

Brent Youth Justice Plan 2024/25

1.0 Introduction

The Youth Justice Plan 2024/25 is a statutory requirement under Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 relating to the provision of youth justice services. This annual plan sets out how the Brent Youth Justice Service (YJS) operates, functions and is funded within Brent.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- i. That the Brent YJS Management Board supports, enables, and monitors delivery of the Brent Youth Justice Plan 2024/25.
- ii. Youth Justice Partner organisations support the Brent Youth Justice Service to achieve the aims outlined in the Plan.

3.0 Vision and Strategy

View from the Chair of the YJS Management Board: *‘Our continuous drive to be the best we can be’.*

We hope you will enjoy reading our review of the last year and our plans for this year in the Youth Justice Plan 2024/25 that outlines our work with children and young people and our response to their personalised needs. We are proud of our achievements which include child-first successful community projects, actions to reduce reoffending and serious youth violence, and addressing disproportionality.

Like all services based within the Children and Young People directorate, the child-centred workplace culture that is evident in Brent YJS has been shaped by our newly revised ways of working: *This is Brent CYP - This is How We Grow*. This ensures that service development conforms to our common values of Contribution to Society, Integrity, Creativity and Achievement. It also encourages all staff to remain Curious, Courageous and Kind in all aspects of our work, including anti-racist practice. Our quality assurance tools continue to evolve and now include a new reflective supervision template and new requirements for robust management oversight.

In terms of our workforce development, it is important we recruit the right staff who will go the extra mile to safeguard children and work co-productively with them to improve outcomes. We provide a supportive, compassionate, and positive work environment that nurtures talent, values all contributions equally and strives for excellence where

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everyone is accountable for the delivery of their work. This is key to collaborating with the Youth Justice Board (YJB) to deliver the three the strategic objectives outlined in the Youth Justice Board Strategy 2024-2027:

1. Supporting improvement of youth justice services in local communities.
2. Focusing on addressing persistent racial disparities across the youth justice system.
3. Influencing development of policy and practice to advance the adoption of *Child First* principles throughout the youth justice system.

Brent's operational responsibilities have remained broadly similar in their focus since they were introduced by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. This required each local authority in England and Wales to deliver youth justice services in line with a statutory framework outlining youth justice responsibilities in relation to out of court disposals, court work, bail and remand, the assessment of children and young people who offend, the provision of court reports, the delivery of community interventions, and custody and resettlement.

Our approach to delivering youth justice services shares much in common with the child-first ambitions announced by the Youth Justice Board in 2021. We see children as children first, treat them fairly and help them to build on their strengths so they can make a constructive contribution to society. It is also a method that provides Brent YJS with the necessary means to achieve its statutory aims:

- Reducing the likelihood of children offending or re-offending
- Protecting children and young people
- Protecting the public
- Ensuring that sentences are served.

During 2023/24, we performed strongly across several key areas:

Reoffending

Reoffending rates are prone to fluctuation and tracked over a period of 18 months. The low rates of reoffending Brent experienced in the last year are likely to have been influenced by the considerable programme of preventative work undertaken at this time. This included the COVID-19 Pathfinder for Overrepresented Children, the MOPAC Funded Disproportionality Project, and the Your Choice cognitive behavioural therapy programme.

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Custody and Remands

Our custodial population is at a historical low. This has been influenced by our work to tackle disproportionality in the youth justice system, the implementation of the constructive resettlement approach, effective interventions, and multi-agency At Risk of Custody meetings. We are currently building upon these successes by responding to recommendations in the HMIP joint thematic inspection of work with children subject to remand in youth detention (November 2023).

First Time Entrants

The number of children entering the Youth Justice System is low overall and reflects the effective decision making and wide-ranging interventions offered by the Out of Court Disposal team.

Out Of Court Disposals

Our procedures and processes highlight the voice of the victim, enhance our restorative justice offer, and develop a holistic and inclusive service involving a range of partners. We recently introduced the YJB Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool to make our assessments even more child-first and to ensure interventions are needs led.

Disproportionality

Our Disproportionality Action Plan is refreshed annually and covers a wide range of work. It is regularly monitored at the YJS Management Board and contains wide-ranging actions across the partnership. Earlier this year we conducted analysis of our police diversionary interventions which showed that children from Black Heritage Groups in Brent have access to Out Of Court Disposals (OOCd). This is encouraging as access to diversionary activities reduces the likelihood of criminalisation. However, analysis also raised a wider concern that their participation in OOCd interventions is disproportionately high when compared to children from White Heritage Groups. We will build upon this in 2024/25 by seeking to understand whether disproportionate access to OOCds is the result of child-first policing, or the product of children from Black and Asian Minority Heritage groups being subjected to a disproportionately high number of stop and searches .

Violence and Gangs

We are committed to safeguarding young people affected by gangs and violence by understanding their challenges through a trauma informed lens and responding to neurodiverse needs. Serious youth violence has declined year on year since we adopted the YJB Serious Youth Violence Tool in 2016/17. Safety

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mapping is undertaken to better understand the nature of exploitation some children and young people are subject to.

Courts

We receive a considerable amount of positive feedback from the magistrates at Willesden Youth Court about the quality of our court reports and our knowledge of the children who appear before the Youth Bench. Our approach to sharing court facilities with Barnet and Harrow is collaborative and ensures all children are given the best possible opportunity to receive a fair outcome regardless of where they live. We are fortunate that our judiciary supports our strive for improvements in many ways which has included the adoption of trauma informed court reports and bail letters.

Participation

The voices of children and their families are heard and used to develop and shape service provision. YJS workers interact with our children and young people with increasing creativity, which last year included sharing short films made by Brent children with the YJS Management Board.

Partnership and joint working

The growing proportion of high-risk children and young people on our caseloads has resulted in a growing reliance on good partnership work and close collaborations with wider Council services. We continue to extend our partnership with the local voluntary sector to provide access to exiting and newly emerging preventative support.

Restorative Justice

Our determination to support victims through direct and indirect mediation is underpinned by our Restorative Justice Policy. It is particularly pleasing that our YJS Restorative Justice Workers convened our first face to face Restorative Justice Conference earlier this year.

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The YJS Management Board will focus on the following in 2024/25

Council Services

Children's Social Care

Safeguarding children and young people from serious youth violence and contextual harm is central to our work. Brent YJS will continue to jointly take forward our plans to reduce the criminalisation of children in care in collaboration with our Looked After Children and Leaving Care Service. Ongoing work undertaken with our Safeguarding and Localities Teams to keep children safe, such as peer mapping and supporting children at court, will be subject to case auditing.

Community Protection

Brent YJS and Community Protection will work closely to identify and support services that combat antisocial behaviour, serious youth violence, knife crime, and county lines. Both services are committed to jointly promoting engagement with local communities and victims on the development of local youth justice services. This includes delivering one of the priorities in the Overarching Safer Brent Action Plan 2024-2026: facilitating *Roundtable* conversations between children known to the police and key stakeholders.

Improving Educational Outcomes

YJS will continue to increase participation for those young people out of school or college, using the support of commissioned Prospects EET Advisors. This combined with close oversight from the YJS NEET Working Group provides YJS with the tools and resources needed to further reduce our NEET cohort. YJS will continue to deliver preventative workshops to mainstream and alternative schools. This will include working in partnership with the Accelerated Support Team to deliver the Your Life You Choose programme. This is a multi-agency presentation day which seeks to deter young people from crime, raise awareness of the consequences of their choices and empower them to make better decisions and keep themselves safe.

Victim Support

Our Restorative Justice Offer is open to all victims of crime and will include both direct and indirect mediation. Brent YJS has extended its reparations offer to include community work at Family Wellbeing Centres. We are also working in collaboration with colleagues in our Looked After Children and Leaving Care Services to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of children living in supported accommodation.

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Public Health

We will continue to work with Public Health funded initiatives to support the physical and emotional health of children, especially those who are missing or excluded from school, or misusing drugs and alcohol. Additionally, we will review longstanding service arrangements to ensure access to substance misuse support best meets the needs of all children within the youth justice system.

Partnership Services

Courts

We will improve the court experience and outcomes for children through ever closer working with Court Services partners. Issues of disproportionality affecting children from Black heritage groups will continue to be tackled. More widely we will build upon our work to enable all children to better understand what will happen at court and facilitate their active participation in ensuring they are involved and listened to during court proceedings.

Probation

The partnership between Brent YJS and the Brent Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) is strong. For many years this has enabled Brent YJS to benefit from the provision of effective staffing resources and operational processes that ensure our children transition seamlessly from the youth justice system into adult services.

Voluntary Sector

The continued sharing of community wide knowledge is vital to achieving good outcomes for children. This includes information relating to contextual safeguarding, deprivation and the quality and sufficiency of safe spaces and activities for children and young people.

Improved Mental Health and Wellbeing

The Brent YJS Mental Health Practitioner seconded from the CAMHS Enhanced Treatment Team will continue to provide onward referral and advice and support for all children likely to require high Tier 3 specialised CAMHS interventions. YJS Case Managers holding cases where children are suspected to possess less acute mental health needs can access general advice and guidance about emotional wellbeing and other community support.

Police

We will assist the police to ensure the safety of children and better protect the public. This will include supporting the implementation of the child-centred ambitions contained within the proposed, new MPS Children Strategy. Support

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will be given to facilitate the establishment of a 'strategic needs assessment' that identifies the drivers of serious violence in the local area and the cohort of people most at risk or most affected by serious violence.

Importantly, the plans and priorities of Brent YJS will continue to be guided by good practice outlined in the *YJB Youth Justice Strategy for delivering positive outcomes for children by reducing offending and creating safer communities (2024–2027)*, and recommendations made in recent HMIP thematic and area-based inspections. These include: *The experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system (October 2021)*, the *Joint thematic inspection of work with children subject to remand in youth detention (November 2023)*, and the *HMIP Annual Report: inspection of youth justice services (March 2022)*. As in previous years we will continue to learn from case audits, Rapid Reviews and other safeguarding learning opportunities, Key Performance Information data, and through engagement with children, young people, and their families.

Furthermore, our commitment to improving outcomes for children in the Brent youth justice system will continue to shape our resourcing and focus. We believe that despite the passage of time the comments made by HMIP in our 2020 inspection report still apply: '...overall, Board members know how their service contributes to the work of the YJS and can judge if their service's contribution is effective'. It is my view that this Plan provides the Brent Youth justice partnership with the clarity needed to work together to achieve good outcomes for children, it also provides a very clear framework to provide strategic oversight, guidance and the support needed to improve the lives of children and young people who enter the criminal justice system.

Palvinder Kudhail Director – Early Help and Social Care Children and Young People London Borough of Brent

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4.0 Local Context: Brent Children and Young People

4.1 Children and Young People Profile (2024)

- 339,818 people live in Brent. It is the 5th largest Borough in London¹
- Brent is one of the most diverse local authority areas in the country with 65% of the total population consisting of people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic heritage groups².
- Brent's child population aged 0-17 years based on Census 2021 is 73,056 with a 10-17 years population projection of 32,249.
- Brent's child population (0-17) represents 22% of the total Brent population.
- Brent's population aged 10-17 represents 10% of the total Brent population.
- Brent's child population (0-17) represents 4% of the 0-17 London population.
- Brent's population aged 10-17 represents 4% of the 10-17 London population.

4.2 GLA Population Projection for 2021:

Table 1. Brent Projected Population by age.

	Projected Population 2021	
	Brent	London
Aged 0-19	81,300	2,085,300
Aged 10-19	41,500	1,024,800
All Ages	339,818	8,799,800

In 2023/24 the YJS cohort consisted of 111 young people. This is 0.33% of the Brent 10-17 population.

¹ ONS 2021 Census

² GLA Population Projections 2022, published 2016.

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4.3 Looked After Children in Brent

In January 2024 there were 300 Looked After Children (LAC) – eight fewer than in January 2023 (308). Brent has a smaller LAC cohort than its statistical neighbours and less than the national average. In January 2024, Brent had a rate of 41.0 LAC per 10,000 children under 18-years with the London average at 51.

4.4 The LAC / YJS Cohort

Within an overall YJS open caseload of 63 children and young people in May 2024 there were ten LAC young people supervised by the YJS - compared to 11 LAC in June 2023, Looked after Children are one of the most vulnerable groups in Brent with many children experiencing high levels of harm and exploitation. In some cases children enter the care system due to their offending (e.g. they are remanded because of an offence and become LAC during their period on remand). Analysis of this cohort shows:

- 80% were male.
- 80% were aged 16 or 17 years.
- 60% were of Black African or Black Caribbean Heritage (62% in June 2023, 44% in February 2022, 50% in February 2021 and 64% in April 2020).
- 70% had committed a violent offence (83% in June 2023, 72% in February 2022, 37% in February 2021 and 76% in April 2020).
- 30% had committed a drugs offence (17% in June 2023, 39% in February 2022, 23% in February 2021 and 32% in April).
- 10% had committed a robbery offence (33% in June 2023, 39% in February 2022, 9% in February 2021 and 24% in April 2020).

4.5 Substance Misuse

National substance misuse treatment data shows that young people often enter specialist substance misuse services with a range of problems or vulnerabilities related to (or in addition to) their substance use. These include:

- using multiple substances
- having a mental health treatment need
- being a looked after child

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- not being in education, employment or training (NEET)
- self-harming behaviour
- sexual exploitation
- offending
- domestic abuse

Analysis of the 113 children and young people supported by Brent YJS between January and December 2023 found that:

- 31 (27.4%) of those children had committed a drugs offence with 29 (93%) of the offence type being possession.
- 100 children were male, 13 children were female.
- 64 children were from a Black Heritage Group, 14 were of 'Other' Heritage, 13 were from a White Heritage Group, 13 were of Mixed Heritage, and nine were from an Asian Heritage group.
- Cannabis was the predominant substance - used or possessed by 25 (52%) children and young people in Brent. This is consistent with the national picture where cannabis is the most common substance used by children referred for treatment (87%).
- 72% had concerns around physical health.
- 64% had mental health concerns.
- 12% had a special educational need.
- 3.5% had some difficulty with speech and language.
- 8% had been or currently were in LA care
- 31% were previously or currently subject to a CIN.
- 8% were previously or currently subject to CP.

4.6 All children and young people: May 2024 open caseload

One hundred and sixty-two children and young people received a court sentence, OOC, Triage or Community Resolution in 2023/24.

A snapshot of the active caseload taken in May 2024 showed there were 63 open cases. Analysis of the caseload showed that:

- 67% were aged 16 or 17 years compared to 64% in June 2023, 64% in February 2022, 57% in February 2021 and 53% in February 2020

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- 89% were male compared to 87% in June 2023, 78% in February 2022, 86% in February 2021 and 84% in February 2020
- 54% of children and young people were from a Black Caribbean or other Black Heritage Group compared to 46% in June 2023, 48% in February 2022, 46% in February 2021 and 63% in February 2020.
- 16%, inclusive of caretaking cases, were LAC.
- 23% were NEET (in academic years 12 and 13 and including children and young people residing out of Brent) compared to 29% in June 2023, 39% in February 22, 24% in February 2021 and 29% in February 2020.
- 11% of the caseload (7) had an EHCP or Statement of SEN compared to 6% in June 2023, 5% in February 2022, 12% in February 2021 and 8% of the caseload in February 2020. SEND / Additional Learning Needs is one the ten newly introduced KPIs monitored by the YJB.

The wards containing the highest proportion of children in the May 2024 cohort were Alperton, Barnhill, Tokyngton, Stonebridge and Wembley Park. Children and young people residing in these wards represent over 33% of all open cases. A significant proportion (almost a quarter) reside outside of Brent.

4.7 Brent YJS 2023/24 case level data:

Table 2: Brent YJS Case Level Data 2023/24

Brent YJS 2023/24 Case-level data (Offences and Offending Populations)															
Offences	Disposals					Offending population by ethnicity						Offending population by gender			
Total Offences	No. of Pre-court disposals	No. of First-tier disposals	No. of Community disposals	No. of Custody disposals	Total Disposals	White	Mixed	Asian	Black	Chinese or Other	Unknown	Female	Male	Unknown	
168	19	67	10	4	100	12 (14.6%)	8 (9.8%)	5 (12.5%)	39 (47.6%)	17 (20.7%)	1 (1.2%)	6 (7.3%)	76 (92.7%)	0 (0.0%)	82

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4.8 Reducing caseloads and increasing complexity

The significant reduction in caseloads in recent years is to a large extent a reflection of changes to national sentencing policy which is now focused on more serious offences and children who are most at risk to others. This has led to smaller, more complex cohorts of children who often present with multiple vulnerabilities and are at high risk of harm to themselves and others. In recent years, the proportion of young people assessed as posing a high or very high risk has increased - especially amongst 16 to 18-year-olds. Inspection data taken from the *HMIP Annual Report March 2022*, showed that 'nearly 80 per cent of children sentenced to a court order were assessed as presenting some form of concern to others, and 30 per cent were considered to present a high or very high risk of harm'.

In Brent, the most prolific types of youth crime are offences of violence against the person, drug possession and supply, robbery, and motoring offences. Serious youth violence (often with links to gangs, drugs and county lines) is a persistent problem and has increased the amount of statutory provision children and young people receive.

5.0 Child First

5.1 Brent YJS delivers services to children and young people in accordance with *Child First principles*

Brent recognises that taking a Child First approach requires services to prioritise the best interests of children and recognise their needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child focused and recognises structural barriers to full participation. This is reflected in the CYP training offer which includes anti-racist and cultural competency training. Furthermore, YJS practice development sessions are delivered regularly, frequently making use of YJB effective practice resources to enhance the skill with which practitioners consider the importance of structural inequalities, racial discrimination, and the impact of trauma. YJS assessments are commenced after a young person, and their parent / carer's self-assessments have been completed.

More recently Brent has emphasised that recognising neurodivergent characteristics is a fundamental part of taking a Child First approach. This increased focus upon neurodiversity, which refers to the way people think, move, act, see, hear and process information varies from person to person which means some people do things differently from others. The term 'neurodiversity' covers many different conditions including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), dyspraxia, dyslexia and developmental language disorder (DLD). The impact of having one or more condition for the individual can vary substantially:

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- About one in six people are thought to be neurodivergent
- One in four in the unemployed population are thought to be neurodivergent
- At least one in three people moving through the justice system are thought to be neurodivergent - many will not have been diagnosed during school days.

Brent YJS takes an inclusive approach to service delivery and design to engage more people in an accessible manner, promoting a child's individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society. Brent's continued focus on trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in our work with children and young people assists practitioners to identify those at higher risk of harm. Specific work can then be identified where the young person has complex issues, is 'stuck' or where there is high anxiety within the professional network. Joint 'signs of safety' group supervision with social work colleagues helps YJS workers to understand concerns and the importance of the joint planning process.

Brent YJS recognises the importance of Speech and Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) in our work with children. SLCN is described as difficulty understanding or using language. It is a type of neurodiversity, which can only be diagnosed by a Speech and Language therapist. SLCN can also be deemed to be a hidden disability. There were 16 children out of 210 children known to the YJS who were identified as having SLCN needs between September 2022 and August 2023. During the April 2024 YJS Management Board meeting members supported the joint efforts of YJS and the Brent Inclusion Service to develop access to assessment and support pathways for children within the youth justice system who display signs of undiagnosed SLCN.

5.2 Encouraging children's active participation, engagement, and wider social inclusion

The Brent CYP Participation strategy describes how young people and children have meaningful and inclusive involvement throughout the decision-making process for services that impact them. It provides a structured approach to creating an environment that enables children, young people and their families to have active involvement which influences decision making, policy and service development. Overall, participation offers numerous benefits for young people, giving them a voice and platform to be actively heard, fostering personal growth promoting social connections and enabling them to have a meaningful impact on their own lives and the wider community.

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Adopting the approach outlined in the Brent CYP Participation strategy has strengthened YJS's ability to form meaningful and creative collaborations with children. Our children have told us they want the YJS to move from a one-dimensional reliance on user surveys to youth led consultations including podcasts and campaigns organised by celebrities. This year children from Black Heritage groups identified the need for music and creative activities to form a greater part of the YJS offer. As a result of this, all YJS young people can attend music recording and production courses delivered by our community partner Street Fusion. Furthermore, children from YJS have been supported to access an extensive range of music, sport and creative activities at Family Wellbeing Centres All programmes have been designed to respond more specifically to children's needs and provide an open space for self-awareness.

Children supported by the YJS Participation Officer have developed short films about their experiences within the youth justice system. It is intended that in 2024/25 topics will include policing, crime, and suggestions for making courts more youth friendly. Closer links with the Raheem Sterling Foundation are being formed, and 'Roundtable' discussions with the police and young people will afford children from the YJS the opportunity to share their views on crime and exploitation with senior decision makers.

5.3 Promoting a childhood removed from the justice system through prevention, diversion and minimal intervention

Possession of cannabis represents approximately 70% of all First Time Entrants to the youth justice system. Since August 2021, Brent children and young people arrested for the possession of cannabis have received Community Resolutions. These are non-criminal disposals that function as an alternative to entering the youth justice system. Despite the voluntary nature of Community Resolutions, children who receive them are offered a level of support that is commensurate to other OOCs. This includes assessment, and co-produced intervention and safety plans. Interventions offered to children include referrals substance misuse counselling, police led crime awareness sessions, and mental health screening and referral.

The work of the Brent Out of Court Disposal Joint Decision-Making Panel includes discussion about mitigating factors for children who have offended. The Panel adopts a child-first approach to identifying and balancing the personalised needs of the child against the wishes of the victim. Relevant professionals such as CAMHS workers, Social Workers, Substance Misuse Workers, Inclusion Service Officers, and Mentors are invited to Panel meetings to enable a holistic understanding of a child's background, neurodivergent characteristics, trauma concerns, learning needs or mental health issues. This

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enables the Panel to make child focused decisions that prevent children from being unnecessarily criminalised when they break the law. Children on an OOC who experience difficulties in school or have issues with their school place are referred to the Inclusion Service so their family can receive advice and specialist support. This includes managed moves, being home educated, and obtaining school places.

6.0 Voice of the Child

6.1 Brent YJS listens to children and young people.

Brent listens closely to the voice of the child. It is heard through a range of activities that are designed and implemented by young people. This has enabled Brent YJS to move beyond hearing their views to ensuring young people are part of decision making, planning and implementation, resulting in the implementation of a range youth led projects. Young people now communicate with members of the YJS Management Board via podcasts and short films, have made films about online exploitation for the Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Group, and will discuss crime and disorder with local politicians and senior Police this summer as part of Safer Brent *Roundtable* discussions.

Brent YJSs commitment to coproduction and youth participation was enhanced by bringing together the YJS with the Council's responsibility for coordinating and monitoring youth services in 2022. Approval was also given by the Board for Early Help to develop a small team to establish youth led activities at Family Wellbeing Centres. This has enabled YJS to promote service user access to a much wider range of youth participation opportunities than was previously possible. It has also created close alignment to a range of universal provision that had previously been difficult for many children from the YJS to access.

6.2 Disproportionality interventions at Family Wellbeing Centres (FWCs)

The MOPAC funded 'Disproportionality' project (2022-2023) funded a range of activities in Brent FWCs, including sports, art, mentoring, emotional health and wellbeing, beauty, music production and photography sessions, co-designed by young people in the community with sessions facilitated by Brent-approved partners of the voluntary sector, to ensure the inclusion of all young people in the borough. Voluntary sector partners included Sport at the Heart, Jason Roberts Foundation, Always Furthering and Nurturing Development, and JKing the Artist. One hundred and seven young people were involved in co-design and 172 young people across Brent took part in activities during summer 2023. More than fifty children from YJS participated in activities.

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6.3 Raheem Sterling Foundation

In May 2024, the YJS Participation Worker, together with YBF and the Raheem Sterling Foundation, organised for a small group of young people to travel to the Foundation's headquarters to discuss crime and community safety with the footballer Raheem Sterling. They spent a couple of hours being mentored, sharing their views on the challenges young people face, and hearing inspirational stories.

In collaboration with Raheem Sterling Foundation and Word 4 Weapons, seven new Knife Amnesty bins were unveiled in Brent at an event attended by young people, council and community workers, and representatives from Word 4 Weapons and Raheem Sterling Foundation. These knife bins are located at: Denmark Road, Kilburn; Wellspring Crescent, Chalkhill Estate; Neasden Lane, Neasden; Fortunegate Road, Harlesden; Old North Circular Road, Monks Park; Hillside, Stonebridge; and Park Lane, Wembley. The knife amnesty bins provide an anonymous way for knives to be safely disposed of, with the addition of a QR code signposting young people towards support away from knife crime towards mentoring, education, and work opportunities. The bins align with the Raheem Sterling Foundation's Power of 7 objectives - social mobility, employment, education, community, creativity, leadership, and enterprise.

Commenting on the partnership, Raheem Sterling said, "I want this project to make a real difference to young people in Brent by guiding them to take positive actions and have better access to a powerful support network of opportunities. Growing up in Brent, I understand the challenges that young people experience every day, I truly hope our work enables change and I'm grateful to all our partners and the organisations supporting us to help improve the lives and increase opportunities for young people."

6.4 Brent Youth Parliament (BYP)

BYP meets monthly and represents schools and youth groups for young people aged 10-19, (up to 25 with SEND), with 63 members in 2023 attending nine BYP meetings and five Council meetings, including Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, full council, and Budget Task Force. The young people lead on discussions about the issues they want to look at, and then work with Councillors and council officers to create change for the improvement of young people's services in Brent. One of BYP's priorities for 24/25 is reducing crime and improving safe spaces and this will be considered with Community Safety and Brent YJS this year.

6.5 The Brent Youth Zone

This website is a platform for Brent young people to access universal information about employment, learning, support and advice and activities to get involved with. The Brent Youth Zone website is also used as an engagement tool for young people by providing online access to youth surveys to gather the voice and views of young people.

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6.6 Brent Care Journeys 2.0

The Children in Care Council for Brent works to make sure children and young people in care and care leavers have the chance to be involved in making decisions and in sharing views about the services and support received. These groups use flyers, newsletters and arrange meetings to share information and experiences.

6.7 Christmas Tree Appeal

In December 2023, Brent Early Help worked with the MET Police as part of their Christmas Tree appeal, reaching 3,000 young people in Brent CYP (including all YJS children) and across the borough in Family Wellbeing Centres. The aim of the work was to ensure that as many young people as possible received an age-appropriate book (for 0–12-year-olds) or a £10 online shop voucher for 13+ year olds, as well as toys, games and learning resources. This was a large undertaking involving logistics and planning and was a great success. This will be a yearly event and planning is expected to begin again in October 2024 for Christmas 2024.

6.8 Music Project

Feedback from children led to the YJS commissioning music providers Street Fusion to deliver a music recording and audio production pilot programme. From the involvement of eight children during 2022, the past year has seen 21 children take part. This has proven to be highly successful, especially with young men from Black Heritage groups. The project also provides a safe space which is conducive to discussing sensitive discussions around themes such as emotional wellbeing, contextual safeguarding, and desistance from offending.

- *I learnt that I can stop being on road chilling with Bad People.*
- *I've improved my flow learnt & confidence.*
- *Nutini at all - I love the vibes and energy and I make new friends.*
- *How I sound on my songs. I can relax better when I'm here.*
- *How to express myself.*

7.0 Governance, Leadership and Partnership Arrangements

7.1 The Brent Youth Justice Service (YJS) is a multidisciplinary, multiagency service that works with children and young people aged 10-17 years and their families. Brent YJS provides support in relation to diversion, prevention, out of court disposals, court work, bail and remand, the assessment of children and young people who offend, the

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provision of court reports, the planning and delivery of community interventions, indirect and direct work with victims and custody and resettlement.

The YJS sits within the Children and Young People's Directorate and is managed by the Head of Early Help. The Director of Early Help and Social Care Chairs the YJS Management Board. The Board provides strategic direction and support for the YJS, ensuring that planning is undertaken to deliver effective youth justice services - which firstly aim to reduce re-offending and safeguard children and young people. Secondly, the Board are informed by an understanding of the type and level of risk to children and young people and ensure proportionality in disposals for all children and young people in Brent.

- 7.2** The YJS Management Board has representation across the partnership at senior levels and has maintained a stable and engaged membership with awareness and knowledge of children in the youth justice system. Board members have developed an effective teamwork approach and contribute service area responses to Inspectorate recommendations, wider planning, and challenges. This consistent approach is embedded operationally reflecting the partnership's strategic focus on addressing disparity and disproportionality. All Board members have been encouraged to observe practice. A case study is presented by a member of the YJS at each Management Board meeting, promoting a wider understanding of interventions and their impact.
- 7.3** A review of the YJS Management Board's Terms of Reference, in adherence to YJB guidance, was approved in January 2023. The Board continues to monitor the original four KPIs reported to the YJB as well as overseeing the introduction and performance of ten new KPIs. One of which is Management Board Attendance - which was met in full in 2023/24.

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Table 3: YJS Management Board Attendance 2023/24 by Quarter

Brent YJS Management Board Attendance 2023/24				
Senior Management Board Attendance	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Health	1	1	1	1
LA Children’s Social Care	1	1	1	1
LA Education	1	1	1	1
Police	1	1	1	1
Probation	1	1	1	1
Total	5	5	5	5

7.4 Youth and Youth Justice Services

The rationale for merging statutory Youth Service responsibilities with the YJS was that closer alignment of these two areas of work would strengthen the offer of Early Help preventative services, enable stronger links with schools, and offer positive early intervention opportunities to reduce exclusions and entry in the criminal justice system. It also enables further integration with the FWC and other providers ensuring the most vulnerable young people are targeted.

7.5 Brent Council is strongly committed to supporting the local youth sector with the principles in the Brent Youth Strategy. These include supporting a programme of refurbishment of existing voluntary sector youth facilities as well as converting spaces such as empty buildings or offices into modern accommodation that the voluntary sector could use for the benefit of young people across the borough. These developments - through the SCIL Youth Provision Project – will see up to £2.15 million spent on physical infrastructure to improve youth provision in growth areas. The youth voluntary sector will be able to apply for funding to improve or upscale their buildings to deliver social infrastructure and to improve the quality of life for children and young people in Brent in line with the Brent Borough Plan 2023-2027.

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- 7.6** The YJB's revised Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) were introduced in England from April 2023, and approved by the YJS Management Board in January 2023. This stated that the existing four current KPIs: binary reoffending rate, frequency of reoffending, first time entrants and use of custody, will continue to be used in conjunction with ten new KPIs. These are accommodation, education, training and employment, SEND/additional learning needs, mental health and emotional wellbeing, substance misuse, out of court disposals, management board attendance, wider services, serious youth violence, and victims.
- 7.7** Brent's intention, alongside other YOTs nationally, is to align performance with the Youth Justice Board oversight framework. This framework - informed by the YJB's vision (April 2023), will monitor youth justice system performance, oversight, assurance, and compliance. It will additionally highlight the YJB's two specific monitoring functions: operation of the youth justice system and the provision of youth justice services and the extent to which the system aims are being achieved and any such standards met. The framework has provided clarity on how the YJB's monitoring function is fulfilled, outlining how oversight of local youth justice services is undertaken and delivery across the wider system is understood. The framework – consolidated through the YJB Strategic Plan 2024-27 - is a new way of working for the YJB which involves challenge and support and helping systems and practices to be embedded. Continued effective relations with the YJB, who attend Board meetings and regularly meet with the Youth and Youth Justice Manager, provides clear support and challenge.
- 7.8** The Brent YJS Youth Justice Plan is informed by and linked to The Brent Borough Plan 2023 – 2027: 'Moving Brent Forward Together'.

8.0 Workforce development

- 8.1** In line with the YJB Business Plan 2023/24, Brent YJS has a diverse workforce that reflects the communities it serves. Brent YJS shared its staffing profile by ethnicity with the Youth Justice Board in September 2023. This showed it is diverse and representative of children in the Brent Youth Justice System. Brent has a Disproportionality Action Plan which it regularly monitors and continues to ensure that everyone who works for the YJS has planned and recorded individual development.
- 8.2** Brent YJS benefits from partner staffing contributions equivalent to 10.6 FTE within the YJS and senior members from partnership agencies at Board level. The YJS is compliant with the minimum staffing requirement set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 – with multi agency staff from Education, Health, Probation, and the Police.

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- 8.3** Brent Police continue to provide a continuous staffing contribution that exceeds the minimum statutory requirement of 1.0 FTE. There are 3.0 FTE Police Officers.
- 8.4** There are two mental health practitioners within the YJS, A seconded CAMHS practitioner and a NHSE funded Youth Justice and Liaison and Diversion Worker who undertakes mental health screening. Both officers offer children and young people 1:1 sessions, develop staff knowledge around emotional wellbeing, and support the wider professional network.
- 8.5** A 0.6 FTE National Probation Service officer is seconded to YJS. The officer holds a case load, advises YJS officers about transitions to the adult estate, and makes positive contributions to wider YJS work including team meeting attendance and providing duty cover.
- 8.6** Since the formation of YOTs in 2001, educational support services have fulfilled their statutory requirement to support YJS via annual financial contributions from the DSG.
- 8.7** Reporting to the Head of Early Help, the Youth and Youth Justice Manager has overall management oversight of 25.5 FTE staff members.
- 8.8** Brent YJS has maintained a stable workforce of largely permanently employed staff. All staff have accessed training through the Brent Council CYP training programme and INSET training recommended by the Youth Justice Board. The team have received more specialist training this year such as, Restorative Justice Practice, Youth Justice Legal Training, Cultural Competency Training, anti-racist training, and neurodiversity. YJS monthly practice development sessions during 2023/24 have provided a wide and comprehensive focus upon case practice issues including restorative justice, understanding the new YJB KPIs, assessment and planning, Referral Order Panel best practice, reviews, management oversight, and reflective supervision.
- 8.9** The YJS will continue to develop its practice in line with the neurodiverse and personalised needs of children and young people during 2023/24. This will include building upon our understanding of cultural competency and anti-racist training.
- 8.10** YJS Case Managers have access to a range of one to one and group work interventions which cover a range of themes. These include offending behaviour, risk and safety interventions, victim awareness, decision and problem solving, anger and emotional management, and weapon and knives interventions.

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9.0 Resourcing and Services

9.1 The YJS benefits from well-established partnerships with agencies within the voluntary sector including:

9.2 Brent EACH

EACH is a counselling and support agency that delivers counselling services and support for YJS children and young people receiving Out of Court Disposals. Thirty-seven of these children received substance misuse counselling in 2023/24. As part of 'whole family working', parents, carer(s), and siblings are also offered support. Two EACH staff members have delivered services in Brent YJS since 2006.

9.3 VIA (formerly known as Westminster Drug Project)

VIA are a drug and alcohol charity. They contribute the equivalent of 1.0 FTE advice, assessment and treatment support for Brent children and young people who received a court order and were assessed as needing drug and alcohol support. Services are delivered at the Brent Civic Centre, and within the local community. Between April and December 2023, WDP delivered support to 23 children and young people.

Table 4: VIA Substance Misuse Targeted Interventions: April to December 2023 – no. of children by tier and quarter

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Total
Tier 1	8	3	6	17
Tier 2	2	1	3	6
Total	10	4	9	23

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9.4 Brent Centre for Young People (BCYP)

BCYP offers a range of psychotherapeutic mental health interventions, designed specifically for children and young people who offend and who often struggle to engage with mental health services. Like EACH they have delivered services within the YJS since 2006.

9.5 St. Giles Trust

St. Giles offer gang affected mentoring for children and young people involved in or at risk of criminal exploitation. Provision is accessible via the Exploitation, Violence and Vulnerability Panel.

9.6 Young Brent Foundation (YBF)

YBF are an umbrella organisation for local voluntary organisations and community groups. They provide mentors from across member organisations to match young people with mentors best suited to support them. The work, support, and guidance they provide to YJS is informed and guided by their extensive community knowledge. YBF is the primary link between YJS and the local youth sector. Community information is routinely shared with YJS Staff and at a strategic level through membership of the YJS Management Board.

9.7 Multi-agency Panels Brent YJS leads or contributes to a wide range of multi-agency panels with specific strategic and operational functions. These were reviewed during 23/24 and include:

- **Resettlement and Aftercare panel** - This monthly panel discusses all children in custody and ensures the accommodation and wider needs of children and young people due to be released from custody are identified and planned for in a timely and transparent fashion in line with the YJB's principles around constructive resettlement. The Panel also provides senior oversight on bail and remand work. Regular panel members

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include Feltham YOI, the Police, Social Care, Early Help, the NHS, CAMHS, Restorative Justice Workers, and the CYP Placement Service. The Panel will be guided by Brent's response to the findings and recommendations from the *Joint thematic inspection of work with children subject to remand in youth detention (November 2023)*.

- **YJS and LAC Managers meeting** Meetings between Heads of Services and Service Managers identify joint actions to be tackled as part of the MOPAC Criminalisation of Children in Care Action Plan.
- **Strategy and Professionals meetings** These meetings are convened as and whenever necessary to share risk, court outcomes, and other information needed to keep children and young people in the criminal justice system safe. Members include YJS, Social Care, Police, Health, and Education.
- **Exploitation, Violence and Vulnerability Panel** This Panel coordinates the sharing of information between partners about children and young people at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation, trafficking and modern slavery, and missing children to ensure identified risks are appropriately managed.
- **YJS Risk, Safety and Wellbeing Multi-agency Management Risk Forum** This YJS led multiagency forum meets monthly. It provides senior management oversight of risk and safety and wellbeing for some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Brent. Attendance includes Social Care, Police, CAMHS, Probation, Inclusion Service and YJS staff
- **YJS Transitions Panel** Chaired by YJS with attendance from Probation, Police (IOM) and Leaving Care colleagues, the Panel discusses young people transitioning from the YJS to Probation in accordance with the

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new local YJS and Probation Protocol – which is informed by the Joint National Protocol for transitions in England (June 2021).

- **Restorative Justice (RJ) Improvement Group** This is a group comprised of Referral Panel members, YJS, Police and the Courts. Members consider meaningful reparation opportunities within the community that are beneficial for both the community and young people. It is also a forum for discussion and reflection about RJ good practice. The Panel enables children and young people to consider different ways of repairing the harm caused by their offending, acquire the opportunity to reflect on their offence(s), and see the wider consequences of their offending for themselves and others.
- **NEET Working Group** The NEET Working Group consists of the YJS, the Virtual School, Prospects and PLIAS (mentoring). It provides a child-focused consideration of NEET young people on a case-by-case basis, inclusive of planning work and educational initiatives to help young people engage in education and training.
- **Out of Court Disposals (OOC) Decision Making Panel** This weekly Panel is chaired by YJS and attended by Police, Health, YJS, Social Care, Early Help staff and Restorative Justice workers to jointly consider and determine OOC decisions guided by the ACPO police child matrix. It additionally identifies young people who are eligible to attend the Turnaround project.
- **The Safer Brent Partnership (SBP)** Community Safety Partnerships are multi-agency, strategic groups that oversee the approach to reducing crime and antisocial behaviour in a particular area. SBP is made up of representatives from many agencies, including the London Borough of Brent, Metropolitan Police, London Fire Brigade, National Probation Service, Voluntary Services and Victim Support. SBP aims to build an involved

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community, with less fear of crime and greater confidence in services, which takes responsibility for its own actions. It also pledges to bring to justice those who cause the most harm to our community, using restorative approaches and out-of-court disposals where appropriate. Its work is intelligence-led and evidence-based, identifying real issues and taking a problem-solving approach to reducing them. The YJS Management Board is linked to SBP via its Chair who is also a member of SBP.

10.0 Progress on priorities in previous plan

10.1 Nationally

Progress has been made over the last twelve years across the national youth justice system:

- The number of proven offences committed by children has fallen by approximately 65%. From 98,937 in 2012/13 to around 34,300 in 2022/23.
- There have been substantial falls in the number of children entering the justice system. This amounts to a reduction of around 77% between the years ending March 2012 and March 2023.
- There were approximately 11,900 occasions where children were sentenced at court in the year ending March 2023. This is 73% lower than in the year ending March 2012.
- The number of children being sentenced to custody has also reduced. In the year ending March 2023, the average monthly population of the youth secure estate was the lowest it has ever been at around 440 children.

10.2 Brent

In 2023/24, Brent YJS performed well in relation to reducing youth re-offending, the number of first-time entrants to the justice system and the use of youth custody (see data tables and charts below).

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- **Reducing Reoffending** The binary rate of reoffending is the official measure of reoffending and the proportion of 'reoffenders' who make up the total cohort. Brent's overall trend is decreasing. This is due to the small size of the cohort creating an effect of instability. Relatively small increases or decreases to the number of reoffenders, or the number of reoffences committed, can produce significant changes each quarter. For instance, in a quarter during which most reoffenders committed no or few offences, the rate of reoffending will increase considerably if one child is criminally prolific. This explains the large variations Brent has experienced during the last six years. In this time the binary reoffending rate was 50% in January to March 2017, 62.2% in January to March 2018, 32.6% in January to March 2019, 39.6% in January to March 2020, 14.9% in January to March 2021, and 13.9% in January to March 2022.

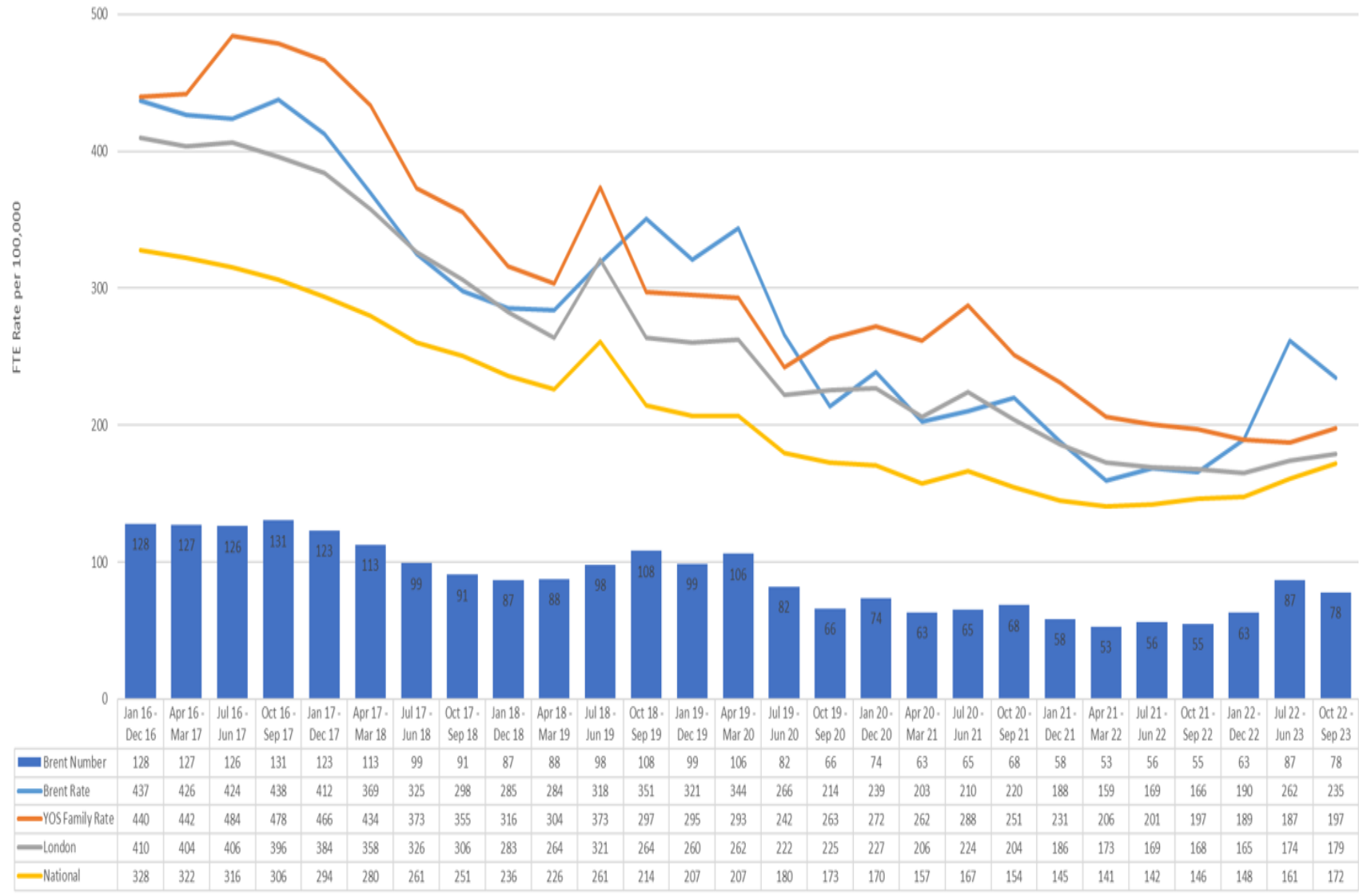
Work in this area has benefitted from the continued use of the YJB live reoffending tracker to analyse data at the level of individual young people. YJS has also created the YJS Transitions Panel to manage various transitions (often a vulnerable time for children and young people), listened to the voice of the child, responded to substance misuse and disproportionality issues, and conducted regular monthly audits.

- **Reducing First Time Entrants (FTEs)** Although Brent recorded a small increase in the number of FTEs in 2023, the long-term trend is declining. Brent's FTE rate per 100,000 children was 201 for the twelve-month period January 2023 to December 2023, compared to 190 per 100,000 children in the period January 2022 to December 2022. The data for this KPI comes from the Police National Computer and is shown in rolling full years.

The latest data published by the Ministry of Justice shows there were 79 new entrants to the youth justice system between October 2022 and September 2023. This is an annual increase of 24 children when compared to the period between October 2021 and September 2022 – 55 FTEs were recorded during this time.

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Table 5. No. of Brent Children Entering the Youth Justice System: January 2016 to September 2023.



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10.3 Reducing Custody

Despite continued serious youth violence, criminal exploitation and gang affectedness, the number of Brent young people sentenced to custody has reduced from a high of 54 in 2013/14, to four in the twelve-month period ending January 2022 to December 2022, to two in the latest period (January 2023 to December 2023).

The number of remands in 2023/24 (5 children) increased by three when compared to 2022/2023 (2 children). This was however, 10 fewer than the 15 children who were remanded to custody in 2020/21. Children from Black or other minority ethnic groups comprised 80% of children remanded in 2023/24.

Table 6. Number of Children Remanded 2020 to 2024 by Heritage Group.

	2020/2021 Remands	2021/2022 Remands	2022/2023 Remands	2023/2024 Remands
Black Heritage	9 (60%)	1 (25%)	2 (100%)	2 (40%)
Other BAME	4 (26.6%)	3 (75%)	0 (0%)	2 (40%)
Total BAME	13 (86.6%)	4 (100%)	2(100%)	4(80%)
White Heritage	2 (13.3%)	0 (0%)	0(0%)	1(20%)
Total	15	4	2	5

Brent YJS prepares written bail packages and bail letters whenever children are at risk of remand. Other proactive measures include management oversight and quality assurance of all bail applications, including a narrative of the child's history and lived experience in bail letters, and having a default approach that 'children will be given bail' in most instances. At Risk of Custody, meetings are held regularly to help avoid the unnecessary use of custody.

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10.4 Embedding Resettlement Practice

The 2021 HMIP Annual Inspection report of youth justice services, highlighted resettlement as an area across YOTs that needed improvement. This was reinforced by the YJB in its 2023/24 Business Plan, and in February 2023 the Minister for Prisons and Probation directed YOTs to work 'with the Youth Custody Service to ensure every child has a clear plan ahead of their release and can access the right education, healthcare and accommodation support'. Brent YJS updated its Resettlement Policy in March 2023 in response to this and continues to actively participate in the London Resettlement Partnership. Support is shaped by the five characteristics that have been identified as key to effective practice: Constructive, Co-created, Customised, Consistent and Co-ordinated.

The Brent Resettlement and Aftercare Panel is an effective and well-structured forum for coordinating and reviewing resettlement planning with representation from key partners with an appropriate level of seniority. This is vital when considering that the YJB in its Strategic Plan 2024-27, described the patterns of violence, self-harm and trauma that is seen in custodial settings as 'unacceptable.' The Resettlement and Aftercare Panel will continue to review any safeguarding issues for children within the secure estate and ensure matters are escalated within the system. Systems are in place and adhered to in accordance with the Brent Probation and YJS joint protocol - under which all children are eligible for transition, and planning is initiated early.

10.5 Accommodation

Safe, suitable, and sustainable accommodation forms the foundations for delivering effective support to children and young people. In the period April to December 2023, 76 children and young people supported by Brent YJS were placed in suitable accommodation. Accommodation can however be deemed unsuitable for a range of reasons including proximity to contextual safeguarding risks, familial safeguarding risks, being placed in custody, or poor living circumstances such as overcrowding. All four children who resided in unsuitable accommodation in 2023/24 were remanded into custody.

Brent YJS is working closely with other CYP services to overcome barriers to unsuitable accommodation which include encouraging placement providers to accommodate children with challenging behaviour, and the practical difficulties associated with placing children in accommodation at weekends. Early Help offer a wide range of support that helps families address their housing and cost of living issues. Accommodation is one the ten newly introduced KPIs monitored by the YJB.

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10.6 Reducing disproportionality in custodial outcomes including remands and sentencing

In 2022, a workshop with defence lawyers, CPS, and the court representatives on anti-racist legal representation (Just for Kids Law) provided important messaging regarding the role of defence lawyers to advocate for children and addressing the trust deficit within Black Heritage groups towards lawyers and Court Services.

During 2024/25 there will be a determined partnership response to some of the key recommendations in the *HMIP thematic inspection of work with children subject to remand in youth detention (November 2023)*. These will be outlined in both the Youth Justice Improvement Plan 2024/25, and the Brent Disproportionality Action Plan to ensure there is a specific focus on a wide range of actions that address the needs of all children. This will include actions addressing drug and alcohol support, monitoring release arrangements, greater consultation on bail conditions, mandatory online training for police officers around child trafficking, bail and remand training across CYP, early identification of accommodation options at the first court appearance, briefings to defence solicitors about the impact of 'no comment' interviews, and offering voluntary support to those acquitted.

10.7 Reducing serious youth violence, exploitation and contextual safeguarding

Serious youth violence (SYV) is defined as any drug, robbery or violence against the person offence that has a gravity score of five or more. The Youth Justice Board SYV toolkit shows that serious youth violence in Brent decreased in the year ending December 2023 compared with the previous year. The tool also indicated that robbery offences have increased significantly in the year ending December 2023 compared to the previous year. An over representation of children from Black Heritage groups involvement in SYV persists. Sixty-eight percent of children and young people who committed SYV offences in Brent were from Black Heritage groups in 2023. This is a year-on-year increase of 15% when compared to 2022 (53%) - and 9% less than 2020 (77%). Males make up the biggest proportion of children and young people committing SYV offences. In the year ending December 2023, 100% of the cohort were male compared to 96% in 2022 and 82% in 2021. During the first 3 quarters of the 23/24 period there were 10 drug related offences: 8 robbery offences and 34 offences of violence against the person.

Working in partnership is key to reducing SYV in Brent. Along with Social Care colleagues and youth justice workers from Barnet and Harrow, Brent YJS attends daily SYV police briefings from the North-West London Borough Command Unit. Daily briefings function as an intelligence sharing forum and allow partners to coordinate the management of violence and tensions within Brent. Other strands to the concerted and joined up effort across the partnership to reduce SYV include supporting events such as Carnival, the deployment of various outreach activities

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in response to local needs, utilising peer mapping, summer programmes and communicating with neighbouring boroughs and courts. The YJS also employs safety mapping to identify risks and keep children safe. Brent has also set up a Violence Reduction Steering Group to advise and agree on prevention-based actions and activities to reduce knife and lethal weapon carrying, co-design programmes and activities that address violent crime and prevent exploitation and harm. Brent YJS will also support the implementation of any actions required from the Brent's Serious Violence Duty to complete a strategic needs assessment (SNA) by March 2025. The SNA will provide an enhanced focus on the reduction of SYV by identifying the drivers of serious violence in Brent and those people most at risk of, or most affected by, serious violence.

10.8 Reducing Knife Crime

Knife crime remains a persistent problem in Brent. Forty-one knife offences were committed by young people in 2023/24, compared to 54 in 2019/20, 39 in 2020/21, 41 in 2021/22 and 38 in 2022/23.

Brent YJS has worked to reduce knife crime. Among other things, YJS staff accompany children to the monthly 'No Knives Better Lives' knife crime intervention at the Central Criminal Court ('Old Bailey'), all young people arrested for knife-related offences are required to attend a mandatory groupwork session led by professionals and members of the public who provide differing perspectives on knife crime – presenters have included a trauma surgeon, an ex-gang member, and the parent of a teenage victim of knife crime. Children who have committed knife offences are also referred to the Brent YJS Weapons Awareness Programme. This is an eight-week programme delivered by YJS Case Managers about the dangers of knife crime and offers participants strategies for preventing or resolving conflict without violence.

10.9 Unlocking Your Potential

This is a monthly programme for up to ten young people from the YJS to attend motivational sessions with guest speakers from the local area. To date 64 young people have attended the sessions. It seeks to inspire young people with entrepreneurial skills to achieve their ambitions. At one session the author Nabil Al-Kinai spoke about his journey of growing up in the Chalk Hill estate and being involved in the criminal justice system at the age of 17 years. His key message was that young people are authors of their own story, and they must take ownership rather than allowing other people to write their stories.

The impact of these sessions has helped one of the participants develop his current business idea to set up his own jewellery business. The young person has now completed his court order; However, he is keen to return back to the YJS to be a guest speaker at one of the future unlocking your potential workshops.

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I think the programme is good because it gives you different perspectives on someone who has committed a crime(s) and is still able to achieve in society and make something of themselves. I learnt a lot about myself and my potential'.

'it's motivating seeing someone do well'

'Learnt about new people and what is going on in my local area, such as the history of Wembley and the book Nabil wrote 'Authors of the estate'. I found it really interesting, and I enjoyed it'

10.10 Radicalisation or extremist activity

The Youth Justice Board issued practice advice in April 2023 to support youth justice services to identify and manage children at risk of, or involved in, terrorist-related activity. This includes dealing with children posing a terrorist risk and those arrested and convicted under the Terrorism Act 2000. The YJS has adopted this guidance and is also a member of the Prevent Operational Group. This allows youth justice perspectives to influence the shape of local anti-extremism provision and training. No Brent YJS children were referred to Channel in 2023/24.

10.11 Out of Court Disposals (O OCD)

In each of the last four years the YJS Management Board has received a report examining practice, procedures, and performance on O OCDs. The Youth Engagement Fund toolkit shows that pre-court diversion nationally leads to greater reductions in reoffending (by 13%) than sentencing young people through court services. Furthermore, when children who have attended diversionary schemes do commit another offence, their offending is likely to be less serious.

The Brent YJS Out of Court Disposal Service offers effective assessment and early interventions to children and young people and their families. Its effectiveness is monitored by a Metropolitan Police led Multi-Agency Scrutiny Panel, comprised of senior representatives from the Police, CPS, Court Services, Judiciary, MOPAC and the YJB. The Scrutiny Panel audited six O OCD cases in November 2022 and further six cases in June 2023. On both occasions decision making was agreed as correct without any comment for five cases, and the remaining one case was agreed as correct with some comment about process. Four out of six cases were adjudged to have correct decisions when the Panel met in December 2023.

The Child Gravity Matrix is the tool Police use to determine the most appropriate outcome or disposal for children and young people who offend. The Matrix outlines the options available to the decision makers for both statutory (caution, conditional cautions, or prosecution) and non-statutory outcomes which in Brent include Community

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Resolutions and Triage. In November 2023, the Matrix was updated and now allows greater emphasis to be placed on mitigating factors which include vulnerabilities such as undiagnosed and diagnosed neurodiversity needs.

Brent YJS has adopted the YJB Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool for Out of Court disposals. It enables greater analysis of how a child’s behaviour can be the result of their life circumstances and helps identify their strengths. Furthermore, it provides a structured framework for assessment, interventions, planning, and the identification of risk factors.

Interventions for young people who receive OOCs reflect their specific needs. For those referred for drug related offences or where assessment has identified substance misuse, one-to-one sessions are offered by the EACH Counselling substance misuse team. Sessions include the law and drugs, county lines drug dealing, gang culture, criminal exploitation, abstinence, and harm minimisation. Other sessions delivered in 2023/24 included decision making, peer pressure, making better choices, online safety, sexually harmful behaviour, knife crime, weapon awareness, victim awareness, police one to one sessions, crime presentations, police led group sessions, and safety mapping.

There were 74 referrals to the OCCD Team in 2023/24:

Table 7: Out of Court Disposals 2023/24

Out of Court Disposals 2023/24	
Community Resolutions	30
Triage	24
Youth Caution	3 (100% successfully completed)
Youth Conditional Cautions	17 (100% successfully completed)
Total	74

Assessment and interventions are offered to all children and are mandatory for those who receive a Youth Conditional Caution. Seventy-four young people undertook Safety Mapping – a contextual safeguarding tool that enables young people to identify non-familial risks in the community. Thirty-seven young people who were referred by the Police for drug related offences or where assessments identified substance misuse were offered one to one substance misuse

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counselling and groupwork sessions. Out of Court Disposals are one the ten newly introduced KPI's monitored by the YJB – no. of young people successfully completing OOCDS.

10.12 YJS Triage Programme

Triage is an OOCDS that is offered to young people who would otherwise be likely to receive a criminal justice disposal. It is available to young people who admit guilt to low gravity offences. The most common offence committed by children who take part in the Triage programme is possession of cannabis. The service is currently funded by MOPAC and has been identified as the most significant cause of the steep decline in the number of young people from Brent entering the criminal justice system. Children who complete Triage receive the same level of multiagency risk management that young people within the youth justice system receive. Triage is a short-term intervention that should not last longer than three-months.

10.13 Policing

Three Police Officers are based within Brent YJS. They work closely with YJS staff to administer and deliver OOCDS, share intelligence, enforce non-compliance, and engage with children known to YJS - this includes the delivery of groupwork and individual sessions. The draft MPS Children's Strategy is currently under targeted consultation. Its aim is to keep children in London safe, build their trust and bring to justice those who abuse and exploit them. It proposes a child first approach with strategic aims and actions around building relationships, tackling discrimination, further increasing the use of OOCDS, strengthening schools and education provision, delivering precise and fair stop and search, and promoting routes into policing careers and volunteering. The success of this strategy will be measured through increasing the percentage of children surveyed by MOPAC who have a good opinion of the police, feel they can trust the Met and believe the police treat everyone fairly.

10.14 YJS Referral Order Programme

Referral Orders are a community sentence that require a young person to agree a contract of rehabilitative and restorative elements during a Referral Order Panel meeting. The YJS trains and recruits a diverse cohort of Panel members who reflect the diversity of Brent. There are currently fifteen volunteer Panel members.

Panels take place on a weekly basis and consist of the following:

- Initial panels (where the RO contract of interventions is agreed with the young person).

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- Review Panels.
- Non-compliance Panels
- Compliance review Panels.
- Final Panels.

A young person and their parent were recently asked if they would change anything about the Panel they attended:

Young Person: 'Not really, I felt everything went well. In my opinion there's nothing that needs to be improved. It was better than I thought it would be'.

Mum 'I thought they (panel members) were fair, and they were engaged. What I liked was that they came across as though they really care. They were not judgemental, and we didn't feel judged. They came across as extremely supportive'.

Table 8. Referral Order Outcomes April 2023/24

Outcome	Disposals	percentage
Active intervention	38	57%
Completed Early Discharge Good Behaviour	1	1%
Completed Other	2	3%
No intervention	3	4%
Not Completed (Other)	1	1%
Not Completed Breached Order Revoked and Resentenced to Community Penalty (Terminated)	2	3%
Successfully Completed	19	28%
Transfer to other agency/home YOT	1	1%
Total	67	

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10.15 Restorative Justice (RJ) and Victims

Through engagement with RJ, Brent YJS seeks to empower victims and reduce reoffending by developing empathy within our children and young people.

Brent YJS revised its Restorative Justice and Victim Policy in 2022/23 with plans to extend meaningful reparation opportunities that were beneficial for both the community and young person, ensure dedicated staff were in post, and to produce youth led and coproduced RJ resources for Brent young people. Brent YJS reparation activities have now extended into face-to-face work at a dementia Café with elderly people and at foodbanks operating out of Family Well-being Centres. These foodbanks enable young people to give back to the community in a meaningful way in a safe environment.

Brent YJS Victim Awareness Groupwork occurs on a quarterly basis for a period of six weeks. Feedback has been positive with good completion rates. Topics covered include establishing boundaries, values, the young persons', and the victim's experience, repairing harm and giving back to the community.

The following quotes are typical of many victims and children and young people who took part in restorative justice in 2023/24:

Victims

"I'm glad you called me as didn't know RJ existed".

"I don't know if me and the victim would have ever spoken again if it weren't for RJ".

"It's good to know that young people have RJ to explore ways to repair harm. I'm happy to engage in any RJ of the young person's choosing".

"It's good to know that the young person is reflecting on their behaviour with the YJS and wants to repair the harm he caused to me".

"I am happy that I went ahead with the RJ process, it brought me closure."

"Although I wanted to rebuild the friendship, I understand that this is not possible now, but I am pleased that I could tell my side of the story."

"I was really frustrated throughout the investigation as I didn't feel that I was listened to. I am pleased that you called, and I can say what I need."

"I needed help at the time the incident happened. I wanted to prevent further harm. I am not happy with what happened at the time, but I think everybody involved has grown and now I can move on thanks for your work."

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“It is good that you called and asked my opinion. I am pleased that the YP’s intervention will address my concerns.”

Young People

“Writing the letter (of apology) was the right thing to do”.

“I feel better for writing a letter as that’s what I would have wanted”.

“RJ got me thinking about my mum and how I would have felt if someone did that (his offence) to her”.

“I wanted to put things right and I think my letter did that”.

“I’m glad I could write a letter as I am sorry for what I did”.

“I completed the Victim Awareness Group, and I liked the people doing the group, they were nice. I also learned different ways victims are impacted.”

“I liked engaging with the other participants of the Victim Awareness Group where I learnt that crime can affect a lot of people that you would not have thought of.”

“I wanted to meet the victim as I wanted to apologise. This was a great closure for the whole incident.”

“I was sorry and embarrassed, and I wanted to say sorry from the beginning. I wrote a letter of apology to a community member as the victim didn’t want any communication. I would have met the victim if he wished for it. RJ helped me to think about the impact of my actions on others.”

“It’s good to know that RJ is available.”

Brent YJS Restorative Justice workers have been delivering ‘Lunch and Learn’ sessions to the whole CYP department. It has been well received and is now featured in the CYP training offer. Brent seeks to build a restorative community by embedding restorative practice within both strategic and operational planning and delivery. We have also supported our full time Restorative Justice Worker to achieve the Restorative Justice Council’s *Certified Advanced Practitioner* status.

Plans for 2024/25 will include promoting the RJ offer to care homes and foster carers and extending the RJ Offer - currently offered to all victims of crime - to carers and key workers as a non-criminal remedy.

“I have learnt a lot of things from these offences. I’ve learnt that I should go down the right path. I should walk the other way and ignore negative friends,” 17-year-old male.

“Since the offence I have not been in any trouble and do not intend on getting into any trouble. I have learnt not to fight as it can affect many people including the victim, offender, community, and it can impact my future,” 17-year-old male.

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“RJ has helped me look at the offence and my behaviour so I can put it in the past and get on with my life,” 16-year-old female.

“The main outcome for me was how an offence like this can truly affect the community. It really gave me a completely new angle on how to look at the crime from the perspective of someone that is a stranger to me and looks at the situation upon face value,” 18-year-old male.

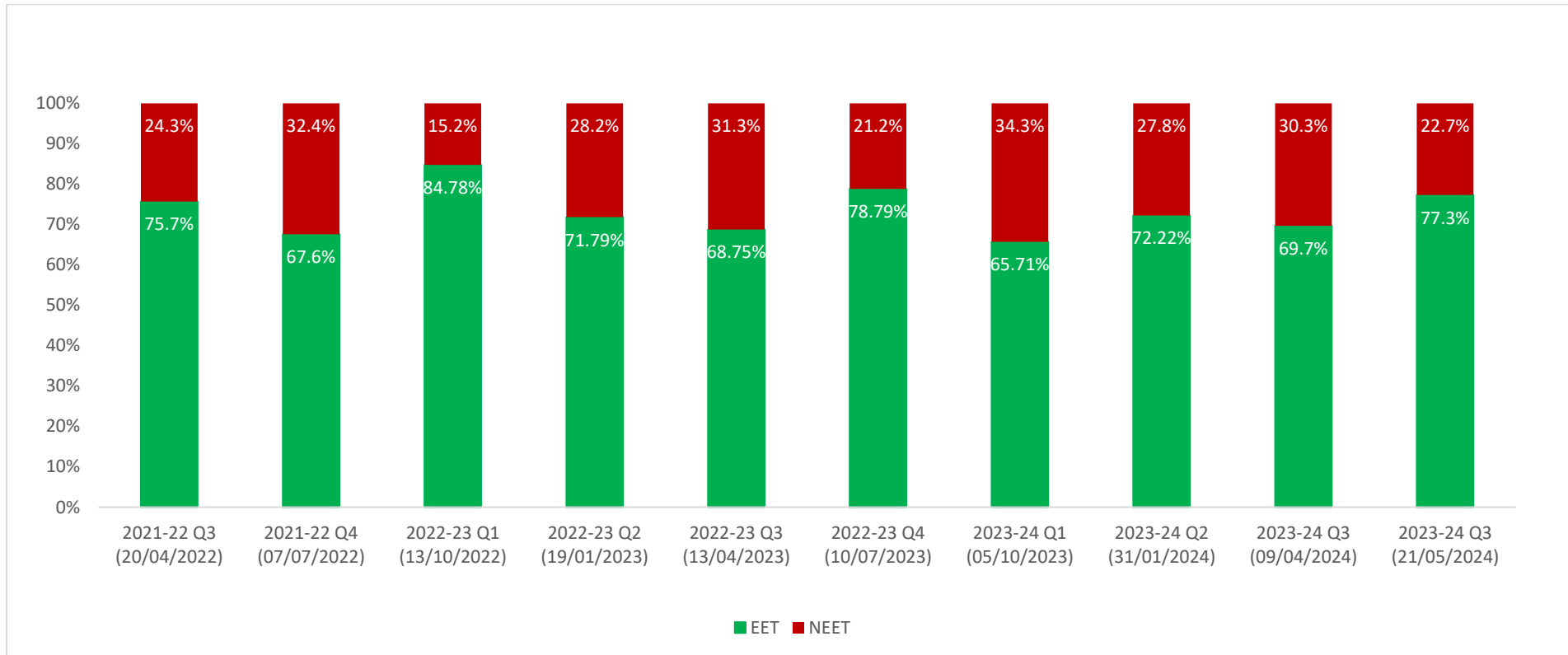
10.16 Education, Training and Employment

Accessing good ETE provision, is crucial to the life chances of children under statutory supervision. It is consistently identified as one of the top three factors that need to be addressed by inspectors and the YJB. However, many children and young people have had negative educational experiences and a disrupted educational experience. In June 2022, a *HM Inspectorate of Probation, Estyn, and Ofsted joint inspection of education, training, and employment services in youth offending teams*, involving 180 children from six local authorities, highlighted many of the strengths and challenges of ETE provision from a youth justice perspective and learning has been used to inform Brent’s approach.

The YJS Management Board scrutinizes the NEET cohort every quarter. This oversight has been extended to all children due to the national inclusion of education as a YJS Key Performance Indicator. The Board also ensures staffing levels are sufficient and there is access to a wide and varied training offer. Clear pathways between Brent YJS and mainstream and alternative education providers means that significant progress has been made towards making HMIP and Ofsted’s recommended improvements. This includes increasing commitment to participation work in schools and a new quality assurance regime which ensures all assessment and case actions are undertaken within agreed timescales. Operational work is monitored by a supportive Board that maintains tight oversight of the relatively small but challenging number of NEET young people known to Brent YJS.

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Table 9. Brent NEET population 2021 to 2024: YJS children and young people



Operationally, ETE is shaped by intensive joint working between YJS, commissioned ETE provider Prospects, and the Virtual School for Looked After Children. Staffing capacity has increased and there is greater emphasis on access, monitoring and quality of provision. This includes:

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- A NEET working group which meets monthly to monitor vulnerable young people not in education and ensure that plans are in place.
- The provision of employment and training data from the YJS to Prospects on a fortnightly basis so that interventions are put in place at the earliest opportunity and any children who have no recorded provision are identified.
- Working closely with custodial units to ensure children and young people have a transition destination at the point of resettlement.
- Ensuring that Prospects advisors are working closely with parents and YJS Case Managers, other professionals, and families.
- Deploying additional staffing when children and young people are already receiving support from a generic Prospects Advisor.
- The NEET group has extended its scope to include a PLIAS Employment Advisor who can provide specialist support to those seeking employment and the construction CSCS card.
- EHCP work is now more comprehensively reflected in Asset Plus and PSRs.
- Close working with the Brent Inclusion Team. This includes the Inclusion Team Manager attending the Multi agency High-Risk Panel.
- The ASER programme offers a series of individually developed units preparing long-term YJS NEET young people for work or training.
- Brent Connexions delivered a re-engagement programme between February and April 2024. This included a series of employability groupwork job skills sessions for young people known to Brent YJS.

Table 10. Brent YJS ETE Suitability April to December 2023

ETE suitability	
ETE Suitability	No. of Young People
Suitable	57
Unknown	1
Unsuitable	23
Total	79

10.17 Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

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The Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Local Transformation Plan 2024/25 has the ambition for better mental health and wellbeing for every child and young person living in North-West London. These include developing inclusive, fair, and equitable services that are reasonably adjusted to support people with more complex needs, including those with learning disabilities and autism. The National Thrive Framework is a key component, providing a set of principles for creating coherent and resource-efficient communities of mental health and wellbeing support for children, young people, and families. Thrive aims to talk about mental health and mental health support in a common language that everyone understands. This, and plans from the NW London CYP Mental Health Steering Group to embed the CYP Mental Health pathway within Family Wellbeing Centres will enable better access to mental health services for children supported by YJS.

The CAMHS Mental Health Practitioner (MHP) based within YJS supports young people who have severe or complex problems to access specialised CAMHS provision.

Table 11. CAMHS Mental Health Support April to December 2023: YJS young people

Mental Health Support:	No. of Young People
Advice / Consultation	12
Referrals and Signposting to other services	3
Referral to FCAMHS / Ongoing liaison	3
Referral to Tier 3 CAMHS	2
Total:	20

Other positive outcomes achieved by the seconded CAMHS MHP include:

- Efficient information sharing, better care, and more effective multi-agency collaboration between YJS and CAMHS, as all young people who come under the CAMHS Effective Treatment Team are case managed by the MHP working across both teams. This allows the MHP to access specialist, multi-disciplinary advice from CAMHS which is shared with YJS Staff to facilitate cohesion and psychoeducation.
- Upskilling and psychoeducation provided to YJS case managers around mental health needs; including discussions alongside Social Care to promote a sense of stability and safety prior to intensive therapeutic interventions. This helps better outcomes and more robust treatment plans.
- Dedicated liaison with FCAMHS to improve care and outcomes for young people; Including initial referrals, individual consultations with FCAMHS clinicians, dissemination of key information and advice, arranging and chairing network

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meetings, and navigating differences between services to allow collaboration around safety plans and risk mitigation. This helps alleviate workload from core network members, allowing for greater care provided to each specialism whilst also promoting cohesion and multi-agency collaboration.

- The MHP provides direct access to the CAMHS young adult pathway lead (16-25), for specialist advice, signposting, and support.
- Brent YJS will explore opportunities to expand referral pathways to mental health and other health provision and seek public health funding to resource participation projects such as Podcasting to improve mental health for YP make support more accessible.

Liaison and Diversion

The NHS England funded Youth Justice Liaison and Diversion scheme in Brent offers mental health screening to young people held in police custody at Wembley Police Station, or those young people referred to YJS for an Out of Court or Turnaround disposal. The CNWL employed Youth Justice Liaison and Diversion (YJLD) Mental Health practitioner identifies any unmet mental health and neurodiversity needs a young person may have (ASD, ADHD, learning difficulties, or SALT) and refers on to appropriate health services. The service is monitored by the Brent ICS Lead, NHS and YJS.

Children are risk assessed and seen at a range of locations including the Brent Civic Centre, school, home, care homes, or community facility. Engagement takes place with parents, schools, Social Care, and other agencies where necessary - especially when there are unmet needs that require attention. The YJLD worker also attends CP, CIN conferences, professionals' meetings, and other meetings to help meet a young person's additional needs.

During the period April 2022 to March 2023, the YJLD worker engaged 148 young people. One hundred and twenty-nine of these were males (87.2%) and 19 were females (12.8%). Sixty-two (41.9%) assessments were completed. Over the period April 2023 to March 2024 the YJLD worker engaged 161 young people. Seventy-eight (49.8%) assessments were completed. The three key offences children accessing YJLD were charged with were drug possession, violence against the person, and possession of an offensive weapon.

10.18 Substance Misuse

Each child that enters the Youth Justice System is referred to a YJS Substance Misuse worker for an initial Information and Guidance session. Children with substance misuse issues or those who have been arrested for offences involving illegal

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substances are offered substance misuse sessions covering a variety of topics that include Information advice and guidance on common substances that young people are exposed to, county lines and exploitation, harm minimisation and future goal setting.

10.19 Wider Services

One-hundred and sixty-two children and young people received a court disposal, Out of Court Disposal, Triage disposal, or a Community Resolution in 2023/24. Of these, 13% were on a Child Protection Plan, 30% were Children in Need, and 14% were Looked after Children. These services are classified as ‘wider services’ by the YJB. More than half of all children supported by YJS (57%) accessed wider statutory provision. Wider Services are one of the YJB’s ten new KPIs.

Table 12. YJS Alignment with Wider Services 2023/24

Wider Services 2023/24		
Wider Service	No of children	%
Total no. of children receiving a court sentence, OOCd, Triage or Community	162	
Child Protection	21	13%
Child in need	49	30%
Looked after child	23	14%

10.20 Disproportionality in the Brent Youth Justice System

Reducing disproportionality in the youth justice system is a highly challenging priority across London. The failure to achieve equity of treatment for all children in the youth justice system can also be found in Brent when using the Summary Ethnic Disparity Tool to analyse children aged 10 to 17 years. This is particularly evident amongst Black

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African and Caribbean children and young people who are significantly overrepresented in the youth justice system. Overall, Black Heritage group children represented 50% of the Brent YJS cohort in March 2024. This compares unfavourably to the 32% of all children and young people from these mixed heritage groups living in Brent according to the mid-year 2021 census.

Table 13. No. of Brent Children in the Youth Justice System 2018 to 2023 by ethnicity

Ethnic group	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Percentage change year ending March 2018 to March 2023	Percentage change year ending March 2022 to March 2023	2021 midyear 10-17 population by ethnic group
Asian	11	11	19	13	6	17	▲ +55%	N/A	10,322
Black	114	106	92	70	46	60	▼ -47%	▲ +30%	7,982
Mixed	17	13	14	10	11	12	▼ -29%	▲ +9%	2,764
Other	23	13	17	9	16	14	▼ -39%	▼ -12%	4,287
Total BAME Heritage Groups	165	143	142	102	79	103	▼ -38%	▲ +30%	25,355
White	46	26	26	22	18	20	▼ -56%	▲ +11%	7,899
Unknown	7	6	0	2	3	1	N/A	N/A	-

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All Heritage Groups	218	175	168	126	100	124	▼ -43%	▲ +24%	33,254
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What Brent YJS is doing to tackle disproportionality

Improving practice

- Trauma informed practice has improved the ability of YJS practitioners to tell the story behind the crime within the pre-sentence reports and the wider assessment and planning process. This includes explaining the experiences of children who have been adversely impacted by gang exploitation or have suffered trauma.
- Practice Development Sessions. These are held regularly and includes themes including Social Graces, and cultural competency (delivered by Young Brent Foundation).
- Background information has been expanded to include any experiences of discrimination or trauma to the courts.
- YJS case studies are shared at YJS Board meetings where attention is given to exploring whether the diverse needs of children have been considered.
- The CYP and YJS Audit programme monitors the quality of provision children receive.
- Magistrates training.
- Child first approaches. Relationship building, coproduced intervention plans, listening to children, participation work and annual surveys:
- Group supervision. Social Care and the Brent YJS work collaboratively whenever Looked After Children (LAC) enter, or are at risk of entering, the youth justice system. This was enhanced in January 2022 by the adoption of joint case supervision. These arrangements formalised existing good practice by regularising ongoing joint risk management and decision making. Practitioners from partner agencies including CAMHS and the PDU participate in group supervision whenever this is in the best interests of the child.
- Out of Court Disposal Decision Making Panel. This weekly Panel is chaired by Brent YJS and attended by Police, Health, YJS, Social Care, Early Help staff and Restorative Justice workers to jointly consider and determine Out of Court Disposal (OCD) decisions. Social Workers attend the Panel - or complete a Professionals Information Form - since November 2021. This has strengthened our ability to take mitigating factors into consideration and identify appropriate interventions and disposal conditions.

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- *The Joint working protocol between Brent Youth Offending Team and The Probation Service (Brent Probation Delivery Unit PDU)*. Created in May 2022, this Protocol outlines the operational procedures and standards required when transferring supervision from the YJS to Brent PS.
- Since December 2021, LAC Social Workers have contributed to all transfer meetings between the YJS and PDU. This ensures that planning is as supportive as possible for LAC Young People moving from the youth justice system to the adult criminal justice system.
- Access to Family Support Workers has enabled the YJS to support the whole family, not just the young person.
- The early identification of neurodevelopmental disorders and help in education at an early stage could combat the entry of Black heritage group children into the criminal justice system.
- The Brent Youth Justice Service (YJS) Disproportionality Action Plan 2024/25 (DAP) has been created to understand the extent to which youth justice disposals are disproportionately served, monitor the effectiveness of initiatives undertaken by YJS to support children from Black Heritage groups, and to consolidate actions youth justice partners are undertaking to tackle overrepresentation. The central themes and activity over the past year have included establishing a commitment to disproportionality targets across the partnership, preventing Black Heritage group children entering the criminal justice system, preventing re-offending amongst the Black Heritage cohort, preventing school exclusions, improved ETE outcomes, improving access to early support for ASD or neuro disabilities to prevent entry and re-entry into the criminal justice system, reducing disproportionality in custodial outcomes, and listening to children's voices and understanding their experiences.

The delivery of effective preventative services is key to redressing inequalities. Brent YJS works closely with partners in delivering a range of initiatives including:

Turnaround

Developed by the Ministry of Justice, Turnaround is based on similar principles to those underlying the Supporting Families programme, including the view that children on the cusp of offending often have complex needs that should be supported. It also recognises that supporting the needs of the whole family is an effective means of reducing the likelihood of children entering the youth justice system.

Brent Turnaround is a three-year programme which has been funded by the MoJ until April 2025 to:

- Work and offer additional support to young people who are on the edge of entering the criminal justice system.
- Support young people who come to police attention.
- Prevent further offending.
- Help young people and their families where there are concerns around behaviour at school, in the community or at home.

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- Achieve positive outcomes for young people.

Turnaround extends support offered through the Out of Court Disposal Team to young people aged 10 to 17 years who are:

- Subject to a No Further Action (NFA) decision.
- Subject to a Community Resolution.
- Receiving a first-time youth caution.
- Released under investigation (RUI) or those subject to pre-charge bail (PCB).
- Discharged by a court.
- Acquitted at court.
- Fined by a court.

A total of 46 families have received Turnaround support to date – 24 completed or partially completed in 2023/24. Staff work to encourage families to access Turnaround. As it is a voluntary intervention consent from a young person and their family is required.

Table 14. Turnaround Referrals April 2023 to March 2024

Outcome	No of Young People
Refused intervention / Not started intervention / Not Completed intervention	7
Partially Completed	1
Successfully Completed or in still in active intervention	23
Total no. of young people	31

Turnaround staff meet with young people and their parents to ensure the whole family participates in a holistic assessment. A fulltime Family Support Worker has been employed to complement assessment, planning and intervention work undertaken by the YJS Out of Court Disposal Team. This is to identify needs and identify any family issues or factors affecting a child or young person’s behaviour. Turnaround Family Support Workers complete an

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Early Help Assessment. Young people who have received and Out of Court Disposal will be assessed using the Brent YJS Rapid Assessment.

Turnaround participants are offered support including an NHS Mental Health screening assessment, substance misuse assessment and interventions, education training and employment advice, mentoring, and positive activities. Outcomes include:

- Young people getting back into education or training.
- Increased self-esteem and confidence.
- Young people identifying their goals and creating a plan for their future. Having something to aspire to gives them more purpose and motivation to change their behaviour and engage with services.
- Providing children and families with a safe space to express their thoughts and feelings, wishes and hopes. This is something they may not have been able to do before.
- Helping children to identify their trusted adults and support network.
- Understanding what makes healthy family relationships. This enables participants to assess their current relationships and identify those that may be exploitative and unhealthy.

Disproportionality Challenge Fund

Brent received funding from MOPAC to establish a 12-month project tackling disproportionality within the youth justice system. There were two components to the programme that ended in November 2023. The first of these was delivered by the Young Brent Foundation and sought to make systems change through the offer of cultural competency training to professionals. The other element consisted of supporting YJS young people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Heritage groups to coproduce activities within Family Wellbeing Centres. Supported by a Youth Participation Officer, 12 young people formed a Youth Panel that advised the YJS Management Board as to their personal experience of the YJS as well as making recommendations for service improvements.

Engage

Engage is a MOPAC Funded project that since September 2023 has provided a range of youth work support in Police custody suites across the NW Borough Command Unit. Barnet are the lead borough and have recruited youth workers who are based in the Wembley and Colindale custody suites. Youth workers meet young people in custody and offer a further two meetings post custody. During this time, they are given information, advice and signposted to Brent

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Early Help and Youth Justice Service interventions. Engage is open from 8am to 8pm weekdays with a reduced level of cover over weekends. Brent has an Engage SPOC working collaboratively with the Barnet Service Manager who reports progress to the YJS Management Board via the Brent Youth and Youth Justice Manager. Engage is funded until the end of 2024-25.

Your Choice

Your Choice (YC) provides training in Cognitive Behavioural Techniques (CBT) to youth practitioners working with young people aged 11-17 years at elevated risk of harm. Comparing the outcomes of the treatment and control group measures the impact of Your Choice so long as the two groups are similar to each other. Teams of practitioners are randomly allocated to train and deliver Your Choice. Young people matched to trained practitioners will receive Your Choice. Young people matched to untrained practitioners will be supported as per business as usual.

YC was delivered at Brent within the AST Team between January and June 2022. Eighteen young people who engaged with the programme were at risk of contextual harm. The Programme commenced in YJS in August 2022 and ran until March 2023. YJS successfully recruited seven children for the Treated Group and seven children for the Control Group. Seventy percent of participants completed the 12-week programme.

Feedback from YJS Case Managers was very positive:

"I have seen a noticeable difference in the behaviours and responses of the YP engaged with the YC Programme. Particularly, those children who are part of the treatment group have been afforded the opportunity to explore their thoughts and behaviours and the emotions attached. As a result, I have found the programme to be an effective method of engaging YP that are willing to explore these areas of their lives."

With ongoing oversight from a YJS Project Lead, YC was transferred to the LAC Service in April 2023 and will continue until December 2024. Fourteen children have been recruited to date.

Preventing school exclusions

Brent's Inclusion service works closely with schools to reduce permanent and fixed term exclusions. Regular data reports any disparities in the background of pupils when compared to the general school population. Brent YJS has developed a range of workshops for schools to work with children in high-risk groups. This was first rolled out with Brent River College PRU in 2021 and Alperton School in 2022. The positive impact of these sessions inspired a larger

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commitment which since 2023 has seen Brent YJS and the Accelerated Support Team deliver monthly school workshops on topics including gangs, knives, crime and substance misuse.

Provision of parent workshops

These workshops are popular with parents who appreciate meeting other parents in a blame free environment and learn about a variety of themes such as online grooming, county lines drug dealing, parenting styles and the negative impact of social media. These workshops have been a response to *the Children Commissioners report on Young Lives (April 2022)*, that found families often do not know where they can get help and then feel blamed when engaging in programmes. Brent YJS has an ongoing commitment to providing parent workshops as well as offering the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities Programme which is focused specifically on parents who have concerns about youth violence.

There are four workshop per year as part of the Parenting Support Training Programme.

In 2023/24, 11 families attended 4 parenting workshop sessions. All have parents benefited from the work that covered topics on exploitation and county lines. Below is some feedback from parents.

– Learned and was shocked about the drug houses and the dirty conditions young people are made to stay in. Also, young people staying with stranger who also might have risky behaviours themselves.

– Surprised to learn about the way in which the gangs were so well organised. Helped me reflect on my son's behaviour and there were signs there that he could have been groomed and how the groomers behave to exploit young people.

– Didn't know that these gangs were so well organised. Learned to be more alert. Learned that it is adults who are in charge of grooming not just teenagers.

– Learned about the numbers of young people being groomed is high and how well organised they are.

In 2023/24 89 parents engaged in one-to-one sessions, there were 460 one to one sessions

The extent to which parent workshops are valued by attendees was described by one mother as:

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'I learnt a lot more awareness and safety tips - I would like to continue with these meetings so I can get a more detailed understanding about our children today. Overall, the meeting was a blessing because I came out knowing more than I did going in'.

10.21 Case Work Practice and Quality Assurance

The YJS audit framework has been shaped by revised case management guidance and HMIP lines of enquiry and is closely aligned to the Brent CYP Quality Assurance Framework 2023-2026.

The CYP Quality Assurance cycle supports Brent to be an outstanding learning organisation through understanding what is working well, what needs to change, identifying new ways to measure the impact of our work. It drives the gathering and analysis of information, the development of action plans for individual children, staff and services and a review of outcomes. Brent YJS contributes to the quality assurance outcomes achieved as part of the CYP Annual Audit Programme. This is an intensive programme of monthly auditing of CYP service areas which in May 2024 included the topic: Quality of work with LAC and care leavers on remand or in prison. The YJS Management Team sought to assess the effectiveness of this by undertaking a dip sample of 30 Social Care case files. As part of her analysis, the YJS Quality Assurance & Practice Development Manager concluded that the quality of work with LAC and Care Leavers in custody was good overall.

YJS cases have also been subject to ongoing audits undertaken by the YJS Quality Assurance and Practice Development Manager. These focused on risk, safeguarding, education, mental health, trauma, cultural competency, and diversity. Audits undertaken during 2023/24 included a full case audit on management supervision and oversight, Pre-Sentence Reports, and Out of Court Disposals. Learning from case audits is a standing agenda item at YJS Team Meetings. Overall, audit results show an upward trajectory of good practice - especially around the quality of recorded outcomes. Areas requiring improvement identified as part of the auditing process are addressed by line managers and during monthly practice development sessions led by the Quality Assurance & Practice Development Manager.

The YJB funded Brent COVID-19 Pathfinder for Overrepresented children project concluded in March 2023. An independent evaluation of the programme, undertaken by social research organisation Cordis Bright found that the programme was successful in several key areas including the successful engagement of children previously unsupported:

“Flexible engagement strategies, the provision of a range of activities led by children’s preferences, and the building of individual trusting relationships facilitated the successful engagement of children with the EACH counsellor, YBF mentors, and the youth participation worker. Some of these children had previously struggled to engage with other services available in Brent.”

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These findings were the subject of a sector wide YJB Webinar, and subsequently available on the YJB Effective Practice Portal.

10.22 National Standards Audit and Subsequent Reviews

The Youth Justice Board required Brent YJS to assess how well they complied with 2019 National Standards. The review in Brent took place between November 2019 and March 2020, across five new Youth Justice National Standards themes. Members of the YJS Management Board led the review. They were supported by YJS Managers and operational staff to form one small working group for each standard. The review covered strategic and operational practice. All five National Standards: Out of court disposals, at Court, the Community, in Secure Settings, and Transitions, were rated good for both the strategic and operational self-assessments. YOS Team managers have been trained to audit national standards and have undertaken subsequent reviews of their lead areas - led by the Quality Assurance & Practice Development Manager. A review of the Court National Standard was completed in July 2023 and shared with Board members. Two improvements relating to the management oversight of court processes were identified and subsequently remedied. Overall, the audit showed good compliance with National Standards.

12.0 Service Improvement Plan and Looking Forward 2024/25

Brent is committed to the priorities outlined in the YJB Strategic Plan 2024-27, Thematic and Area Based Inspection recommendations, and the Brent ways of working, this is Brent, this is how we grow.... In keeping with this, the following are the principal aims and commitments that will shape the Brent YJS partnership in the year ahead.

- Tackling the over representation of children from Black Heritage groups in the Brent Youth Justice System.
- In conjunction with other CYP services to reduce the criminalisation of children in care and care leavers.
- Continuing to promote evidence-based *Child First* approaches as the best means to support victims, promoting public protection, keeping communities safe and supporting children towards positive outcomes.
- Ensuring the YJS Management Board, wider partnership, and YJS staff are prepared for the next round of HMIP Inspection through a YJS focused programme of case file audits, practice observation, delivery of thematic Practice Development sessions, and focused individual supervision.
- Developing pathways and creating access for speech and language therapy.
- Maintaining and developing new partnerships with the community and voluntary sector.

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- Expanding youth participation and youth coproduction capabilities.
- Refreshing the Youth Participation Strategy and the Brent Youth Strategy.
- Continuing to build a YJS partnership culture that encourages diversity in its workforce and in its thinking; is inclusive and supportive, encourages personal responsibility and is delivery focused.
- Supporting MPS Children's Strategy recommendations to help keep children in London safe, build their trust and bring to justice those who abuse and exploit them.
- Refreshing, implementing, and monitoring the Brent YJS Disproportionality Action Plan.
- Responding to the HMIP Thematic Inspection recommendations around custody and remand.

The above aims and actions will be included within the annual Brent Youth Justice Improvement Plan 2024/25. Activity will continue to focus upon our key themes to improve our performance, tackle serious youth violence, strengthen our partnership culture, improve our prevention offer, strengthen our staff and workforce, become more evidenced based and creative in our practice, and be inspection ready.

13.0 Evidence-based Practice and Innovation

Brent has learnt much from evidence-based practice and will seek to adopt any new approach that has the potential to improve outcomes for Brent residents. To this end Brent will closely monitor research commissioned by the Youth Engagement Fund via their research toolkit. This provides access to many promising approaches to addressing offending behaviour - including methods that prevent serious youth violence. Work with community organisations to identify alternative forms of engagement with young people will also be explored. This will include coproduction and participation methods, such as the use of podcasts and multimedia, that enable young people to learn and express their views about offending and its impact upon their communities. YJS will continue to extend access to the Brent Your Choice programme across the CYP Directorate. Funded by the Youth Endowment Fund, it has shown promising signs that the use of CBT techniques, as part of a 12-week programme, can achieve positive results with children and young people confronting complex challenges.

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14.0 YJS Partnership Budget 2024/25

Brent uses Youth Justice Board funding exclusively for the delivery of a range and variety of youth justice provision, aligned to effective practice and the achievement of the youth justice core outcomes.

Agency	Cash	In-Kind Contributions	Partnership Funding	Total
Brent Council	£793,406	-	-	£793,406
Police	-	£120,000	-	£120,000
National Probation	£5,000	£50,000	-	£55,000
Health Service	-	£100,000	-	£100,000
MOPAC	£45,000	-	-	£45,000
Youth Justice Board	£577,467	-	-	£577,467
Other Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)	£114,000	-	-	£114,000
Total	£1,534,873	£270,000	£0	£1,804,873

Sign off, submission and approval



Signed

Palvinder Kudhail

Chair of the Brent Youth and Youth Justice Service Management Board

Date: 01/07/2024

Brent Youth Justice Plan 2024/25

Appendix 1 YJS Management Board Membership

Name	Job Title	Sector / Partnership Area
Palvinder Kudhail	Director – Early Help and Social Care	CYP Brent Council
Serita Kwofie	Head of Early Help	CYP Brent Council
Simon Egbor	Head of Community Safety	Community Safety and Public Protection
Vivien Dean	Head Teacher of Brent River College	Education
Alexandra Johnson	Head of Probation Delivery Unit	Probation Service
Sarah Nyandoro	Head of Joint Commissioning Brent ICB	CCG – Health
Andy Brown	Head of Substance Misuse	Public Health
DI Warren Kennard:	Detective Inspector Northwest Borough Command Unit Metropolitan Police	Metropolitan Police
Sgt Karl Jameson:	YJS Supervisor – NW BCU	Metropolitan Police
Kelli Eboji	Head of Looked After Children and Permanency	CYP Brent Council
Stephen Gordon	Head of Localities	CYP Brent Council
Trish Davies	Service Manager Brent CAMHS	Brent and Kensington and Chelsea CAMHS
Rachel Summerfield	Magistrate – Chair of the Youth Bench	Willesden Magistrates Court
James Salter	Youth and Youth Justice Manager	CYP Brent Council

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Catherine Williams-Baffoe	Deputy Youth Justice Manager	CYP Brent Council
Antoinette Morgan	Quality Assurance & Practice Development Manager	CYP Brent Council
Chris Murray	Chief Executive Young Brent Foundation	Young Brent Foundation – Voluntary Sector
Sanjay Shah	Performance and Management Information Officer	CYP Brent Council
Bhavita Gohel	Performance Advisor Youth Justice Board	Youth Justice Board
Daniel Thomas	Head of Resettlement	Feltham A

Dates of the YJS Management Board Meetings

Meetings 2024/25
28 April 2024
25 July 2024
24 October 2024
30 January 2025

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Appendix 2: Staff Structure

The Youth and Youth Justice Manager reports to the Head of Early Help

YJS Staffing Structure 2023 – 24		
Post	FTE	Funding Source
Youth & Youth Justice Manager	1	YJB/Brent Council
Deputy Youth Justice Manager	1	YJB/Brent Council
Quality Assurance & Practice Development Manager	1	YJB/Brent Council
Team Managers	5	YJB/Brent Council
Restorative Justice Lead	1	YJB/Brent Council
Case Managers	13	YJB/Brent Council
Data Quality Officer	1	YJB/Brent Council
Family Support Key Worker 1	1	Turnaround / MoJ
Early intervention Officer – Triage	1	MOPAC
Reparations Worker	0.5	YJB/Brent Council
Total	25.5	

The service wide YJS staff group of 25.5 FTE is supplemented by the following 10.6 FTE secondments and co-location arrangements:

Post	FTE
Police Officer	3.0
Seconded Probation Officer	0.6

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Prospects Employment Advisor	2
CAMHS Practitioner	1
YJLD Liaison and Diversion (CNWL)	1
WDP Substance Misuse	1
EACH Counselling – family support	2
10.6	

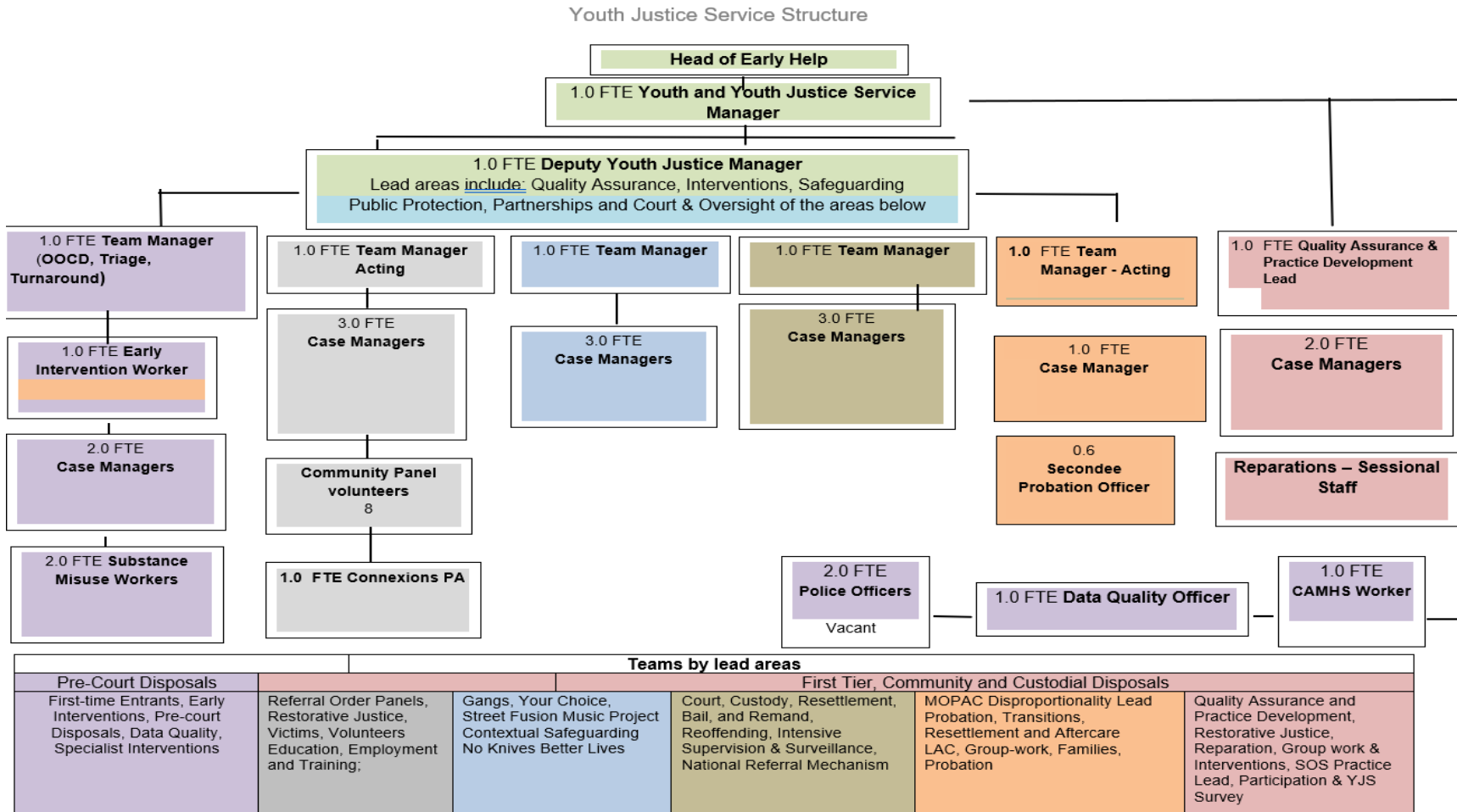
Staff by gender and ethnicity (There are no staff currently registered as disabled)

Gender	Total
Female	28
Male	9
Total	37

Ethnicity	Total
BAME	30
Prefer not to say	0
White	7
Total	37

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Brent Youth Justice Service Staff Structure 2024/25



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