

	Corporate Parenting Committee 13 October 2025
	Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People and Community Development
	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools - Councillor Gwen Grahl
Progress report 2025: The London Protocol on Reducing Criminalisation of Looked After Children and Care Leavers	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	Reducing Criminalisation of Looked After Children and Care Leavers - A protocol for London: The national protocol on reducing unnecessary criminalisation of looked-after children and care leavers. The national protocol on reducing unnecessary criminalisation of looked-after children and care leavers (publishing.service.gov.uk)
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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide information and updates to the

Corporate Parenting Committee (CPC) about the London Protocol (The Protocol hereafter) on Reducing Criminalisation of Looked After Children and Care Leavers, published in March 2021¹¹. Previous reports on reducing the criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers were presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee in January 2022 and February 2024.

- 1.2 Progress against the priorities identified in the 2024/25 report on The London Protocol on Reducing Criminalisation of Looked After Children and Care Leavers have been updated throughout the body of this report. In summary:

Priority a)

Accommodation Provider forums to explore how we can together aim to reduce criminalisation of LAC and care leavers by ensuring staff/carer responses to behavioural difficulties which may be viewed as criminal, are proportionate and appropriate and the need for Police involvement and/or court action is minimised.

A forum was held with attendance of over 20 accommodation providers in September 2025. Presentations were given by the YOS and Corporate Parenting staff. The presentation was well received. Agreement was reached to develop a joint protocol to ensure:

- LAC and Care Leavers are not criminalised unnecessarily,
- Restorative approaches are used to deal with incidents occurring in placements when this is more appropriate.

Priority b)

Training to be provided to foster carers that focus on de-escalation when working with young people presenting behavioural difficulties.

Half day Training was delivered to foster carers by the Early Help, Youth Justice Service (YJS) Restorative Justice Officer. Further training was delivered to foster carers, fostering and kinship teams.

Priority c)

Training for Personal Advisors on providing advocacy when supporting young people in prison.

A joint programme is being developed with the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) and will be delivered by the end of the year.

Priority d)

A joint LACP and YJS staff forum.

A joint forum took place in July 2024. Staff from LACP and YJS collaborated to raise awareness about the statutory support and enforcement tools available to the local authority when care experienced young people have been convicted of an offence or receive an out of court disposal (OCCD).

- 1.3 This report provides a summary of Brent's current practice and actions taken to reduce the criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers in line with the London Protocol. It contains evidence of services and approaches provided to looked after children and care leavers at a strategic and operational level.
- 1.4 The protocol will ensure there is consistency when responding to incidents it will include descriptions of incidents and the level of response. A draft of this was shared at the 2 events including foster carer's and providers all participants were keen to work together to develop this further and implement this in their work with looked after children and care leavers.
- 1.5 A revised local protocol that incorporates the principles of the pan London protocol will be worked together with carers, supervising social workers and accommodation providers and will be published by the end of January 2026.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that the CPC review and comment on the contents of this report. This ensures the CPC is fulfilling its responsibility to advocate in support of the key principles set out within the London Protocol on behalf of looked after children and care leavers when exercising their duties as corporate parents.
- 2.2 The protocol will be shared with carers and accommodation providers it will ensure there is consistency of practise and looked after children and care leavers are not criminalised unnecessarily, and that restorative justice approaches are used to deal with incidents occurring in placement where this is more appropriate.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 3.2 This report sets out the management of the local authority's Corporate Parenting service and the developments that have taken place in the 2024/25 reporting period. The work of the LACP service contributes to the following borough priorities:
 - The Best Start in Life
 - Prosperity and Stability
 - A Healthier Brent
 - Thriving Communities

4.0 Background

- 4.1 In November 2018, a national protocol on reducing unnecessary criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers was published by the Department for Education (DfE), Home Office and Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The protocol was the first national guidance aiming to tackle this issue. It provided a framework

for local authority children's services, local care providers, youth offending services, the crown prosecution service, Police, HM Courts and Tribunal Services and local health services. A Pan-London Protocol was published by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) in March 2021 and sets out a framework for practice relevant to London.

- 4.2 The national protocol's key objectives and principles focused on a practice model that aimed to introduce preventative measures, reduce re-offending behaviour and rehabilitate young people who had offended through effective joint working between relevant agencies. The protocol highlighted the impact of previous trauma, attachment issues and specific vulnerabilities of looked after children and care leavers. All agencies were encouraged to use a trauma-informed approach to their practice. The Protocol recommends that restorative approaches should be used in a child-centred way to enable integrated, coordinated, and proactive responses to prevent and address challenging offending behaviour.
- 4.3 Children's early life experiences have a significant impact on their development and future life chances. As a result of their experiences before entering care, and during care, children in care are at greater risk of entering the youth justice system than their peers. Children in Care are more likely to be exposed to the risk factors established in research as associated with the onset of youth offending than the general population of children. Risk factors for youth crime, and the factors leading to reception into care are similar. Risk (and protective) factors for young people who offend are categorised across four domains: the family; school; community; and those which are individual, personal, and related to peer group experiences.
- 4.4 The London Protocol sets out the roles and responsibilities of each group involved in the care of looked-after children and care leavers in reducing their involvement in crime – as these groups have a role in protecting these vulnerable young people from a life of crime. This includes children's home carers, foster parents, Police officers, the Crown Prosecution Service, health services and local authorities.
- 4.5 The Youth Justice Service works in accordance with the London Protocol by supporting children and young people to maintain relationships and placement stability. This helps Children's Social Care to implement corporate parenting principles, coordinate services to promote positive outcomes for looked after children and care leavers and reduce their unnecessary criminalisation. The expansion of preventative support in Early Help via the Targeted Prevention Hub (TPH) affords greater access to support services that reduce the number of first-time entrants into the youth justice system, reduce reoffending, and tackle risk factors that draw young people into crime.

5.0 Brent's Approach

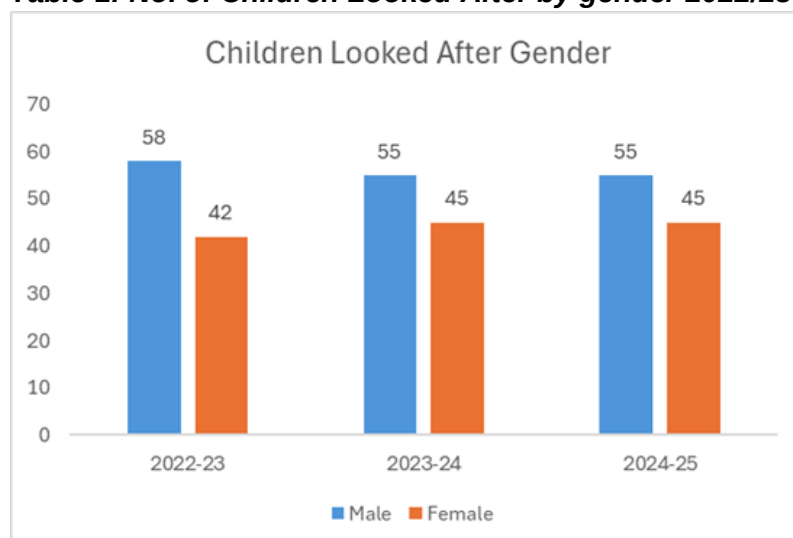
- 5.1 Looked after children and care leavers interact with a whole range of agencies and professionals and it is important that all of them understand the reasons

why looked after children and care leavers may behave in particular ways which are different to the universal population; key to this is their understanding of the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma on children, young people and adults.

- 5.2 A key part of Brent's approach is to raise awareness of why looked after children and care leavers need to be specifically considered when making decisions about involvement in the criminal justice system. Locally this has been and will continue to be done through a range of face to face and virtual training options. This includes building the agreed approach for looked after children and care leavers into current training packages.
- 5.3 Ensuring looked after children and care leavers have the right placements that meet their identified needs will significantly contribute to the prevention of criminalisation. It is recognised that caring for and managing children and young people with behaviour that can be perceived as difficult or challenging can be an integral feature of work within care placements.
- 5.4 At the 31 March 2025 Brent had 296 children in care compared to 307 children on 31 March 2024, a decrease of 3.6%. This represented 40.1 children per 10,000 child population against the rate for England of 71 per 10,000 head of child population, a decrease in rate by 1.8 from the previous year (1.9). In 2024/25, 142 children became looked after, compared to 131 children last year, and an average of 180 per year over the previous four years.

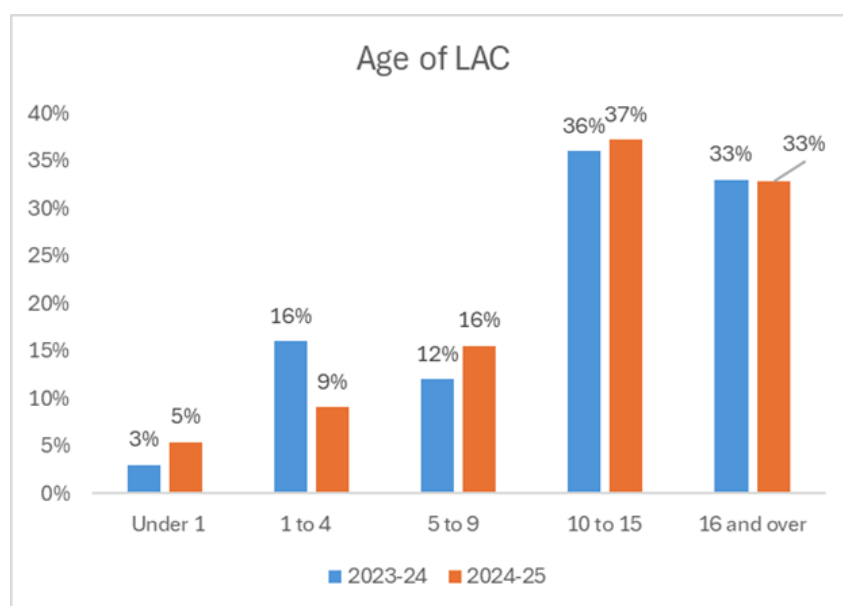
The decrease in looked after Children is likely to be the result of robust Entry and Care oversight and the increased use of pre-proceedings.
- 5.5 Of the 296 looked after Children on 31/03/25, 41 had had a previous looked after period. This represents 14% of the looked after children cohort.
- 5.6 The gender of the looked after Children population consists of 55.4% male and 44.6% female. This is broadly the same as in 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Table 1: No. of Children Looked After by gender 2022/23 to 2024/25



- 5.7 32.8% of the care population in Brent was aged 16 and over, compared to 32.6% at the end of March 2024. 70% of the care population in Brent was aged 10 and over. Having a predominantly adolescent care population presents challenges around outcomes such as placement stability, education, employment and training. Many young people present with emotional and behavioural difficulties and complex needs that foster carers may not feel equipped to manage. Additionally, there continues to be a national lack of sufficiency for foster carers that have the skills to provide care for teenagers.
- 5.8 Whilst the number of children in care in Brent is lower than our statistical neighbours, there is an identified trend that those children who do come into our care are often older children who have entered the care system at a later stage and are therefore more likely to experience unstable care. Despite these challenges, Brent's placement stability has improved in this reporting period.

Table 2: Age. of Children Looked After 2023/24 to 2024/25



5.9 Young people in the youth justice system are supported by the Brent Early Help managed, Youth Justice Service (YJS). The total number of LAC children supervised by Brent YJS in 2024 (23) decreased by 2 compared to 2023 (25). This represents a continuation of a trend experienced in recent years in which the number of looked after children known to the YJS is reducing. Comparison of open caseloads demonstrates the extent of this downward trajectory. In April 2020, 25 care experienced children were known to the YJS. By May 2024, the number of care experienced children receiving support by the YJS had decreased to 10. By April 2025 the number of LAC cases open to the YJS had increased to 17, however this was due to seven children receiving LAC status due to being remanded in custody for two serious offences. Analysis of these 17 children and young people shows that:

- 94% were male.
- 76% were aged 16 or 17 years.
- 41% were of Black African or Black Caribbean Heritage (60% in May 2024).
- 59% had committed a violent offence (70% in May 2024, 83% in June 2023, 72% in February 2022 and 37% in February 2021).
- 12% had committed a drugs offence (30% in May 2024, 17% in June 2023, 39% in February 2022 and 23% in February 2021).
- 26% had committed a robbery offence (10% in May 2024, 33% in June 2023, 39% in February 2022 and 9% in February 2021).

5.10 It is difficult to identify a single factor that is responsible for the decreasing number of Brent care experienced children within the youth justice system in recent years. However, it is notable that Brent Early Help increased its commitment to preventative provision during this time. In October 2020, the Brent COVID-19 Pathfinder for Overrepresented Children was established. This was a three-year preventative programme that provided

emotional wellbeing, mentoring and other support to more than 450 children and young people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic Heritage groups that were 'at-risk' of entering the youth justice system.

- 5.11 Furthermore, Brent Early Help invested heavily in trauma recovery, and anti-racist training. This enhanced the ability of the YJS to deliver services to children and young people in accordance with *Child First* principles that recognise the needs, capacities, rights, and potential of children. It has also enabled the YJS to increasingly raise awareness among partners that structural barriers prevent many children and young people from participating fully.
- 5.12 The MOPAC funded 'Disproportionality' project (2022-2023) funded a range of activities in Brent Family Wellbeing Centres, including sports, art, mentoring, emotional health and wellbeing, beauty, music production and photography sessions co-designed by young people. All these sessions were facilitated by voluntary sector partners including the Young Brent Foundation, 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.
- 5.13 In May 2024, the YJS Participation Worker, together with Young Brent Foundation and the Raheem Sterling Foundation, organised for a small group of young people to travel to the Foundation's headquarters to meet Raheem Sterling. They spent a couple of hours with the footballer playing games, being mentored, learning inspirational stories, and having snacks, before going home with a goody bag which included signed football boots.
- 5.14 Turnaround is a current Early Help initiative that contributes to the decrease in looked after Children participation in the YJS. It is a four-year programme which has been funded by the MoJ until April 2026 to:
- Work and offer additional support to young people who are on the edge of entering the youth 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.
 - Achieve positive outcomes for young people.

Turnaround extends support offered through the OOC 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.

All the 70 Brent children who have accessed Turnaround in the three-year period up to March 2025 were either referred by the Police or Brent Early Help. Approximately 90% of referrals came via the Police. This is significant as prior to Turnaround these children would not have been given access to services. As it is a voluntary intervention consent from a young person and their family is required. Turnaround staff meet with young people and their parents to ensure the whole family participates in a holistic 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.

Turnaround 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.

5.15 Challenging power imbalances occurs frequently in Brent. Examples include:

- Working with the Chair of the Willesden Magistrates Youth Bench to identify if service improvements are needed to ensure children understand court processes and that their voice is heard.
- Professional opinion, especially around issues such as undiagnosed mental health problems, is used to challenge disposal recommendations from the Police where appropriate through the identification of mitigating factors. This often leads to children receiving a lower tariff disposal than initially recommended.
- Enabling courts to see young offenders as children first and foremost. All Brent YJS court reports have been restructured so telling the story of the child

appears prominently at the beginning of report. This enables the judiciary to see the story of the child prior to considering offence details.

- A sustained period of ongoing volunteer recruitment has allowed YJS to draw from a younger and more diverse pool of Referral Order Panel volunteers.
- In 2023 Brent CYP refreshed its Practice Framework in consultation with staff working across the department. The framework continues to support trauma informed approaches and promotes the need to better understand and therefore respond to the diverse needs of young people.
- The Contextual Safeguarding and Violence Reduction Strategic Group (CSVRRSG), chaired by the Head of Service, Brent Community Safety Team, develops and coordinates initiatives that tackle extra-familial harm experienced by children and young people in the community or online such as physical, sexual, and criminal exploitation. It is a multi-agency initiative that includes representatives from services and partnership organisations including the Looked After Children and Permanency Service, Brent YJS, the Inclusion Service, Early Help, the Virtual School, the Police, Public Health, St.Giles Trust, and Air Network. The group meets quarterly to oversee the implementation of the CSVRRSG Action Plan which contains measures to safeguard children by tackling violent crime with a specific focus on knife crime, challenging domestic abuse, sexual abuse and preventing violence against women and girls, focussing on incidents impacting Brent communities, protecting those most vulnerable, and providing community reassurance.

5.16 The Brent Youth Justice Service Management Board includes senior representation from Social Care (Localities, and Looked After Children and Permanency services), the Police, Brent Probation Service, Youth Justice Service (YJS), Early Help, Willesden Magistrates Court, NHS, and Public Health. In October 2021, the Board identified three actions which were subsequently implemented and remain operational:

- Localities, and Looked After Children and Permanency representation on the YJS Out of Court Disposal Decision Making Panel.
- Localities, Looked After Children and Permanency representation during transitioning to Brent Probation meetings.
- Ensure the responsibilities and good practice outlined in the *London Reducing Criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers protocol* are embedded within Brent. Ongoing actions to maintain compliance include a joint YJS and Localities, Looked After Children and Permanency learning event at the Wembley Learning Zone, London Protocol themed practice development sessions, and including the London Protocol in staff induction.

5.17 The Contextual Safeguarding Lead together with YJS staff, have provided joint Contextual Safeguarding training for Social Care practitioners to broaden their understanding of 'harm outside of the home' and to reinforce the need to disrupt perpetrators, in addition to

increasing safety for young people. To ensure that victims are treated as such, and not as criminals. The Contextual Safeguarding Lead also chairs a Contextual Safeguarding Champions Group with partner agencies including Looked After Children team managers, Community Safety and YJS to look at trends within practice and explore opportunities for intervention across the borough.

- 5.18 Heads of Service provide briefings about high-risk children to the Director of Early Help and Social Care. The DCS and Lead Member are provided with regular updates and briefings about these cases by the Director. These procedures for the recording and reporting of critical incidents internally also demonstrate adherence to Youth Justice Board serious incident requirements.
- 5.19 The Exploitation, Violence and Vulnerability Panel (EVVP), which is jointly chaired by Children's Social Care and the Community Safety Team, leads on operational planning and co-ordination work between partners, driving strong interventions in response to individual young people at risk of exploitation. Most of the young people who are referred have contact with the youth justice system and the EVVP plays a key role in triggering interventions and resources to assist safety planning for young people. A transitional safeguarding plan is also used to further increase safety for young people who are on the verge of adulthood and effectively plan for their support network post adulthood.
- 5.20 A weekly operational meeting between CYP staff and the Police investigates individual cases of children who are missing from home or care – some of whom are at risk of, or are engaged in, criminal behaviour. Key themes from these discussions are fed into EVVP to promote consistency of practice.
- 5.21 Well-established practice is in place when it comes to working between looked after Children and Care Leavers who are in contact with the Youth Justice Service. Social Care and the Brent YJS work collaboratively whenever looked after Children enter, or are at risk of entering, the youth justice system. We continue to promote the use of joint supervision between social work and YJS teams, and we are working to embed this practice currently. These arrangements will formalise existing good practice by regularising ongoing joint risk management and decision making. Practitioners from partner agencies including CAMHS and the NHS will participate in group supervision whenever this is in the best interests of the child. Joint decision making and planning will increase our ability to ensure young people get the right interventions at the right time. Other benefits will include children receiving consistent information from practitioners, multi-agency safety planning, and greater clarity surrounding the remit and responsibilities of services.
- 5.22 The Out of Court Disposal (OCD) Decision Making Panel is a weekly Panel chaired by Brent YJS and attended by Police, Health, Social Care,

Early Help staff and Restorative Justice workers to jointly consider and determine Out of Court Disposal decisions. LAC Social Workers attend to assist the Panel to take mitigating factors into consideration and identify appropriate interventions and disposal conditions. The effectiveness of Brent OOCd decision making is monitored by a Metropolitan Police led Multi-Agency Scrutiny Panel, comprised of senior representatives from the Police, CPS, Judiciary, MOPAC and the YJB. The Scrutiny Panel audited six Brent OOCd cases in January 2025, and a further six cases in August 2025. Decision making in 11 out of 12 cases was afforded the highest marks issued by the Scrutiny Panel. A further benefit is that Social Workers are equipped with the information they need to explain OOCd conditions to children in their care and support them to successfully comply with legal conditions.

- 5.23 Brent children and young people arrested for the possession of cannabis may be offered a Community Resolution. This is a non-criminal disposal that functions 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 OOCds. This includes assessment, and co-produced intervention and safety plans. Interventions offered to children include referrals to substance misuse counselling, Police led crime awareness sessions, and mental health screening and referral.
- 5.24 LAC Children and Young People Transitioning to Brent Probation receive dedicated support. LAC Social Workers and Personal Advisors contribute to all transition meetings between the YJS and Probation Service. This ensures that planning is as supportive as possible for LAC moving from the youth justice system to the adult criminal justice system. The adoption of this approach has improved support to LAC as the transitioning process is less technical and more child centred. The individual needs of young adults are central to transitioning and professionals work together to ensure LAC understand the differences between adolescent and criminal justice services, are less fearful about change, and are as prepared as possible to successfully complete their order.
- 5.25 Brent Council's Targeted Prevention Hub (TPH) was launched on 1 July 2025. The TPH is a new and developing service to provide professionals who are supporting children and young people (aged 10-18) with rapid access to a range of specialist support and advisory services. This is to ensure professionals are providing the best support and can make a real difference in the lives of the children and young people they support. The TPH has a particularly strong focus on prevention and early intervention and addressing safeguarding concerns outside the home. The LAC and Permanency Service is working with TPH to increase the access of looked after children to mentoring and other available provision which includes one to one support for children who are gang affected or affiliated, missing children support, and early interventions for young people on the edge of the youth justice system. In the future, the TPH will be expanded to include services such as careers advice, sexual health, sexual exploitation,

emotional health and wellbeing, domestic abuse support, family group conferencing, out-of-hours detached youth work and substance misuse. TPH Outcomes conform to the four provided in the DfE dashboard, as set out in Children's Social Care - Outcomes and Enablers (see The Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme Guide Delivery expectations for safeguarding partners in England March 2025, p.46). These outcomes include:

- Fewer children in care.
- Reduction in the number of vulnerable children and young people becoming looked after
- Increased understanding of youth criminal exploitation by children and their families.
- Reduced number of children entering the youth justice system.
- Reduction of children vulnerable to risk outside the home
- Reduction of victims vulnerable to risk outside the home
- Increase in the number of vulnerable children and young people being safely supported in the community.
- Improved access to, and performance of, preventative (wrap-around) services for young people and their families.

- 5.26 Practice development sessions are held regularly and include themes of relevance to the overrepresentation of looked after Children in the youth justice system. These include good youth participation techniques and understanding the impact of cultural differences when supporting children and young people.
- 5.27 Bail template letter background information has been expanded to provide the courts with details of any discrimination or trauma LAC young people have experienced.
- 5.28 YJS case studies are shared at YJS Board meetings to explore how the needs of children have been considered and take forward learning for case work.
- 5.29 As part of its contribution to the Willesden Magistrates Court Users Forum, Brent has delivered good practice sessions that raise awareness of the impact of trauma on a child's behaviour in court and anti-racism training.
- 5.30 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 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.

- 5.31 The Your Choice programme provided training in CBT techniques 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 were randomly allocated to train and deliver Your Choice. Young people matched to trained practitioners received Your Choice. Young people matched to untrained practitioners are supported as per business as usual. Your Choice was delivered within the CYPD Accelerated Support 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 transferred to the LAC and Permanency Service between April 2023 and December 2024. Fourteen care experienced children were recruited prior to the project returning to the YJS until its closure at the end of the funding agreement in June 2025. A total of 66 children and young people accessed Your Choice. Only five children who accessed Your Choice offended after their involvement in their programme. Only one of these children was part of the LAC and Permanency Service cohort.

"I have seen a noticeable difference in the behaviours and responses of the YP engaged with the YC Programme. 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."

YJS Case Manager

- 5.32 The Looked After Children and Permanency Service identify children who will need support from Adult Social Care. Planning commences when children are aged 17 years and six months at Adult Social Care Transitions Pathways Planning Meetings. Progress is monitored at jointly convened Adult and Children's Social Care Transitions Tracking Meetings.

6.0 Disproportionality

- 6.1 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 YJB Summary Ethnic Disparity Tool to analyse children aged 10 to 17 years. This is particularly evident amongst Black African and Caribbean children and young people who are significantly overrepresented in the youth justice system. Overall, Black Heritage group children represented 37% of

the Brent YJS cohort in March 2025. This compares unfavourably to the 22% of all children and young people from these other Heritage groups living in Brent according to the mid-year 2021 census. The table below shows the breakdown by ethnicity over the last 5 years.

Table 3. No. of Brent Children in the Youth Justice System 2020 to 2025 by ethnicity

Ethnic group	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Percentage change year ending March 2020 to March 2025	2021 midyear 10-17 population by ethnic group
Asian	19	13	6	17	8	11	▼ -42%	10,322
Black	92	70	46	60	60	56	▼ -39%	7,982
Mixed	14	10	11	12	13	24	▲ +71%	2,764
Other	17	9	16	14	27	33	▲ +94%	4,287
Total BAME Heritage Groups	142	102	79	103	108	124	▼ -12%	25,355
White	26	22	18	20	15	22	▼ -15%	7,899
Unknown	0	2	3	1	0	4	N/A	-
All Heritage Groups	168	126	100	124	123	150	▼ -11%	33,254

6.2 What Brent YJS is doing to tackle disproportionality

- 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.
- Court report 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.
- Group supervision. Social Care and the Brent YJS work collaboratively whenever looked after Children enter, or are at risk of entering, the youth justice system.
- The Out of Court Disposal Decision Making Panel is chaired by Brent YJS and attended by Police, Health, YJS, Children's 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. This has strengthened the ability to take mitigating factors into consideration and identify appropriate interventions and disposal conditions.
- The London Protocol outlines the operational procedures and standards required when transferring supervision from the YJS to the Brent Probation Service.
- LAC Social Workers contribute to all transfer meetings between the YJS and Probation Service. 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.
- Introduced in 2022/23, the annual Brent Youth Justice Service Disproportionality Action Plan (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 DAP is monitored by the Brent YJS Management Board biannually. The 2025 DAP focusses on preventing Black Heritage group children entering the criminal justice system, preventing re-offending within the Black Heritage cohort, preventing school exclusions, improving 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.

6.3 It is difficult to determine the extent to which Brent YJS has contributed to a steady decline in the number of Brent children from Black Heritage groups in the local youth justice system: a 39% reduction between March 2020 (92) and March 2025 (56) – see Table 1. It is however possible to assert that to some extent the concerted partnership effort to reduce disproportionality is a key factor. Notwithstanding these gains, the overrepresentation of children from Black Heritage groups remains and is significant.

7.0 Child First

7.1 Brent YJS and the LAC and Permanency Team deliver services to children and young people in accordance with *Child First principles*. It is an approach that recognises that services must prioritise the best interests of children and recognise their needs, capacities, rights, and potential. For this reason, Brent supported Crest Advisory, an independent crime and justice consultancy, as

part of ongoing research, commissioned by the YJB to understand the implementation of Child First in the youth justice system. This involved a series of staff interviews, and an in-person workshop that offered practitioners the opportunity to help shape the support that youth justice services receive from the YJB to operationalise Child First effectively. Key themes included, perceptions and practical applications of Child First, collaboration across youth justice services and partner organisations, and the YJB's role in driving the implementation of Child First.

- 7.2 Brent's strong corporate parenting ethos recognises the care system is not just about keeping children safe, but also about promoting recovery, resilience and wellbeing. This requires corporate parents to ensure that work across Social Care, placement providers, educational settings, health services, the Police and other criminal justice partners, prevents unnecessary criminalisation.
- 7.3 All professionals working with looked after Children, and care leavers understand the impact of trauma and abuse on development, particularly their effect on emotional and behavioural development and self-regulation. Professionals, including YJS workers, Social Workers, teachers, children's home staff and foster parents, health services, Police, CPS, HMCTS and local Youth Panel (Magistrates), at both senior and frontline levels, receive appropriate training.
- 7.4 The importance of understanding our children and young people is a key theme for Brent. 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 and frequently make 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.
- 7.5 By taking an inclusive approach to service delivery and design, Brent engages more children and young people in an accessible manner. Brent YJS promotes 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), such as experience of the care system, in its work with children and young people assists practitioners to identify those at higher risk of harm. Specific work can then be identified when a young person has complex issues, is 'stuck' or where there is high anxiety within the professional network.
- 7.6 Brent is proactively encouraging children's active participation, engagement, and wider social inclusion. The Brent CYPD 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.

- 7.7 Adopting this approach has strengthened YJS's ability to form meaningful and creative collaborations. During 2024/25, YJS 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, children from YJS have been supported to access an extensive range of music, sport and creative activities at Family Well-being Centres. All programmes have been designed to respond more specifically to children's needs and provide an open space for self-awareness. This work will be extended over the next three-years in line with the priorities contained in Brent's recently launched Youth Strategy 2025-2028 which are: Being Heard and Taking Part, Reaching Goals and Enjoying Yourself, Feeling Good and Staying Safe.
- 7.8 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. Creative and interactive approaches, such as enabling children and young people to create podcasts and short films, have proven to be a popular and effective means of communication
- 7.9 Brent YJS commitment to co-production and young participation continues to be a priority. This is demonstrated through delivering the Council's responsibilities for coordinating and monitoring the Brent Youth Strategy, and establishing 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 increased participation to a range of universal provision that had previously been difficult for many children from the YJS to access.
- 7.10 During 2024 an extensive survey took place with 68 YJS young people. Participants were given multiple choice questions, afforded the opportunity to provide explanatory information, and asked to rate responses on a scale to 10 - higher is better. Of the 68 young people, 38 (56%) were subject to a referral order and 8 (12%) were subject to a Youth Rehabilitation Order. There were 2 (3%) subject to a Detention and Training Order. There were a wide range of responses to the question 'What led you to offend? These included frustration, anger, fear, stupidity, being bullied, not thinking, decision making both positive and negative, homelessness and money and a sense of justice. A few children maintained their innocence. Other findings include:

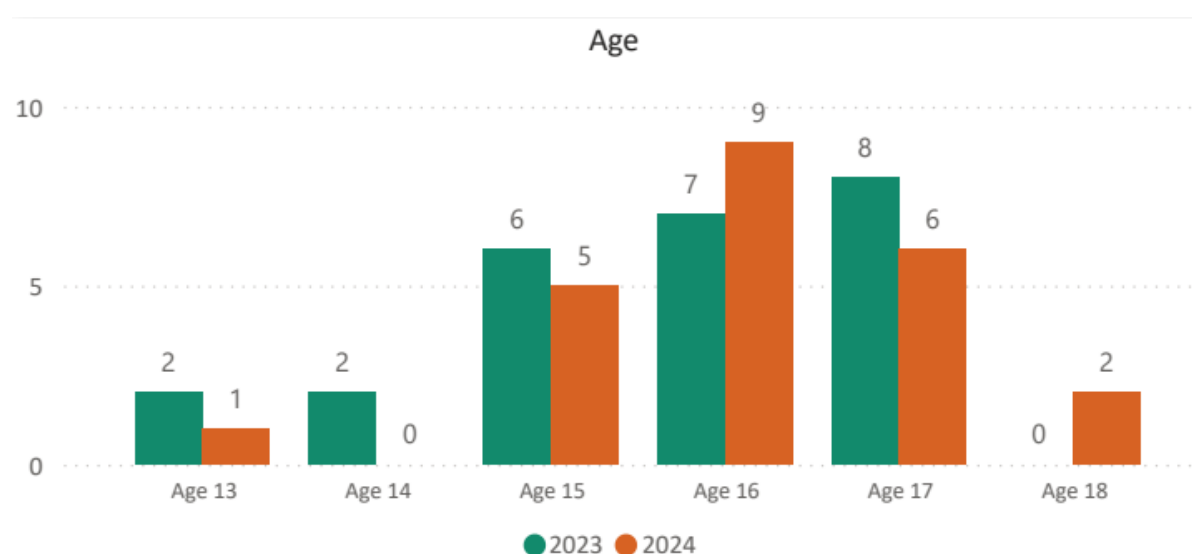
- 94% (64) believe the Case Manager understands what has happened in their life.
- 96% (65) described their strengths as a person as sporting, nice person, resilient, good at DIY, sociable, fighting and music.
- 96% (65) said they had their court order explained to them by the YJS officer.
- The overall court experience was viewed in varied ways by young people. This ranged from 'stressed, nervous, scared, trials are not fair', to 'it was ok, alright, calm, very good' and 'it was ok, but the fine was inconvenient'.
- 73% (19) said the YJS officer explained what the court order meant (42 young people skipped this question).
- 100% of young people said their Case Manager had completed work with them prior to an initial referral order panel. This included a learning questionnaire, YP assessment, mood questionnaire, screening tools, parent assessments, career choices, negative peers, and learning styles assessment.
- When asked what has worked well or made the biggest difference on your order, responses included 'Obtaining a passport, kept me busy, knowing right and wrong, understand things more, anything can be a weapon, appointments give me a routine, cast off some friends, how to think and behave, good substance misuse sessions, helped my self-esteem and mental health, engaging with ETE, advice to keep me out of trouble, I like talking to you, session on decision making, having help from different people, substance misuse and mental health assessment'. One respondent stated: 'I am not the person I was 2 years ago and that is a good thing.'

8.0 Measuring impact

A comparative analysis of the 2023 LAC cohort involved in the YJS and the 2024 LAC cohort involved in the YJS shows some positive impact has been made in the past 12 months.

8.1 Age

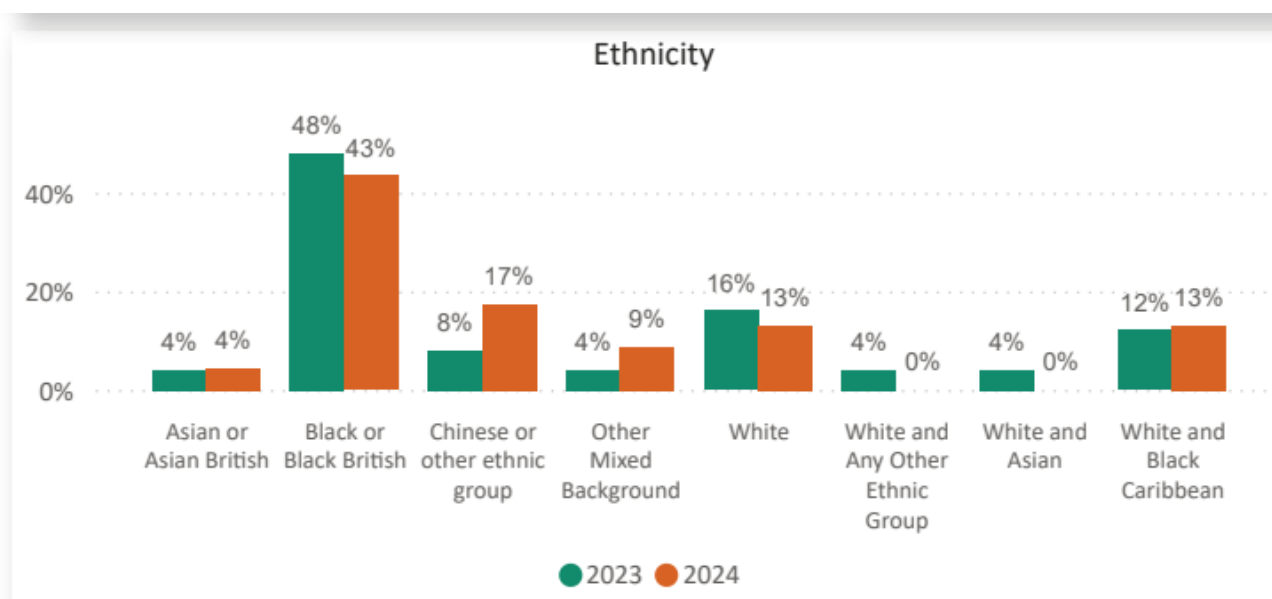
Table 4: No. of Looked After Children receiving YJS support 2022/23 to 2024/25



Four LAC children aged between 13 and 14 were supported by the YJS in 2023. This reduced to one in 2024. Although it is not possible to ascertain why three fewer children offended, the adoption of the Met Polices Child First Policy, which seeks to only criminalise children as a last resort is likely to have been influential. In Brent this includes close working between the Police and YJS through the Brent Out of Court Disposal Panel, where non-criminal disposals (Triage and Community Resolutions) are issued wherever possible to avoid children being criminalised for low level offences.

8.2 Ethnicity

Table 5: Percentage of Looked After Children receiving YJS support by ethnicity 2022/23 to 2024/25

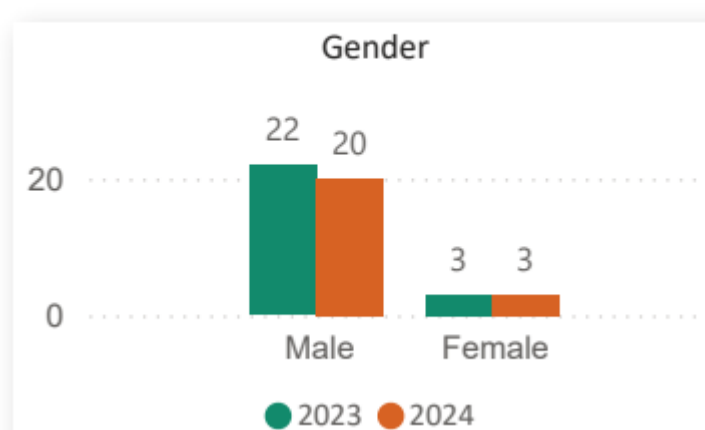


The ethnicity of looked after Children supported by the YJS in 2024 closely resembled the ethnicity of this group in 2023. The only two categories to experience an increase were the “Chinese and other ethnic group”, which increased from 2 children from Arab Heritage groups to four from the same Heritage groups, and “White and Black Caribbean” Heritage group children which increased by 1% to represent 13% of all children.

A 5% decrease in looked after Children from Black or Black British Heritage groups was the most significant reduction to be found across all ethnic categories. Although statistically modest, the overrepresentation of care experienced children from Black Heritage groups in the Youth Justice System is a persistent problem in Brent so any reduction is a positive outcome. LAC and Permanency Service and other Social Care representation on the OOC Panel, joint Children’s Social Care and YJS complex strategy meetings, and changes introduced via the YJS Management Board DAP are likely to have combined to reduce the number of looked after Children from Black Heritage groups entering the youth just system. Nonetheless, children from Black Heritage groups make up 24% of the total 0-17 years Brent population. It is of paramount importance that this downward trajectory continues in 2025/26.

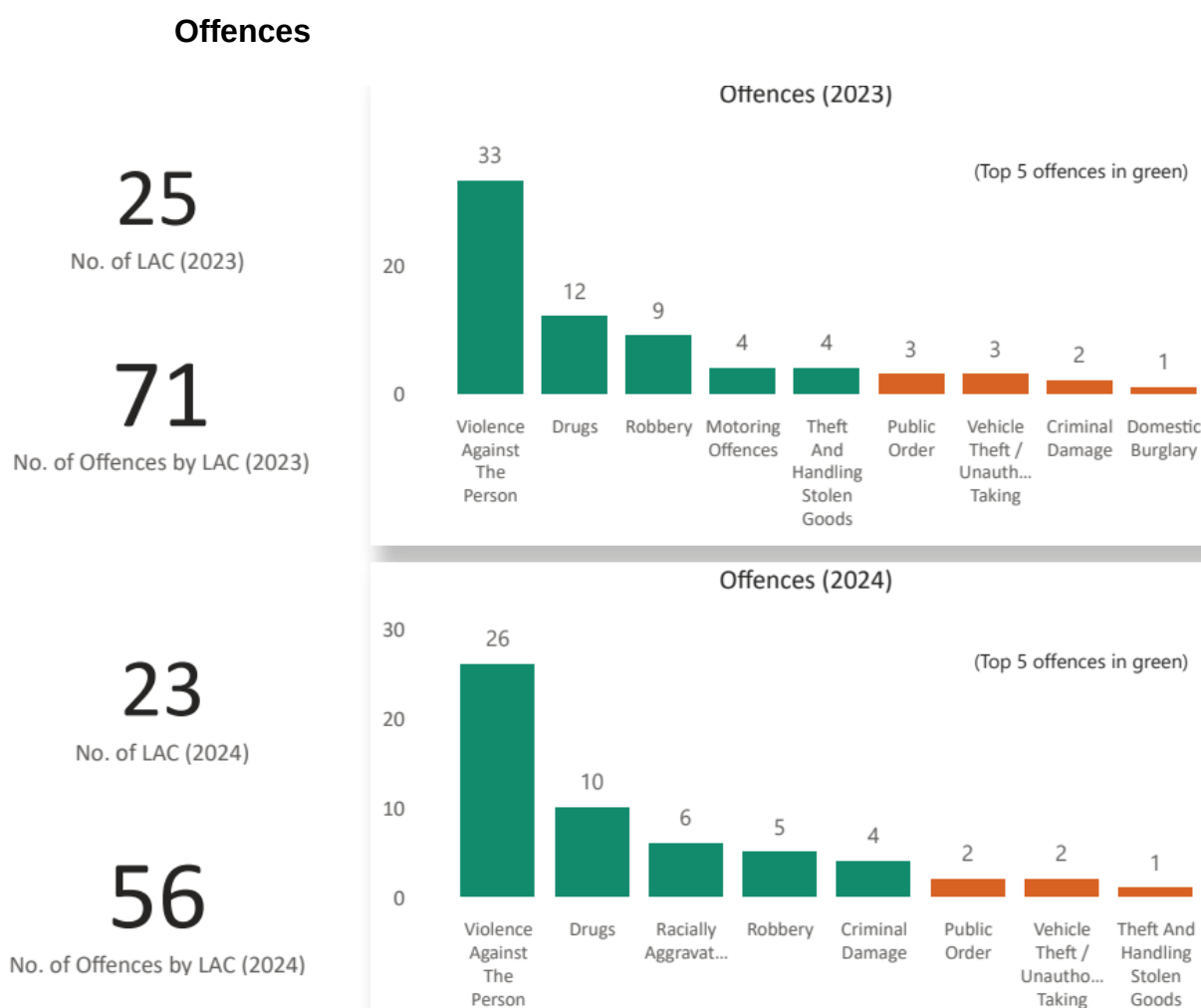
8.3 Gender

Table 6: Percentage of Looked After Children receiving YJS support by gender 2022/23 to 2024/25



Two fewer care experienced children were supported by the YJS in 2024 than was the case in 2023. Both were male. The percentage of looked after Children young women in the youth justice system (15%) is slightly higher than the overall proportion of all young women in the youth justice system which normally fluctuates between 5% and 12%.

Table 7: Looked After Children offending 2022/23 to 2024/25



8.4 Overall, offending by care experienced children decreased in terms of volume and type. Although the total care experienced children supported by YJS cohort decreased by only 2 (8%) in 2024, the total number of offences decreased by 15. The number of offences committed by this group also decreased or remained the same when compared to 2023 in eight out of nine major crime categories. Violence against the Person is the one crime category where performance in 2024 (33 offences) was worse than 2023 (26 offences).

8.5 Reoffending by ethnicity and gender

Table 8: Looked After Children reoffending by ethnicity and gender 2023/24

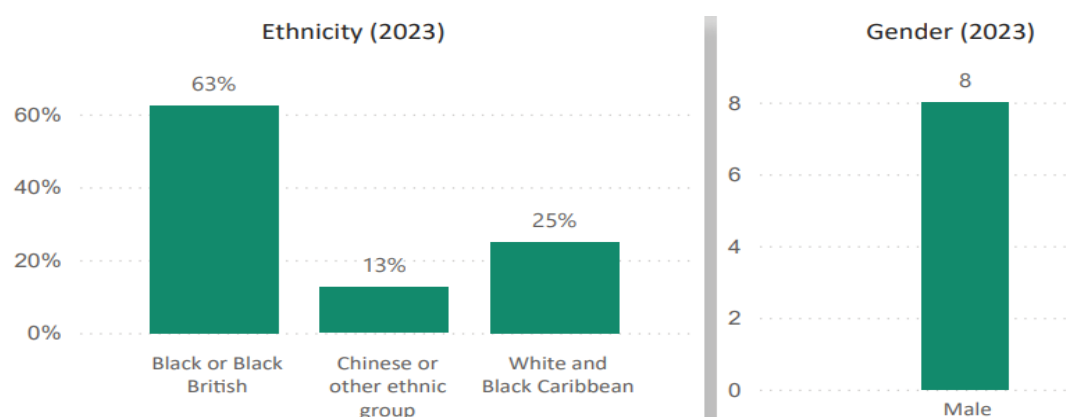
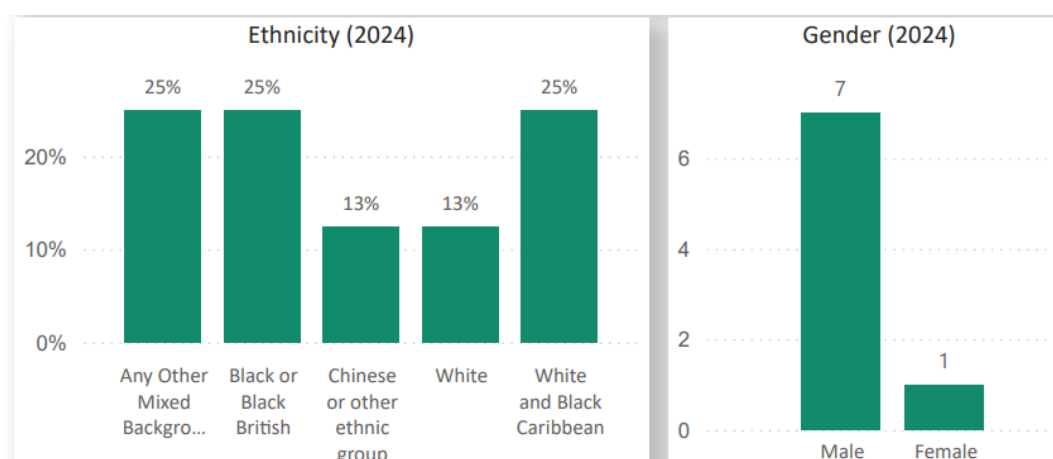


Table 9: Looked After Children reoffending by ethnicity and gender 2024/25



The volume of reoffending by care experienced children remained the same in both 2023 and 2024 - eight children reoffended in both years. No females reoffended in 2024 compared to one in 2023.

The proportion of looked after Children who offended from “Black of Black British” Heritage groups fell significantly from 63% in 2023 to 25% in 2024. A decrease of this scale is uncommon in any analysis of crime by ethnicity and more so within Black or Black British” Heritage groups where the over representation of children is most pronounced. It is also only slightly above the percentage of “Black or Black British” Heritage group children aged 0-17 years residing in Brent (24%). “White and Black Caribbean” Heritage group reoffending remained the same as in 2023 (25%). “Chinese or other ethnic group” was also unchanged – 13% in both 2023 and 2024.

Reoffending from looked after Children from “Any other mixed background” Heritage groups increased from 0% in 2023 to 25% in 2024. This was comprised of two children – one from Scottish, Irish and Egyptian Heritage, and the other from Italian and African American Heritage. The reoffending of children from “White” Heritage groups increased from 0% to 13%.

8.6 First Time Entrants

Table 10: Looked After Children first-time offending by ethnicity and gender 2023/24

Decriminalisation of LAC children - First time Entrants

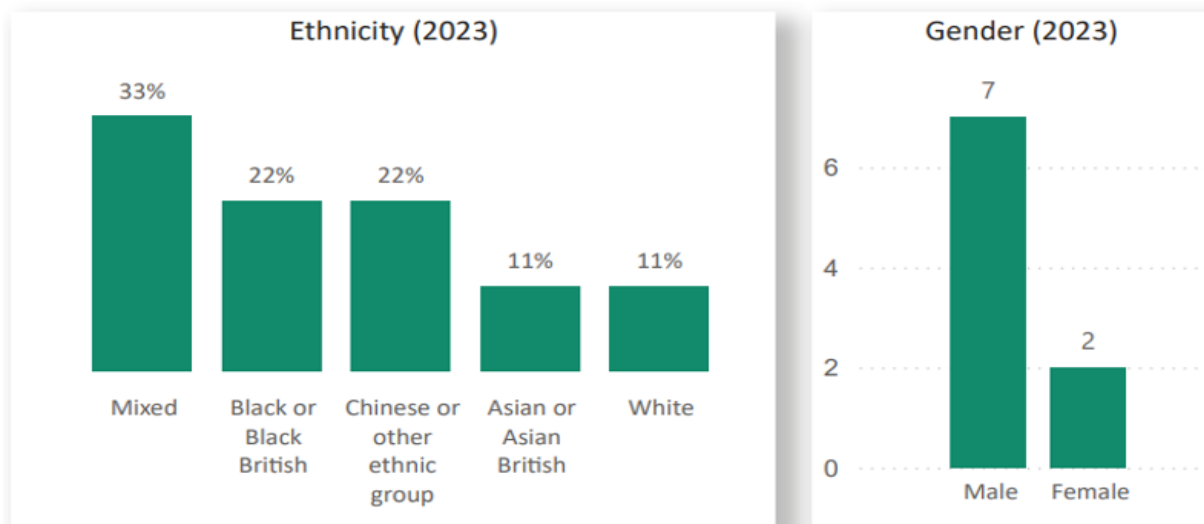


Table 11: Looked After Children first-time offending by ethnicity and gender 2023/24 to 2024/25



The number of looked after Children who received a criminal disposal for the first time increased from 7 in 2023 to 11 in 2024. Although an increase of 4 is statistically small it suggests that the improved early intervention offer made available to care experienced children through the establishment of TPH is much needed. The number of looked after Children females who

became First Time Entrants to the youth justice system increased from 2 in 2023 to 3 in 2024.

The percentage of looked after Children from “Black or Black British” Heritage groups who received a criminal disposal for the first time increased from 22% (2 children) in 2023, to 36% (3 children) in 2024. The proportion of care experienced children from “White” Heritage groups who committed a first offence almost doubled from 11% in 2023, to 21% in 2024.

8.7 Dip Sample Audit: Quality of work with LAC and care leavers on remand/prison

A dip audit of 30 cases was undertaken by six YJS Managers in May 2024 to better understand the quality of work undertaken with Looked after Children and care leavers on remand or sentenced to prison.

This dip sample looked at two cohorts. The largest of these consisted of all 18-25 care leavers currently remanded in custody or serving custodial sentences (28 young adults aged 18 – 24 years). The second cohort is comprised of two Looked After Children. One of these is remanded in custody and the other is remanded into the care of the local authority.

The audit found that:

19 out of 30 cases showed evidence of effective multi-agency, resettlement, and transition planning.

Communication was a consistent theme with cases that lacked effective multi-agency planning, resettlement and transition planning. This was evidenced as follows:

- On three occasions a Personal Advisor (PA) failed to receive notification from a Young Offenders Institution (YOI) that a young person was being moved to another custodial establishment. Their PA only became aware of this when they booked a visit to see the young person.
- On one occasion there was no evidence of requested information from a custodial establishment regarding the young person’s prison support.
- On one occasion there was minimal contact with the YOI.
- On two occasions young people refused to meet their PA.

Evidence of regular contact with children and care leavers in custody was present in 16 out of 29 cases

Thirteen children and care leavers did not receive regular contact with their Social Worker or PA whilst in custody. Of these:

- Seven young people declined to see their Social Worker or PA when visits had been booked.
- Regular contact was not made with three other children.

- In one case there was no evidence of visits taking place.
- In one case a prison move occurred without the PA's knowledge.
- There were also visit cancellations, and difficulties encountered arranging visits due to limited visiting time slots. On one occasion visits were cancelled by a prison between March 24 and May 24. Prior to this, the young person had not been seen for 9 months.
- In one case supervision notes stated that visits had been taking place, but this was not supported by evidence.
- In another case the first custodial visit occurred four months post-sentence. There was no evidence of the young person's views.

Racially minoritized children face a range of inequalities that make them vulnerable to criminalisation.

The audit sought to understand whether any of the following been a contributing factor to the child's current custodial placement:

- **Poverty and Austerity:**
12 cases identified this as a factor likely to contribute to criminalisation.
- **Education:**
19 Cases identified this as a factor likely to contribute to criminalisation.
- **Neurodiversity:**
10 cases identified this as a factor likely to contribute to criminalisation.
- **Mental health and wellbeing**
13 cases identified this as a factor likely to contribute to criminalisation.
- **Racism and identity**
10 cases identified this as a factor likely to contribute to criminalisation.
- **The Care System**
13 cases identified this as a factor likely to contribute to criminalisation
- **Being female**
2 cases identified this as a factor likely to contribute to criminalisation.
- **Intersectionality**
14 cases identified this as a factor likely to contribute to criminalisation.
- **Racism and Youth Justice**
14 cases identified this as a factor likely to contribute to criminalisation.

The audit report author noted that without completing a deep dive on the cases being dip sampled it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions and clearly understand the true extent to which these factors make offending more likely. Achieving this would require detailed knowledge, such as that possessed by a Case Manager. For this reason, the following recommendation was made to the Performance and QA Board:

“With regards to better understanding the factors affecting racially minoritized children, this might be achieved if practitioners had a list of factors they could select when completing case summaries. This would make the identification of factors easier and assist in planning.”

Identified strengths

- Overall, the way the voice of the child is captured within plans in the first person and quoted is a strength.
- Most of the plans seem to address planning and transitions.
- One case provided especially good evidence of multiagency, resettlement and transition planning within case diary entries with email threads and within the pathway plan, which shows joint working with YJS, Social Care, the Custodial Placement Manager, and Resettlement practitioners.
- It was good to see that during a LAC visit the Social Worker remembered it was the child's birthday the next day. This is a good example of Brent Social Workers treating children in care as their own.

Improvement priorities

Ongoing data analysis of care experienced children will enable us to identify which TPH services are most effective for reducing offending and reoffending, of looked after children known to YJS. These will be extended to foster carers and placement provider staff to enhance their management of risk, reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of care experienced children and young people, and provide greater placement stability.

8.8 Case study

Background

KJ is a 16-year-old female of Black British and Jamaican Heritage who:

- KJ received a 10-month Youth Rehabilitation Order for the possession of offensive weapon, Assault Emergency worker x 2 and Theft.
- She has been a Brent Looked After Child since December 2020.
- KJ has a good relationship with her mother, brother and grandparents.
- KJ has lived in placements in Shrewsbury, Essex and Enfield.
- KJ aspires to become an air hostess.
- KJ is passionate about completing a Travel Tourism course at college.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Numerous missing episodes to unknown locations and with unknown individuals
- Vulnerable to sexual and criminal exploitation when missing
- Not attending school and being excluded from school
- No remorse towards her victim
- Anger management
- Pro-criminal peers

The negative impact of Adverse childhood experiences



Support and interventions

Joint working from YJS and the LAC and permanency Service was supportive and focussed on relationship building. This helped to foster the trust and confidence for KJ to constructively engage with a range of interventions including:

- Weapons awareness.
- Decision making skills.
- Consequential thinking.
- Mentoring support.

Impact

- A change in thinking and attitude towards her peers.
- Acquired a positive understanding of the dangers of absconding with strangers.
- KJ feels remorse towards her victims and recognises the harm she has caused.
- KJ secured a place at college and is attending regularly.
- KJ got a part-time job at a café.
- Attended all sessions with her YJS Case Manager.

8.9 Training and development for staff and foster carers

8.10 Three priorities emerged from two training forums offered to staff and foster carers. It is expected that adopting these new workstreams will build upon the gains already made towards reducing the involvement of looked after Children in the youth justice system:

- The development of a local decriminalisation of looked after Children protocol that will be adopted by all accommodation providers and fostering agencies, and our internal foster carers.
- Supporting accommodation providers to develop internal behaviour management policies that align with the key question: *'Would this be good*

enough for my child’?

- Offering half-day restorative practise training to foster carers and accommodation providers.

9.0 Partnership support and commitments

9.1 Partnership work undertaken or led by the Looked After Children and Permanency service and the YJS to reduce the criminalisation of looked after Children conforms to the YJB’s *Supporting Care Leavers to Prevent Custody Evidence summary* November 2024. The report recommends that:

- Targeted prevention and diversion should be used to minimise the unnecessary criminalisation of care experienced children.
- Protocols should be developed to minimise the vulnerabilities experienced by care experienced children in terms of being drawn into the criminal justice system.
- Securing suitable and appropriate accommodation prior to being released from custody helps to support care experienced children.
- Integrated service structures such as “adolescent services” which bring together multiple services for children under a single structure and service manager, often allow for closer relationships between YJ Services and Children’s Social Care teams.
- Mental health and trauma-informed approaches should be used.

9.2 The YJS Management Board monitors progress of the Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025/28 to ensure the effective delivery of youth justice services that aim to reduce re-offending and safeguard children and young people. This includes the effectiveness of work undertaken by the YJS, Social Care and partnership organisations to reduce the criminalisation of children in care and care leavers. The aims of this work were outlined in last year’s *Progress report: The London Protocol on Reducing Criminalisation of Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2024*:

- *Explore new opportunities to achieve good outcomes for LAC children through ever closer working between the Looked After Children and Permanency Service and YJS.*

The Looked After Children and Permanency Service and YJS teams are located alongside each other in the Brent Civic Centre. The proximity of the two services is beneficial for the undertaking of routine joint responsibilities such as informal and formal information exchanges, organising and attending complex strategy meetings, and preparing for risk and resource panels such as EVVP and the YJS Risk Forum.

The closeness of the two teams has also produced good strategic outcomes. The respective Heads of Service are currently identifying Family Group Conference delivery models that are best suited to the needs of children and young people, as part of plans to expand TPH provision. More broadly, the Head of LAC and Permanency Service was involved throughout the planning and

implementation of TPH to ensure services meet the needs of care experienced children and young people and care leavers.

- *Promote the Brent YJS restorative justice offer to care homes and foster carers.*

Restorative Justice is currently offered by the YJS to all victims of crime. This will be extended to carers and key workers as a non-criminal remedy. The aim of this work is to avoid criminal prosecutions by raising awareness that restorative justice is an effective alternative to informing the Police about low level incidents in many instances. Victims Work, inclusive of Restorative Justice, has been included as one of the areas of enquiries undertaken by inspectors as part of the new His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation inspection of Youth Justice Services regime. The adoption of new victim contact procedures in line with HMIP inspection standards has delayed plans to work with care homes and foster carers. Training resources have however been developed, and delivery will commence in early 2026.

- *Ensure that YJS work to tackle the over representation of children and young people from Black Heritage Groups includes a specific focus on Looked After Children.*

A list of all looked after Children known to the YJS by ethnicity is shared with the Looked After and Permanency Team every month. These will be subject to joint supervision by Team Managers from both services from October 2025. The overrepresentation of looked after Children from Black Heritage groups in the youth justice system is particularly pronounced within the Brent custodial population. To redress this Brent has produced a multi-agency Disproportionality Action Plan that is monitored by the YJS Management Board. Improvement priorities outlined in this report will be included in the Draft Disproportionality Action Plan 2025/26. This draft report will be presented to YJS Management Board members for adoption in October 2025.

- *Further develop work with placement providers and foster carers. This will include supporting them to identify and share information about children who are at risk of going missing in line with the Philomena Protocols.*

The need to maintain and share records containing vital information about children in placements with the Police and Social Workers was highlighted during the LAC and Permanency led Accommodation Provider Forum in September 2025. This requirement was also covered during half-day de-escalation training for Foster Carers.

- *Strive to find solutions to the challenges associated with placing young people in suitable accommodation where they are free from contextual safeguarding harm and near enough to avoid disrupting their education and relationships with families and positive friends.*

YJS and the Looked After Children and Permanency Team work closely with the CYP CD Commissioning and Resources Team to ensure early

conversations are held during a child's sentence to plan where they will live upon release. Progress and case planning is subject to monthly oversight by the Brent Resettlement and Aftercare Panel.

Joint working between the LAC and Permanency Service and the Virtual School ensures looked after Children at risk of offending are well supported to explore employment, education and training opportunities. Contact hours are reviewed to ensure CIC receive the appropriate level of support. Early co-allocation of a Personal Advisor enables effective joint planning for young people in custody. This includes effective release planning and securing suitable and stable accommodation. Care Leavers aged 18 and older are regularly visited by their Personal Advisor who will also liaise with the Offender Manager Unit whenever welfare or safeguarding concerns arise.

Contextual Safeguarding responsibility will be moved to TPH when a new Contextual Safeguarding Lead Officer is appointed in October 2025. A renewed focus on risks in the community affecting placements, plans to remove children from harm, and measures to disrupt criminal exploitation will be explored by this officer in collaboration with the LAC and Permanency Service.

- *Ensure youth participation work captures the voice of LAC children supported by YJS. This will include creating opportunities to use film and other media to raise awareness across the youth justice system.*

Between 2023 and 2024 the YJS Youth Participation Worker worked closely with the Early Help Family Support Worker to introduce young people who had their first missing episode to a range of positive activities and to encourage them to communicate with YJS Board members via short films. They also produced a film on online harm that was shared with the Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Group. Youth Participation support is now delivered as part of TPH. Progress will be tracked by the YJS Management Board via scrutiny of the 2025/25 YJS Improvement Plan.

- *Expand the range of diversionary activities and preventative services available to LAC children and young people working closely with community and voluntary sector partners to increase LAC access to existing early intervention initiatives that seek to prevent children and young people from entering the youth justice system.*

Care experienced children can access mentoring and gangs' worker provision via TPH. They are also supported to access and codesign positive recreational activities at Family Wellbeing Centres. TPH are currently working with Public Health to expand their preventative offer to include sexual health, substance misuse and emotional wellbeing support.

- *Continue to educate partners and stakeholders about their responsibilities under the London Reducing Criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers protocol.*

The Looked After Children and Permanency service and the YJS have meaningfully collaborated to introduce new ways of working and improved access to existing interventions in line with the Protocol. Partners have responded positively in many ways. In terms of provision this includes a seconded CAMHS practitioner who refers children to CAMHS for assessment, NHS mental health screening of all children in Police custody, ETE support from Prospects, transitioning support from the Probation Service, and Police led crime awareness sessions. Public Health have demonstrated genuine commitment to widening access to commissioned services and the Community Safety Team have included increasing YJS access to mentoring provision as part of their new commissioning cycle.

Brent is fortunate to have partners and stakeholders that are committed to reducing the overrepresentation of looked after Children. Brent Council has a key role to play in ensuring this commitment is maintained by continuing to promote London Protocol responsibilities to health, care, and criminal justice partners via the YJS Management Board. Presenting this paper to the Board as part of a wider exploration of new commitments will take place in October 2025.

10.0 Financial Considerations

10.1 There are currently no specific financial considerations arising from this report.

11.0 Legal Considerations

11.1 There are currently no specific legal considerations arising from this report.

12.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

12.1 By adopting the principles outlined in The Protocol, we are recognising and addressing the vulnerabilities and disadvantage experienced by care experienced young people, ensuring better overall outcomes.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

13.1 There are no climate change or environmental considerations.

14.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

14.1 There are no human resource or property considerations.

15.0 Communication Considerations

15.1 At this stage there are no communication considerations.

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director Children, Young People and Community Development