



Dan Price
Cheshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner

Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner's response to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Police and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspections

Title of inspection: The effectiveness of diverting children from the criminal justice system: meeting needs, ensuring safety, and preventing reoffending

Published on: 15th October 2025

Inspection types: Thematic

Recommendations: For partner agencies and police

Report summary

A joint thematic inspection published on 15 October 2025 by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and HM Inspectorate of Probation evaluated the evolving use of youth out-of-court disposals (OoCDs) in diverting children from the criminal justice system. The report highlighted a significant rise in OoCD usage since 2018, now making up the majority of youth casework, yet noted a lack of comprehensive data on their frequency, application, or cost-effectiveness. Inspectors visited eight Youth Justice Services across six police force areas, reviewing 98 cases involving community resolutions or deferred prosecutions and 66 cases with Youth Cautions or conditional cautions. They found that while practitioners actively engaged children and families, interventions tended to focus narrowly on offenses and neglect broader safeguarding needs, with insufficient tailored support to prevent reoffending.

The inspection also uncovered a fragmented and inconsistent system characterized by a "postcode lottery" in decision-making and variable police practices. A concerning number of cases some involving serious offenses were handled informally by police without involvement from Youth Justice Services, sometimes leading to coercive or inaccurate guidance given to children about interventions. The NPCC child gravity matrix was underused, with only 35 of 179 police-only decisions showing its application. To address these issues, the report issued 18 recommendations aimed at strengthening governance, improving data collection, clarifying guidance, enhancing consistency, and



ensuring youth-centered, safety-focused, and outcome-driven support frameworks across all regions.

Recommendation 11 – For Chief Constables:

Chief constables should improve how out-of-court disposals are managed by:	Initial Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• working with YJS to establish formal data-sharing arrangements to ensure timely and consistent access to information on all types of out-of-court disposal	There is a formal Information Sharing Agreement between Cheshire Constabulary and Cheshire Youth Justice Service. As well as the sharing of general information, the agreement enables Force vetted YJS officers to have access to specific Niche reports that detail Cheshire Police disposals relating to Youth Restorative Disposals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ensuring decisions about the use of crime Outcomes 20 and 21 are consistent and appropriate and reflect revised NPCC guidance	The constabulary has established a review team to ensure that our application of crime outcomes is consistent and appropriate. Audits have been conducted and NPCC guidance tested during them. A review of all O20 and 21 is conducted weekly by the audit team for those applied in the previous week.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	A joint protocol exists between Cheshire Constabulary and Cheshire Youth Justice Service for the Operation and Delivery of Diversionary and Out of Court Disposals for Children. One aim of the protocol is to ensure the NPCC Child Gravity Matrix is carefully considered and applied for children. The Child Gravity Matrix is a triage tool ensuring appropriate decisions are taken according to offence, disposal type, and level of seniority required. This matrix is used at police and YJS joint panels to discuss individual case referrals and then recommend an outcome. These panels are area based and occur weekly.



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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ensuring that joint decisions with the youth justice service about out-of-court disposals are made at the appropriate level of seniority	Cheshire Constabulary has a Performance Framework for Outcomes/Offences Brought to Justice Policy. This documents the correct pathway and level of rank required when making decisions on crime outcomes, including youth crime.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	The constabulary has established a review team to ensure that our application of crime outcomes is consistent and appropriate. Whether or not children's legal rights are met and ensuring that an appropriate adult is present are included in the community resolution audit methodology. Performance is scrutinised by Chief Officers at Volume Crime Gold and Investigation Board Meetings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ensuring that safeguarding referrals are made when appropriate.	Safeguarding referrals are included in the methodology for audits undertaken by our outcome review team. Performance is scrutinised by Chief Officers at Investigation and Vulnerability Board Meetings.

Commissioner's Response:

I am pleased to see the Constabulary has a comprehensive action plan addressing each component of Recommendation 11.

To further ensure robust implementation, I commit to the following:

- Ongoing oversight: My office will monitor the application of OoCRs my youth specific outcomes scrutiny panel.
- SWAP Fund: Over £200K awarded to grassroots youth clubs, sports initiatives, and early-intervention schemes aimed at deflecting children from crime.
- Active Futures Programme: In partnership with Active Cheshire and Cheshire Community Foundation, this funds physical activities and sports for at-risk youth, targeting areas with elevated serious crime or ASB.



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- Phone Free Education campaign
- Early Intervention and prevention work.
1:1 mentoring for young people at risk of exploitation, county lines and knife crime.
- Support the youth Justice service to deliver their Divert programme supporting young people aged 10-17 make positive choices and move away from offending behaviour.

By investing in diversionary and health-led programmes, we not only tackle the root causes of youth offending, but support young people into positive futures.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Price".

Dan Price

Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner

