

Greater Manchester Combined Authority Police & Crime Panel

Date: 16 March 2026

Subject: Priority 3: Keeping Children and Young People Safe and preventing them from becoming involved in crime

Report of: Kate Green, Deputy Mayor

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

This is a highlight report on Priority 3 of the Greater Manchester Police and Crime Plan on 'keeping Children and Young People Safe and preventing them from becoming involved in crime'.

This report provides a highlight summary of progress against all of the actions outlined under this priority, so that the Panel can assess progress against this priority in its totality

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Police, Fire & Crime panel is requested to:

1. Note the priority 3 highlight report progress update.

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Equalities Impact, Carbon, and Sustainability Assessment:

A full Equality Impact Assessment was produced for the Greater Manchester 'Standing Together' Police and Crime Plan which this priority report sits within. The priorities and commitments in the Plan were developed taking specific account of the EIA. Updates on equality actions are included within this report.

Risk Management

Should the priorities and commitments in the Plan not be achieved or progressed there is a risk of increased harm to individual citizens and our communities and indeed their perception of community safety. This itself poses further risks to overall ambitions of Greater Manchester for its citizens and communities. The scrutiny by the Panel is one mechanism of monitoring progress, but this is supplemented by performance management mechanisms within GMCA and relevant partner agencies that continually monitors the progress of the Plan and which can dictate mitigating action, where necessary.

Legal Considerations

No legal considerations – this report is an update on progress of delivery of the Standing Together: Police and Crime Plan 2024-2029.

Financial Consequences – Revenue N/A

Financial Consequences – Capital N/A

Number of attachments to the report: 0

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Background Papers

Standing Together: Police and Crime Plan

[Standing Together Our plan for policing and safer and stronger communities in Greater Manchester 2024-2029](#)

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution?

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

Bee Network Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Priority 3: Keeping Children and Young People Safe and preventing them from becoming involved in crime

Executive Summary:

1. Across Greater Manchester, partners continue to strengthen safety, early identification of risk, and positive opportunities for young people. Programmes such as StreetDoctors, Stop the Bleed and Operation Venture have increased awareness of risk, built emergency response skills, and supported schools, colleges and PRUs to engage young people outside mainstream education. Multi agency learning through the Education Symposium further strengthens early identification of vulnerability and inclusive practice.
2. Progress continues across education to employment pathways, with sports-based engagement, cultural programmes, employer involvement and community led networks providing structured opportunities for young people most at risk. VCFSE partners also sustain trusted community spaces that reflect local needs.
3. A successful Integrated Settlement award has enabled continuation of the community led programme, allowing the VRU and VCFSE partners to expand delivery and offer more consistent support during key transition points for young people.
4. National priorities are also shifting. Although government focus remains on knife crime and violence against women and girls, signals suggest pressures on funding and a move towards tertiary intervention from 2027. The VRU is therefore prioritising preparedness, assurance and resilience to protect progress in a changing landscape.
5. The Youth Justice Transformation Programme continues to embed trauma informed, child centred practice aligned with GMP's Child Centred Policing Strategy. Whole system evaluation and community insights deepen understanding of risks and exploitation, while Navigator pathways support early responses to ACEs at key "reachable moments" in hospitals and custody.

6. Engagement with health partners, though vital, remains challenging. Work continues to strengthen relationships, improve data quality, increase visibility of risk and explore co commissioned services with NHS and public health partners.
7. Strong progress has also been made in diversion and reduced criminalisation through consistent Out of Court Resolution pathways, triage, early intervention across all districts and multi-year funding. The GM Youth Justice Remand Project continues to deliver system wide benefits, including £2.4m savings and reductions in remands, supported by dedicated accommodation and nationally recognised best practice.
8. Greater Manchester is now widely recognised as a national leader in youth justice innovation, with its whole system model, research partnerships and successful pilots strengthening its position as a site for future government backed innovation and reform.

1.1 Continue to keep children and young people safe

1.1.1 Provide positive opportunities for young people and prevent children and young people coming to harm by working with schools and colleges – focusing on those not attending education as we know this increases the risk of becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour and thus reduces life chances.

- Delivered extensive community-based engagement through StreetDoctors and Stop the Bleed, increasing young people's understanding of violence, risks, and emergency response.
- Supported schools and colleges via Operation Venture's school engagement component, increasing visibility of safe pathways and early intervention.
- Strengthened relationships with Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) through the July Education Symposium, helping create working groups on practice sharing, inclusion and employability for marginalised youth.

1.1.2 Improve the early identification of children and young people who need support and are vulnerable to harmful influence.

- Navigator models (hospital/custody) continue to provide early identification and support at critical touchpoints; internal comms highlight best-practice narratives and national coverage of similar models to inform local learning.
- Continued improvement of health-sector data sharing to strengthen early visibility of risk, working closely with partners across the NHS and data providers.
- Developed multi-agency learning through the Education Symposium and Community & Education strategic engagement, enabling earlier recognition of risk factors presented in school or community settings.
- Utilised insights from community partners to identify hidden or emerging vulnerabilities.

1.1.3 Support the creation of effective pathways to education, work and skills opportunities through pathways such as MBacc, focusing on those young people who are at greatest risk and to break the ‘school to prison pipeline’

- Sports through StreetGames leveraged to connect young people into structured activities and progression routes; evaluation underway with Loughborough University on sports systems change (supports EET pathways through sustained engagement)
- Community-led network and convened cross-sector working groups focused on improving education–employment pathways for young people outside mainstream education.
- Engaged employers through symposium activity to support upskilling and readiness for employment.
- Incorporated insights from arts, culture and sport engagement to diversify alternative pathways aligned with interests and strengths of young people at risk.

1.1.4 Support children and young people having access to safe spaces in their communities, such as youth centres, hubs, and zones, ensuring that these

spaces are accessible, local, and open at times when young people most need them, and that there is somewhere for young people to go in every part of Greater Manchester.

- Strengthened community engagement structures (e.g., Community Led Action Network chaired by Prof. Erinma Bell) to surface local insight on where safe spaces are needed most.
- Enhanced community-led approaches across GM to ensure violence reduction decisions reflect youth needs and locality experiences.
- Supported voluntary and VCFSE partners who play a key role in creating trusted spaces for young people.

1.2 Prevent more children and young people becoming involved in crime and divert them away from the criminal justice system.

1.2.1 Continue to work with GMP on delivery of their Child Centred Policing Strategy, improving outcomes for children and ensuring that they are safeguarded, protected from harm and not unnecessarily criminalised.

- The Youth Justice Transformation Programme embeds child first principles, trauma informed practice and safeguarding approaches, aligning fully with GMP's Child Centred Policing (CCP) Strategy.
- The development of the GM Youth Justice Coordination Hub proposals will strengthen multi-agency consistency, supports shared standards, and ensures that Youth Justice Services work hand in hand with GMP to reduce unnecessary criminalisation.
- The Programme's whole-system approach strengthens early help, diversion, and prevention, reducing entry into custody and formal criminal justice pathways, directly supporting CCP's core priorities.

1.2.2 Improve the understanding and recognition of children who are neurodiverse and consider how this impacts on children and can make them more vulnerable to harmful influences.

- VRU engagement with schools, colleges and PRUs has helped surface support needs for neurodiverse young people in alternative education.
- Multi-agency work via the symposium model promotes holistic planning around neurodiverse children, especially where vulnerability and risk may intersect.
- Strengthened relationships with health data partners to build a richer understanding of complex need profiles, including neurodiversity.

1.2.3 Improve our understanding of the issues that cause children and young people to become involved in criminal activity – working with key partners.

- Within the VRU, a whole-system evaluation completed to assess drivers of violence between 2019–2023, generating a detailed evidence base to inform future early intervention.
- Community insight gathered through VRU strategic engagement events has highlighted lived experiences, enabling richer understanding of conditions contributing to exploitation and crime.
- Health data improvements and third-sector involvement contribute to a fuller picture of risk pathways for the VRU.

1.2.4 Respond at the earliest opportunity to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), by equipping those who work with children with the knowledge and skills to recognise indicators of exposure to ACEs and feel confident to intervene.

- The Trauma Responsive GM network continues to coordinate a range of activities across the city region to improve knowledge, practice and policy in relation to professionals and communities understanding the impact of trauma and adversity in childhood and how that manifests in behaviour and mental ill health. A core part of this work is engaging with education and encouraging a

trauma responsive approach to managing behaviour and attendance in schools and colleges. The integrated settlement for 26/27 includes £400,000 funding towards this programme which will be used for staffing to assist with the running and coordination of the network, implementation of the GM framework and running targeted training with key stakeholders.

- Navigator pathways (hospital/custody) integrate trauma-informed identification and referral at “reachable moments,” supporting earlier responses to ACEs in practice.
- Internal learning and governance such as VRU Weekly meetings, provides a route to embed ACE-sensitive competencies into delivery expectations and reporting.
- VRU partnership work with education, health and VCFSE providers incorporates ACE awareness into training and engagement workstreams.
- Youth-focused programmes such as StreetDoctors and Unity Radio help build trusting relationships that promote early disclosure of harm or risk.
- Insights from evaluation work will contribute to strengthening trauma-informed practice across agencies.

1.2.5 Invest in services that place a high value on developing trust and belief in young people and provide them with opportunities for change

- Hospital admissions from sharp-object assaults down 4% in 2025, with continued programme delivery such as sports with StreetGames and the new Creative GM programme, designed to maintain momentum and reinforces creative, youth-centred interventions that build confidence and positive identity.
- Community-led approaches and VCFSE engagement continue to embed trust-building structures across all GM localities.
- VRU-funded partners continue delivering relationship-focused work aimed at improving belief, motivation and positive change opportunities.

1.2.6 Increase the use of out of court resolutions and voluntary attendance, reduce the number of children taken into police custody, and have fewer children remanded or sentenced to secure custody

- The Youth Justice Transformation Programme drives a whole system diversion model, including consistent Out of Court Resolution processes, improved triage, and alternatives to arrest, and has secured Youth Endowment Funding to support improvements to diversion pathways. It is anticipated that this is embedded by September 2026.
- The Programme funds and strengthens early intervention pathways across all ten districts, ensuring children's needs are identified sooner and managed outside formal processes where safe and appropriate and has been awarded 3-year settlement for GM Youth Justice Services for the MoJ Turnaround Programme for diversion. GMCA will be supporting youth justice services to consider innovative joint-commissioning options alongside dedicated local provision.
- Close partnership work with GMP and Children's Services is ensuring that fewer children are entering custody, and improvements in resettlement planning are reducing likelihood of remand or custody.
- The GM Youth Justice Remand Project has delivered a range of significant benefits across GM having a measurable impact on both outcomes for children and system efficiency. The project has generated £2.4 million in savings since its inception, demonstrating strong financial value for the region. It has also contributed to a reduction in the number of children being remanded, with improved performance evident when comparing remand levels in April–September 2025/26 to the same period in 2023/24. The establishment of dedicated GM remand accommodation—with spot purchased overnight staffing—has ensured that children can now be placed quickly and appropriately, strengthening local sufficiency and improving the stability of placements. Notably, the project has been recognised nationally as a successful model, reinforcing its suitability for further devolution and pilot activity in youth justice transformation.

1.2.7 Ensure Greater Manchester is positioned with Government as an area with the ability to pilot and test new and innovative prevention approaches for young people to be diverted away from crime and feel safe.

- The Youth Justice Transformation Programme positions GM as a **national leader in youth justice innovation** through its whole-system transformation model, evidence-led practice, and partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University (including a Knowledge Transfer Partnership and, PhD, research).
- GM has already demonstrated capability through initiatives such as the GM Remand Pilot and development of the Youth Justice Coordination Hub — both referenced nationally as innovation exemplars.
- The Youth Justice Transformation Programme has created the infrastructure that Government requires to approve and scale pilots, test-beds and system-change models which has resulted in a GM multi-year settlement for Turnaround and future consideration of the pooled core grant for youth justice services.
- By embedding high standards and continuous learning, GM becomes the natural site for future pilots and GMCA is supporting a joint bid with Youth Justice Services for further remand/diversion funding.