school visits to help repair generations of mistrust of the police within certain communities.
3. **Consistent application of Outcome 22.** Our research has highlighted that Outcome 22 is mobilised differently in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County. It is recognised that the legal definitions of Outcome 22 remain a grey area as national frameworks have not yet been released. However, what is notable from this research is that based upon the geographical location where a young person is arrested, this has an impact upon whether they are offered Outcome 22.
4. **Tackle the 'accounting culture' within the police.** It is widely acknowledged that high rates of arrest and charging do not have an impact on feelings of safety for communities. Although meeting targets for the police force, the criminalization of young people does little to improve safety. Whilst efforts to divert, in a non-stigmatizing way, has been evidenced as a more impactful approach to supporting safety within communities. As considered in section 4. of this report, we recommend diversion interventions that meet the needs of young people. This would involve the rebalancing of policies, prioritizing Child First, over number of Offences Brought to Justice.

²⁷ It was noted that neurodiversity is incorporated in the Sgt and Insp Operational policing courses, and it was in Divisional training in 2022/23

Recommendations for Schools

1. **Better targeted Alternative Provision for young people.** School exclusion as an intersecting factor causing higher rates of FTEs was a recurrent theme across several sections of this report. Quantitative data informs us that schools exclusion happens mostly prior to FTE. We recommend that young people are allocated more suitable alternative provision and are given places within minimal delay, which impacts momentum and feelings of inclusion within the education system.
2. **Informal screening for young people's needs pre-EHCP.** Whilst the EHCP is a valuable document, schools are often slow in involving YOS, calling upon them once exclusions have taken place. An informal screening process, led by schools, would seek to understand communication and diversity related needs which would avoid rushing to exclude without understanding the child. YOS can support in this process by building relationships with schools Safeguarding Leads around supporting non-criminalized responses to behavior. Currently Nottingham City has representation from the Education sector on their management board and service plans that detail a joint approach to working with education in relation to the early identification of children with complex needs that may be contributing to the being at risk of exclusion. Nottinghamshire County has strategic plans submitted to the YJB focusing on education, communication and developmental needs.
3. **Reduce the focus on default behaviour measures of isolation and exclusion.** Young people, Practitioners and Stakeholders all agreed that schools are too quick to exclude young people. Department of Education data has shown that Nottingham City's exclusion rates are significantly above the national average. Our recommendation is to support more pastoral work within schools, avoiding isolation and exclusion where possible and to hold schools accountable for reducing the number of exclusions. Schools' practices should change so that exclusion becomes much more rare, and for the young people who are currently excluded, efforts to mitigate the risks they are exposed to by being excluded should be made.

Recommendations for NNVRP

1. Work with Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Council to undertake a **mapping exercise of the targeted youth provision** available in these areas to identify gaps and inform future partnership commissioning.
2. Develop a **joint communications strategy** which focuses on highlighting positive news stories in relation to children and young people.
3. Support all agencies who provide services to children in undertaking a **self-assessment against 'Child First Principles'** utilising the recently

published Youth Justice Board child first toolkit. Also consider how this might sit alongside the partnerships' **Trauma Informed Strategy**.

4. Continue to gain assurance around **Out of Court Disposal processes**, ensuring a child first approach is taken

We also make some **recommendations for addressing poverty**, whilst acknowledging that the prevailing explanation within Nottingham City for the high FTE rate has been the indices of multiple deprivation. This previous focus has suggested therefore that the high FTE rate is immovable, however, we have made recommendations above that challenge this prevailing narrative. At local level, we recommend better addiction and mental health services, debt and welfare rights services, increased childcare support especially for lone parents. In appendix 1, we collate national policy changes that would beneficially impact upon the lives of young people.

Finally, we offer **suggestions for future research possibilities**. Firstly, the over-representation of black males in custody rates warrants further exploration. One way to approach this would be to investigate the training that all who work in the judicial process in Youth Court receive. This study could also be extended to include neurodiverse young people. For example, testimony from practitioners with extensive experience of the youth courts noted that magistrates had a tendency to overlook neurodiversity as a contributory factor to the offence committed. Therefore, research that investigate the support for training on developments from the sector: child first, trauma informed practice is needed. It is recommended that all of those involved in the judicial system have detailed training on how to recognise neurodiverse conditions and how the traits of such conditions often lie behind 'criminal' behaviour, especially challenging behaviour. Secondly, following observation at one OOC panel, the range of options offered to young people in terms of disposal could be further explored. Finally, large-scale comparative data work, involving multiple universities would be able to scope different responses to FTEs across different force areas. This further research suggestion would be dependent upon data sharing agreements across different police forces as well as sharing local area knowledge.

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Appendix

1. National policy changes that would beneficially impact upon the lives of young people.

- I. Supporting ex-offenders with money management / debt advice²⁸
- II. Abolish the 2 child limit. This would have the biggest and quickest impact on reducing child/family poverty. The IFS have some good stats on the impact.
- III. Increase child benefit (charities often say £20 per week as starting point)
- IV. Extend free school meals to summer periods.
- V. Increase national minimum wage for under 21s
- VI. Reduce 5 week wait for universal credit
- VII. Local Housing Allowance rates set the maximum amount of housing benefit people can get if they rent from a private landlord. If your single and under 35 you normally only get housing benefit to cover the cost of a room in a shared house. This should be abolished.
- VIII. Increase the discharge grant when people are released from prison.

²⁸ <https://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/49596/>

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