Department of Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

Männystrie O tha Laa

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PERFORMANCE IMPACT REPORT

2025 - 2026

Youth Justice Agency

FOREWORD
BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Thank you for reading this year's YJA performance impact report. It has been a challenging year. While the number of children offending has remained broadly static, the proportion of children we work with who have complex needs is growing. With tight resources, this has stretched us in lots of different ways. The skill, resilience and persistence of our excellent staff team has been crucial in enabling us to continue to have a significantly positive impact on the children we work with, their families and victims as you can see from both the data and engaging case studies included in this year's report. A huge thank you to each and every member of the YJA team.

We have continued to invest in our people through an ever improving learning and development programme. For the first time this year, this has included the development of a dedicated leadership programme in partnership with the Health and Social Care Leadership Centre.
We have also continued to invest in early career development with our newer staff and are building our capacity to take on more social work and youth work placement students.

Partnership remains at the heart of all we do and this year's impact report reflects some of the partnerships essential to long-term success. We are grateful to each of our partners for their ongoing support.

Our work continues to be recognised nationally and internationally. Two particularly stand out for me. Paula Craig received a commendation in the prestigious Butler Trust awards for the health and fitness programme she developed in the Juvenile Justice Centre and the state of Illinois has continued its partnership with us as it adopts and implements key elements of our Child First approach to youth justice state-wide.

Youth Justice Agency

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The Youth Justice Agency is part of the Department of Justice.

We were established in April 2003.

Mission Statement

To reduce offending by supporting children to achieve their full potential.

Statement of Purpose

"Making communities safer by helping children to stop offending"

Our YJA Corporate Plan for the period 2025-2028 is aligned to the DoJ Corporate Plan 2025-2028

WHO ARE WE?

Our community-based services are delivered by our Youth Justice Services through five Area Teams located across Northern Ireland.

Custody for children and young people is provided by our Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre which is located in Bangor and services the needs of all Northern Ireland.

The YJA also recruits and trains volunteers to support young people.

189 Number of staff who work across custody, community and corporate services.

2 Experts by Experience.



The Youth Justice Agency (YJA) operates two types of Experts by Experience (EBEs), including young adults aged 18–25 with past involvement in YJA and parents/carers who have supported a child through the youth justice system. Their insights shape service design and inform strategic outcomes, ensuring services meet the needs of users. YJA currently has two EBEs, one parent/carer and one young adult, and plans to further develop this model.

HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

971

PSNI Referral Schemes consisting of:

- **770** CRN Schemes
- **201** Sexting Schemes

126

referrals to YJA from the Children's Diversion Forum

168

Earlier Stage Diversion referrals for voluntary support

1,325

referrals to Youth Justice Services involving **709** individuals

1,894

total number of children and young people we worked with both in custody and the community

100%

of young people discharged from JJC with a referral to Community CAMHS and a follow up appointment within ten days

105

referrals were made to ACORN, of which **78** young people completed an initial assessment and engaged with ACORN thereafter

6,543

Woodlands EOTAS lessons. **4,651** lessons provided by the Education Authority during the academic year. **1,892** lessons were provided by People 1st

99

YJA school workshops delivered in **33** schools to **4,452** pupils and staff

203

children and young people and **11** community/voluntary organisations funded through YJA individual and community support funding

HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

89.7%
of children & young people attending school workshops stated that they were more aware of issues that can lead young people into offending

97.4%
of Community Resolution Notice programmes were successfully completed

84.7%
of Earlier Stage Diversion referrals were successfully completed

100% & 96.9%
of parents/carers and children rated their experience of the Earlier Stage Diversion referral as 'Very Good' or 'Good'

85.8%
of Youth Engagement Clinics were successfully completed

95.5%
of children and young people surveyed rated their experience of YJA as either 'Very Good' or 'Good

97.0%
of surveyed parents/ carers were either 'Very Satisfied' or 'Satisfied' with the service they received

95.8%
of parents/carers stated they strongly agreed or agreed that YJA helped with family relationships

94.7%
of surveyed victims stated that they were 'Satisfied' with the restorative process

84
qualifications were awarded in Woodlands in the academic year

100%
of parents/guardians surveyed stated they rated their young person's overall care in Woodlands as 'Very Good'

100%
of parents surveyed stated they were involved in the decision-making process regarding their young person in Woodlands

50.0%
of young people surveyed stated they felt supported by the Healthcare team in Woodlands

98.8%
average JJC School Attendance for the year. **28** young people had **100%** attendance

HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

721

children completed a CRN programme during **2024/25**, of which only **8.7%** received a statutory referral to YJA within one year of completion

87.0%

of children and young people with Children's Diversion Forum intervention referrals felt their experience of YJA would help them avoid further offending

168 (12.7%)

of referrals were for Earlier Stage Diversion contributing to fewer young people reaching the formal justice system. Of the children who completed Earlier Stage Diversion referrals in **2024/25**, only **16.1%** received a statutory referral to YJS within a year of completing the programme

99.5%

of children and young people and **99.4%** of parents/carers surveyed stated that Youth Engagement Clinics helped their understanding of choices available

94.1%

of children and young people and **95.8%** of parents/carers 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that YJA helped with family relationships

93.9%

of children and young people and **96.1%** of parents/carers either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that YJA helped with ETE

99.5%

of parents/carers stated that YJA helped the child/ young person in some way

71.4%

of children and young people that attended school at Woodlands last academic year had an Education, Training and Employment placement at discharge

42

young people attended school for more than five days and achieved **84** qualifications - **58** via Education Authority, **26** via People 1st

EARLIER-STAGE DIVERSION

YJA Outcome 1:

Children are exited from the youth justice system at the earliest point with appropriate support.

The Sexting Referral Scheme began as a pilot in November 2019 before being rolled out across all areas in June 2020. A partnership between the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) and PSNI, referrals are made by police for children who have been involved in relatively minor "sexting" type offences and who would benefit from education rather than a formal justice disposal.

Children who are referred to the scheme are allocated a YJA worker, who will deliver a one-off intervention to children and their parents/carers. In some cases, further voluntary support can be offered, based on need.

The YJA staff involved demonstrate high levels of compassion and confidence in helping children and their parents/carers discuss what can often be very difficult and personal topics in a manner that promotes desistance.

In 2025/26 201 sexting referrals were made to YJA, and 88.4% of sexting awareness sessions were successfully completed. 93.3% of children and 100% of parents/carers rated the sexting awareness sessions as either good or very good, and 97.1% of children and 94.9% of parents/carers felt that the session would help avoid further offending.

Of the 228 children who completed sexting awareness sessions in 2025/26, only seven (3.1%) children received a statutory referral within one year of completion.

USER FEEDBACK:

"I feel more confident to say no as I am more aware of the consequences of sexting for me and my future."

"It gave me a better understanding of the risk of sexting."

"I have no complaints or suggestions for improvement. [Staff member] has been 100% at all times."

"Worker was really down to earth, made talking about a very difficult topic really easy. Thank you so much for the care you gave, we appreciate it"

"I feel that she has benefited from engaging in the session as she is more aware of the consequences for herself and her future. Thank you so much for all the care you gave to (name removed) and I, we appreciate it."

"[Staff member] has been a strong source of encouragement and support for [child]. We have gained nothing but positives from the experience."

CASE STUDY | JANE'S STORY

Jane was 14 and had been sending inappropriate images of herself to a stranger who had not requested them. Jane's mother contacted the police who made a referral to the Sexting Referral Scheme. Jane engaged in this one-off session and through it, further underlying issues were identified that had contributed to her actions. Both Jane and her mother agreed that they would engage in further voluntary support with YJA.

Over this period, Jane was able to explore interests in personal training and art, eventually being assisted in joining a gym by YJA and participating in an art group that saw a piece of her work being chosen for an exhibition. She has also now registered with the DofE Award. When Jane's voluntary engagement closed both she and her mother highlighted the importance of the help and support YJA had delivered, particularly how it had improved their relationship and helped Jane to develop positive coping strategies. This they believe will help Jane to avoid becoming involved in similar behaviour in the future.

YOUTH CONFERENCING

YJA Outcome 2:

Positive outcomes for children, families, victims, and communities affected by offending.

A Youth Conference is a meeting or series of meetings convened by the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) after a young person has admitted to an offence or been found guilty of an offence. Diversionary Youth Conferences are directed by the Public Prosecution Service. Court Ordered Youth Conferences are requested by the Youth Court.

CASE STUDY | PAUL'S STORY

Paul, a 17-year-old, participated in a Diversionary Youth Conference for an offence of Attempted Burglary. This was Paul's first and only referral to the Youth Justice Agency. During preparation sessions, Paul explored what had contributed to his actions, which he believed were out of character. It was identified that Paul was easily influenced within his peer group, they had 'egged him on'. He also acknowledged his poor choices, which lead him to want to apologise. Planned and structured preparatory work with the victim, Peter, was carried out, ensuring he felt heard and his role in the process valued.

Peter agreed to participate in the conference meeting which created an opportunity for a meaningful restorative conversation. Paul was able to reflect on the impact of his actions, his poor choices and apologise, while Peter shared the emotional, personal, and financial impact on him and his business. All participants considered how best to support Paul, acknowledging his remorse and engagement with the process. It was agreed that some work with Paul to address decision-making and personal responsibility would strengthen his ability to make positive choices in the future and a period of supervision with YJA would provide an opportunity to develop this.

USER FEEDBACK:

"Grateful for the chance to turn my life around."

"It was a positive experience and I got help."

"As a parent we were always involved in any decisions that needed to be made, and we always felt like we were listened to."

"My son had a good experience with you. You help him with right and wrong and all the wee extras that was done. We will be lost without you."

VICTIMS

YJA Outcome 2:

Positive outcomes for children, families, victims, and communities affected by offending.

A youth conference is a meeting which can be attended by a victim or representative of the victim. It gives them the opportunity to talk to the young person about how they were affected by their actions and to hear the young person's side of the story. A victim can make suggestions about how the young person can make amends and it gives the young person an opportunity to acknowledge their wrongdoing.

USER FEEDBACK:

"When working with young people in residential units it's good to have an outside safe place to have conversations."

"I felt 100% that my contribution to this process was valued."

"This process appears to me to be a well-planned and researched process, and I feel a lot of work has gone into it already. I am very impressed."

CASE STUDY | DEPUTY CARE HOME MANAGER

This account is based on a victim impact statement provided by a Deputy Care Home Manager who attended the young person's conference.

'We as staff understood the factors that shaped the young person's behaviour, it was important for him to recognise the significant impact his actions had on others and therefore I decided to write a victim impact statement for the conference. The assaults and incidents of aggression affected us as staff members, management, and the other young people living within the home. We experienced fear and uncertainty in our workplace, with some staff feeling so unsafe during incidents that they were required to lock themselves in rooms and contact the police for assistance and protection. These experiences left us as staff feeling vulnerable and anxious within an environment where our primary purpose was to provide care, support, and stability to young people.

We do not come to work expecting to be assaulted; we come to nurture, support, and advocate for young people in our care. Incidents of violence have a profound emotional impact, leaving our staff feeling frightened, distressed, and questioning their personal safety.

The impact also extended beyond staff. Damage to transport and property had direct consequences for other young people in the home, many of whom experienced disappointment and disruption when family contact, planned activities and opportunities for positive experiences had to be cancelled or delayed. The financial cost of repairing damage to the home and vehicles placed additional pressure on resources that would otherwise have been used to support the needs and wellbeing of all young people within the service. Despite these challenges, staff continued to do their best to support the child, balancing their duty of care with the need to protect themselves and others.

As a result of the conference the staff were able to inform the young person of the impact directly on them and the wider impact on the care home and those who reside in it. It allowed staff to express how they were made to feel by the young person's actions and to ensure the young person was aware of the full impact of his behaviours. The Deputy Care Home Manager felt this was a worthwhile process for all those involved and hoped it made a difference in the future'.

BAIL FOSTERING

YJA Outcome 2:

Positive outcomes for children, families, victims, and communities affected by offending.

Background

A Bail Fostering Scheme "Proof of Concept" Pilot started in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT) area in July 2024. The aim of this pilot was to provide short-term therapeutic foster placements for children remanded to Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre (JJC) who could not perfect bail because they had no suitable home placement. This pilot was introduced in response to concerns by SHSCT and the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) that children were sometimes spending time on remand simply because they had no suitable address, which is not in their best interest and is contrary to the principle that custody should only be used as a measure of last resort for children.

Progress to Date

There have been six bail fostering placements delivered through this pilot scheme. In all cases the placements were successful, and the foster parents provided high-quality placements where the children felt safe and their needs were met.

Two children breached bail (one once and the other twice) but this was dealt with appropriately and the children were returned to the foster placement on all occasions. There was a range of outcomes for children flowing their bail fostering placements, including two returning home to their parent(s), two moving to supported accommodation, one moving into longer term foster care and one going into residential care. These were the likely final outcomes in all of these cases but time preparing for these moves was spent in foster care in the community, rather than in custody.

Learning

Some good learning has been identified from the pilot to date. This included the need to be flexible and open to change when developing a new service. For example, the service procedures were amended and added to in response to feedback from the young people, foster carers and staff directly involved in the pilot.

There were initial concerns about maintaining and financing a bail foster placement which might not always be in use (as has proved the case). This was managed by this bed also being made available for short-term emergency placements and the foster parents also providing other foster placements for SHSCT at the same time. There is some concern about how readily a similar arrangement could be replicated by other foster carers.

Conclusions

Although the number of children involved in the Bail Fostering Scheme pilot has been very low, the six bail placements have been a great success and the concept has been shown to be viable. As a result of this, the SHSCT has now agreed to fund this service on an established basis. This success is due to the experience, knowledge and skill of the foster parents; good interagency working, trust and communication; and the commitment and support of senior management within SHSCT and YJA. Other Trusts have now begun to explore the viability of this service in their areas.

CASE STUDY | JOHN'S STORY

John is a 16-year-old who, after his parents separated, eventually went to live with his father, whom he assaulted during one of their frequent fights while they were both under the influence of drugs and alcohol. He was involved with the YJA for previous similar offences, all of which were in a domestic context. He was initially remanded to Woodlands JJC but was subsequently granted bail which could not be perfected as his father refused to have him home. John has complex needs which contribute to his struggle to manage relationships, emotions and conflict. His father also has addiction and mental health needs.

John was placed in the bail fostering placement, and while there he experienced a settled period in which Social Services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and YJA were able to work on strengthening family relationships and communication, and reconnecting John and his father to addiction and mental health services. After eight weeks of this intensive work John successfully returned home.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT (ETE)

YJA Outcome 3:

Develop effective and responsive services to meet changing needs

'Renew and reinvigorate partnerships with Education, Further Education and employers to identify opportunities for more children who offend to return to Education, Training and Employment'

The Youth Justice Agency recognises the vital role that education, training and employment (ETE) play in improving outcomes for children and young people who come into contact with the justice system. Strong partnership working and enhanced collaboration with key agencies are essential to supporting positive and sustainable outcomes.

Joint working with the Education Authority (EA) has focused on improving access to appropriate educational provision, identifying and implementing reasonable adjustments, increasing awareness of available support services, and promoting early intervention to help prevent school exclusion and placement breakdown. Information on the services that EA provides has been disseminated across YJA teams to enhance staff knowledge and support practice.

During 2025/26, significant progress has been made in strengthening pathways into education, employment and training through partnerships with the Department for the Economy, Local Labour Market Partnerships and the Careers Service.

In collaboration with the Careers Service, a staff desk aid has been developed to increase awareness of available programmes and support YJA staff in assessing young people's career readiness, identifying barriers to progression, and signposting them to appropriate opportunities and support.

This collaborative approach aims to ensure that children and young people engaged with YJA are better supported to access education, develop skills, and move towards sustained employment and positive future pathways.

USER FEEDBACK:

In 2025/26, 93.9% of children and 96.1% of parents/ carers either strongly agreed or agreed that YJA helped with ETE.

"I appreciate all the support I have been given."

"Staff member really helped me and got me on to my training course."

"My worker helped me with careers and gave me support every week which was great."

CASE STUDY | JODIE'S STORY

Jodie was not attending education due to a range of complex needs. These included previous unsuitable educational provision, low attendance, and significant communication, social interaction, and emotional wellbeing difficulties, identified within her Statement of Special Educational Needs. Jodie had been out of formal education for a year after her previous post-primary placement failed to meet her needs.

YJA staff worked alongside Jodie, her mother and other professionals to support her return to education. Following liaison by the Health and Social Care worker, a more appropriate specialist placement was secured within the Autism Unit in mainstream education. YJA supported both Jodie and her mother throughout this transition, accompanying them on her first day at school and later arranging and attending review meetings when necessary.

Recognising Jodie's difficulties with social interaction and confidence, she was encouraged to participate in the YJA Art Participation Project. This provided opportunities to engage with small groups of peers in a structured and supportive environment, helping to build her confidence, self-esteem and social skills. She successfully attended the local project launch alongside her mother.

Jodie started her school placement in Easter 2026 and despite facing some challenges she has engaged with education and identified positive goals for the following academic year.

REFLECTION OF MY TIME WITH THE YOUTH JUSTICE AGENCY: A YOUNG ADULT'S ACCOUNT

YJA Outcome 3:

Develop effective and responsive services to meet changing needs

"I was involved with Youth Justice since I was 14, between 2020 and 2025 because of different offences - back then I had a lot of difficult stuff going on in my life. My mum and I had a very difficult relationship, and I spent some time in residential care including a period in secure care. I was taking drugs and putting myself in some risky situations and I wasn't doing well at school with so much going on. I had also been diagnosed with ASD and ADHD.

As a result of so much happening and not having the chance to try and understand it, I got in a lot of bother which included assaults on police and members of the public, possession of drugs and sending offensive messages. Because of this I had nine youth conferences over the years which were really difficult for me but helped in the long run. All through this time I had different professionals from different organisations involved with me, I didn't always get on with them or feel like they really understood me.

My YJA worker was different. I felt like she actually listened to me and didn't just see me for the things I had done - she was more interested in why I'd done the things rather than just focus on the actual actions I'd got in trouble for. She helped me understand why I was involved with Youth Justice and encouraged me to think about the choices I was making and what I wanted for myself.

She believed in me and helped me realise that being involved with Youth Justice showed the things I had done in the past when I was having my most difficult moments didn't define me or my future. Where others kept judging me against incidents I'd been involved in at my lowest, she encouraged me to recognise why I'd done them, accept responsibility not only what I did but for making the changes so I would avoid repeating them in the future.

Having that support helped me believe in myself more and see that I was capable of achieving things. I got my GCSEs, attended training courses, and started thinking more positively about what I wanted from my life supported by my YJA worker.

She also supported my mum. My mum got involved with the parents' group, which helped her realise that she wasn't on her own and that she hadn't failed as a parent. It also helped her understand more about what I was going through.

We were both treated with dignity and respect, and I think that helped our relationship too.

My mum and I are in a much better place now. I have my own place and I'm much more independent. I still need her support, but she also knows when to give me space. We understand each other much better now, and there is more trust between us.

When I look back, the biggest thing for me was having someone who believed in me when I didn't always believe in myself. I made mistakes, but I learned from them. The support helped me make better choices, become more confident, and see that I was capable of moving forward with my life. Youth Justice was part of my life for a few years, but it helped me get to where I am now and see that there were more opportunities for me in the future.

The fact that while others just wanted to see me punished for what I'd done, the YJA worker understood that at 14 I had things going on for me that I needed help with and while it wasn't all simple or without its challenges, I dread to think what would have happened without that understanding and support".

WOODLANDS JJC

YJA Outcome 3:

Improved outcomes for children through the delivery of a safe, secure, therapeutic, child centred environment.

Custodial Services

Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre provides a safe, secure, and stimulating environment for 10–17 year old boys and girls who have been remanded or sentenced to custody by the courts in Northern Ireland. The centre also accommodates young people under Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) legislation.

216 Admissions to Woodlands (PACE 179, Remand 33, Committed 4).

73.1% of young people surveyed in Woodlands stated that they felt supported and included in the creation of their initial care plan on admission to Woodlands.

63.0% of children surveyed stated that they felt safe being away from drugs and alcohol whilst in Woodlands.

USER FEEDBACK:

"The staff have always listened and supported me."

"The staff provided lots of activities and encouraged me to participate."

"Staff have been very supportive and gave time to me when I first arrived as I was having trouble settling into this environment. I was listened to and provided with help and advice which I appreciated."

"Staff helped me in contacting my mum as I had an argument with her. My keyworker supported me in a face-to-face visit with my mum and helped me get my point of view across in calm way. I have a much better relationship with my mum since that meeting."

CASE STUDY | JOHN'S STORY

John, aged 16, was remanded to Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre on an alleged charge of Riotous Behaviour. This was not his first admission, having previously spent periods in custody since 2023 for a range of alleged assault offences. Prior to his remand, John lived with his parents, who have remained supportive despite occasional challenges within family relationships. Throughout his time in Woodlands, John engaged positively with staff and adapted well to the custodial environment. He developed constructive relationships with staff and participated in a range of offence-focused and personal development interventions, including victim awareness, positive choices, family intervention work, and educational support. John also completed programmes such as CrimePics II and Stages of Change.

Recognising John's diagnosis of ASD and ADHD, support was provided through Acorn Therapeutic Services alongside ongoing involvement from Social Services and YJA, Youth Justice Services. John reported that the activities available in Woodlands had a positive impact on his mental health and wellbeing and described staff as supportive and respectful throughout his stay. John was subsequently released on strict bail conditions to his family home. Since his discharge, he has complied with these conditions and continues to engage with the support provided by Youth Justice Services and Social Services, demonstrating positive progress and a commitment to making safer choices.

WOODLANDS JJC

YJA Outcome 3:

Improved outcomes for children through the delivery of a safe, secure, therapeutic, child centred environment.

Woodlands physical training and health and facilities provide a safe, structured and supportive environment that promote positive physical and mental health outcomes. Participation is voluntary, enabling young people to engage at a level that is appropriate to their individual needs and interests.

Prior to commencing any training programme, each young person completes a comprehensive safety induction. An individualised training plan is then developed in consultation with the young person and Woodlands medical staff, ensuring that activities are safe, appropriate and aligned with health and wellbeing needs. Young people are supported by fully trained and experienced staff throughout their participation. This approach provides safe engagement in physical activity, encourages the development of healthy lifestyles, and supports improvements in physical fitness, confidence, emotional wellbeing and overall health. The combination of specialist facilities, professional guidance and individualised support enables young people to develop positive attitudes towards exercise and wellbeing, while providing opportunities to build routine, resilience, self-confidence and personal responsibility.

USER FEEDBACK:

"Staff have been very supportive and respectful. Martin has grown and developed in this environment, and we cannot wait to have him home."

"I have got on well with most of the staff. They have respected me and encouraged me to try and get off substance misuse."

Participation has contributed to positive changes across a range of areas, including:

- Improved sleep patterns
- Increased confidence and self-esteem
- Improved diet and healthier lifestyle choices
- Improved personal hygiene and appearance
- Improved teamwork and interpersonal skills
- Greater focus on positive goals and future aspirations

Overall, the facilities provide young people with an opportunity to develop healthier routines, build confidence and resilience, and make positive lifestyle choices. The structured and supportive approach helps young people recognise their achievements, develop a sense of personal responsibility and work towards positive outcomes for their health, wellbeing and future.

CASE STUDY | MARTIN'S STORY

Martin described his admission to Woodlands JJC as a particularly difficult period. He experienced low mood, poor self-esteem and a lack of motivation, and initially struggled to adjust to the secure environment. However, he recalled being treated with dignity and respect by staff, who provided consistent support and encouragement.

Although initially reluctant to engage in health and wellbeing activities, Martin eventually attended the gym and quickly experienced the benefits of regular exercise. With the guidance and support of staff, he became motivated to participate in every session, enjoying both the physical activity and sense of teamwork. As a result, his mental wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem improved significantly.

Martin also reported that advice from staff on nutrition helped improve his eating habits and sleep pattern. He now feels better equipped to manage challenges, make positive choices, and has set goals for the future, including joining a gym on release. He would encourage other young people to engage in health and fitness activities, highlighting the positive impact on both mental and physical wellbeing.

YJA ACHIEVEMENTS AND AWARDS

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT



During 2025/26, the Youth Justice Agency continued to invest significantly in the learning and development of staff across Youth Justice Services (YJS) and the Juvenile Justice Centre (JJC). Staff participated in a wide range of internal and external training opportunities designed to enhance professional knowledge, strengthen practice skills, and ensure the delivery of high-quality services to children and young people.

All staff completed mandatory safeguarding training meeting statutory and agency requirements. In addition to this other training undertaken during the year included Open University (OU) Degree in Social Work, Northern Ireland Practice Teaching Programme, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Levels 1 & 2, New Staff Induction, Introduction to Systemic Practice, Trauma Informed Practice, Children's Rights, Cultural Competence, Restorative Practice, Neurodiversity, MMPR, AIM, Non-Violence Resistance Training, Motivational Interviewing, Lego Therapy and Substance Use.

This investment reflects the Agency's commitment to maintaining a skilled, knowledgeable and confident workforce that is equipped to respond to the increasingly complex needs of children and young people. Continuous professional development supports staff to apply evidence-informed practice, improve decision-making, strengthen interventions, and promote better outcomes for children, families and communities.

Marcel, a practitioner from the Northern Area Team took part in the IPD course and provided some feedback:

"The benefits of the IPD course were that it helped me to reflect on my practice and consider what I have learned throughout my Assessed Year in Employment (AYE) and first few years in YJA. It helped me to recognise and reflect on the importance of our role and do deeper research into the area of poverty and inequality and how it affects the families we work with. It also gave me an opportunity to connect with a few others who are in different areas of social work and improve my understanding of their roles as well. Overall, the course was challenging, and fitting it in alongside work was tough at times, but I would recommend it to anyone looking to complete their PiP as I was supported throughout the process and I learned a lot from it"

Particular congratulations to a Youth Justice Practitioner (YJP) who completed the Initial Professional Development (IPD) course with the Ulster University and gained his two Professional in Practice Northen Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) Requirements in the Consolidation Award. Another YJP achieved a Post Graduate Certificate in Systemic Practice with QUB.

One Area Manager completed the Individual Assessment Route to achieve two Professional In Practice (PIP) NISCC requirements in the Consolidation Award while another completed the Quality Improvement Course to achieve three PIP NISCC requirements on the Strategic and Leadership Award.

In JJC, three new Minimising and Managing Physical Restraint (MMPR) coordinators completed their course.

Three newly qualified social work staff within the Agency completed their Assessed Year in Practice (AYE).

Youth Justice Agency

Youth Justice Agency
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