

South Yorkshire
Mayoral Combined Authority
11 Broad Street West
Sheffield, S1 2BQ

2 December 2025

To: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

Dear Chief Inspectors

Response from Kilvinder Vigurs, South Yorkshire's Deputy Mayor, to the HMIP and HMICFRS report – The effectiveness of diverting children from the criminal justice system: meeting needs, ensuring safety, and preventing reoffending.

This report provides a comprehensive national overview. I welcome the emphasis on avoiding unnecessary criminalisation of children through a child-centred approach and I thank both inspectorates for their shared findings.

One recommendation has been made for Chief Constables, and this has been accepted by South Yorkshire Police. As Deputy Mayor with responsibility for Policing and Crime, I retain oversight of the implementation of this and other recommendations through established local governance arrangements.

Recommendation 11 – Chief Constables should improve how Out of Court Disposals (OOCs) are managed by:

- Working with Youth Justice Services to establish formal data-sharing arrangements to ensure timely and consistent access to information on all types of out of court disposals.
- Ensuring decisions about the use of crime outcomes 20 and 21 are consistent and appropriate and reflect revised National Police Chief Council (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

I support this detailed recommendation. I am pleased to see a focus on improved management of out of court disposals and their effectiveness. This should enable the ethical and appropriate use of these disposals on a case-by-case basis rather than merely driving compliance with binary measures. To help Chief Constables better track local progress and demonstrate the required improvements to the public, I would welcome further guidance on the expected timelines for completion of the recommendation.

I recognise the report's concerns regarding data and inconsistent oversight. To bring local context to this:

- **Data:** There are limitations in disaggregated data for children, including outcomes and reoffending rates. Work is underway in South Yorkshire to secure access to Youth Justice Board (YJB) datasets, including exploring extending data-sharing agreements for improved oversight. Through the work of South Yorkshire's Local Criminal Justice Board, I will empower the YJB to bring forward local insights and expertise and ensure this forum works to improve local processes and practices. The recommendation for local police forces is welcome to support efforts in this area. I am also supportive of the call for a revision to the "First Time Entrants" measure or even an additional measure to ensure accurate focus and reflection of current practices and to support intervention at the earliest opportunity.
- **Decision making and quality assurance processes:** Consistency in decision-making is essential to ensure fair and proportionate outcomes for children. South Yorkshire Police have appointed supervisory officers within the Safer Neighbourhood Services to act as gatekeepers to ensure that all decisions about outcomes for children are reached using the gravity matrix. Work is being progressed through the regional youth justice meeting to establish quarterly dip sampling, which will add further assurances regarding consistency and standardisation of decision making. Checks are in place within custody to ensure safeguarding referrals for children are submitted and captured, with development ongoing to strengthen this process further.
- **Governance and oversight:** Local governance arrangements are in place, but we will review them to ensure they provide sufficient scrutiny. A meeting has been scheduled for December to examine children's OOCd usage and effectiveness. Local police officers work closely with local Youth Justice Services, and representatives from the Policing and Reform Directorate within SYMCA sit on the four district Youth Justice Management Boards. Through participation in these Boards, a SYMCA officer has recently established a victim-focused task and finish group to support Youth Justice Services with victim engagement and support. In addition, Youth Justice Services are invited to Local Criminal Justice Board subgroup partnership meetings. South Yorkshire Police (SYP) convene an OOCd scrutiny panel, chaired by a Magistrate and made up of representatives from across the criminal justice system, including Youth Justice. The group looks at all OOCds usage, with children's cases featuring within the first half of the panel. Learning is utilised to inform best practice for all relevant parties and drive improvement in the appropriate use of OOCds for children.

Commenting more broadly on the report

I welcome the recommendation for the Home Office to formally recognise deferred cautions and prosecutions. This presents an opportunity to strengthen the current approach, though there may be implications for resourcing and service availability. Any changes to the

outcomes framework would benefit from collaboration with the Department for Education to ensure informed, intersectional approaches. Further, new programmes should include evaluation to address the current evidence gaps that limit meaningful alternatives. I look forward to working with partners to explore these further and identify opportunities to support effective delivery.

I welcome the continued focus on intervention at the earliest opportunity and improving outcomes for children. I will monitor South Yorkshire Police's progress through existing governance arrangements here in South Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Kilvinder Vigurs". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Kilvinder" and the surname "Vigurs" clearly legible.

Kilvinder Vigurs

Deputy Mayor for Policing & Crime