



SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP25/46

SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL –
21 NOVEMBER 2025

SUBJECT: SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

SUMMARY:

1. This paper supports the related commitment in the Police and Crime Plan, that the Constabulary will ensure the way it works with young people supports effective engagement, safeguards young people, prevents unnecessary criminalisation and reduces reoffending (including its triage work with Suffolk Youth Justice Service).

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is asked to consider the progress made by the Constabulary and raise issues with the Chief Constable as appropriate to the PCC's role in holding the Chief Constable to account.

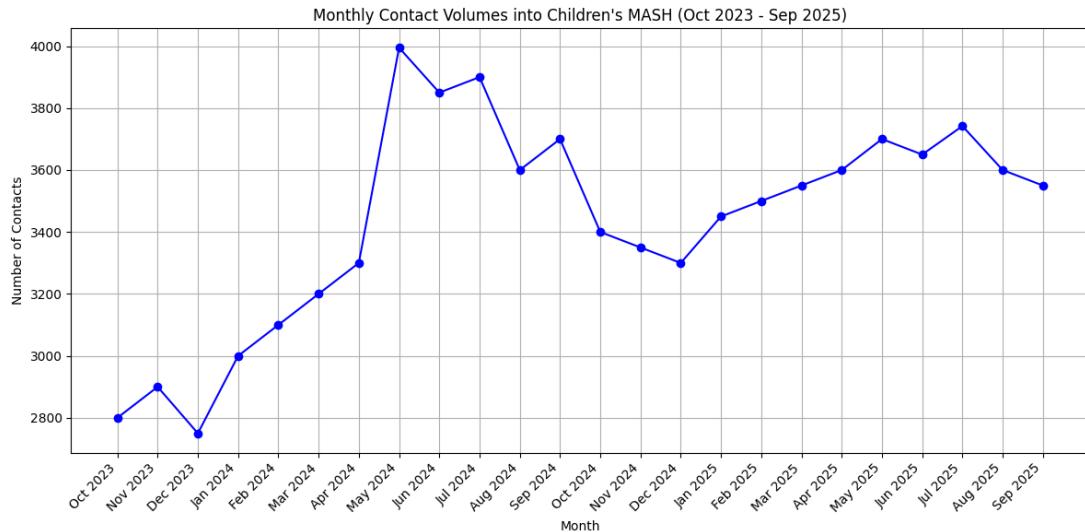
1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report covers the period May 2025 to November 2025 and provides an update to the areas reported on in a previous paper to the Panel.
- 1.2 Strategic oversight of Children and Young Persons (CYP) is shared across the County Policing Command, Crime, Safeguarding and Incident Management and Joint Justice Services. The portfolio holders are as follows: Superintendent County Partnership and Prevention Hub (CPPH) responsible for Children and Young People delivery against the National Strategy and Child Centred Policing Framework including Youth Justice Services (YJS) and Schools, Detective Superintendent responsible for the Safeguarding Partnership, Detective Superintendent for Child Abuse Investigations, and a Chief Inspector responsible for Children in Custody.
- 1.3 The Strategic Governance is held by the Assistant Chief Constable for Local Policing who chairs the force Children and Young People's Delivery Board, providing leadership and oversight. There are delivery boards for CYP, Child Safeguarding (incorporating custody) and missing.
- 1.4 A new National Chief Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Children and Young People Strategy was published in October 2024, introducing 3 new strategic pillars – Your Trust, Your Voice and Your Future. The NPCC are now working with the Youth Endowment Fund to develop a Policing Charter that will accompany the new strategy and support embedding good practice within forces. It is anticipated that this will be published in 2025 and at this point Suffolk will review and amend their internal CYP strategy.
- 1.5 This paper supports the related commitment in the Police and Crime Plan, that the Constabulary will ensure the way it works with young people supports effective engagement, safeguards young people, prevents unnecessary criminalisation, and reduces reoffending (including its triage work with Suffolk Youth Justice Service).

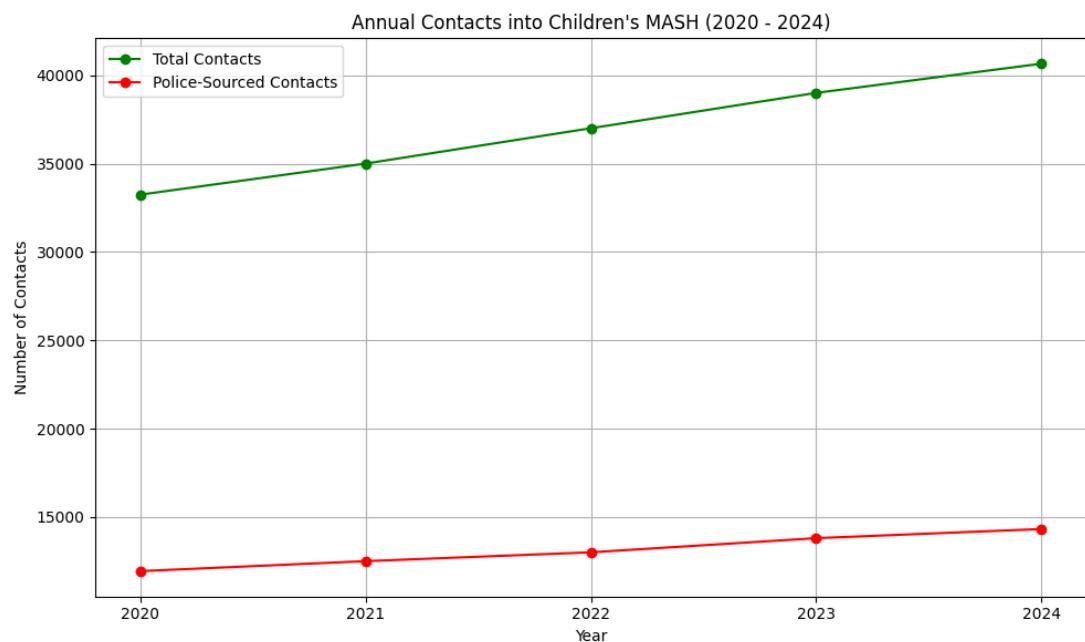
2. KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

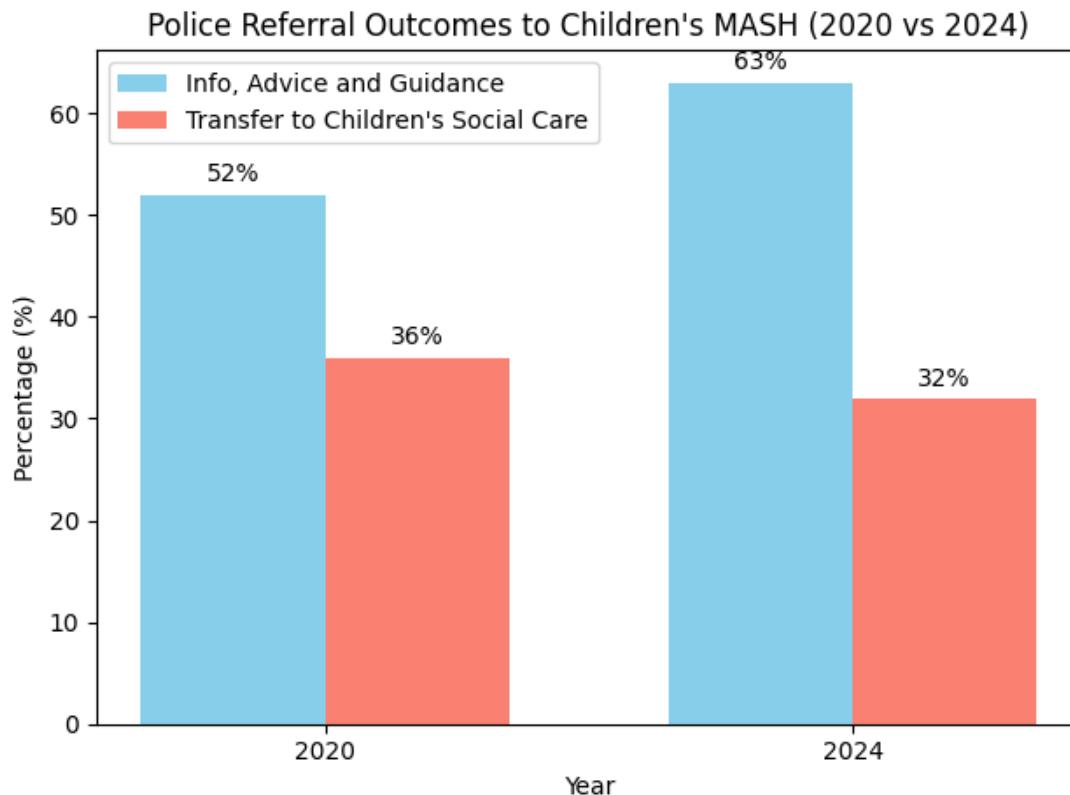
- 2.1 Suffolk Constabulary is a core statutory partner within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), co-located at Landmark House in Ipswich. Working alongside Suffolk County Council's Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), Adult Social Care (ASC), and health professionals, the Constabulary plays a central role in the collective safeguarding response across the county. As part of its statutory responsibilities, the Constabulary continues to be the largest single source of child safeguarding referrals into the MASH, consistently accounting for approximately 35% of all submissions. This reflects the Constabulary's proactive approach to identifying and responding to risk, and its commitment to working collaboratively to protect vulnerable children and young people.
- 2.2 Recent data shows a marked increase in demand over the summer months. May, June and July 2024 were among the busiest on record, with May peaking at 3,995 contacts. This seasonal trend continued into 2025, with July recording 3,742 contacts.



2.3 Annual figures demonstrate a sustained rise in overall contact volumes and police-sourced referrals. Between 2020 and 2024, total contacts increased from 33,242 to 40,653, while police-generated contacts rose from 11,935 to 14,318. These contacts are finalised in various ways, but many require police research and may result in joint intervention with partner agencies. The upward trend highlights the growing demand placed on all MASH partners and underscores the Constabulary's continued commitment to safeguarding children across Suffolk.



2.4 Recent data demonstrates a continued shift in how police referrals into the Children's MASH are resolved. There has been a notable increase in cases finalised as Information, Advice and Guidance, rising from 52% in 2020 to 63% in 2024, reflecting a broader partnership ambition to reduce unnecessary statutory interventions. Conversely, the proportion of cases transferred to Children's Social Care has declined from 36% to 32% over the same period. This trend supports the strategic direction of enabling earlier, proportionate responses and reducing the number of families requiring social worker-led assessments or statutory investigations.



2.5 Suffolk is actively progressing the implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme, a nationally driven reform led by the Department for Education to transform children's social care. In alignment with the "Stable Homes, Built on Love" strategy, the programme promotes a more integrated, preventative, and family-focused model of support through the creation of Family Help Teams and Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs). Locally, this includes the development of an Integrated Front Door, designed to streamline access to Early Help and statutory services, and improve triage and decision-making at the point of contact. Suffolk's approach, now moving to a countywide roll-out from April 2026, reflects a commitment to whole-system reform, relational practice, and earlier intervention. As part of this transformation, exploratory work is underway to establish joint multi-agency child abuse investigation teams, bringing together police, social care, health, and education professionals to respond more effectively to complex safeguarding concerns. This integrated model aims to reduce duplication, improve outcomes, and ensure families receive timely, proportionate support from the right professionals at the right time.

2.6 Demand into Suffolk's MASH continues to rise steadily, with sustained high volumes of child safeguarding contacts and episodes, particularly during peak summer months, placing increasing strain on partnership capacity. While many referrals are resolved through information, advice and guidance, a significant proportion still require multi-agency assessment, with police research consistently supporting over 60% of MASH episodes. July 2025 marked one of the busiest months on record, with over 1,500 episodes and more than 1,000 researched by MASH Police. This growing demand, coupled with seasonal surges and increasing case complexity, is making it progressively more challenging to maintain timely and proportionate responses. In response, the partnership is reviewing operational processes and capacity, with a focus on improving triage, efficiency, and decision-making. These efforts are closely aligned with the wider transformation under the Families First Partnership Programme, including the development of an Integrated Front Door and the planned countywide roll-out from April 2026. Exploratory work is also underway to establish joint multi-agency child abuse investigation teams, enhancing the collective ability to respond to

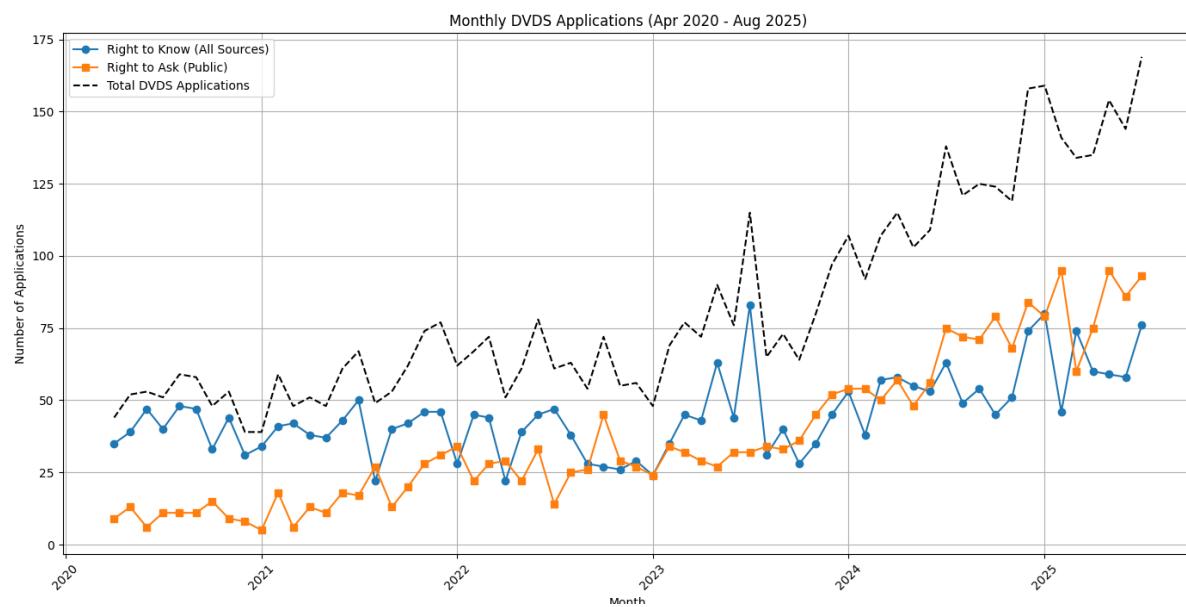
significant harm. These reforms aim to strengthen early intervention, reduce duplication, and ensure families receive the right support at the right time.

Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)

2.7 The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), also known as Clare's Law, continues to be a vital safeguarding tool, enabling individuals to make informed decisions about their relationships and protect themselves and their families from harm. Suffolk Constabulary has seen a sustained increase in DVDS demand, with total applications rising by 54.6% in 2024 compared to 2023. This upward trend has continued into 2025, with monthly volumes reaching record highs, particularly in the summer period.

2.8 To strengthen delivery, the Constabulary has introduced several operational improvements. Since November 2024, DVDS activity has been captured via Power BI, allowing for real-time monitoring and performance oversight. While historical data has been amalgamated with Power BI outputs to provide a complete picture, the system now enables more agile response management. A risk-based prioritisation model ensures that the most urgent cases are addressed first, and additional resources have been secured to tackle the backlog and maintain compliance with the statutory 28-day disclosure timeframe.

2.9 This increase in demand is mirrored nationally, with other forces reporting similar pressures. Suffolk's proactive approach, including ongoing review of DVDS processes, aims to enhance efficiency, safeguard outcomes, and ensure the scheme remains a cornerstone of domestic abuse prevention.



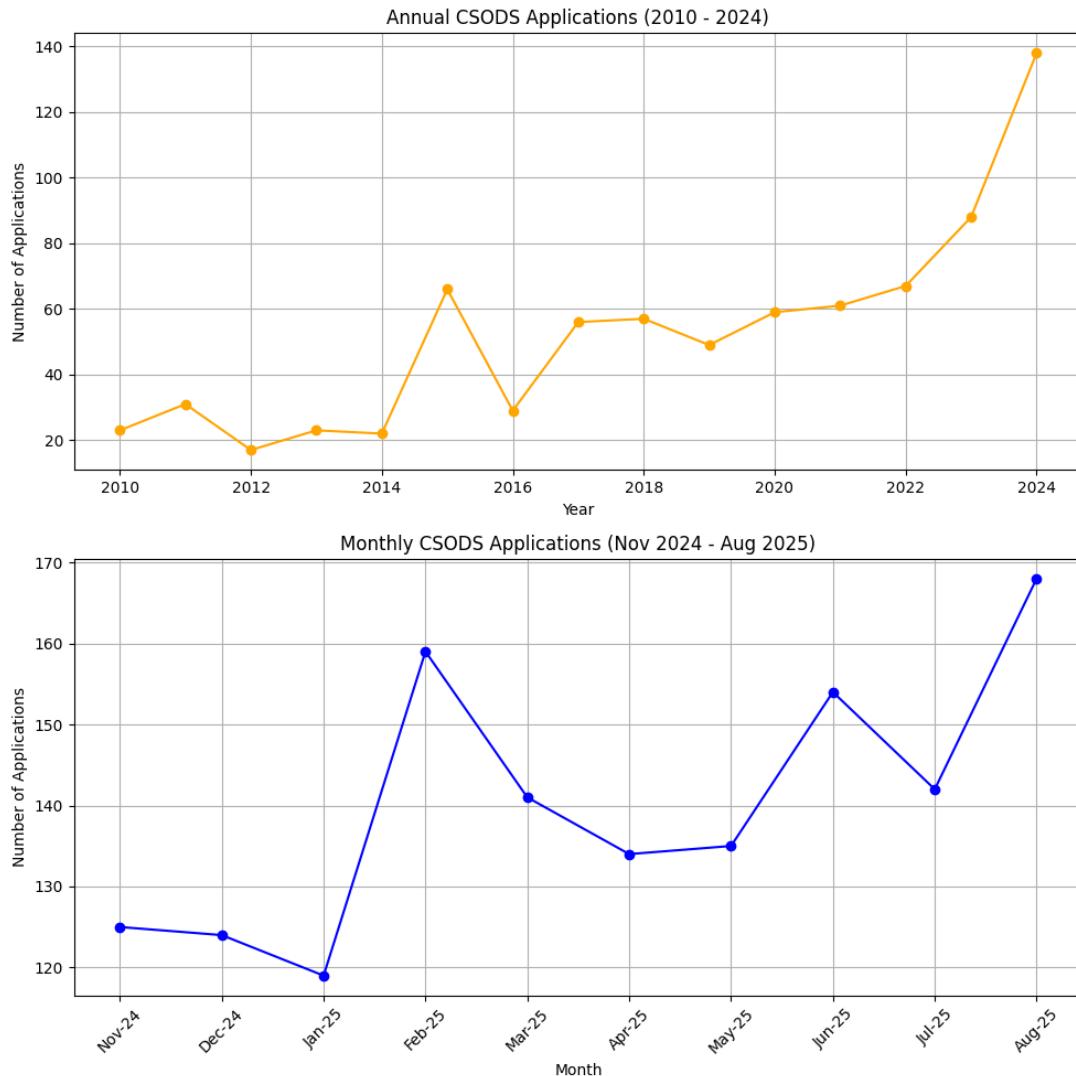
Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme (CSODS)

2.10 The Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme (CSODS), also known as Sarah's Law, continues to play a critical role in safeguarding children by enabling parents and carers to make informed decisions about individuals who may pose a risk. Suffolk Constabulary has seen a gradual but consistent increase in CSODS applications, with 2024 recording the highest annual total of 138 applications, up from 88 in 2023.

2.11 Since November 2024, CSODS data has been captured via Power BI, allowing for more granular monthly analysis. Between November 2024 and August 2025, Suffolk received 1,401 CSODS

applications, with monthly volumes peaking at 168 in August 2025. This reflects a significant operational uplift and highlights the growing public awareness and utilisation of the scheme.

2.12 To manage this demand, Suffolk Constabulary has prioritised high-risk cases and secured additional resources to support timely processing and disclosure. The increase in applications is mirrored nationally, with other forces reporting similar trends and pressures. A review of CSODS delivery is underway to ensure continued compliance with statutory timeframes and to enhance safeguarding outcomes.



Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)

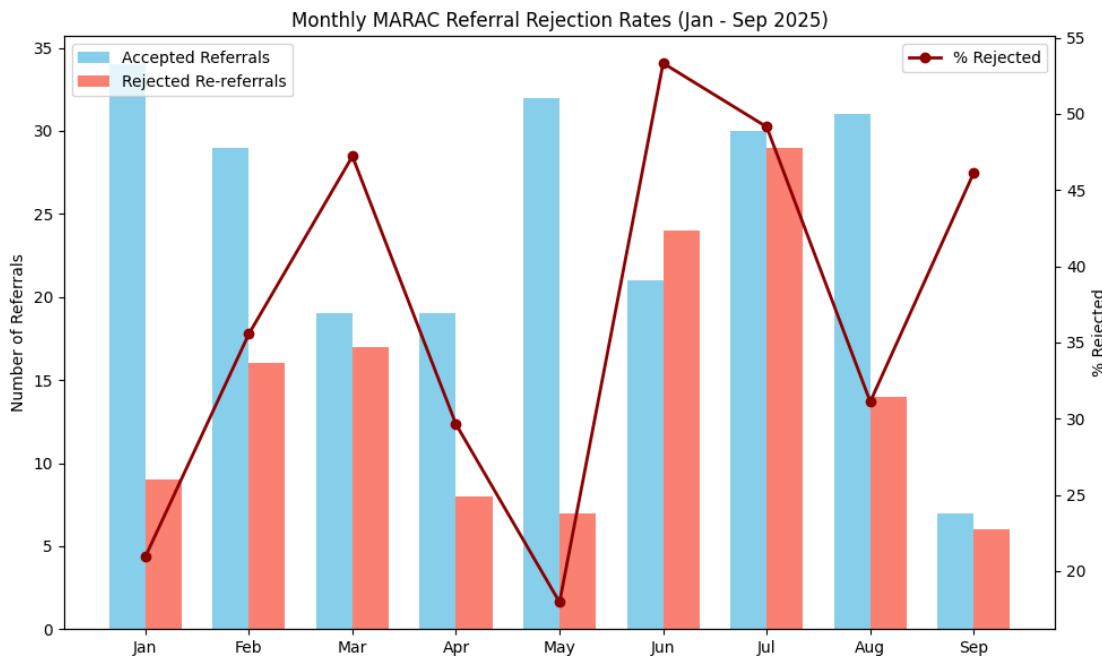
2.13 Suffolk's MARACs continue to be a critical mechanism for safeguarding victims of domestic abuse, with consistent representation from Children and Young People's Services (CYPs) to address child protection concerns. All MARAC referrals are processed through the MASH, supported by a dedicated Constabulary MARAC Coordinator and Administrator.

2.14 Over the past year, the number of referrals heard at MARAC has remained broadly stable, with 891 cases heard, and the Southern MARAC accounting for 42.9% of the total. Police referrals continue to make up approximately two-thirds of all cases, maintaining a consistent contribution.

2.15 However, a key challenge has emerged around referral rejection rates. While the volume of referrals has increased, a significant proportion are being rejected for not meeting the high-risk threshold. Between January and September 2025, rejection rates have fluctuated

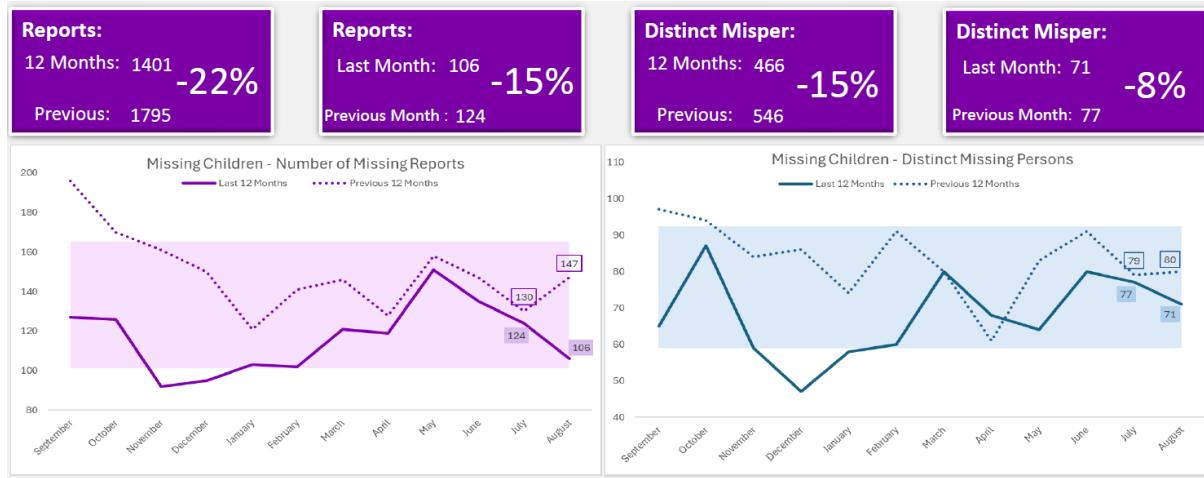
between 17.9% and 53.3%, with June and July showing the highest rejection levels. This trend has not prompted concern, and additional training has been delivered to partners.

- 2.16 To address these issues and improve MARAC effectiveness, the partnership has introduced several improvements which include a refreshed MARAC Steering Group Terms of Reference, a structured Chair's Agenda and Tactical Menu of Options to guide decision-making and escalation of participation concerns to senior leaders across partner organisations.
- 2.17 These changes aim to improve meeting quality, ensure appropriate threshold application, and strengthen multi-agency coordination.



Missing Children

- 2.18 Suffolk Constabulary continues to prioritise its response to missing children, recognising the safeguarding risks associated with repeat episodes, exploitation, and vulnerability. In the 12 months ending August 2025, the number of missing children reports fell by 22% compared to the previous year, with distinct missing children down 15%. This reduction reflects improved reporting practices, strengthened partnership working, and targeted intervention by Missing Person Advisors, particularly with care homes.
- 2.19 Despite this progress, a 2024 audit aligned to HMICFRS inspection standards identified deficiencies in the quality of operational missing person investigations. In response, a Task and Finish Group was established, leading to several improvements including a move to a task-based enquiry system within COMPACT from April 2025 accompanied by a mandatory LMS training package to improve supervisor risk assessments, language use, and understanding of Child Sexual and Criminal Exploitation (CSE/CCE).
- 2.20 The Constabulary currently holds four designated Areas for Improvement (AFIs) following National Child Protection Inspections in 2022 and 2023. These focus on initial risk assessments for children, ownership and oversight of missing investigations, use of appropriate language and continued application of the Philomena Protocol.



Voice of the Child

2.21 Voice of the Child (VOTC) entries are a key theme across all safeguarding partners and as shown in Fig 5 below the constabulary has performed well in maintaining its use within Athena reporting. It is now expanding to include child suspects and children who have returned from Missing Episodes.

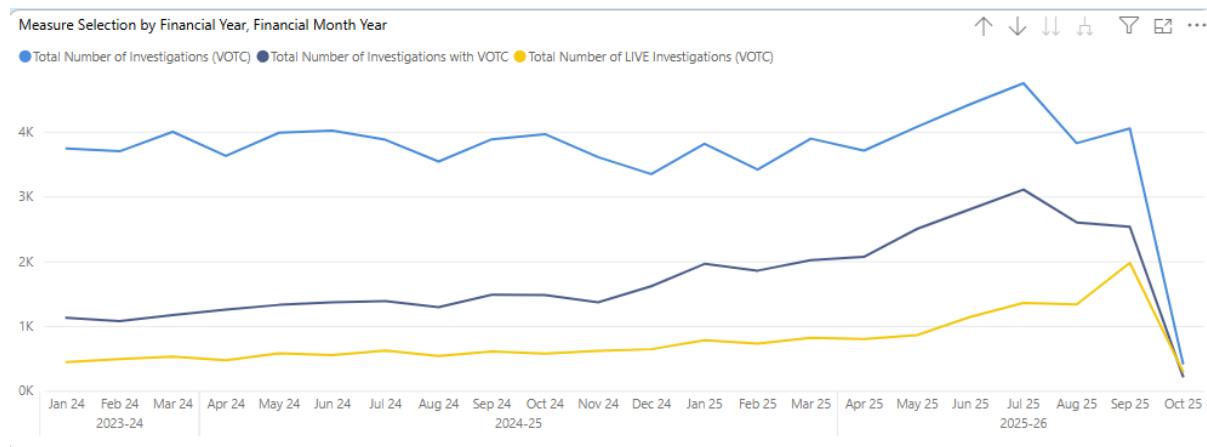


Fig 5 – VOTC Entries within Athena Reports

Section 47 Investigations & Serious Case Reviews

2.22 Section 47 investigations remain a core focus of Suffolk's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Investigation Teams. In response to learning from recent cases, a multi-agency audit was commissioned by the Learning and Improvement Group Oversight Board and led by Suffolk Constabulary to evaluate the quality of decision-making in safeguarding cases involving children. The audit reviewed nine cases across three categories: single-agency decisions, joint investigations, and the application of the Blue, Red, Amber, Green (BRAG) risk rating system. The audit found that decision-making was generally appropriate, with strong evidence of timely visits, proportionate responses, and effective partnership working. Joint investigations between police and social care were particularly well-coordinated, with creative approaches used to engage children and capture their voice, even in complex or non-verbal cases. The audit also highlighted good examples of enforcement action in domestic abuse cases, even where victims were reluctant to engage.

2.23 However, the audit identified areas for improvement:

- Re-engagement gaps: In some cases, the expectation to re-engage police if concerns escalated was not consistently followed.
- Documentation and follow-up: There were inconsistencies in how decisions and follow-up actions were recorded and endorsed across agencies.
- Information sharing: Some cases lacked comprehensive contextual information, which could have supported more robust safeguarding decisions.

2.24 As a result, a series of actions have been initiated, including improvements to the use of the BRAG system, clearer documentation of re-engagement expectations, and enhanced training on the use of Domestic Abuse, Stalking and 'Honour'- Based Violence (DASH) risk assessments. These findings were delivered to the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership meeting in May 2025, which has adopted the MASH as one of its priorities for this year.

2.25 A Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) has recently been concluded and published by the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership (SSP). The review highlights the need for earlier, trauma-informed, coordinated responses and better support for practitioners.

Child Sexual Exploitation, Criminal Exploitation, Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC's) and Multi-Agency Criminal Exploitation Panel (MACE)

2.26 Child Sexual Exploitation remains a key concern within Suffolk Constabulary's safeguarding efforts and that of their Safeguarding Partners, with Exploitation identified as a key strategic priority within the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership Child Delivery Board, with focus group being led by Detective Superintendent. The Southern Area Criminal Exploitation and Gangs Team are focused on safeguarding both vulnerable victims and offenders and in doing so disrupting those involved in the exploitation. Due to the success of this team, the organisation is looking to expand this resource to service force wide.

2.27 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is regularly reviewed at a range of multi-agency meetings including Multi-Agency Criminal Exploitation (MACE), MAPPA, Missing tasking & coordination group (TCG), Op Hull Partnership, Youth Justice risk panels and the child protection professional meetings and conferences, which focus on safeguarding young people identified as being at risk of harm. Suffolk Constabulary have been working with Op Hydrant around reviewing group based CSE cases with a more trauma informed lens. This is part of a phased national priority.

2.28 The County wide work programme to tackle Criminal Exploitation continues to receive funding (2024-2027). This includes the part-funded Partnership Officer (constable) role and the CE Hubs. The priorities are Innovation & Learning; Intervention & Exit; Breaking Drug Supply Chains and Safeguarding Adolescents. The CEWP have been actively involved in creating a national disruption toolkit, for which Suffolk have been recognised and toolkit available nationally.

2.29 Multi Agency Criminal Exploitation (MACE) remains a central mechanism for addressing exploitation of children and young people up to age 24. Following independent reviews supported by the Children's society and Survivors of Domestic Abuse (SODA), the recommendation for a dedicated chair has been adopted to cover all three (area MACE meetings to ensure consistency in responses and approaches. Once a child or young person is adopted to MACE this enables coordinated interventions planning by all relevant

stakeholders, including CE hubs, Make a Change Teams (MAC) and third-sector partners, tailoring support and ensuring safeguarding measures are implemented promptly.

2.30 MACE panels continue to be held in each policing command area, the panel has had the following referrals between April 2025- September 2025.

MONTH	New Pre MACE Referrals		Referrals not adopted to MACE		Referrals adopted to MACE	
April 2025	12	West-3 South-5 East-4	5	West-1 South-3 East-1	7	West-2 South-2 East-3
May 2025	14	West-5 South-6 East-3	1	West-1 South-0 East-0	13	West-4 South-6 East-3
June 2025		NO MACE HELD		NO MACE HELD		NO MACE HELD
July 2025	16	West-2 South-7 East-7	2	West-1 South-1 East-0	14	West-1 South-6 East-7
August 2025	18	West-8 South-6 East-4	7	West-3 South-4 East-0	11	West-5 South-2 East-4
September 2025	10	West-2 South-7 East-1	3	West-0 South-2 East-1	7	West-2 South-5 East-0

2.31 Whilst the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) remains relatively low, they are considered within the safeguarding exploitation frameworks. Suffolk Constabulary continue to work with partners to ensure that UASC are protected from exploitation and supported through appropriate referral and intervention pathways.

Child Sexual Abuse and Online Investigation

2.32 Globally, reports of Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) from industry continue to rise year-on-year. This increase, caused by increased levels of online offending and changes to industry reporting processes, has led to an increase in referrals into the National Crime Agency (NCA) over the last 5 years. NCA are now facing unprecedented and persistent high demand from National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). The Child Sexual Exploitation Reporting Board (CSERB) continues to manage significant demand from NCMEC, equating to a 27% increase on 2024, with CSERB now receiving 1721 referrals per week.

2.33 Compounded by recruitment and retention difficulties, the increase affected the NCA's ability to process and deliver a regular flow of disseminations to UK forces. This led to a back log of unprocessed referrals, which ultimately caused a decrease in referrals received into Suffolk's Internet Child Abuse Investigation Team (ICAIT) between December 2022 and March 2024. During the latter months of 2024, particularly from July onwards, the number of referrals rose significantly with each month seeing an increase on the previous years. As a result, 2024 saw Suffolk ICAIT process 281 investigations in the year. This was the highest number recorded over the last 5 years of figures, with the next closest being 268 in 2021. This significant rise has increased throughout 2025 with the ICAIT team having currently received 391 investigations as of the end of September. It is forecast that the team will end 2025 with just over 500 referrals.

2.34 As shown in Fig 6 below Suffolk has seen a significant increase in referrals, as the backlog is being drip fed on top of the natural increase experienced each year. The reporting period of

March 2025 to September 2025 saw 319 referrals compared to 160 during the same period in March 2024 to September 2024. This is an increase of 50%.

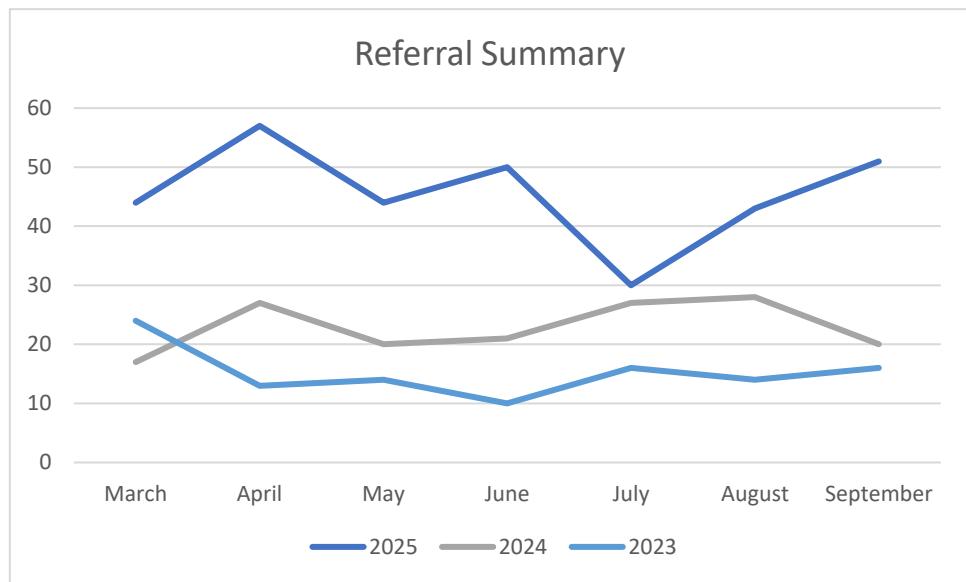


Fig 6 - ICAIT Referrals 2023 – 2025

2.35 Despite the sharp increase in referrals, Suffolk Constabulary, in comparison to similar Force groups, is in a good position. Whilst the number of referrals has increased, ICAIT are maintaining a manageable number of unallocated cases where the risk is unknown. All referrals are recorded, risk assessed and developed by ICAIT's Intelligence Development Officer (IDO). The team are reactive to risk by executing timely enforcement which is evident in the consistent number of suspects arrested, interviewed, and charged. In addition to this, two further staff have been seconded into ICAIT to assist with the increase in demand. A second Detective Sergeant has also been recruited and started in role in March 2025. Further plans are being implemented by the Senior Leadership Team that will see the demand increase met by other Detectives across the Constabulary.

2.36 Suffolk Constabulary has three Victim Identification (VID) Officers, who are trained to utilise specialist VID software and techniques for the purpose of identifying the victims within the Child Sexual Abuse Material found on suspects' devices. The number of victims identified, safeguarded, and referred to the NCA's Victim ID unit by Suffolk has increased significantly over the past 18 months. The reporting period of November 2024 to April 2025 saw an increase of 30% on the same reporting period in the previous year, November 2023 to April 2024.

Schools Liaison and CYP Engagement

2.37 School engagement continues to be delivered by Community Police Officers (CPOs) supported by content produced by the CYP PCs. Pol-Ed has now established within Suffolk and CYP (children and young person) officers and CPO's (Community Policing Officers) are delivering sessions alongside those delivered by teachers. CYP officers who were supported by CPO's delivered Crucial Crew in the South area in the summer term and will shortly start delivery of year's crucial crew in the Eastern Area. This is delivered to all Year 6 children in Suffolk – the policing topics covered throughout 2025 include Online safety, Harassment and Exploitation.

2.38 A new CYP data pack and dashboard has been built by the Strategic Business and Operational Services (SBOS) department. This enables a greater understanding of the data relating to a range of CYP areas. This dashboard is designed to show crime data relating to those

committed on and by under 18s, offence locations, demographics of suspects & victims, custody and stop search data. This will enable a better understanding of offence/suspect and victims' profiles, as well as looking at disproportionality, which can be used to better deploy resources and targeted interventions.

- 2.39 Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating of the schools (which is used to set engagement and intervention levels) has been reviewed, with a focus on targeting schools with areas of high crime/ASB (using the same date set as used to set Hotspots under Op Spotlight) and within Clear Hold Build locations.
- 2.40 CYP officers have produced supportive material for CPOs to use for in-school delivery to individual or small groups on topics like 'School Gate Chats', the risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Youth Produced Sexual Imagery. All school engagement is recorded using the Engagement App and data captured includes the number of students engaged with, their age, demographic and the topics discussed or delivered. Schools are given termly updates on the common offence types committed within their local area on and by under 18s, alongside suggested POL-ED content to be delivered to address those offences.
- 2.41 The CYP Police Constables continue to support local and national police operations such Hate Crime Awareness Week, Prevent awareness, County Lines Intensification Week, Safer Internet Day, Sexual Abuse, Op Sceptre (Knife Crime) and Crucial Crew.

Pol-Ed (Police Education)

- 2.42 October 2024 saw the introduction of Pol-Ed, which is an education programme that provides schools with free lessons, assemblies and resources covering a range of police topic areas which link to Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE), Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) and Citizenship in schools. It has been designed by West Yorkshire Police, who currently use the package, alongside Bedfordshire and Northumbria Police. It is now being used by 13 police forces including recently Norfolk.
- 2.43 Pol-Ed aims to reduce youth offending by proactively educating young people around law and offences. Resources created in conjunction with PSHE experts, provide teachers with the tools to deliver information on the law, crime prevention and safeguarding, building an understanding of resilience, peer to peer support and how to access help if needed.
- 2.44 The programme works along 3 distinct phases: Phase 1 is teacher/school led and is the largest used phase, Phase 2 is police inputs, which are officer led sessions and Phase 3 is Intervention 22.
- 2.45 Intervention 22 is a means to deliver Outcome 22 diversion activities to young people who have entered the criminal justice system.
- 2.46 Pol-Ed provides the police with an early intervention and prevention programme to reduce crime both in the short term and long term and provides greater consistency of the topics and themes delivered across schools. It helps to teach pupils how to keep themselves and their peers safe and how to make better decisions in response to a range of situations, which results in a safer community. Since the start in October 2024 there have been 1363 school lessons delivered by education provisions, reaching over 40,000 children and 345 police inputs delivered reaching nearly 19,000 children and young people.

Suffolk Youth Justice Service and Suffolk Constabulary Partnership

2.47 In May 2024, Assistant Chief Constable local policing Suffolk became the new chair of the Suffolk Youth Justice Board, and the Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025 was agreed with the focus remaining on preventing young people from being unnecessarily criminalised, reducing the number of first-time entrants (FTE) into the criminal justice system and addressing any identified disproportionality.

2.48 Police are currently working with the Youth Justice Service (YJS) to improve data sharing and onward analysis so that this can be used to better inform intervention with highlighted demographic groups and support the reduction of first-time entrants. The data will also enable trends amongst victims to be mapped, which will lead to targeted support and prevention work with any identified groups.

2.49 To support this work, changes are currently being made to the Police Electronic Notification to Youth Offending Teams (PENY) to capture data not already recorded on other systems, such as children in care, mental health and disabilities. This has been delayed to due staffing difficulties within ICT. Improvements have already been achieved in the process of consulting with YJS, before the police apply for preventative orders (i.e. CBO). A comprehensive review of the out of court process for children is underway, to ensure that the joint approach between Police and YJS is aligned with the Youth Justice Board's Case Management Guidance, Child Centred Policing and National best practice.

2.50 The Multi-Agency Out of Court Resolution Panels continue to work well across Suffolk. The changes made to those referred to the panels for sexual offences, are seen as suitable in preventing children being inadvertently subject to notification requirements under Sexual Offences Act. There has also been an improvement in those referred to the Harmful Sexual Behaviours Teams (SCC team) for support. Working with YJS, a process has been introduced to add an extra layer of oversight to ensure that the most appropriate offence is progressed and that the Out of Court Resolution Panel is fully informed of impact of any disposal and the appropriate diversion options open to the young person.

2.51 The use of deferred prosecution, which is widely used nationally, was approved at the Children and Young People (CYP) Board in May 2025. This process defers for three months the application of a charge or caution, if the young person successfully engages with diversion activities directed by the police or YJS. This provides the young person with meaningful diversion to reduce onward offending, opens Restorative Justice opportunities and supports the reduction of First Time Entrants. At the point of writing 15 children have been subject to diverted outcomes with only one child not engaging and being issued with a caution.

2.52 Work continues to ensure that creative and flexible outcomes are encouraged when it comes to bespoke diversion that is meaningful, effective and meets requirement for Home Office disposal option, and has achieved our objectives without criminalising the young person. Work is being finalised on a police force delivered restorative justice intervention, aimed at those with no previous contact with the police, having been linked to a low-level offence. The intervention will be delivered by the officer dealing, at the point of first contact, with the child, using a restorative justice approach. This will reduce the need for referrals to YJS, reducing demand in the wider system, but improve the overall outcome for the child. Work is also being undertaken with Norfolk on a suitable alternative to court option children committing minor traffic offences, now that traffic matters can be considered in the out of court disposal arena.

2.53 Home Office funding for the Turnaround programme has been extended for a further year. This funding is used by YJS to target children particularly at risk from committing crime or antisocial behaviour (ASB) and divert them to meaningful interventions at an early stage.

2.54 The Constabulary continues to work with Ipswich Town Foundation on several projects to divert children away from crime and ASB. The projects include the “divert” project which focuses on a small group of children in the Ipswich area, referred to the foundation by the Constabulary Child Exploitation and Gangs Team (CEGT), from those that they have engagement with. They are working with 14–16-year-olds, who have been excluded or who are risk from excluded from school. They are taking part in Diversionary Workshops specially designed for them through a partnership between Ipswich Borough Council, Ipswich Town Foundation and Suffolk Constabulary. The students explore issues relating to gangs or county lines and carrying a knife and ask them where they would like to see change in Ipswich to address issues around knife crime and gangs.

2.55 The Constabulary has started to use virtual reality (VR) headsets to deliver sessions covering ASB/Gangs and knife crime awareness. The sessions take the user through a scenario, which makes them think about what positive choices they could make and the outcomes if they choose a different route. We are currently aiming these at year 8 students in selected schools and those working with CEGT.

Young People in Custody

2.56 There are in the region of 4488 persons arrested in Suffolk between May and September 2025. Of these, 747 detainees were 24 or under.

2.57 It is widely accepted that custody should not be a place for juveniles. However, when dealing with matters on a case-by-case basis if the legislative criteria for arrest necessities have been met, and other options have been either tried and failed, or considered and negated, then custody can be considered for juveniles.

2.58 As seen in Fig 7 and 8 below the throughput and disposal data is relatively unremarkable, and relatively consistent. It must be noted however that nationally, Norfolk and Suffolk have the lowest number of juvenile throughput compared to any other force.

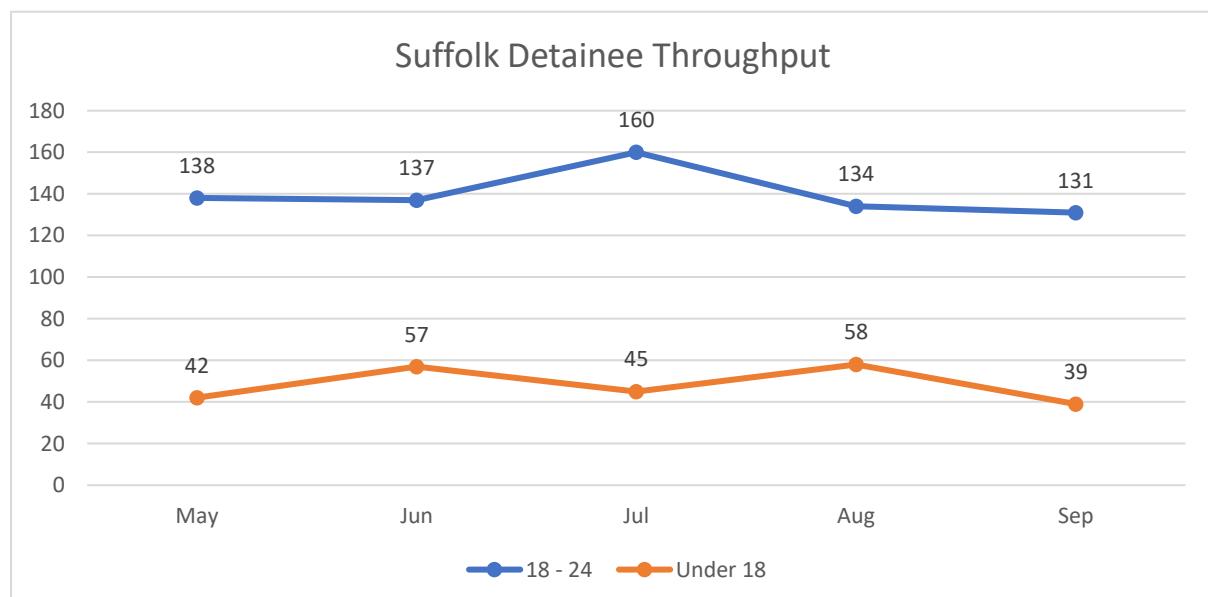


Fig 7 – Suffolk Custody child throughput

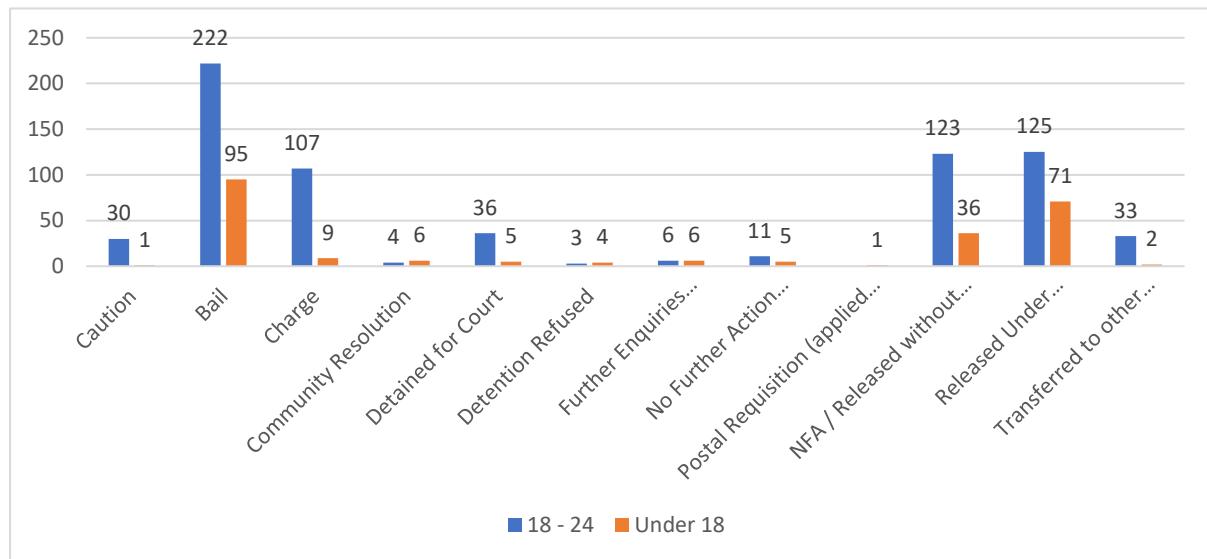


Fig 8 - Suffolk custody child disposals

2.59 Custody throughput is monitored through a number of processes within Suffolk Constabulary, including the Children and Young Persons Delivery Group, which specifically considers children and young people.

2.60 Norfolk and Suffolk (Joint Custody) are recognised nationally as best practice in dealing with children and young adults. This is due to a number of reasons including our child focussed cells with distraction elements (targets on wall, whiteboard etc.), processes which include automatic legal representation for all under 18's and custody processes being dealt with in discreet booking in room or 'comfy consultation room'.

2.61 Consideration has been made to reduce PACE clock for children to 12 hours which has been done in other forces, however as the following table shows our averages fall below this.

Average Detention Time	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Total
18 - 24	11:25	12:24	11:27	10:48	11:19	11:29
Under 18	08:50	09:45	12:26	10:25	10:54	10:25
Grand Total	10:46	11:39	11:40	10:41	11:13	11:13

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Whilst the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Children and Young Persons Strategy was launched in October 2024 the accompanying charter is still under development. Suffolk have responded to the request to support this development, providing examples of good and innovative practice from within force, and once the charter is published it is recommended that Suffolk reviews their CYP strategy to ensure that it still aligns and is delivering the recommended best practice.

3.2 Non-Crime diversion is not a statutory function of the Youth Justice Service and is currently provided in addition to its core responsibilities. Due to financial constraints, police are currently the only agency referring into this provision and consideration should be given regarding the long-term viability and availability of non-crime provision with the Youth Justice Service, and alternative services and funding should it no longer be sustainable. This work is key to support national priorities regarding the decriminalisation and diversion of children.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The organisation continues to pay an ongoing yearly cash contribution in addition to 3 funded PC posts as part of Youth Justice Service delivery.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

5.1 None at this time.

6. CHIEF OFFICER CONCLUSION

6.1 Suffolk Constabulary continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to safeguarding children and young people, with robust governance, multi-agency collaboration, and a clear focus on early intervention and prevention. This report highlights sustained improvements across key areas including missing children, exploitation, youth justice, and school engagement.

6.2 Demand into the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub remains high, with police consistently the largest source of child safeguarding referrals. The Constabulary is actively supporting national reforms such as the Families First Partnership Programme and is exploring integrated models to improve outcomes for vulnerable children.

6.3 Innovative approaches such as Pol-Ed, virtual reality education, and restorative justice interventions are helping to divert young people from the criminal justice system. The use of deferred prosecution and strengthened partnerships with the Youth Justice Service reflect our commitment to reducing first-time entrants and addressing disproportionality.

6.4 Despite rising demand in areas such as online child sexual abuse investigations and disclosure schemes, Suffolk maintains strong performance and continues to invest in capacity and capability. Our approach remains child-centred, trauma-informed, and focused on safeguarding, engagement, and proportionate policing.