

PCC and CC Force Inspection response record

Version Dec 2024

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| Force | Staffordshire |
| Police and Crime Commissioner | Ben Adams |
| Chief Constable | Acting CC Becky Riggs |
| Title of inspection | The effectiveness of diverting children from the criminal justice system: meeting needs, ensuring safety, and preventing reoffending |
| Published Date | 15/10/2025 |
| Inspectorate |  <p>HMICFRS Making communities safer</p> |
| Summary of inspection | <p>Youth out-of-court disposals (OoCDs) are alternatives to formal prosecution for children and are designed to divert them away from the criminal justice system by addressing their behaviour early and offering support to prevent further offending.</p> <p>In this report, we make 18 recommendations to support stronger governance, clearer guidance, and more consistent practice in the use of OoCDs for children.</p> |
| Grade | |
| Recommendations | <p>Chief constables should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. improve how out-of-court disposals are managed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with YJSs to establish formal data-sharing arrangements to ensure timely and consistent access to information on all types of out-of-court disposal • ensuring decisions about the use of crime Outcomes 20 and 21 are consistent and appropriate and reflect revised NPCC guidance • ensuring that police always use the NPCC child gravity matrix guidance when making decisions relating to outcomes for children and that the rationales for those decisions are always recorded. • ensuring that joint decisions with the youth justice service about out-of-court disposals are made at the appropriate level of seniority. • ensuring that children’s legal rights are met before issuing a community resolution; this includes the need to caution and make sure that an appropriate adult is present • ensuring that safeguarding referrals are made when appropriate. |

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's initial response

I welcome the inspection report and its focus on the use, quality, and outcomes of out-of-court disposals (OOCs) and diversionary approaches for children. The observations about inconsistency, fragmentation, data gaps, and risk to equity and fairness (e.g. the “postcode lottery”) are serious and deserve urgent attention.

As PFCC, my statutory remit allows me to hold the Chief Constable to account for force performance, strategy, and delivery; but I have no direct authority to mandate other agencies (e.g. local authorities, health, education, youth offending services). In light of this, my response focuses on how I will use my influence, governance levers, and partnership forums (notably the Staffordshire & Stoke Reducing Reoffending Board and local YOS Management Boards) to push for stronger alignment, accountability, and improvement in diversion work — within existing resource constraints.

I will use the SSRRB to track the Inspection report's recommendations locally and commit to seeking assurance that the following actions are taken:

- Confirm that Staffordshire Standard Operating Procedures codify the use of the revised NPCC child gravity matrix and mandate that any divergence (beyond one score) be approved by at least inspector rank — mirroring the national recommendations.
- Confirm that the force ensures officers record full rationales for any decision to issue Outcome 20/21/22 or OOCs, including reflections on safeguarding, proportionality, victim interests, child vulnerability.
- Request the force review existing training provision for frontline officers, sergeants, and decision-makers on best practice in diversion of children, including the importance of recording decisions, trauma-informed approach, equity issues, and “child first” mindset.
- Encourage the force to explore “joint decision-making panels” (police + YJS) where necessary, especially in more borderline or complex youth cases, to share accountability, mitigate unilateral risk, and improve consistency.
- Support the early completion of proposed Youth Justice Service OOC self-assessment exercises in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent

Chief Constable's response

Staffordshire Police was not one of the selected forces inspected for this thematic inspection into Out of Court disposals (OoCD). The force believes that, overall, we demonstrate good practice in Staffordshire against the concerns raised in the HMIP/HMICFRS report.

Staffordshire have a dedicated Youth Offending Service (YOS) Police Team based at locations across the force. YOS performance data is scrutinised through both the PPU Performance Board and Child Protection Governance meeting and through Strategic Vulnerability Board by exception. Diversion and Early Intervention are also central workstreams in their own rights for our Child Centred Policing approach under the CYP thematic at a force-level. To date the Force has delivered the following activities in support of the recommendation:

- Use of the updated Child Gravity Matrix is fully embedded with daily use and recorded rationales.
- Joint Decision-Making Panel (JDMP) established and functioning effectively across Stoke and Staffordshire.
- Cessation of street Community Resolutions for children to ensure legal rights (cautioning and appropriate adult presence) are consistently met.
- Safeguarding referrals strengthened with mandatory Child Concern PPNs for all child-related cases, with HRH secondary review.

The following key activities are on-going:

- Real-time data sharing improvements underway including Power BI integration as part of the wider PPU Dashboard, estimated completion November 2026.
- Development of a YOT Quality Assurance framework including dip sampling to ensure consistency in decision making and Outcome 20/21 compliance.

A brief update is provided below against each action within Recommendation 11 of the report:

Action 1 – Working with YJSs to establish formal data-sharing arrangements to ensure timely and consistent access to information on all types of out-of-court disposal

- Police now have access to YJS ChildView Systems, giving real-time data.
- Performance data is shared at Youth Forensic Board (YFB) and quarterly at YJB, with combined agency data.
- Work is ongoing to implement Power BI real-time data sharing across Stoke & Staffordshire.
- This forms part of the wider PPU Dashboard project led by the Performance Team.

Action 2 - Ensuring decisions about the use of crime Outcomes 20 and 21 are consistent and appropriate and reflect revised NPCC guidance

- Outcome 21 is not routinely used during the OoCD process in Staffordshire/Stoke because referrals should already pass the public interest test.
- Criteria for Outcome 20 (HOCR Section H) reaffirmed—requires another agency to take action and that victims are informed.
- Victims must be notified when another agency assumes responsibility and given the appropriate contact details.
- Staffordshire YOT uses a consistent approach aligned with this guidance.
- A Quality Assurance (QA) framework will be developed, including dip sampling to ensure consistent decision-making.

Action 3 – Ensuring that police always use the NPCC child gravity matrix guidance when making decisions relating to outcomes for children and that the rationales for those decisions are always recorded

- The updated Child Gravity Matrix is used daily by the police YOT team.
- All rationales are recorded prior to determining an outcome.
- An escalation process exists with partners for disagreements.
- Deferred prosecutions only allow exceptions to the Gravity Matrix in agreed exceptional circumstances.

Action 4 – Ensuring that joint decisions with the youth justice service about out-of-court disposals are made at the appropriate level of seniority

- A multi-agency JDMP operates across Stoke and Staffordshire.
- Panels are attended by a Police YOS Sergeant and PC.
- Clear escalation process exists.
- Knife offence decisions escalate to Inspector rank.

Action 5 – Ensuring that children’s legal rights are met before issuing a community resolution; this includes the need to caution and make sure that an appropriate adult is present

- Staffordshire has stopped using street Community Resolutions (CRs) for children to ensure legal rights (cautioning & appropriate adult presence) are met.
- No plans to reintroduce street CRs.
- Regarded as the correct approach for child-focused diversion.

Action 6 – Ensuring that safeguarding referrals are made when appropriate

- A Child Concern PPN is completed for every child-related case.
- These receive secondary review by the HRH for onward referrals as needed.
- Compliance monitored through HRH; governance via PPU Command.
- YOT QA framework will include dip sampling to ensure PPNs are submitted appropriately.

The delivery and monitoring of these actions will take place via existing governance channels.

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's overall comments

I welcome the Chief Constable's update on the actions taken in response to the HMICFRS thematic inspection into the effectiveness of diverting children from the criminal justice system. Although Staffordshire was not one of the forces inspected, it is important that we reflect on the national findings and ensure our local approach meets the highest standards of consistency, fairness and safeguarding. The inspection highlighted the need for clearer governance, more reliable data, and greater consistency in decision-making when out-of-court disposals are used.

I am reassured that Staffordshire Police already has strong foundations in place, including a dedicated Youth Offending Service Police Team, established joint decision-making panels, strengthened safeguarding referrals and the embedded use of the updated Child Gravity Matrix. These are all positive indicators of a child-centred and proportionate approach. The force has also taken steps to safeguard children's rights by ending the use of street community resolutions for young people, ensuring appropriate adults are always present.

However, there is still more to do. The work underway to improve real-time data sharing, strengthen quality assurance processes and ensure consistency in the use of outcomes is essential. I will continue to monitor progress closely through my statutory governance structures, including the Reducing Reoffending Board and relevant safeguarding and performance boards, to ensure that improvements are fully embedded and sustained.

All children deserve a fair, consistent and supportive response that addresses their needs and reduces the risk of further offending. I am committed to ensuring that Staffordshire's approach to diversion remains robust, evidence-based and focused on giving young people the best chance to move away from crime and towards positive futures.