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Parliamentary Under-Secretary
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The Rt Hon. the Lord Foster of Bath
Chair of the Justice and Home Affairs Committee
House of Lords
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Dear Lord Foster

CONSULTATION ON THE FUNDING AND OVERSIGHT OF YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICES

Today the government will publish its consultation on the oversight and funding of youth justice services, which seeks views on proposals to reform the national framework for the performance oversight, and funding of youth justice services in England and Wales. Please find attached a copy of the consultation.

The consultation is an important next step in the Government's wider programme of youth justice reform. It builds on the policy statement, 'A modern youth justice service: *Foundations fit for the future*', published in February and the Youth Justice White Paper – '*Cutting Youth Crime. Changing Young Lives*' published in May. Together, these set out our vision for a youth justice system that is better equipped to prevent offending, improve outcomes for children, protect victims and keep communities safe.

Our consultation proposals respond to the significant changes that have taken place across the youth justice system over the last two decades. While the number of children entering the justice system has fallen considerably, there is a greater proportion of children in the system who have complex needs, often requiring coordinated support from statutory youth justice partners. At the same time, services have told us that existing oversight and funding arrangements have become fragmented, reporting requirements can be burdensome, and current approaches do not always reflect modern practice or clearly distinguish between the responsibilities of youth justice services and those of the wider partnership.

The consultation invites views on a package of reforms to national oversight and funding arrangements, to be implemented in two phases: a new national performance and oversight framework from April 2027, followed by reforms to youth justice funding arrangements from April 2029. Together, these proposals are intended to support a locally led, nationally aligned system in which local leaders and partnerships retain the flexibility to design and deliver services that meet local needs, while national government sets clear expectations, establishes minimum standards and provides support where needed. The framework is not intended to increase central control, but to provide assurance that public funding is used effectively and that children, victims and communities receive high-quality services. The primary purpose of oversight will be to support local

learning and self-assessment rather than just compliance, with the YJB, in their reformed role supporting services to continuously improve.

Specifically, the consultation seeks views on proposals to:

- set clear minimum expectations through updated youth justice **National Standards** that reflect contemporary practice, while giving local services greater flexibility in how they meet those expectations by reducing the focus on inputs and placing greater emphasis on outcomes
- introduce a **new Quality Performance Framework** as a tool to support local reflection, self-assessment and improvement planning against a shared understanding of high-quality practice, complementing National Standards
- establish a clearer approach to **performance assessment**, distinguishing between measures that sit within the control of youth justice services and those that reflect wider partnership or system performance, alongside a clear escalation route where national action is needed
- **clearer framework for assessing performance** by distinguishing between measures to assess performance at a youth justice service level, and those used to assess partnership or system level
- **streamline reporting requirements** so that information is collected where it supports accountability, improvement or action, enabling services to focus more on delivery and outcomes
- move towards a **more transparent and needs-based approach to funding** by updating the national funding formula used to allocate grant funding to just youth justice services
- strengthen support youth justice services and their management boards to **address gaps in partner contributions and service provisions**

The consultation proposals follow extensive engagement with practitioners, local authorities, inspectorates, voluntary sector partners and devolved governments, and we will continue to work closely with the sector as these proposals are developed.

The government recognises the importance of parliamentary scrutiny and welcomes the Justice and Home Affairs Committee's continued interest in reducing offending amongst children, improving children's outcomes, and keeping victims and communities safe. The proposals in this consultation set out how reformed funding and oversight arrangements will establish clear expectations for services and partnerships, while enabling local areas to design and deliver services that respond to local need, accompanied by a strong support offer from the Youth Justice Board where needed.

I am confident that the proposals set out in this consultation provide a strong foundation for a more effective, outcomes-focused youth justice system, supporting local leaders to deliver high-quality, evidence-based services that improve outcomes for children and protect the public.



JAKE RICHARDS MP