



SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP24/47

SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL –
22 NOVEMBER 2024

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 2024 to November 2024 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 NPCC Children and Young People Strategy, with accompanying charters, is anticipated in the 2024-25 period.
- 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).

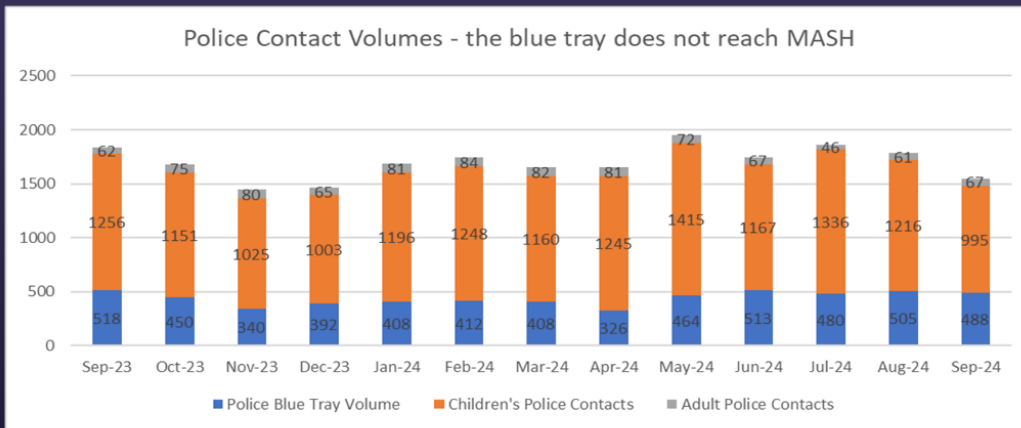
2. KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

2.1 Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

- 2.1.1 Suffolk Constabulary is a key partner working in the MASH, alongside members of Suffolk County Council from Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), Adult Social Care (ASC), plus health colleagues.
- 2.1.2 The Constabulary remains the largest referrer of child safeguarding concerns into the MASH.

MASH Police Statistics (September 2023-September 2024)

- 2.1.3 Chart 1, below, shows a steady increase in the volume of Protecting Vulnerable People (PVP) submissions for children and adults at risk made by officers and staff into the MASH. Each of these are triaged by police staff within the MASH, utilising agreed risk ratings. Those assessed as 'blue' do not meet the agreed threshold for sharing with social care. All others are shared with either CYPS or ASC.

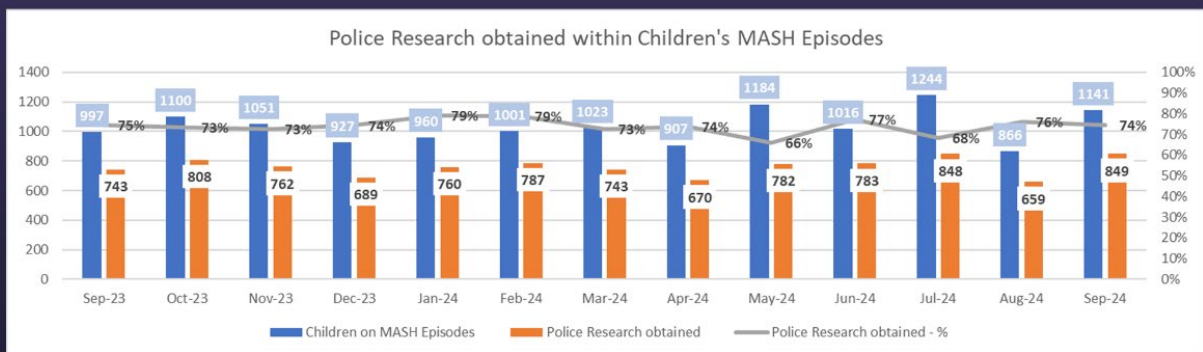


- Police Contact Volumes – PVP submissions by officers and staff.
- Police Blue Tray Volume – Numbers that are assessed as 'blue' and not passed on to either Children's Social Care or Adult Social Care.
- Children's Police Contacts – Number of PVPs shared with Children and Young Peoples Services. Excludes cases with allocated social worker.
 - Adult Police Contacts – Number of PVPs shared with Adult Safeguarding. Excludes cases with allocated social worker.

Chart 1 – Police contact volumes of PVPs submitted into the MASH, managed by police.

2.1.4 Chart 2, below, shows the increase in requests received by the Local Authority CYPS, for research into cases involving children. The requests come from the totality of all referrals into CYPS, whether through the police, or other agencies via the Local Authority Customer First team.

The increase has been noticed since May 2024 and remained consistent. Such a rise has placed increased demand upon the police staff researchers in the MASH, who complete research packages that are shared with CYPS to help determine the best course of action to safeguard a child.



- Episode research – Children on MASH Episodes – Number of children on contacts/incidents sent to the MASH from all partner agencies.
 - Police research obtained - Number of children researched as a result of requests from CYPS.

Chart 2 – Police research undertaken following Local Authority requests.

- 2.1.5 A key statutory responsibility of the Constabulary is to support the Local Authority in determining the right outcomes for children who may be at risk through partaking in multi-agency strategy threshold discussions where information is shared, and decisions are made about the best course of action.
- 2.1.6 In August 2024 Ofsted released its report following an inspection of the Local Authority, which included the MASH. Concerns were raised around the handling of some cases that has resulted in changes that will most likely increase the requests for research and strategy discussions.
- 2.1.7 Chart 3 shows the outcomes determined by the Local Authority following reviews of all information and strategy discussions, where required. The outcomes are for the PVPs submitted by officers and staff from the Constabulary.

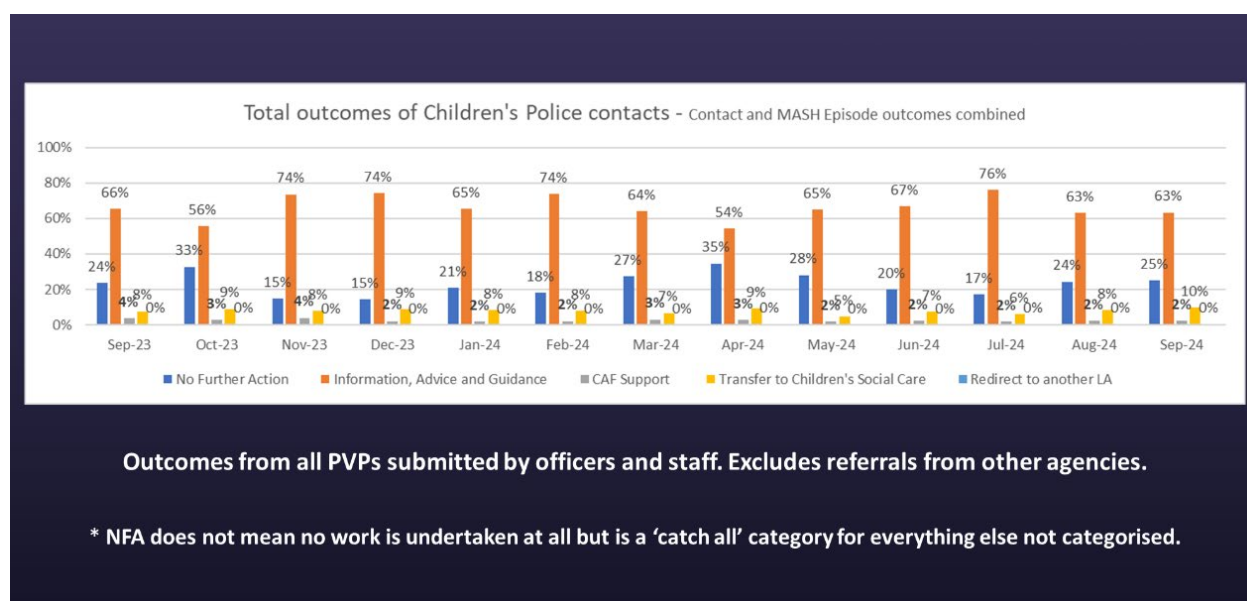


Chart 3 – Outcomes from all PVPs submitted by Constabulary officers and staff.

- 2.1.8 A significant proportion of PVPs sent into the MASH are resolved without the requirement for further police investigation. Effective triage by skilled and experienced practitioners across all agencies allows the appropriate level of intervention to be identified. This ensures the most concerning cases requiring scrutiny through joint working of the Police and the Local Authority are promptly passed to the most appropriate teams to progress.
- 2.1.9 Although this report focusses on supporting children and young people, it is important to note that there has also been an increase in demand on the MASH police resourcing around safeguarding adults, in addition to the increased requirements to support safeguarding children and young people.

2.2 Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)

- 2.2.1 The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), also known as Clare’s Law, allows police information about a potential source of risk to be shared with a person potentially at risk. This empowers people to protect and safeguard themselves and their children by making an informed choice about their relationships. It is a key strategy to prevent domestic abuse.
- 2.2.2 There has been a sharp increase in the use of the DVDS, with the most significant rise coming from people making ‘Right To Ask’ applications about (potential) partners. In 2023 the

Constabulary received a total of 874 DVDS applications, which is the highest number yet. In 2014, the first year of complete data, we received 65 in total. Up to the end of September 2024 the total number of DVDS applications is 988.

- 2.2.3 Following engagement with other police forces it is evident they are experiencing comparable increases. This substantial increase has led to the Constabulary reviewing existing processes to ensure we are able to meet this level of demand.

2.3 Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme (CSODS)

- 2.3.1 The Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme (CSODS), also known as Sarah's Law, allows police information about a potential source of risk to be shared with a person whose children could be in contact with that potential source of risk. This empowers parents and care givers to protect and safeguard children by making an informed choice about contact and relationships.

- 2.3.2 There has been a more gradual increase in CSODS applications. In 2023 we had the highest number of applications, with 88, up from 67 the previous year. Up to the end of August 2024, there have been a total of 79 applications this year.

2.4 Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)

- 2.4.1 The County's Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) continue to be attended by CYPS to address child safeguarding concerns within cases discussed.

- 2.4.2. All MARAC referrals are processed through the MASH where the Constabulary has a MARAC Coordinator and Administrator.

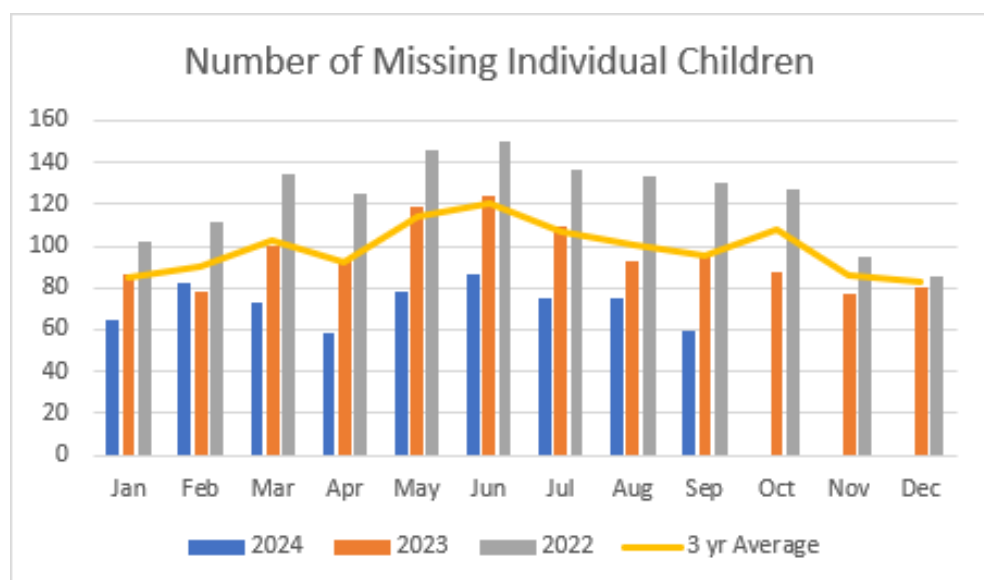
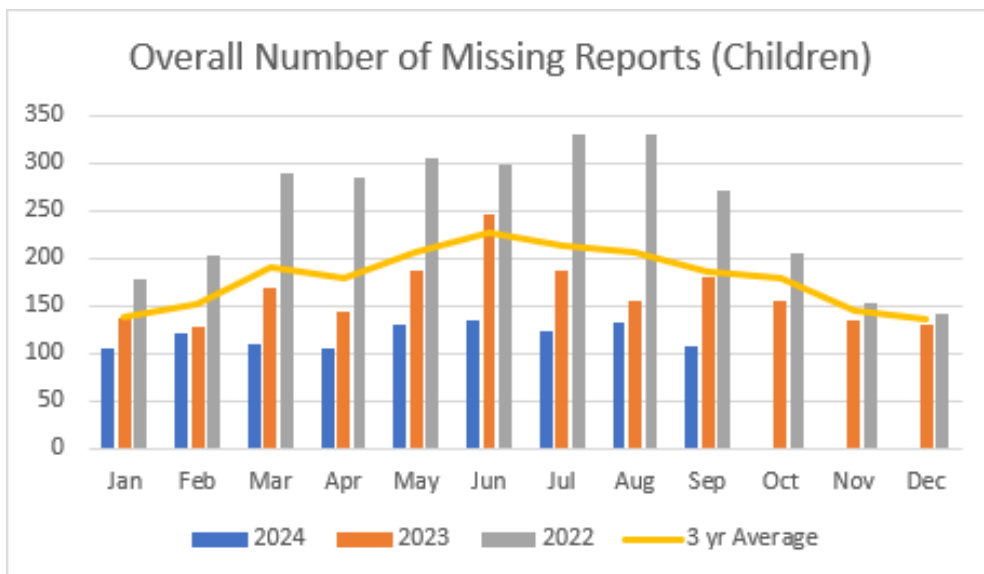
- 2.4.3 MARAC referrals have remained consistent and in line with national recommendations, but some referrals are rejected on the basis that they are missing key information or simply do not meet the high-risk criteria. Although a MARAC referral may be rejected, some degree of research is still completed to ensure appropriate safeguards are managed. In addition, any crimes disclosed to both statutory partners and third sector agencies are identified and recorded.

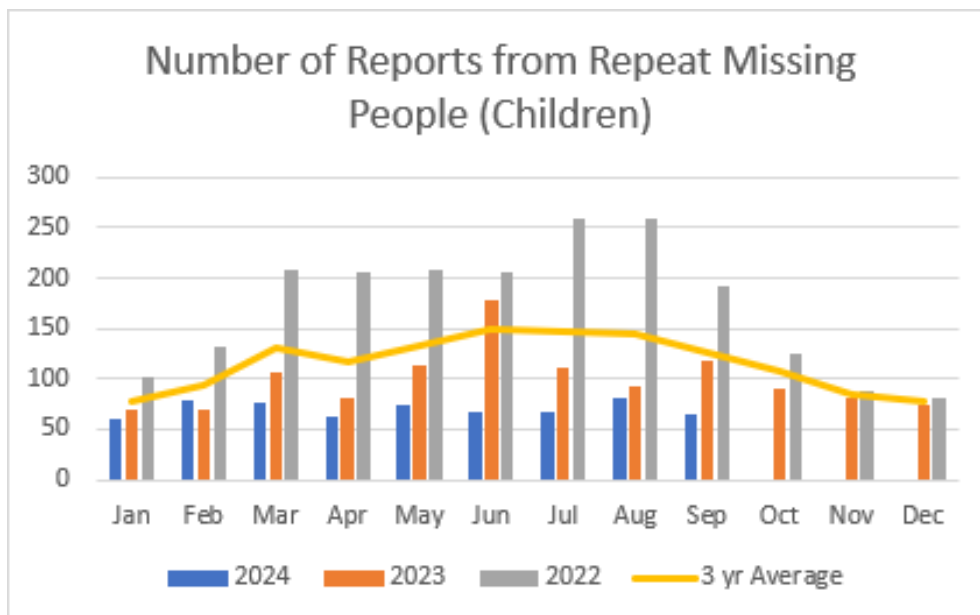
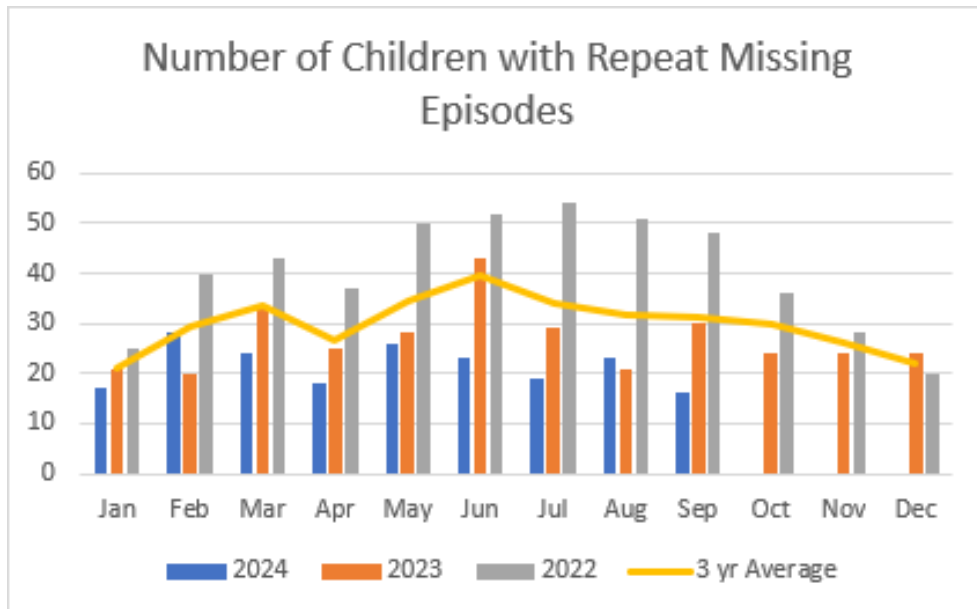
- 2.4.4 During a meeting of the MARAC Steering Group, chaired by the police Superintendent lead for domestic abuse, several key improvements were agreed, notably specific time slots to discuss specific cases; a more equal spread of MARAC chairs through a rota; improvements to administrative tasks; separating the east meeting into two half-day meetings; and training to improve the quality of MARAC referrals.

2.5 Missing Children

- 2.5.1 Missing Children numbers continue to reduce annually, and this is due to a combination of appropriate reporting, greater partnership working and intervention by the missing person advisors with individual care homes. There is still some work remaining to improve the quality of investigations however the children who are most frequently at risk of going missing continue to be discussed within the various internal and external vulnerability meetings such as Missing Tactical Tasking Coordination Group (TTCG), Multiagency Child Exploitation Meeting (MACE) and local Monthly Information Meetings (MIM) which provides partnership support for the most vulnerable and repeat missing children. This is additional to the regular partnership space whereby children are also discussed within professional and threshold discussions with partners to address the drivers for repeat missing episodes though bespoke support.

2.5.2 The graphs below demonstrate the continued reduction:





2.5.3 The Constabulary currently has 4 (four) designated areas for improvement (AFI) following the National Child Protection Inspection in 2022 and 2023. These focus upon initial risk assessments for children, ownership and oversight of missing investigations, use of language and continued use of the Philomena Protocol. Progress has been made in respect of all AFI's and further assessments of progress will be made in advance of future inspections.

2.5.4 Ongoing areas of work to improve the Constabulary response to Missing children include:

- Continued support of the Philomena Protocol
- Introduction of Operation Encompass for Missing to notify schools and colleges when a child is reported missing or located following a missing episode.
- Improvements to COMPACT (Missing Person Management System) including moving to a task-based enquiry system and the addition of an electronic document management storage solution.

2.6 Child Exploitation and Multi-Agency Criminal Exploitation Panel (MACE)

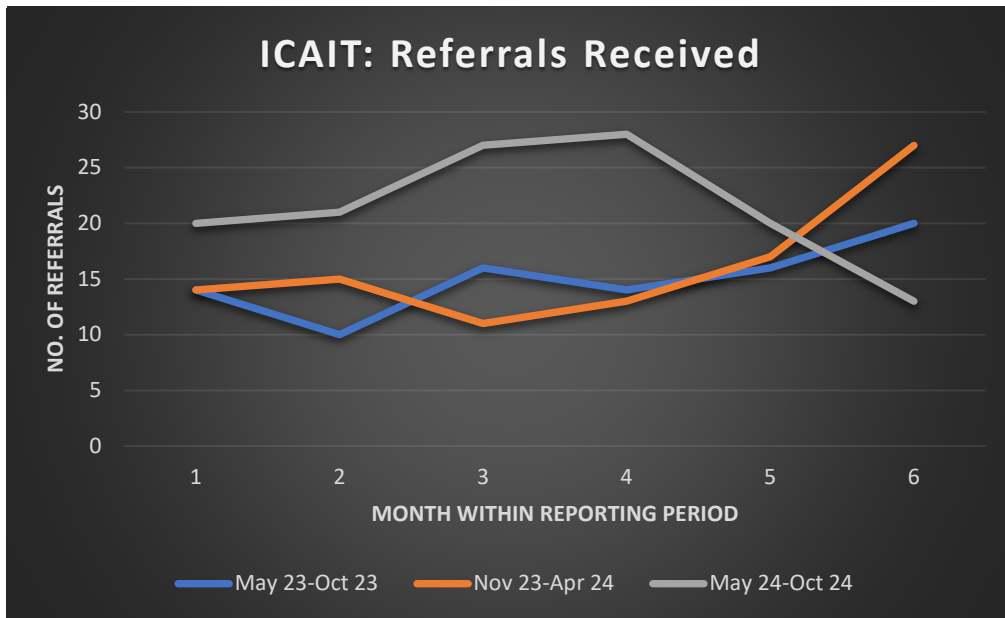
- 2.6.1 The Detective Superintendent, Demand Reduction, as the lead for safeguarding chairs a Child Safeguarding Delivery Group, which provides oversight of Child exploitation work within the Constabulary as well as wider activity in relation to child protection and safeguarding.
- 2.6.2 Suffolk Constabulary continues to support a partnership Criminal Exploitation work programme, which has a police focus upon breaking drug supply chains and supporting partners with prevention and early intervention and safeguarding young people.
- 2.6.3 MACE panels continue to be held in each policing command area, panel has had the following referrals from July 2023 to December 2023.

MONTH	NEW		Referrals <u>not</u> adopted to MACE		Referrals adopted to MACE	
	Pre MACE Referrals					
May	8	West - 4 South - 4 East - 0 – No meeting	2	West - 1 South - 1 East - 0	6	West - 3 South - 3 East - 0
June	18	West - 3 South - 9 East - 6	6	West - 2 South - 3 East - 1	12	West - 1 South - 6 East - 5
July	16	West - 5 South - 8 East - 3	11	West - 4 South - 5 East - 2	5	West - 1 South - 3 East - 1
August	10	West - 4 South - 6 East - 0	4	West - 2 South - 2 East - 0	8	West - 2 South - 4 East - 2
September	8	West - 4 South - 4 East - 0	4	West - 2 South - 2 East - 0	4	West - 2 South - 2 East - 0

Referral numbers between May 2024 – September 2024. There are occasional discrepancies in monthly figures due to some referrals being transferred to the next month when not enough information is received to fully adopt at panel.

2.7 Child Sexual Abuse and Online Investigation

- 2.7.1 Globally, reports of Online CSAE from industry continue to rise year-on-year. This increase, caused by increased levels of online offending and changes to industry reporting processes, led to a 63% increase in referrals into the National Crime Agency (NCA) in 2023.
- 2.7.2 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.
- 2.7.3 Since April 2024, 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 May 2024 to October 2024 saw an increase of 33% on the previous reporting period, November 2023 to April 2024.
- 2.7.4 Volume of referrals received into ICAIT during this reporting period:



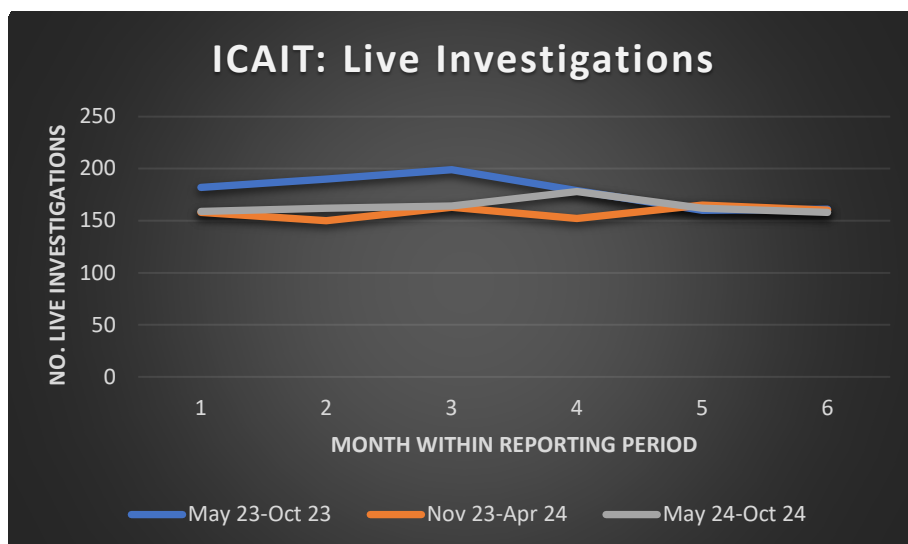
Comparison of number of referrals received into ICAIT, by month, between reporting periods May 2023 to Oct 2023, Nov 2023 to Apr 2024 and May 2024 to current date, 14th Oct 2024.

	May 23- Oct 23	Nov 23- Apr 24	May 24-Oct 24 (as at 14/10/24)
1	14	14	20
2	10	15	21
3	16	11	27
4	14	13	28
5	16	17	20
6	20	27	13
Total	90	97	129

Data obtained from ICAIT’s Op Tudor workflow management document.

2.7.5 Despite the sharp increase in referrals, Suffolk Constabulary, in comparison to similar Force groups, is in a very strong position with only a small number of investigations wherein the risk is unknown. All referrals are recorded, risk assessed and developed by ICAIT’s Intelligence Development Officer (IDO). This includes seeking information from partner agencies in the MASH. If intelligence indicates that the suspect has immediate access to children, the team consult with staff from children’s services to ensure they are fully prepared before attending the address so that safeguarding can be planned. The team are reactive to risk by executing timely enforcement which is evident in the consistent number of suspects arrested, interviewed, and charged.

2.7.6 Live investigations during this reporting period:



Comparison of number of live investigations held within ICAIT, by month, between reporting periods May 2023 to Oct 2023, Nov 2023 to Apr 2024 and May 2024 to current date, 14th Oct 2024.

	May 23- Oct 23	Nov 23- Apr 24	May 24-Oct 24 (as at 14/10/24)
1	182	158	159
2	190	150	162
3	199	163	164
4	179	152	178
5	160	165	162
6	161	160	158
Total	1071	948	983

Data obtained from MI Team - Power BI

2.7.7 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 12 months. The reporting period of May 2024 to October 2024 saw an increase of 74% on the previous reporting period, November 2023 to April 2024.

2.8 Schools Liaison and CYP Engagement

2.8.1. School engagement continues to be delivered by Community Police Officers (CPOs) supported by content produced by the CYP PCs. In the period May – Sept 2024, 227 visits were made to secondary school and 51793 students spoken to on a range of topics including knife crime, County Lines and healthy relationships. During the same time 476 primary school visits occurred, engaging with 33769 children on internet safety and healthy relationship. Additionally Crucial Crew has been delivered in all areas.

2.8.2. Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating of the schools (which is used to set engagement levels) has been reviewed creating a greater focus on offences committed on and by under 18, to tailor in school delivery.

- 2.8.3. The demand (in the form of calls for service) from schools has also been tracked, so that targeted deliveries or advice can be undertaken on common themes. A survey was also undertaken with all schools to understand what is working well and what can be improved. This has resulted in advice being given around when to report incidents to the police and how to find a school's community policing team.
- 2.8.4. CYP officers have started to develop new supportive material for CPOs to use for in-school delivery to individual or small groups on topics like 'School Gate Chats', the risk of CSE and CCE and youth sexual produced imagery.
- 2.8.1 All school engagement is recorded using the Engagement App and data captured includes the number of students engaged with, their age, demographic and also the topics discussed or delivered.
- 2.8.2 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.
- 2.8.3 Education Delivery in the period May 2024- Sept 2024 –

	Primary		Secondary		16+	
	No Visits	People engaged with	No Visits	People engaged with	No Visits	People engaged with
May	102	7047	47	9654	4	73
June	174	12322	69	17427	6	206
July	94	5835	58	13067	3	561
Aug						
Sept	106	8565	53	11645	12	1340
Total	476	33769	227	51793	25	2180

Pol-Ed

- 2.8.4 October will see 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 Economic Education (PSHE), Relationships, Sex, Health Education (RSHE) and Citizenship in schools. It has been designed by West Yorkshire Police, who currently use the package, alongside Bedfordshire and Northumbria.
- 2.8.5 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.
- 2.8.6 The programme works along 3 different phases – Phase 1 which is teacher/school led (this is the largest used phase), Phase 2 - Police Inputs, which are officer led sessions and then there is Intervention 22, as phase 3.
- 2.8.7 Intervention 22 is a means to deliver outcome 22 diversion activity to young people who have entered the criminal justice system.

2.8.8 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.

2.9 Suffolk Youth Justice Service and Suffolk Constabulary Partnership

2.9.1 In May 2024 Assistant Eamonn Bridger became the new chair of the Suffolk Youth Justice Board, and the Youth Justice Plan 2024-25 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.

2.9.2 Police are currently working with YJS to improve data sharing and onward analysis so that this can be used to better inform intervention with hightailed 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.

2.9.3 To support this work changes are currently being made to the Police Electronic Notification to Youth offending Team (PENY) to capture data not already recorded on other systems, such as Child in Care, Mental Health and Disabilities but this awaits support from the digital team to make OPTIK changes.

2.9.4 The Multi-Agency Out of Court Resolution Panels continue to work well across Suffolk. However, a review of the process relating to sexual offences highlighted that there was a risk that young people could be inadvertently subject to notification requirements under Sexual Offences Act through out of court outcomes. 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.

2.9.5 The use of deferred prosecution, that is widely used nationally, is now being explored within Suffolk. This process defers for three months the application of a charge or caution, if the young person successfully engages with work 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.

2.9.6 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. Once Pol Ed (see above) is launched this will be reviewed to see how it can contribute to this with the view to making use of it for Outcome 22 options.

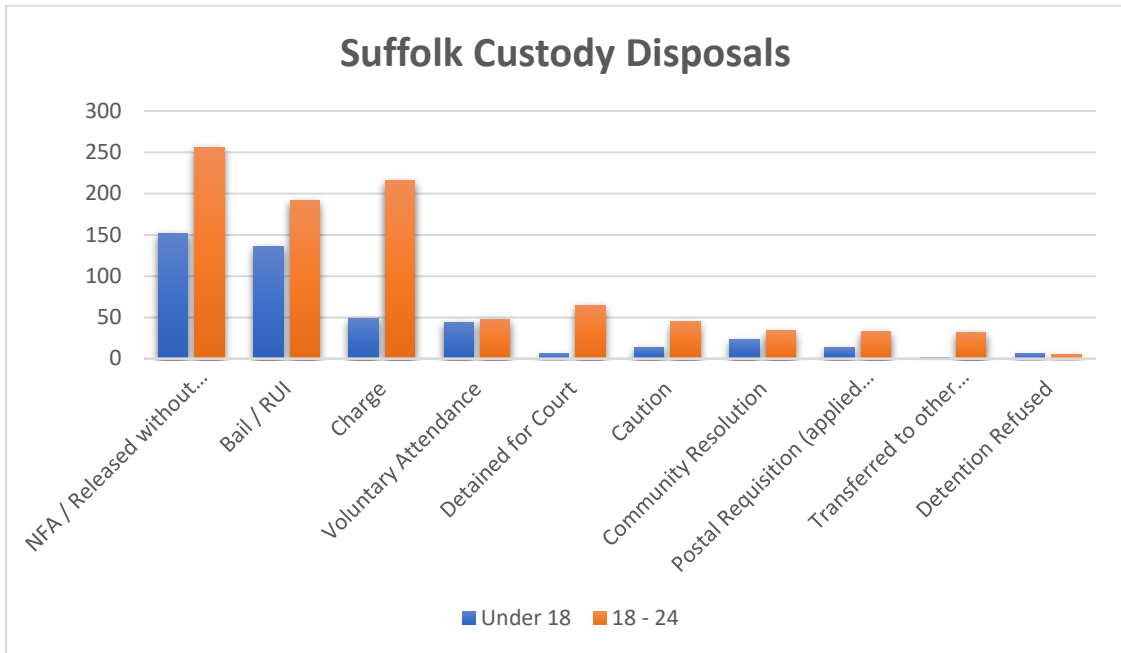
2.9.7 Home Office funding for the Turnaround programme is due to end in March 2025, and this has been identified as a risk for Suffolk YJS and work is currently underway to explore exit options.

2.10 Young People in Custody

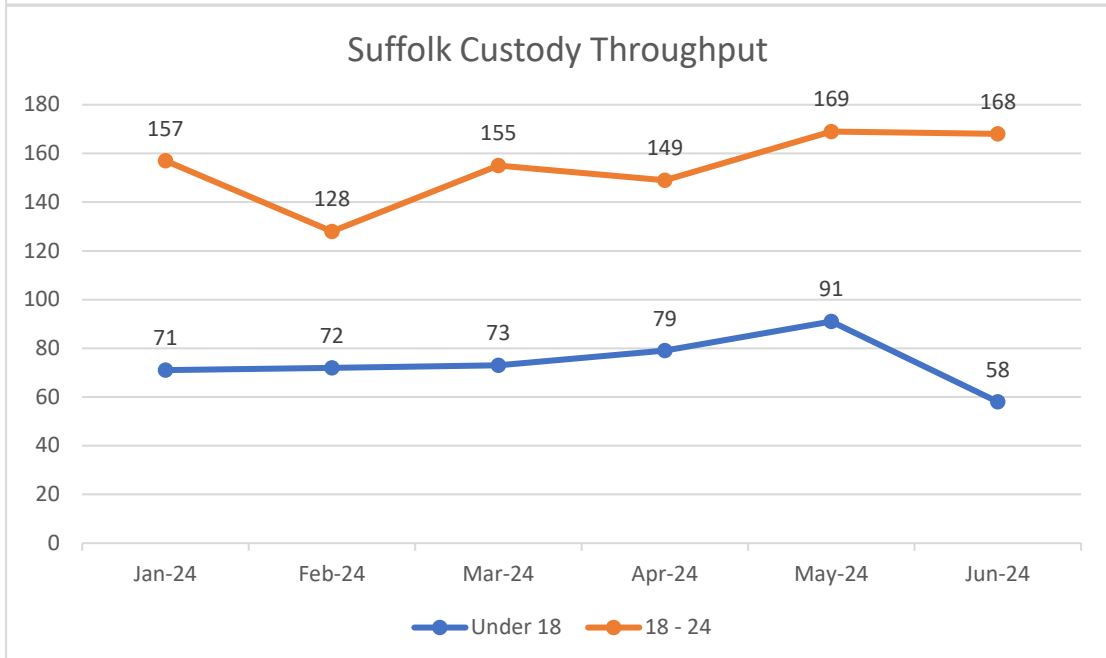
2.10.1 There are in the region of 28,000 persons arrested across Norfolk and Suffolk in the previous 12-month period, of which 5840 were aged under 24.

2.10.2 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.

2.10.3 The data below shows all Suffolk arrests for persons detained at all of the Police Investigation Centre’s in Norfolk and Suffolk between January 2024 and June 2024. The throughput 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.



2.10.4



Suffolk custody throughput:

2.10.5 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.

Mental Health

- 2.10.5 Three detainees aged under 24 had a formal Mental Health Act assessment between January and June 2024. All 3 were aged 18-24 and all assessed under the Mental Health Act whilst in custody were recommended for detention under the Mental Health Act.

Mental Health	Under 18	18 - 24	Total
Number of MHA assessments	0	3	3

- 2.10.10 Each detained person, regardless of age, who is assessed under the Mental Health Act whilst in custody and recommended for detention under either s.2 or s.3 of the Act, is reviewed as part of the joint escalation process, which requires initial oversight from the custody officer, the Inspector [ordinarily the Custody Bronze Inspector], the Duty Superintendent/Chief Superintendent and ratification from the Force Executive; and continuous liaison with Social Services [AMHP's] and Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust [NSFT] to expedite the release of the detained person.

- 2.10.11 Norfolk and Suffolk, more than any other force nationwide often experience long periods of detention of detained persons requiring admission to Mental Health facilities under the Mental Health Act due to complications with bed allocation and availability within the NSFT.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Children and Young Persons Strategy is currently being renewed with the draft out for consultation. It is recommended that once this is launched Suffolk reviews their CYP strategy to ensure that it still aligns so that key thematic areas for delivery are recognised, it drives consistency and learning across borders, and draws on regional support and learning.
- 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 current funding arrangement for the Youth Justice Service Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) was renewed in March 2024 for another year. There are currently 2.0 FTE, which are funded jointly by Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Constabulary. Suffolk Youth Justice Service (SYJS) has given early indication that they intended to review this arrangement in Autumn 2024 but no update has been received at this time.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

- 5.1 None at this time.

6. CHIEF OFFICER CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Constabulary can demonstrate strong governance and partnership arrangements where children and young people are concerned. There are clear plans around how to make further improvements to service and performance and these are commented on in this report.
- 6.2 There are growing demands in most areas of policing where child issues are concerned and there remains a strong commitment to avoidance of criminalising young people where appropriate. Both of these elements are evidenced in this report as are the approaches to ensure the Constabulary response is proportionate.