

# Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

## 1.0 Introduction

The Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028 (YJP) is a statutory requirement under Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 relating to the provision of youth justice services. Brent's new 3-year plan reviews progress made over the last 12 months and outlines our priorities and plans for the next three-years. Our planning is realistic, achievable and inspires confidence that we are well placed to build upon the gains made over the last ten-years. These include falling numbers of first-time entrants, a declining custodial population, and reductions to our reoffending rates. Our YJP also sets out how the Brent Youth Justice Service (YJS) operates, how it is funded, and provides details of our governance arrangements.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

- i. That the Brent YJS Management Board supports, enables, and monitors delivery of the Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028.
- ii. Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028 progress is reviewed and recorded annually and shared with the Youth Justice Board, Brent YJS Management Board and other governing authorities as directed on or before 30 June annually.
- iii. 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 Brent 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 the next 3 years. The Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028 outlines our work addressing the individual and often complex needs of children and young people who have entered, or are at risk of entering, the local youth justice system. In 2024, this totalled 201 children (0.6%) of the Brent 10-17 population who received 289 youth justice disposals:

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**Table 1. No. of children supported by Brent YJS by disposal in 2024**

Type of disposals	No. of Children
Court Sentence	98
Out Of Court Disposals	59
Turnaround Programme	38
Remand / Bail support programme	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>

We are proud of our achievements which include the integration of child first principles into our daily work, the progress we have made to reduce reoffending and first-time entrants into the youth justice system, and our continued commitment to addressing the overrepresentation of children from Black heritage groups supported by Brent YJS.

On a Departmental level it has been both a very busy and extremely productive year. In April 2024, Brent Council's Early Help and Social Care Directorate embarked on a new redesign programme to better support more holistic, joined up working and ensure we have a modern, fit for purpose service model, in line with the Government's Families First reform programme. Throughout the process, we engaged with staff across Early Help and Social Care to get a strong understanding of their experience within the existing operating model, and the key issues that they wanted to be addressed in the new model. Following these sessions, a proposed Target Operating Model was approved by OCSLT and was taken forward for formal consultation with staff in January 2025.

Thanks to the considerable help and support we received from staff across CYP we have developed a new model which brings together non-statutory Family Support Workers with Children's Social Workers in seven teams, each aligned to a Family Wellbeing Centre. Over time, Family Support Workers will receive training to begin to complete Child and Family Assessments under the guidance and supervision of a Social Worker. These teams will oversee all Family Support and Child in Need work. New Child Protection Teams will also be established, made up of Social Workers who will oversee caseloads of Child Protection, Section 47, Interim Care Order, Supervision Orders and Care Proceedings cases.

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Brent YJS and the Community Safety Team have long worked closely to identify and support services that combat antisocial behaviour, serious youth violence, knife crime, and county lines. Existing close collaborations were strengthened further when the service was repositioned in April 2025 within the widened Children, Young People and Community Development Department (CYPCD). Both services are committed to jointly promoting engagement with local communities and victims on the development of local youth justice services.

The development of our new Targeted Prevention Hub (TPH) is of particular relevance to Brent YJS. Located within the Brent Youth and Youth Justice Service and managed by the Youth and Youth Justice Manager (reporting to the Head of Service Early Help), the TPH will bring together existing adolescent-focused resources across Early Help and Social Care to support children and young people across all areas of the child's journey, starting at the point of referral. The TPH also includes the development of a Family Group Conference Service. The TPH is due to be launched in stages from June 2025.

The child-centred workplace culture that is so evident in Brent YJS will be incorporated into TPH through modelling the revised ways of working: *This is Brent CYP - This is How We Grow*. This ensures that all 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 reflective supervision template and enhanced 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 everyone is accountable for the delivery of their work. This is key to collaborating with the Youth Justice Board (YJB) to deliver the three strategic objectives outlined in the Youth Justice Board Strategy 2024-2027:

1. Supporting the improvement of youth justice services in local communities.
2. Focusing on addressing persistent racial disparities across the youth justice system.
3. Influencing the 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

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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 and re-emphasised in their Strategy Plan for 2024-2027. These are to deliver positive outcomes for children by reducing offending and creating safer communities. 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 as responsible citizens. It is also a method that provides Brent YJS with the necessary means to achieve its principal 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 2024/25, we performed strongly across several key areas:**

## **Re-offending**

Re-offending rates are prone to fluctuation and tracked over a period of 18 months. The low rates of reoffending that Brent has experienced in recent years is 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. The establishment of TPH provides renewed confidence that our reoffending rates will maintain their downwards trajectory.

## **Custody & 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 oversight including At Risk of Custody meetings.

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## **First Time Entrants**

The number of children entering the Youth Justice System has also been falling for more than a decade. To a real extent this has reflected the effective planning, and decision making, and wide-ranging interventions offered by the YJS Out of Court Disposal team.

## **Out Of Court Disposals**

Our procedures and processes highlight the voice of the victim, and promote our restorative justice offer. Work undertaken in partnership with the Police and the YJS Out of Court Disposal team is truly collaborative and focused on achieving fair and good outcomes for all children and young people. In 2024 we introduced the YJB Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool to make our assessments even more child-first and to ensure interventions are needs led. The number of police referrals to the Out of Court Disposal Team is predicted to increase significantly during the life of this plan due to the strategic commitment to child-first policing made by the Metropolitan Police in April 2025.

## **Disproportionality**

Our Disproportionality Action Plan is refreshed annually and is reflected throughout the work of the YJS. It is regularly monitored by the YJS Management Board and contains wide-ranging actions across the partnership. In 2024 we conducted an analysis of our Police diversionary interventions which showed that whilst children from Black Heritage Groups in Brent have access to OOCs, they remain under-represented when compared to children from White Heritage groups. Furthermore, children from Black Heritage groups are more likely to receive 1<sup>st</sup> tier outcomes and thus more likely to be when compared to children from White Heritage Groups. We will build upon this throughout 2025-2028 by seeking to understand whether disproportionate access to OOCs the result of child-first policing or the product of children from Black Heritage groups being subjected to disproportionately high Police attention.

## **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 2016/17 (66 SYV offences in the year 2016/17 to 37 in 2024/25, which is 44% decrease) - although within this cohort there has been an increase in the proportion of both robbery offences and knife crime for this cohort. For this reason, safety mapping is undertaken with all children supported by the YJS to better understand the harm they are exposed to in the community and where necessary plan how they can work safely with the YJS.

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## **Courts**

We receive a considerable amount of positive feedback from our 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 continual 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. This has included YJS children sharing short films made by Brent children with the YJS Management Board, working in partnership with the Raheem Sterling Foundation, and sharing youth insights on crime and disorder with the Police during Community Safety Team Roundtable discussions, and conducting annual surveys with Brent children and their parents and carers.

## **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 existing and newly emerging preventative support. The new TPH will further strengthen our joint working.

## **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 in 2024. It is hoped that new arrangements introduced by the Police will significantly increase our ability to directly encourage victims to engage in restorative justice.

**The YJS Management Board will focus on the following in 2025/26:**

## **Council Services**

### **Children's Social Care**

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Safeguarding children and young people from serious youth violence and risk outside the home 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, Leaving Care, Family Support and Child Protection and Court Teams.

Ongoing work undertaken with our early help and social care teams to keep children safe, such as peer mapping and supporting children at court, will be enhanced by the establishment of the Brent Contextual Safeguarding and Violence Reduction Strategic Group (CSVRSRG). Introduced in May 2025, the purpose of CSVRSRG is to understand the profile of our most vulnerable and at-risk residents, oversee themes and trends and develop interventions to make individuals and Brent residents safer. The CSVRSRG supports the Safer Brent Partnership to achieve the priorities of the Safer Brent Strategy to tackle violent crime, challenge domestic abuse and sexual abuse and prevent violence against women and girls, focus on incidents impacting our community, and protect the most vulnerable.

## **Community Safety Team**

Brent YJS and the Community Safety Team have long worked closely to identify and support services that combat antisocial behaviour, serious youth violence, knife crime, and county lines. Existing close collaborations were strengthened further when the service was repositioned in April 2025 within the widened Children, Young People and Community Development Department (CYP CD).

Both services are committed to jointly promoting engagement with local communities and victims on the development of local youth justice services. This includes working together to include mentoring provision for YJS children as part of 2026-2029 commissioning arrangements and 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. We have increased educational staffing resources to 2.0 FTE Prospects Careers Advisors, and this is complemented by one PLIAS Resettlement Worker who offers community-based support, advice and guidance to young people with criminal convictions. This combined with close oversight from the YJS NEET Working Group provides the tools and resources needed to reduce the number of children known to YJS who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). YJS will continue to deliver preventative workshops to mainstream and alternative schools. This will include working in partnership with our newly formed TPH to deliver the Your Life You Choose programme. This is a multi-agency presentation day which seeks to deter school students from crime, raise awareness of the consequences of their choices and empower them to make better decisions and keep themselves safe.

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## **Victims**

We continue to work collaboratively with colleagues in our Looked After Children and Leaving Care Services to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of children living in supported accommodation by raising awareness about alternatives to reporting low level crime. This includes referral to our restorative justice offer which is open to all victims of crime and includes both direct and indirect mediation. Brent YJS has built upon plans to extend its reparations offer and now undertakes reparative work at Family Wellbeing Centres and the church-based Dementia Café. Our children and young people also exhibited significant painting and decorating flair as part of new reparations programme which has revamped the SEND area at Stonebridge Primary School. Victim's work is predicted to expand significantly following the recent decision from the Metropolitan Police to allow YJS' to have greater direct access to victims.

## **Public Health**

We continue to work closely with Public Health. Work undertaken last year paved the way for the creation of newly revamped substance misuse provision pathways. Introduced in April this year, all children who receive Police Out of Court Disposals can access support from VIA, a voluntary sector provider that specialises in substance misuse provision for children and young people in Brent. To promote ever closer working between Brent YJS and VIA, the two organisations held a service wide meeting in May this year, that enabled practitioners to identify service improvements and new ways of working - which include a commitment to offer groupwork. This work dovetails with TPH plans to extend access to Public Health initiatives that support the physical and emotional health of children, especially those who are missing or excluded from school, or misusing drugs and alcohol.

## **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.



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## **Voluntary Sector**

The continued sharing of community wide knowledge is vital to achieving good outcomes for children. This includes information shared by the Young Brent Foundation at Management Board meetings relating to contextual safeguarding, deprivation and the quality and sufficiency of safe spaces and activities for children and young people.

Brent YJS will continue to access to the broad range of youth provision offered by the Violence Reduction Unit funded *I Am Brent* consortium.

## **Improved Mental Health and Wellbeing**

The Brent YJS Mental Health Practitioner seconded from the CAMHS Enhanced Treatment Team will continue to provide onward referral, advice and support for all children likely to require 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 from the Brent Centre for Young People and TPH.

## **Police**

We will assist the Police to ensure the safety of children and better protect the public. This will include the ongoing delivery of Police led Victim Awareness and Crime Prevention group work sessions, Police One to One sessions with children and young people supported by YJS, and the joint sharing of risk and safety information between YJS and the Police. YJS will continue to support the Police to implement the child-centred ambitions contained within the new MPS Children Strategy, by identifying new opportunities to listen to and respond to the voices of children. Supporting the Community Safety Team to facilitate Roundtable events between YJS children and the Police.

## **National Strategy and Emerging Good Practice: the YJB and HMIP**

Overall, 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), the *HMIP Annual Report 2023: inspection of youth justice services* (Sept 24). *Standards for children in the justice system: 2023 to 2024 audit* (Feb 25), *Multi-agency responses to serious youth violence: working together to support and protect children* (Nov 24), and *Children and families' experiences of multi-agency support when impacted by serious youth violence* (Nov 24).

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As in previous years we will continue to learn from case audits, Serious Case Reviews, Key Performance Information data, through engagement with children, young people, and their families, and through case presentations at Board meetings. 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’. This 3-year 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, Young People and Community Development (CYPCD)**

## **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 5<sup>th</sup> largest Borough in London<sup>1</sup>
- 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 groups<sup>2</sup>.
- Brent’s child population aged 0-17 years (based on Census 2021) is 73,056 with 33,359 aged 10-17 years.
- 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.

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<sup>1</sup> ONS 2021 Census

<sup>2</sup> GLA Population Projections 2022, published 2016.

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## 4.2 GLA Population Projection for 2021:

*Table 2. 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

## 4.3 Looked After Children in Brent

In January 2025, there were 289 Looked After Children (LAC) – eleven fewer than in January 2024 (300). Brent has a smaller LAC cohort than its statistical neighbours and less than the national average. In January 2025, Brent had a rate of 39.0 LAC per 10,000 children under 18-years.

## 4.4 The LAC / YJS Cohort

Within an overall YJS open caseload of 112 children and young people in April 2025 there were 17 LAC young people supervised by the YJS - compared to 10 LAC in May 2024 – the increase is the result of eight children being remanded in custody for two serious offences. Looked after Children are one of the most vulnerable groups in Brent with many children experiencing high levels of harm and exploitation. Analysis of this cohort shows:

- 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).

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

Analysis of 201 children and young people supported by Brent YJS between January and December 2024 found that:

- 174 children were male, 26 children were female.
- 84 children were from a Black Heritage Group, 48 were of 'Other' Heritage, 26 were from a White Heritage Group, 26 were of Mixed Heritage, 15 were from an Asian Heritage group and the heritage of 2 was Unknown
- Cannabis was the predominant substance - used or possessed by 52 (26%) children and young people supported by Brent YJS.
- 52 (25.8%) of those children had committed a drugs offence with 51 (98%) of the offence type being possession.
- 24 of the 46 children referred to the YJS due to cannabis crime were referred for substance misuse treatment. This is consistent with the national picture where cannabis is the most common substance used by children referred for treatment (52%).
- 67% had mental health concerns.
- 7% had a special educational need.
- 1% were recorded as having difficulty with speech and language.
- 16% had been or currently were in LA care
- 26% were previously or currently subject to a CIN.
- 8% were previously or currently subject to CP.

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## 4.6 All children and young people: April 2025 open caseload

A snapshot of the active caseload taken in April 2025. showed there were 112 open cases. Analysis of the caseload showed that:

- Sixty percent were aged 16 or 17 years compared to 67% in May 2024, 64% in June 2023, 64% in February 2022 and 57% in February 2021.
- Eighty-eight percent were male compared to 89% in May 2024, 87% in June 2023, 78% in February 2022 and 86% in February 2021.
- Thirty-eight percent of children and young people were from a Black Caribbean or other Black Heritage Group compared to 54% in May 2024, 46% in June 2023, 48% in February 2022 and 46% in February 2021.
- Twenty-three percent, inclusive of caretaking cases, were LAC.
- Twenty-three percent were NEET (in academic years 12 and 13 and including children and young people residing out of Brent) compared to 23% in May 2024, 29% in June 2023, 39% in February 22 and 24% in February 2021.
- Seven percent of the caseload (8) had an EHCP or Statement of SEN compared to 11% in May 2024, 6% in June 2023, 5% in February 2022 and 12% in February 2021. SEND / Additional Learning Needs is one the ten newly introduced KPI's monitored by the YJB.

The wards containing the highest proportion of children in the April 2025 cohort were Alperton, Mapesbury, Stonebridge and Harlesden. Children and young people residing in these wards represent over 28% of all open cases. A significant proportion (almost a quarter) reside outside of Brent.

## 4.7 Brent YJS 2024 case level data:

*Table 3: Brent YJS Case Level Data 2024*

Brent YJS 2023/24 Case-level data (Offences and Offending Populations)			
Offences	Disposals	Offending population by ethnicity	Offending population by gender

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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	
210	22	73	18	2	116	12 (12.5%)	13 (13.5%)	3 (3.2%)	41 (42.7%)	26 (27.1%)	1 (1.0%)	6 (6.25%)	90 (93.75%)	0 (0.0%)	96

### 4.8 Reducing caseloads and increasing complexity

The significant reduction in caseloads in recent years reflects changes to national sentencing policy which is largely now focussed 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 - along with knife crime - 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 being Child First requires services to 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

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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.

The importance of really understanding our children and young people has become 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.

Recognising neurodivergent characteristics is a fundamental part of being Child First because 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), autism spectrum condition (ASC) also known as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), dyspraxia, dyslexia, and developmental language disorder (DLD). Historically conditions such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and ASCs were viewed as separate disorders or conditions. More recent research has shown these should not be considered as binary diagnoses, in that you either 'have it or do not', but more like continuous traits such as height or blood pressure where everyone lies somewhere along a continuum. The impact of having one or more condition for the individual can vary substantially however:

- 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 whilst at school.

By taking an inclusive approach to service delivery and design, Brent YJS is able to engage more children and young people in an accessible manner. Creating a formulation for each child means the YJS has moved away from labels, to being more child-centred and towards inclusive and not exclusive approaches. 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) in its work with children and young people assists practitioners to identify those at higher risk of

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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 & 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. The Brent Youth Justice Board, led by our NHS and Inclusion Service representatives, is currently redoubling efforts to establish referral pathways that will enable Brent children and young people known to YJS to access Speech and Language Therapy.

## **5.2 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.

Adopting this approach has strengthened YJS's ability to form meaningful and creative collaborations. Children supported by the YJS Participation Officer have developed short films about their aspirations, challenges and experiences as victims and perpetrators of crime. Closer links with the Raheem Sterling Foundation are being formed and this has led to a group of five children, who supported a knife amnesty, discussing their hopes and aspirations with Raheem Sterling for over an hour. 'Roundtable' discussions with the Police and young people commenced in 2024. These afford children from the YJS the opportunity to share their views on crime and exploitation with the Police and senior decision makers.

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



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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.

## **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 to 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 healthy debate on 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 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. We have journeyed with them to the implementation of a range youth led projects. These have been more creative and interactive approaches, supported by the YJS Participation Officer, such

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as podcasts and short films - including a short film about online exploitation that was shared with the Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Group.

Brent YJS commitment to co-production and youth participation was afforded a strategic advantage in April 2022, when the YJS Management Board approved a proposal to form the Youth and Youth Justice Service by bringing together the YJS and the Council's responsibility for coordinating and monitoring the Brent Youth Strategy. 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** Over the course of the HMIP Inspection of youth justice services 2022/24, 423 text surveys were sent to children, parents and carers. HMIP received 152 complete responses and 52 partial responses (204 in total). Key findings included:

- Ninety-six per cent of children, parents and carers felt the aims of the YJS were communicated effectively to them: 'Help and guide', 'keep me/my child out of trouble', 'avoid further offending', 'to make better choices'.
- Ninety-eight per cent believed that their case managers had the right skills to help them: 'You get warm vibes with them – you feel that you can talk to them'. 'I feel confident with my worker, and I trust them'. 'It's taken some time to build the trust because it is something I struggle with. They got round it by being genuine, and being with them a long time now has helped me to really get to know them'.
- Ninety per cent felt that their YJS had supported them and helped them to get access to the services that would support them and help them to stay out of trouble: 'They pay for me to go to a music studio and use it for free. The people that work there have also helped me to learn how to produce music and beats.'
- Ninety-nine per cent of children felt that the places where YJS practitioners saw them were safe and accessible.  
'They ask where you feel safe when you first meet them. I didn't feel safe where my school was and my YJS worker helped to get me into a new school placement.'

## **6.3 Brent Young People and Parent and Carer Surveys – 2024**

During 2024 an extensive survey took place with YJS young people and their parents and carers. This involved 68 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.

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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? This 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.
- 39% (22) fully understood their sentencing experience in court (10 rating - highest) and another 56% (32) gave ratings at 5 or above. 3 (5%) gave a rating of 1 (lowest).
- 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.
- 97% (66) were offered an opportunity to engage in positive activities whilst in contact with the YJS.
- 100% felt listened to by their case manager.
- 99% (67) felt satisfied with the work that the case manager had completed with them.
- Key areas of work completed within the plan as indicated by the young people were peer pressure (54%), substance misuse (59%), victim awareness (63%), ETE (46%), work on my offence (62%), my identity (46%), reparation (41%), work on my safety (41%), restorative justice (21%), family support (28%) ETE work with Prospects (22%), stop and search (knowing your rights) (24%), weapons awareness (40%) and ETE work with PLIAS (16%).
- 94% (64) said that the case manager had given them feedback about their progress.
- 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,

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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.'

- 100% said that their case manager has encouraged them to think about their future plans.
- 99% (67) said that the case manager contacted them on the date and time expected for their session each week.
- 69% (47) said that their case manager had visited them at home.
- 78% (53) of them had said that the case manager had supported them to keep them safe. This was due to 'safety mapping, advice to not go into certain areas, not going missing and telling staff where I am, advising me to talk to my Mum about the threats and better friends.'
- 34% (23) have been a victim.
- 81% (55) had been stopped and searched.
- 61% (41) felt well supported by their case manager (a 10 rating) and a further 26% (18) rated this support as 8 rating or 9.
- Participants expanded on how support' could be improved with a range of responses including: 'less (face to face) appointments and more appointments over the phone, sometimes when I am talking she does not take it all in and could listen some more, continuous support, not being so reluctant to give second chances, getting to know my case manager better, not making me do victim awareness or reparation, to be more understanding of why I did what I did, moving quicker on stuff that needs to get done.'
- 78% (53) felt that the YJS helped them to stop re-offending
- When asked what the biggest barriers to moving forwards in their lives were, participants replied: 'the neighbourhood, wrong friends, my ADHD, I don't want to answer this, some people in Southend can be a negative influence, mistakes in life, criminal record, need a job or training opportunity, to think about what I'm doing before I do it, Social Care do not listen and are too much in my business, being in custody and then needing to make up for lost time, stopping smoking cannabis, working, alcohol and my anxiety with people, nothing, being disciplined, being tagged, and living in Wembley'.
- When asked how the YJS could improve its service to young people, participants replied: 'have people work with us that have gone through the same experiences with committing a crime, don't assume people are in gangs or talk about safety issues when it's not the case, less appointments, no panels, book me a music studio session every Saturday, more videos and presentations with the interventions, more activities and practical work, not coming to court as it makes me feel like a bad person, having a jobs board for local opportunities - the SPEAR program does this but most of the opportunities are not in my area, doing what you say you will do quicker, Nah I

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don't think so, continue supporting them, more free activities like free gym memberships, have more Panels like Roundtable for young people to have good discussions about different things that affect them, not have so many appointments, more straight to the point, by providing constructive use of time such as studio time, or sports activities.'

**Although findings were positive overall, there several areas where improvements need to be made. These include:**

- Whilst YJS Case Managers invest a great deal of time explaining court proceedings, it is worrying that a large proportion did not fully understand their sentencing experience at court, and equally that some children were stressed, nervous and scared by their overall court experience. YJS will review current approaches to preparing children for court to identify the strengths and weaknesses of our current approach. Recognising the likely impact of known and undiagnosed speech and language difficulties and progressing our work with the NHS and Inclusion Service to unlock pathways to SALT provision will be central to improving our understanding.
- Similarly, YJS Case Managers routinely explain what a court order is, its requirements and the consequences of non-compliance. It is therefore concerning that 42 young people did not respond to this question. The YJS will assess the extent to which these messages are being delivered in a child friendly way that matches an individual's learning needs. Practice development sessions and individual support will be provided to officers where necessary. The extent to which speech and language difficulties may have contributed to the low response rate must also be considered as part of wider work to access SALT provision for children known to YJS.
- Thirty-one percent of children said they didn't receive a home visit. Work is needed to understand why. Whilst there are often safety reasons for not doing so, analysis of the ChildView database will be undertaken to understand why home visits were not undertaken in all instances. Team Managers will be expected to have close oversight of this area of practice, and where necessary provide rationale for not doing so in supervision.

### 6.4 YJS Parents and Carers Survey - 2024

Twenty-nine parents took part in the YJS Parents and Carers Survey 2024. Seventy-six percent of participants were female. Fifty-two percent of their children were sentenced at court and the remainder received an Out of Court Disposal (OCD) from the Police.

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Parents overwhelmingly felt emotional strain because of their child's involvement in the youth justice system. Participants referred to: 'sadness, upset, shame, tearful, feeling bad, and anxiety'.

Other findings include:

- 42% of parents found accompanying their child to court to be a difficult experience. Seventeen percent (5) said they had a good experience at court.
- 100% of parents attended and participated in their child's initial YJS meeting.
- 97% of parents felt listened to and included in the preparation of their child's Intervention Plan.
- 93% of parents were sent a copy of the plan of work to be undertaken.
- 51% of parents were invited to the child's quarterly review meeting.
- 97% felt they were able to speak to their child's case manager about any issues or concerns.
- 100% reported that they received up to date reports from the child's case manager about what is happening.
- Over 90% rated their experience as 8 and above when asked if their child was fully supported by the YJS.
- 93% were offered support, advice, and information about parenting.
- The support parents received was regarded positively: 'I could air my concerns, excellent advice and support, given a lot of tools to keep calm, supported and encouraged throughout, really helpful, I followed the advice and it worked'.
- 93% of parents and carers were satisfied with the service received from the YJS (43%) or very satisfied (50%).
- The top five issues of concerns identified by parents and carers were: substance misuse:19 parents (65%), child criminal exploitation:18 parents (63%), gangs: 20 parents (69%), social media: 14 parents (48%) and County lines: 12 parents (41%).

## **6.5 Although findings were positive overall, there several opportunities for improvements to be made. These include:**

- It is unsurprising that so many parents and carers experienced emotional difficulties as a result of their child's involvement in the youth justice system. However, given that 100% had attended their child's initial YJS meeting, and so too that they were happy with the support provided by case managers, it is notable that so many found court to be a difficult experience. This may suggest that they require more emotional assistance than a Case Manager can be expected to give. Either way, YJS staff will work with parents to identify any additional needs that could be provided by the YJS and to refer them to local support including that offered at Family Wellbeing Centres.

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- Case Managers will invite all parents and carers to their child's quarterly review meeting. Team Managers will provide close oversight of this work and ensure the reasons for all instances of absence are recorded on ChildView.
- Parents and carers will be given access to structured workshops covering the issues they are most concerned about.

### **6.6 Raheem Sterling Foundation**

In collaboration with Raheem Sterling Foundation and Word 4 Weapons, seven new Knife Amnesty bins were unveiled in Brent at an event held in May 2024, attended by five young people from Brent YJS, council and community workers. 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 away from knife crime and towards support with 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."

The YJS Participation Worker, together with YBF and the Raheem Sterling Foundation, organised for the five YJS young people who supported the event 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.

### **6.7 Brent Youth Parliament (BYP)**

Brent Youth Parliament (BYP) represents over 77,000 children and young people living in the borough and encourages them to express their views and have a say on decisions that affect them. The parliament is open to young people aged between 10 and 19 (and up to twenty-five for young people with special education needs or disabilities) from a range of backgrounds, who represent schools, youth groups and different communities in Brent.

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Brent Youth Parliament run by an elected executive group of young people, which includes two members of the UK Youth Parliament who represent young people in Brent in national campaigns and decision-making. BYP meets at Brent Civic Centre once a month to discuss and campaign on issues that affect young people.

## **6.8 The Brent Youth Zone**

This website promotes Brent Youth Parliament, the Fire Cadets and provides 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.

## **6.9 Junior Care in Action (Junior CIA), Care in Action (CIA) and Care Leavers in Action (CLIA)**

The Children in Care Council for Brent Council 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.

## **6.10 Christmas Tree Appeal**

In December 2023, Brent Early Help worked with the MET Police as part of their Xmas 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. Planning was expected to begin again in October 2024; however, the MET Police were unable to undertake the Christmas Tree appeal and distribute donations in the same as they were focussing on raising funds instead.

After exploring alternative avenues, Brent CYP received a delivery of £535 worth of £15 Amazon vouchers and £10-£20 Love2Shop vouchers donated by 'Wates Living Space'. These were distributed to young people across the Looked After and Leaving Care team, 0-25 Disabled Children and Young People's Service, Accelerated Support Team, Family Solutions, Youth Justice Service and Family Wellbeing Centres. The Church of Annunciation in Wembley kindly provided a large range of children's toys, clothes, games, books and craft items, which were given out over the two CYP conference days to Early Help staff for their Brent children and young people for Christmas. We also received two sacks of children's toys from the Ace Café in Stonebridge, which were given to the St. Raphael's and Three Trees Family Wellbeing Centres. Planning for Christmas 2025 will begin in October.



# Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

## 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 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 CWYCD Department 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 aim to reduce offending and safeguard children and young people. Secondly, the Board are informed by an understanding of the characteristics of the YJS cohort and 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 2025. 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. The KPI on Management Board Attendance was met in full in 2023/24. The attendance at the Board remained good overall throughout 2024/25, however probation and educational representation dipped in the first half of the year due to new appointments.

*Table 4: YJS Management Board Attendance 2024/25 by Quarter*

<b>Brent YJS Management Board Attendance 2024/25</b>
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Senior Management Board Attendance	2024-25 Quarter 1 18/04/24	2024-25 Quarter 2 25/07/24	2024-25 Quarter 3 24/10/24	2024-25 Quarter 4 30/01/25
Health	0	1	2	2
LA Children's Social Care	0	2	1	2
LA Education	0	0	0	1
Police	2	2	2	1
Probation	0	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

### 7.4 Families First reform programme

The Early Help and Social Care service commenced a redesign programme in April 2024, to make provision more seamless, holistic, and future fit. Involving staff at all levels and all stages has been a critical part of the programme's success. A series of workshops with Service Managers, Team Managers and practitioners across the service were conducted to gather a wide range of views and ideas. Other Local Authorities were also engaged, including those involved in the Government's Families First for Children Pathfinder, to understand best practice elsewhere. From this a set of key design principles underpinning the development of any model options were adopted:

- Ensure that Children and Young People are at the centre of everything we do.
- Reduction in silo-working between departments.
- Minimising and streamlining handover points between teams.
- Minimise assessments and duplication for children and families.
- Create greater opportunities for shared learning and experience building between teams
- Greater consistency for children and families.
- Increase practitioners' capacity to build strong relationships with children and families.
- Supporting the recruitment and retention of Key Workers and Social Workers.
- Improving the experience of Children and Families engaging with the Early Help and Social Care services.

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Using these guiding principles, three model options were developed, two of which were taken forward for extensive staff engagement in November and December 2024. Well over 200 staff participated in these sessions, providing extensive feedback on model options and guiding the choice of a preferred model. After careful consideration, OCSLT approved a proposed Target Operating Model for formal consultation with staff in January 2025. The model features a joining together of non-statutory Family Support Workers with Children's Social Workers in seven teams aligned to Family Wellbeing Centres. Each team is responsible for overseeing Family Support and Child in Need work. Additionally, Social Workers will be allocated to new Child Protection Teams and Court Teams to manage child protection and care proceedings cases. Care Planning Teams will remain the same, with the only change being that cases will only transfer to these teams once a Care Order is issued. Ultimately, it is hoped that this new model, with a stronger focus on preventative family support work, and closer working between qualified and alternatively qualified practitioners will reduce the number of handovers between different teams and ultimately improve outcomes for children and families.

### **7.5 Brent Youth Strategy 2025-2028**

In March 2025 the refreshed Brent Youth Strategy 2025 – 2028 was approved by Cabinet after a period of consultation with partners and young people in Brent.

The refreshed youth strategy and action plan represent our promise and commitment to the young people of Brent, to deliver and achieve together. The Brent Youth Strategy document is made with and for the children and young people of Brent and outlines clearly how the Council and partners will work for them and support them towards a positive future. This will be monitored through the work of the Youth Strategy Delivery Group, that works collaboratively with multi-agency partners. Young people in Brent have been consulted throughout the process so that their voices and views on what is most important to them are heard and clearly reflected. The Brent Youth Strategy 2025 – 2028 is grounded in principles of equity, inclusion and innovation with a focus on ensuring that every young person, regardless of background, has the resources, confidence and opportunity to lead a healthy, fulfilling and purpose-driven life.

Through collaborative partnerships, the aim is to create a sustainable framework that nurtures the young people of Brent to be equipped to thrive.

Together with our partners, including the voluntary and community sector across Brent, we will continue building close and lasting relationships that will enable us to effectively succeed in the delivery of our strategy plan. We celebrate Brent for the diverse and vibrant borough that we are, and we are dedicated to ensuring the best possible

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outcomes for our young people. This refreshed youth strategy and action plan represent our promise and commitment to young people to deliver and achieve together.

The Youth Strategy's Priorities, or main themes, as identified by young people, are:

- Being Heard and Taking Part (Engagement and Participation)
- Reaching Goals and Enjoying Yourself (Skills, Opportunities and Activities)
- Feeling Good (Health and Wellbeing)
- Staying Safe (Safety)

On 7 April 2025, young people gathered at St Raphael's Family Wellbeing Centre to celebrate the launch of the Brent Youth Strategy 2025 – 2028 with stalls promoting youth provision and support across Brent, free sporting, music and gaming activities, hot lunch and snacks provided and a sponsored raffle.

Members of Brent Youth Parliament, who played a key role in shaping the strategy, declared: "This is a strategy made for young people, by young people, with our fingerprints embedded firmly in it."

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 Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (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.

- 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.

## **Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028**

- 7.7** Brent YJS is aligned to the Youth Justice Board oversight framework. This framework, informed by the YJB's vision (April 2023), monitors youth justice system performance, oversight, assurance, and compliance. It additionally highlights 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. Our continued good relations with the YJB, who attend our Board meetings and regularly meet with the Youth and Youth Justice Manager, will continue to have far reaching benefits for our children, families, and wider communities.
- 7.8** The Brent Borough Plan 2023-2027, sets out what the council will focus on over the next four years. The Plan is called 'Moving Brent Forward Together' and it focuses on five priority areas:
- Prosperity and Stability in Brent
  - A Cleaner, Greener Future
  - Thriving Communities
  - The Best Start in Life
  - A Healthier Brent

By focussing on keeping young people safe, raising aspirations, empowering young people and encouraging them to be seen and heard, the work of Brent YJS is closely aligned to the Best Start in Life theme.

### **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 2024. 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 - via the YJS management Board - and continues to ensure that everyone who works for the YJS has planned and recorded individual training and development.

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- 8.2** Brent YJS benefits from partner staffing contributions equivalent to 7.6 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.
- 8.3** Brent Police continue to provide a continuous staffing contribution that exceeds the minimum statutory requirement of 1.0 FTE. There are 2.0 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 offer children and young people 1:1 session, 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, Education has fulfilled their statutory requirement to support YJS via annual Direct Schools Grant financial contributions.
- 8.7** Reporting to the Head of Service, Early Help, the Youth and Youth Justice Manager has overall management oversight of 21.5 FTE staff members.
- 8.8** Brent YJS has maintained a stable workforce of 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. Regular monthly YJS monthly practice development sessions during 2024/25 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 2025/27. This will include building upon our understanding of disproportionality concerns, cultural competency and anti-racist training, especially around the journey of the child.

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**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.

## **9.0      Resourcing and Services**

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

### **9.2      VIA**

Since 2017, VIA, a voluntary sector provider that specialises in substance misuse provision have been supporting YJS children and young people:

- Who have admitted to, or been found guilty of, the commissioning of drug offences by a court of law.
- Or have been assessed as having substance misuse needs as part of the YJS duty to supervise court ordered sentences. This crucial support has been made possible due to Brent Public Health commissioning arrangements.

Following a remapping of substance misuse pathways exercise led by Public Health, VIA have increased their support in April 2025 to all children in the Brent youth justice system. This has been achieved by extending the referral pathway to include children who have received a Police-issued OOC for drug related offences, or are assessed by the YJS to have, or be at risk of, substance misuse harm.

Substance Misuse is one the ten newly introduced KPI's monitored by the YJB.

### **9.3      I Am Brent**

*I Am Brent* is a local consortium includes Step Up Hub (lead organisation), PLIAS, Sport at the Heart, Connect Stars, United Borders and Hilltop. These organisations work together to address the root causes and effects of violence affecting young people in the London Borough of Brent. Support includes pre-custodial release engagement, intensive trauma informed mentoring, one to one casework support, employability support, psychotherapy, and family support. Under YJS management, TPH will work with I Am Brent to maximise the effectiveness of referral routes across CYPCD and identify opportunities to work more collaboratively.

# **Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028**

## **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.

## **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 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 include Feltham YOI, the Police, Social Care, Early Help, the NHS, CAMHS, Restorative Justice Workers, and the CYP Placement Service.



# **Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028**

## **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 co-ordinates 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.

## **Contextual Safeguarding and Violence Reduction Strategic Group**

The purpose of the Brent Contextual Safeguarding and Violence Reduction Strategic Group (CSVRSG) is to understand the profile of our most vulnerable and at-risk residents, oversee themes and trends and develop interventions to make individuals and Brent residents safer. The CSVRSG – which has a core membership of numerous agencies and other agencies as required - supports the Safer Brent Partnership to achieve the priorities of the Safer Brent Strategy to:

- Tackle violent crime
- Challenge domestic abuse sexual abuse and preventing violence against women and girls
- Focus on incidents impacting our community
- Protecting the most vulnerable

The Brent CSVRSG is accountable to the Safer Brent Partnership and contributes to the Safeguarding Children Forum and Safeguarding Adult Board.

# **Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028**

## **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 new local YJS and Probation Protocol – which is informed by the Joint National Protocol for transitions in England (June 2021). The purpose of the Panel is to support the planned and safe movement of young people from the youth justice service to the probation service when they turn 18.

## **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 (O OCD) 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 O OCD decisions guided by the ACPO Police child matrix. It additionally identifies young people who are eligible to attend the Turnaround project.

# **Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028**

## **9.8 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 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 – new developments - and related performance against KPIs**

### **10.1 Nationally: Youth Justice Board Strategic Plan 2024-27**

Encouraging 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 shrunk. 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**

# Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

In 2024/25, 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. The statistical evidence is encouraging and set out in sections 10.3 to 10.5.

## 10.3 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 appears to be that of a significantly fluctuating and decreasing reoffending rate. This is largely 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 and 26.1% in January to March 2023.

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 quality assurance activity.

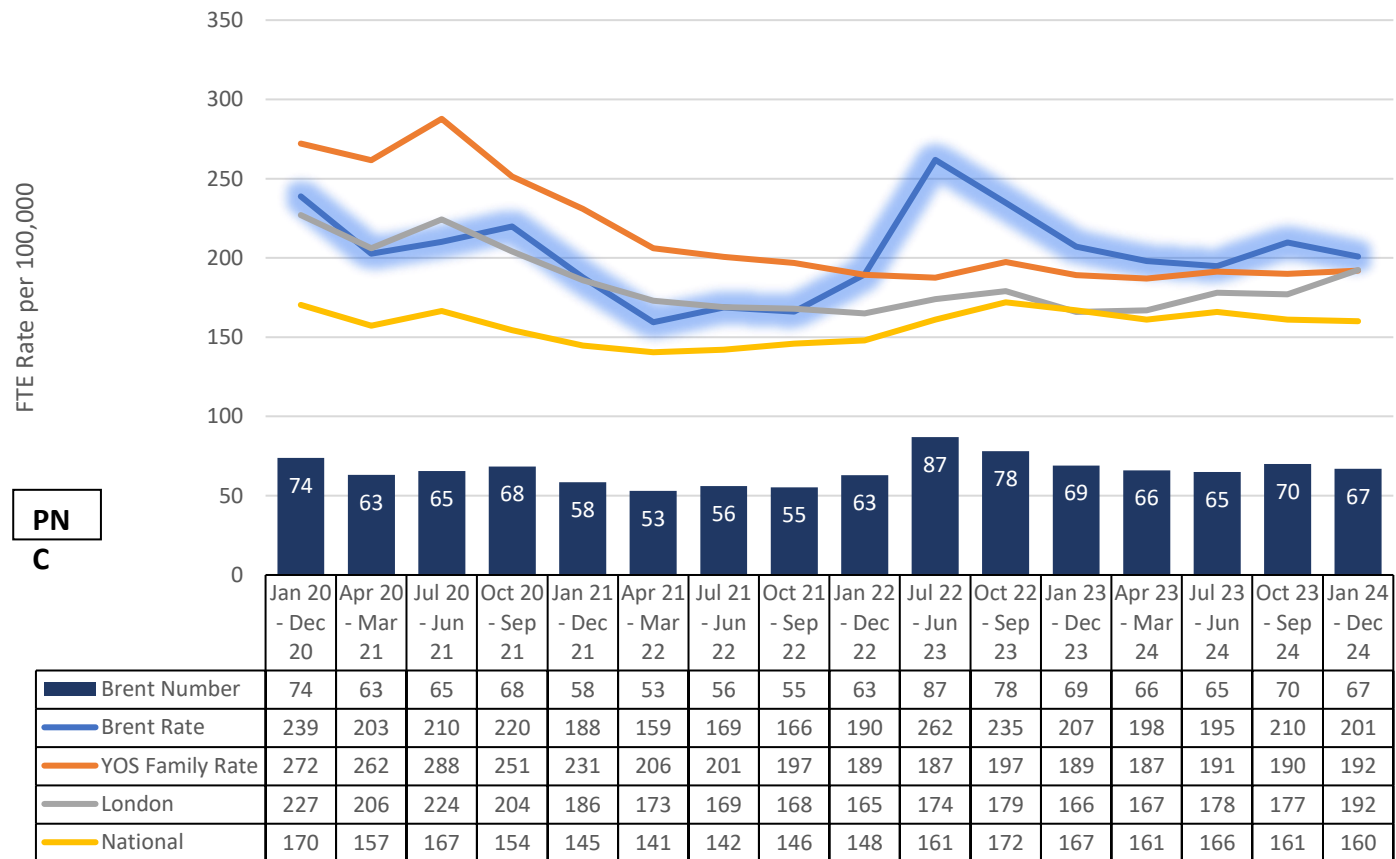
## 10.4 Reducing First Time Entrants (FTEs)

Although Brent recorded a small increase in the number of FTEs in 2024, the long-term trend is that of a significant fall. Brent's FTE rate per 100,000 children was 201 for the twelve-month period January 2024 to December 2024, compared to 207 per 100,000 children in the period January 2023 to December 2023. 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 67 new entrants to the youth justice system between January 2024 and December 2024. This is an annual decrease of 2 children when compared to the period between January 2023 and December 2023— 69 FTEs were recorded during this time.

# Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

**Table 5. No. of Brent Children Entering the Youth Justice System: January 2020 to December 2024.**



## 10.5 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

## Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

period ending January 2022 to December 2022. It decreased to three in the latest period (January 2024 to December 2024).

The number of remands in January 2024 to December 2024 (8 children) increased by three when compared to January 2022 to December 2022 (5 children). This increase is attributed to two serious incidents involving eight children. Children from BAME Heritage Groups continue to be overrepresented in the YJS remand cohort. The YJS has referred this to our children safeguarding partnership for a review given the themes that have emerged.

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

	Jan – Dec 2020 Remands	Jan – Dec 2021 Remands	Jan – Dec 2022 Remands	Jan – Dec 2023 Remands	Jan – Dec 2024 Remands
Black Heritage	8 (57%)	4 (50%)	1 (25%)	3 (60%)	6 (75%)
Other BAME	2 (14.5%)	3 (37.5%)	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	1 (12.5%)
Mixed BAME	2 (14.5%)	0 (0%)	1 (25%)	1 (20%)	1 (12.5%)
Asian BAME	1 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total BAME	13 (93%)	7 (87.5%)	3 (75%)	4 (80%)	8 (100%)
White Heritage	1 (7%)	1 (12.5%)	1 (25%)	1 (20%)	0 (0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>

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.

### 10.6 Embedding Resettlement Practice

# Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

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, later in February 2023 by the Minister for Prisons and Probation who 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' and was highlighted in resettlement criteria for the HMIP Inspection regime. The Youth justice inspection Resettlement Case assessment guidance (CAG) v 1.3 June 2024 stated that 'planning for accommodation was to start at the point the child enters custody. This is a key aspect of resettlement work; other services cannot be organised until the child has an address to be released to'.

Brent 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. 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.

## 10.7 Accommodation

Safe, suitable, and sustainable accommodation forms the foundations for delivering effective support to children and young people. In the period January to December 2024, 79 children and young people (76 in 2023) were supported by Brent YJS 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. In the same period, a further three children who resided in unsuitable accommodation were remanded into custody.

Brent YJS is working closely with Social Care 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 on weekends. Furthermore, Early Help offer a wide range of support

## Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

that helps families address their housing and cost of living issues. Accommodation is one of the ten newly introduced KPI's monitored by the YJB.

**Table 7. Suitability of accommodation 2024**

KPI 1	Suitable accommodation	Unsuitable accommodation	% Suitable accommodation	% Unsuitable accommodation
Jan - Mar 2024	19	2	90%	10%
April - June 2024	24	1	96%	4%
July - Sep 2024	18	0	100%	0%
Oct - Dec 2024	21	0	100%	0%

### **10.8 Reducing disproportionality in custodial outcomes including remands and sentencing**

Our work to reduce disproportionality follows the various stages within the criminal justice process and is particularly significant within the secure estate and the sentencing of young people. In 2023, 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 2025-2028 there will continue to 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)*, which found that at any given time, there are around 200 to 250 children remanded in youth detention. Further findings included:



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- a quarter of the children were released on bail before being sentenced, and inspectors judged that more of them could have been safely managed in the community.
- nearly half of the children in the cases reviewed had no previous convictions and some of the remands were long, lasting more than a year.
- in many cases children made no comment at the Police interview but this was not always to the child's benefit as admitting the offence at that stage might have made bail more likely.
- In just under three-quarters of cases the Youth Justice Service did not offer a bail programme at the child's first remand hearing.

Our responses will again be outlined in both the Youth Justice Improvement Plan 2025/26, 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 and young people. This will include actions addressing drug and alcohol support, monitoring release arrangements from the start of the sentence / remand, 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.

## **10.9 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 2024 compared with the previous year. The tool also indicated that robbery offences have increased significantly in the year ending December 2024 compared to the previous year. An over representation of children from Black Heritage groups involvement in SYV persists. 41% of children and young people who committed SYV offences in Brent were from other heritage groups in 2024. This is an increase of 29% when compared to 2023 (12%), 2022 (0%) and 2021 (23%). Males make up the biggest proportion of children and young people committing SYV offences. In the year ending December 2024, 95% of the cohort were male compared to 100% in 2023, 96% in 2022 and 82% in 2021. During the first 3 quarters of the 24/25 period there were 2 drug related offences: 16 robbery offences and 4 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

# Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

partnership to reduce SYV include supporting events such as Carnival, the deployment of various outreach activities 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.

Our work in this area will be guided by the recent HMIP report: *Multi-agency responses to serious youth violence: working together to support and protect children (Nov 24)*.

## Key Points from Executive Summary

- The extent and impact of serious youth violence are more far-reaching than many adults realise
- A failure to consistently identify serious youth violence as a safeguarding issue is leaving too many children at serious risk of harm.
- The government and local agencies must prioritise the needs of children who are disproportionately at risk of harm from serious youth violence
- Multi-agency work was most effective when serious youth violence was a strategic priority
- In some areas, partners worked together well to meet the wider needs of children affected by serious youth violence.
- Local partnerships need to do more to evaluate approaches to addressing serious youth violence, to use available research about what works and to share learning across areas to drive improvement in practice.
- Children's access to support to address serious youth violence varies too much between local areas.
- Projects aimed at preventing serious youth violence often receive short-term funding.
- Engagement with the community, children and parents is essential

## 10.10 Reducing Knife Crime

Knife crime remains a persistent problem in Brent. A total of 39 knife offences were committed by young people in 2024, compared to 30 in 2023, 46 in 2022, 52 in 2021 and 44 in 2020.

Brent YJS has worked hard 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

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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. The Raheem Sterling Foundation knife bin amnesty, saw a total of 118 weapons, including 9 zombie knives collected in September 2025. The March 2025 collection saw a total of 196 weapons, including 13 zombie knives and 4 other dangerous articles surrendered.

### 10.11 Unlocking Your Potential

Unlocking Your Potential seeks to inspire young people with entrepreneurial skills to achieve their ambitions. During the session with George the Poet George explained to the young people the key ingredient for success is self-belief, he said “you must choose the right friends and friends that are loyal to you”, He spoke about the importance of overcoming peer pressure and gang involvement. We discussed some of the current tensions within Brent and how he overcame this when he was young. George explained his resilience allowed him to pursue his education and achieve at Cambridge University.

people are authors of their own story, and they must take ownership rather than allowing other people to write their stories.

Feedback from participants has included:

*“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’*

In order to develop and sustain capacity, YJS have continued a similar programme through the Roundtable Project which is now led by Community Safety and the YJS. Guest speakers from the community are invited to speak at this session similar to the format of Unlocking Your Potential

### 10.12 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 included 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

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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 2024/25.

## 10.13 Out of Court Disposals (OOCd)

Out of Court Disposal provision is tightly monitored in Brent. In each of the last five-years the YJS Management Board has received a report examining practice, procedures, and performance. Such high-level curiosity and interest reflect Brent's understanding of the clear links between intervening early and good outcomes. For instance, 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 OOCd cases in January 2025. Decision making was agreed as correct and consistent with policy and guidance for all six cases.

The Child Gravity Matrix (CGM) 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 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.

Key changes include:

- Traffic Offences: the CGM now makes it clear that informal OOCds can be considered as an alternative to penalty/points charge where appropriate.
- The CGM introduces the Child Information Form (CIF) which replaces the First Time Entrant Check list and a 10-point checklist for Looked After- Children to accompany cases being sent to CPS for a decision. The CIF is designed to collate and streamline the information provided by Police and other relevant agencies involved in the child's life, requiring both the investigator and prosecutor to consider the specific circumstances of a child.
- Clarifies that joint decision making should take place between the YJS and Police but that where there is a disagreement the final decision rests with the Police.

## Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

- There have been various technical changes to the offences table, including remorse and regret being removed from aggravating and mitigating factors.

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.

All referrals for an Out of Court Disposal are discussed at the Out of Court Disposal Joint Decision-Making panels which are tightly organised and held weekly. Panel members include the NHS, Police, YJS, Social Care, Inclusion Service, Family Solutions and Family Support Workers. All professionals are involved in the discussion to determine any underlying issues and needs for each young person. Discussions take place around a child's life circumstances and impact that may contributed to their behaviour. The O OCD panel always aims to mitigate and lower the disposal where possible. If available victims' views are considered. YJS Police officers aim to get in contact with the victim prior to the panel and explain the diversion process.

Interventions for children who receive O O C D s, reflect their specific needs. Mental health screening is offered to all young people through referral to the NHS Youth Justice Liaison and Diversion practitioner. For those referred for drug related offences or where assessment has identified substance misuse, one-to-one sessions are offered by the Evel8 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 2024/25 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 one to one sessions, and safety mapping. Case managers seek to include children in intervention planning wherever possible.

### **There were 76 referrals to the O C C D Team in 2024/25:**

Community Resolutions: 23

Triage: 22

Youth Caution: 9 (100% successfully completed)

Youth Conditional Cautions: 14 (100% successfully completed)

**Total: 67**

Assessment and interventions are offered to all children and are mandatory for those who receive a Youth Conditional Caution. 67 young people undertook Safety Mapping – a contextual safeguarding tool that enables

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young people to identify non-familial risks in the community. 31 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 counselling and groupwork sessions. Out of Court Disposals are one of the ten newly introduced KPI's monitored by the YJB – no. of young people successfully completing OOCs.

## Feedback on OOCs

*“Grandmother provided positive feedback on YJS involvement. She was grateful for the support provided to Y and the disposal agreed. Grandma was also happy with the advice and information provided to her around education and YJS supporting with liaising with the Inclusion Team.”*  
(OOC Case Manager, March 2025)

*“Thank you for your work with D. She has built up a good working relationship with you and though D would never say it, she has valued your intervention. It has been great working with you!”* (Social Worker, February 2025)

*“The decision-making session was helpful – you helped me understand what would benefit me in a situation and what would not and how I should or could approach difficult situations.”*  
(Young Person, March 2025)

## 10.14 YJS Triage Programme

Triage is an OOC 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.

## 10.15 Policing

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Two 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 MPS' Children's 5-year Strategy (Sept'24) aims to make a meaningful difference to how the Met Police safeguard children and is designed to rebuild trust, reduce crime and ensure high standards across the force. In developing the strategy, the Met Police considered the views of children across London. 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.

## **10.16 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 nine active local community panel members from Black, White British, White European, and Asian Heritage groups. Panel members come from a wide range of backgrounds including family support, teaching, accounting, business and law.

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

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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 2024/25**

Outcome	Disposals	Percentage
Successfully Completed	47	90%
Completed Other	1	2%
In Custody	1	2%
Not Completed (Order Revoked and Resentenced to Community Penalty)	1	2%
Not Completed Breached Order Revoked and Resentenced to Community Penalty (Terminated)	2	4%
Transfer to other agency/home YOT	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 10.17 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. The YJS Partnership has dedicated staff who are innovative and creative in encouraging wherever possible victim and perpetrator engagement in restorative justice approaches.



## **Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028**

YJS practitioners are not always able to obtain victims views. This information can provide a unique perspective on how to keep children and communities safe. The YJS needs to work closely with the Police to identify and remove barriers to the timely acquisition of victim information. There are Police resourcing, capacity and systems issues which can make contacting victims difficult. For instance, if victims' details are not gathered by the investigating officer, delays will occur to YJS Police Officers being able to contact victims - and in some instances contact will never be made. Positively, in April 2025, the Metropolitan Police agreed a new approach that improves victim access.

This has been achieved by removing the Police requirement to gain the victims explicit consent to be able to share victim data with YJS. Furthermore, the Police have removed the requirement to send out the agreed victim letter to the victim, if they are unable to get through to the victim.

The new process means that upon receiving a YOT referral seeking an OOC, once the YOT Police have verified and confirmed the referral is suitable, they will continue to attempt to contact the victim to seek their wishes to share their basic details with the YJS. If the victim does not want to share their details no further contact will be made and the relevant YJS will be informed so this can be recorded on ChildView. If the victim agrees, or the Police are unable to make contact, they can automatically share sufficient victim data for the YJS to contact victims directly.

This process also applies to those cases which bypass the YOT referral stage and are convicted at court after a charge and sentenced to a court order to work with the YJS. For this to happen the YJS must request victim details. The Police will then seek to contact the victim. If they are unsuccessful victim details will be shared with a YJS so that they can contact the victim directly.

The Brent YJS Restorative Justice Worker has a manageable workload. Victims work is intensive so this could conceivably change now that the systems issues delaying victim consent have been resolved.

Brent YJS reparation activities have now extended into face-to-face work at a dementia Café with elderly people, Stonebridge Primary School, 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 excellent completion rates. Topics covered include establishing boundaries, values, the young persons', and the victim's experience, repairing harm and giving back to the community.

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The following quotes are typical of many victims and children and young people who took part in restorative justice in 2024:

## 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."*

*"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".*

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*"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 delivered 'Lunch and Learn' sessions to the whole CYP department in 2024. 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 2025/26 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.*

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*“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.*

*“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.*

Victims are one the ten newly introduced KPI's monitored by the YJB.

## **10.18 Education, Training and Employment**

### **Nationally**

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 proportion are entrenched in lifestyles that are not conducive to participation in ETE. This is often because of exploitation, gang affiliation and disrupted educational history. 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. Brent children were not involved in the inspection.

### **Strengths**

YOT boards consistently prioritised ETE work in the delivery of services, operational staff had enough time to deliver high quality work with children, staff had good access to training in recognising children's ETE needs, and YOTs delivering good ETE work had well-developed partnership arrangements, including specialist assessment and interventions.

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## **Areas for improvement**

The quality of ETE work was poorest for those children who most needed it, and this was particularly evident when a child had an EHCP.

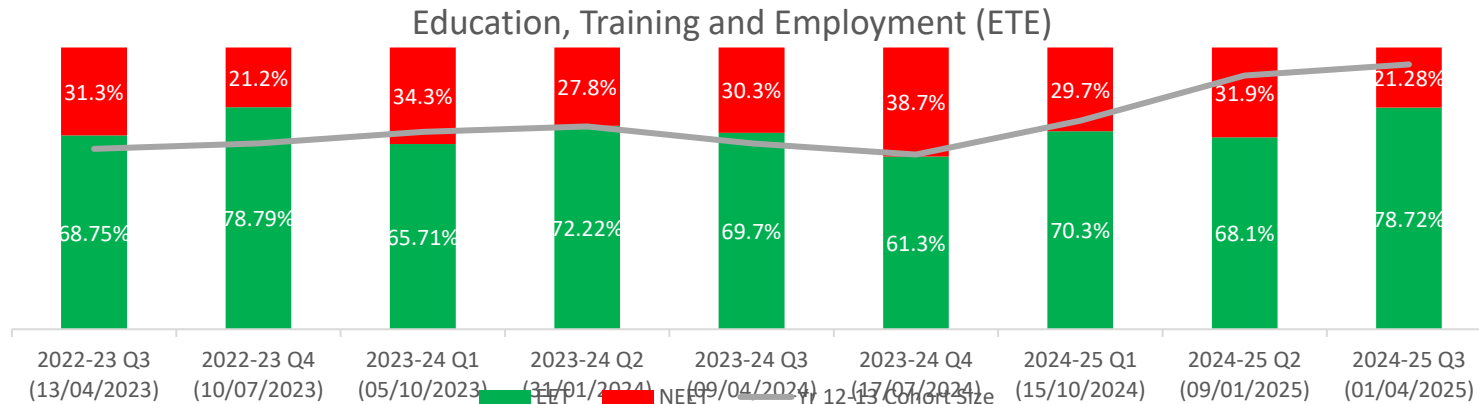
- There are too many cases where children were not making progress and whose vulnerability was increasing because of low levels of engagement in positive work.
- Boards were not monitoring key aspects of the children's engagement in ETE.
- There are significant barriers to participation.
- The quality of work was poorest for those children who most needed it.
- The support provided to the child to engage in ETE should be clear and reviewed regularly.

## **Employment – Training and Education (ETE) in Brent YJS**

The characteristics of a strong YJS Partnership, as identified by HMIP and Ofsted, exist in Brent. 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 2022 to 2025: 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:

- 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.

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- 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.
- Supporting children with undiagnosed learning needs is an ongoing challenge. Brent YJS works closely with the Brent Inclusion Service. Regular joint service area management meetings take place and can be used to identify training that can equip staff to better identify and refer children who are eligible for SEND and other Inclusion Service support.

**Table 10. Brent YJS ETE Suitability April to December 2024**

ETE suitability	
ETE Suitability	No. of Young People
Suitable	48
Unknown	0
Unsuitable	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>

### Speech and Language

Brent YJS has identified significant deficiencies in access to provision relates to Speech and Language assessment and therapy. This is despite conservative estimates suggesting 40-60% of children in the youth justice system have an undiagnosed language disorder, *Winstanley, Webb & Conti-Ramsden (2021)*. Findings also suggest that Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) is the highest predictor of reoffending, and that children with DLD are 2.6 times more likely to reoffend. Furthermore, one year after committing an offence:

- 62% of people with DLD reoffended
- 25% of people without DLD reoffended.

Despite significant efforts to address this service gap in recent years, YJS still does not have access to the health resources needed to improve outcomes for children with undiagnosed speech and language needs. Work undertaken

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in the last year to resolve this shortcoming includes YJB facilitated meetings with the NHS, Head of Service discussions between Brent Early Help and the Brent Inclusion Service, and ongoing YJS Management Board oversight. In April 2025, the YJS Management Board representative from the NHS offered further support to the YJS aimed at accessing pathways to SALT assessment and support for Brent children in the youth justice system.

## 10.19 Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

### Local Strategy

The Children & Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Local Transformation Plan 2024/25 has high ambitions 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 North-West London Integrated Care Board (ICB) was formed in July 2022, to closely collaborate on several aspects of the Children and Young People mental health pathway. This includes implementing the National Thrive Framework which provides 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.

### Local delivery: CAMHS

A CAMHS Mental Health Practitioner (MHP) based within YJS supports young people who have severe or complex problems to access specialised CAMHS provision. The post was vacant between September 2024 and February 2025.

**Table 11. CAMHS Mental Health Support April to September 2024: YJS young people have requested more data re table below)**

<b>Mental Health Support:</b>	<b>No. of Young People</b>
Advice / Consultation	18
Referrals and Signposting to other services	7
Referral to FCAMHS / Ongoing liaison	5



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Referral to Tier 3 CAMHS	4
<b>Total:</b>	<b>34</b>

The 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.
- CAMHS worker provided training for YJS (October '24) about mental health and neurodiversity in the context of offending behaviour. This will help 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 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.
- CAMHS and BCYP worker ran a four-week group for young people within the YJS exploring their emotional wellbeing in January 2025.
- Brent YJS will explore opportunities to expand referral pathways to mental health and other health provision through the establishment of TPH.
- CAMHS will provide mental health and neurodiversity training to Social Care, School and SENCOs during 2025 in the context of offending behaviour.

Mental Health Support (Help and Advice) is one the ten newly introduced KPI's monitored by the YJB.

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## Local Delivery: 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 2024 to March 2025, 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. During 2024 the YJLD worker engaged 160 young people. Ninety-one (57%) assessments were completed. The four key offences that children accessing YJLD were charged with were drug possession, violence against the person, robbery and possession of an offensive weapon. 16 and 17-year-olds form the highest age group.

## 10.20 Substance Misuse

Since becoming operational in 2000, more than 1,500 young people supported by the Brent Youth Justice Service have received community-based substance misuse support. After considerable planning in partnership with Public Health, approval was obtained in January 2025 from both the Brent Drug and Alcohol Board, and the Brent Youth Justice Management Board, to develop a single pathway from Brent YJS to substance misuse provision.

Under these arrangements, *Elev8*, a provider of community-based alcohol and drug detoxification services for residents in the London Borough of Brent, have been supporting all children known to the YJS who have come to the attention of YJS for committing drug or alcohol related offences or have subsequently been assessed as having substance misuse needs. These services have been accessible from VIA - the name of the substance misuse and other support services *Elev8* offer children.

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The two pathways by which children enter the youth justice system remain unaltered. The first of these are OOCs. These allow the Police to deal effectively and proportionately with low-level, often first-time offending without a prosecution at court. The other pathway by which a child will receive statutory support from a Youth Justice Service arises when a child appears before a court. If convicted, a youth court can give a range of criminal disposals including fines, Referral Orders, Youth Rehabilitation Orders, and custodial sentences. VIA have been supporting children who have become known to YJS through this route since 2017. They have maintained a co-located presence with YJS at the Brent Civic Centre throughout this time.

**Table 12: Children receiving Court Orders or OOCs for drug offences 2017 to 2024: by number and percentage.**

Year	Court Orders by no. of drug offences	Court Orders by percentage of drug offences	OOCs by no. of drug offences	OOCs by percentage of drug offences
2017	125	67.57%	60	32.43%
2018	138	70.77%	57	29.23%
2019	107	67.72%	51	32.28%
2020	57	52.78%	51	47.22%
2021	33	42.86%	44	57.14%
2022	28	45.90%	33	54.10%
2023	24	46.15%	28	53.85%
2024	26	50.98%	25	49.02%

**Table 13: Drug offences by type, and substance misuse provider December 2023 to November 2024.**

Drug offences: court convictions by drug type and percentage			Drug offences: Police issued OOCs by drug type and percentage		
Court Pathway			OOC Pathway		
Cannabis	Cocaine	Heroin	Cannabis	Cocaine	Other

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19	5	2	27	1	1
73%	19%	8%	93%	4%	3%

The development of the single pathways approach has been influenced by several factors.

- Fewer children supported by Brent YJS have accessed substance misuse provision in recent years. There is an opportunity to treat more children by refreshing referral pathways in a way that targets more children and young people supported by YJS.
- Introducing a less rigid system is now achievable and would allow substance misuse provision to be sequenced in line with the needs of the child, rather than the operational necessity to move a large volume of children into substance misuse support at the earliest opportunity.
- The majority of substance misuse delivery takes place at the Brent Civic Centre. Using a secure central office is ideal for coordinating back-to-back appointments. However, there are instances where accessing other sites would better serve the needs of children and families. It would also provide the added benefit of introducing children and their families to other provision offered at community centres
- There is real scope to put processes in place that ensure there is a consistent approach to making treatment services available to those hard to engage young people who fall through the cracks in existing pathways.
- The Metropolitan Police's *Children Strategy 2024* introduces a child first approach to policing in London. This means that the proportion of children supported by YJS's (approximately half of all Brent cases) is expected to increase significantly. Existing pathways need to be modernised to reflect this change as they were created when OOCs were a small proportion of YJS work.
- Remapping pathways enables Brent YJS and VIA to add greater value to each other's work. Partnership working between the two services is strong and benefits from good case management oversight and regular meetings. There are however many opportunities to strengthen this further through greater aligned working such as ensuring YJS staff accompany children to all first substance misuse appointments regardless of location, and where relevant to support and encourage children to access wider VIA provision including support groups and emotional wellbeing services.

### 10.21 Appropriate Adult Service

Brent's Appropriate Adult service sat with Adult Social Care until 31 December 2024 when the responsibility was transferred to CYP. AA services are contracted to the Appropriate Adult Service Limited (TAS). In March 2025, OCSLT approved the continuation of this arrangement. Costs will be shared across CYP and day to day management of the contract will sit with Brent YJS.

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## 10.22 Wider Services

Two hundred and one children and young people received a court disposal, Out of Court Disposal, Triage disposal, a Community Resolution or Turnround in 2024. Of these, 8% were on a Child Protection Plan, 26% were Children in Need, and 16% were Looked after Children. These services are classified as 'wider services' by the YJB. More than half of all children supported by YJS (50%) accessed wider statutory provision. Wider Services are one of the YJB's ten new KPIs.

**Table 14. YJS Alignment with Wider Services 2024**

Wider Services 2024		
Wider Service	No. of children	%
Total no. of children receiving a court sentence, O OCD, Triage or Community and Turnaround	201	
Child Protection	16	8%
Child in need	52	26%
Looked after child	32	16%

## 10.23 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 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.

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**Table 15. 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	Percentage change year ending March 2024 to March 2025	2021 midyear 10-17 population by ethnic group
Asian	19	13	6	17	8	11	▼ -42%	▼ -58%	10,322
Black	92	70	46	60	60	56	▼ -39%	▼ -34%	7,982
Mixed	14	10	11	12	13	24	▲ +71%	▼ -7%	2,764
Other	17	9	16	14	27	33	▲ +94%	▲ +59%	4,287
<b>Total BAME Heritage Groups</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>▼ -12%</b>	<b>▼ -24%</b>	<b>25,355</b>
White	26	22	18	20	15	22	▼ -15%	▼ -42%	7,899
Unknown	0	2	3	1	0	4	N/A	N/A	-
<b>All Heritage Groups</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>▼ -11%</b>	<b>▼ -27%</b>	<b>33,254</b>

## 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:

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- 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.
- *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 the Brent Probation Service.
- 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 collaborative culture in CYP means that Social Care and YJS work together every day in a range of ways including Strategy meetings, at risk of custody meetings, and preparing bail packages.
- 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. In 2024/25 the DAP focussed on preventing Black Heritage group children entering the criminal justice system, preventing re-offending within 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.

It is difficult to attribute 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

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(56). It is hoped however that the concerted partnership effort to reduce disproportionality is a key factor. Notwithstanding these gains, it must be noted that the overrepresentation of children from Black heritage groups remains and is significant.

## ***10.24 Prevention work - Targeted Work and our Wider Reach***

### **Targeted Prevention Hub (TPH)**

The development of our new Targeted Prevention Hub (TPH) located within the Brent Youth and Youth Justice Service brings together existing adolescent-focussed resources across Early Help and Social Care to provide an expanded range of preventative support to children and young people in Brent. Due to be introduced in stages from June 2025, it will also introduce a new Family Group Conferencing Service.

TPH is a non-case holding service that is expected to achieve a wide range of benefits including:

- Providing more support to services tackling risk outside the home.
- Strengthening Brent's approach to prevention and early intervention.
- Expanding resources for children returning home from care and supporting reunification with families.
- Unifying and coordinating existing resources from across Early Help and Children's Social Care.
- Improving experiences for children, young people, and families – providing a single, dedicated referral pathway.

By creating a single pathway across Children's Social Care, TPH will fast-track access to a menu of services, including:

- Careers advice e.g. for children who are NEET.
- Sexual Health advice (NHS/VCS).
- Expert advice re child sexual exploitation.
- 1:1 support for children who are gang affected/affiliated.
- Out of hours detached youth work.
- Mentoring.
- Missing children support.
- CVS enrichment provision e.g. Young Brent Foundation.



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- Mental health support including CAMHS and WEST.
- Substance misuse support from VIA.
- Contextual safeguarding support e.g. peer mapping, safety mapping, complex strategy meetings, and intelligence sharing.
- Brent YJS Turnaround.
- Educational awareness sessions on crime and exploitation.
- Family group conferencing.
- Reunification of children returning from home from being looked after.
- Domestic abuse with Advance.

## **Turnaround Programme**

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 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 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.
- 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.

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- 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. Staff work hard to encourage families to access Turnaround. As it is a voluntary intervention consent from a young person and their family is required.

**Table 16. Turnaround Referrals April 2024 to March 2025**

Outcome	No. of Young People
Refused intervention / Not started intervention / Not Completed intervention	3
Partially Completed	0
Successfully Completed or in still in active intervention	46
<b>Total no. of young people</b>	<b>49</b>

Turnaround staff meet with young people and their parents to ensure the whole family participates in a holistic assessment. This is to identify needs and identify any family issues or factors affecting a child or young person's behaviour. Young people who have received an Out of Court Disposal will also be assessed using the Brent YJS Diversion and Assessment template.

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.

# **Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028**

- 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.

## **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 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 2025/26.

## **Your Choice**

Your Choice provides 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 are 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.

Since its introduction in Brent in 2023, 49 children and young people have been recruited to Your Choice from the YJS, Accelerated Support Team, and Children's Social Care. This is broadly similar to the 1,463 children who have received Your Choice across 31 London boroughs in the period 2021 to 2025 – an average of 47 per Local Authority. Many of the young people who engaged with the programme were at risk of contextual harm. Seventy percent of participants completed the 12-week programme.

Feedback from YJS Case Managers was very positive:

# Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

*"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."*

Your Choice funding was due to finish at the start of April but has been extended until June 2025. Brent has been invited to submit a bid to run a further 12-week programme. A proposal is being developed which if successful would be based within the YJS and made available to children involved in the youth justice system. A report focussed on the pan-London impact of Your Choice is due to be published by Youth Endowment Fund at the end of Oct 2025.

## **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.

All parents benefitted from the work that covered topics on exploitation and county lines. Feedback from parents includes:

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

*"Surprised to learn about the way in which the gangs are 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".*

# Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

*“Learned that the numbers of young people being groomed is high and well organised”.*

Parents all commented positively about their experiences attending substance misuse workshops for parents:

*‘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’.*

Trainers commented positively about the participants who attended substance misuse workshops for parents:

*“Families felt supported and have appreciated the wraparound support and advice/advocacy that had been offered.”*

*“Grateful for the insight into their child(s) behaviours and the YJS.”*

*“Thankful for the awareness given to widen knowledge around how drugs affect their child and its impact.”*

*“Appreciative of having someone to listen to their concerns, as they felt heard”*

*“Grateful for the groups they had been referred to as it helped resolve some of their concerns and given them ample information, that in some cases they thought they wouldn’t need.”*

## **10.25 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. This sets out the quality assurance activities which help the Children and Young People Department fulfil its core values, to make the most positive impact and improve outcomes for Brent children and young people:

- Places children and young people and their families at the heart of service design and delivery.
- Adopts a child/family journey approach to service delivery.
- Holds the views of children and young people and their families as of paramount importance.

# Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

- Ensures that staff can spend as much time as possible with children and young people and their families so that they can make a real difference to their lives.
- Enables children and young people and their families to only tell their story once and be able to rely on long-term relationships with CYP professionals.

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 the analysis, the YJS Quality Assurance & Practice Development Manager concluded that the quality of work with LAC and Care Leavers in custody was good overall. Led by the YJS Quality Assurance and Practice Development Manager, YJS Team Managers also undertook a peer audit of ten intervention plans. Applying HMIP inspection standards, eight out of ten intervention plans were assessed as Good” - the remaining two were both assessed as “requires Improvement” - one of these did not provide a rationale for its assessment of risk safety and wellbeing, and the other was not saved within ChildView. Team Managers supported their Case Managers to make the necessary improvements in both instances and good Intervention Planning has subsequently been afforded significant attention within Practice Development sessions. Other YJS audits have focussed 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. In collaboration with Barnet, a cross-borough peer audit of Brent and Barnet OOC cases is due to take place in June 2025. Auditing programmes due to commence in 2025/26 include peer audits of case files to assess recording practice, national standards adherence, and assessing the standard and use of desistance factors. YJS cases are also subject to ongoing audits and support undertaken by the YJS Quality Assurance & Practice Development Manager.

YJS has developed a bespoke and more child friendly intervention plan than the one available within the Child View Assessment framework. The intervention plan was created by an Intervention Planning Committee, led by the YJS Quality Assurance and Practice Development Manager in consultation with Case Managers, Deputy Service

# **Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028**

Manager, Team Managers, the YJS Liaison and Diversion Officer and a young person receiving support from the YJS.

## **10.26 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.

YJS Team managers have been trained to audit national standards and have undertaken subsequent reviews of their lead areas - led by the Quality Assurance and Practice Development Manager. A review of the Court National Standard was completed in July 2023. Two improvements relating to the management oversight of court processes were identified and subsequently remedied. Overall, the audit showed good compliance with National Standards. It was submitted to the YJS for moderation – ratings remained unchanged.

## **11.0 Challenges, Risks and Issues**

The cost-of-living crisis has provided significant challenges for children, young people, and their families. It has exacerbated tensions within the home, affected mental health and produced poor ETE outcomes. Although restrictions have long been lifted, the COVID-19 pandemic created long lasting challenges for many children. For example, some young people have been exposed to hardships that have affected their physical and mental health, experienced increased poverty and social deprivation, and experienced loneliness and a loss of support networks. For children from Black and Minority Ethnic communities, the impact of loss has been comparatively greater. To respond successfully to these challenges there may well be resource demands within the YJS in the years ahead. The effects of these socio-economic factors in Brent cannot be fully predicted but it is possible for example, that robbery, theft, and other forms of acquisitional crime such as shoplifting may increase.

Strong leadership, good governance, and a committed and determined workforce provide Brent with good reason to feel confident about achieving our ambitions for 2025-2028. We trust our stakeholders and partners to provide the

# Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

support needed to ensure we respond effectively to the challenges that accompanied the introduction of ten new performance KPIs and our inspection preparation provides an additional layer of Quality Assurance Brent's commitment to ongoing youth justice improvement and innovation is nonetheless resource dependent. Brent has worked creatively and flexibly to protect and improve frontline service provision. However, the possibility of public sector funding reductions in the years to come, combined with cost pressures stemming from increasing local housing demands, pose a risk to the current concerted partnership effort to reduce serious youth violence, reoffending and compromise our dedicated commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people in the criminal justice system.

## 12.0 Service Improvement Plan and Looking Forward 2025-2028

12.1 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 next three years.

1. Embed the new Targeted Prevention Hub within Brent.
2. Develop ever closer links with the voluntary and community sector – to include the ongoing identification of partners to join the TPH.
3. Implement and manage new substance misuse arrangements within Brent.
4. Embed new Appropriate Adult arrangements within Brent.
5. Increase access to victim's support.
6. Work with partners to develop pathways and create access for Speech and Language Therapy.
7. Refresh, implement, and monitor the Brent YJS Disproportionality Action Plan to tackle the over representation of children from Black Heritage Groups in the Brent Youth Justice System.
8. Support the delivery of the Brent Youth Strategy.
9. Collaborate with Social Care to reduce the criminalisation of children in care and care leavers.
10. Continue to promote evidence-based Child First approaches as the best means to reducing victims, promoting public protection, keeping communities safe and supporting children towards positive outcomes.
11. Support 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.



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12. Continue to build a YJS partnership culture that encourages diversity in its workforce, promotes anti-racist practice in its thinking and inclusivity, is supportive, encourages personal responsibility and is outcomes focused.
13. Continue work within the YJS Management Board, the wider partnership, and YJS staff to prepare for the current round of HMIP Inspection, through a YJS focussed programme of case file audits, thematic Practice Development sessions and focused individual supervision.
14. Broaden access to mentoring with clear referral pathways.
15. Develop plan to expand the remit to care leavers who are involved in the criminal justice system

The above aims and actions will be included within the annual Brent Youth Justice Improvement Plan 2025/26. 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.

## 12.2 HMIP Inspection Standards Review

**12.3** In March 2025, Brent YJS completed a 23-page self-evaluation: *Brent YJS: HMIP Inspection Standards self-assessment*. The report assessed Brent YJS readiness for inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) - the independent inspector of youth justice and probation services in England and Wales.

**12.4** The report outlines the two types of inspections Brent may be subject to prior to assessing Brent YJS's strengths and areas for improvement against each of HMIP's inspection standards. Information used to evidence performance include audit findings, scrutiny panel findings, service user survey responses, parents and carer survey responses, magistrates feedback, feedback from other professionals, the Brent Youth Justice Plan 2024/25, quotes from children and young people, and lead area analysis from the YJS Management Team.

**12.5** The work of Brent YJS was rated Good overall. There were also seventeen recommendations that will be incorporated into the Brent YJS Improvement Plan:

## Domain One recommendations

1. The creation of a three-year Youth Justice Plan.
2. Increase youth participation at YJS Management Board Meetings.

# **Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028**

3. Identify priority policies and devote time to increasing staff awareness.
4. Introduce a staff survey cycle
5. Director's briefings and Serious Incident Notifications to be stored in one place
6. Identify training that can equip staff to better identify and refer children who are eligible for SEND and other Inclusion Service support.
7. Pre-supervision mini audits must be routinely completed.
8. Compliance actions must be followed up within 24 hours and Management Oversight must be evident.
9. Gain access to the resources needed to improve outcomes for children with undiagnosed speech and language needs.
10. Closer data sharing and alignment with the Brent Community Safety Team.

## **Domain Two recommendations**

11. YJS Team Managers to ensure that the full extent of the support and guidance provided to Case Managers is evidenced as management oversight on Child View.
12. Work closely with the Police to identify and remove barriers to the timely acquisition of victim information.
13. Team Managers to ensure that Case Managers routinely attach intervention plans to the Asset Plus assessment.
14. Team Managers to ensure that all Intervention Plans are SMART.

## **Victims**

15. Brent YJS to raise issues that limit the ability of the Police to contact victims in a timely fashion with the YJB, and at pan London strategic forums.
16. A Brent YJS Victims working group should be formed to explore local barriers and identify recommendations for making improvements.
17. Centralise all victims and restorative justice practice within one overarching Victims Policy.

# Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

## 13.0 Evidence-based Practice and Innovation

**13.1** The *HMIP 2023 Annual Report: inspections of youth justice services* promote an evidence-based approach to youth justice policy and practice. The approach is broken down into a framework that will underpin Brent YJS effective practice development in 2025-2028:

- **Adversity** – Young people who come into conflict with the law have experienced adversity on an individual, family, and community basis, and those from ethnic minority backgrounds experience disproportionate contact with the justice system.
- **Adolescent development** - Offending behaviour by young people should be viewed as part of adolescent development and considered in the context of the young person's social and psychological environment.
- **Universal Services** - Providing access to universal services – especially those focused on education and health – can prevent young people coming into conflict with the law.
- **Individualisation** - An individualised, rights-based and child-centred approach is key to preventing young people from getting into further conflict with the law.
- **Diversion** - When seeking to divert young people who have come into conflict with the law, it is important to take care with how and when to intervene, always ensuring to support positive outcomes.
- **Positive Relationships** - The development of positive relationships between young people and adults can help to prevent offending/engaging in further offending.
- **Detention** - The use of detention must be avoided, and where used, it must be adapted to children's needs, with a focus on equipping children with the health, education and life skills that ensure their safe return to their communities.
- **Continuing Support** - Education and employment opportunities are vital to ensuring young people avoid further offending and attention needs to be paid to managing the end of any intervention, providing continuity in support to the greatest extent possible.
- **Involving YP** - Young people's lived experiences are invaluable for policymakers seeking to understand the nature of youth offending, and their views are indispensable for developing effective and child-centred responses to offending behaviour.
- **Developing the Evidence base** - There is a continued need for consistent data collection, increased funded research, and improved relationships between policymakers and the academic community to promote progressive approaches to youth justice.

# **Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028**

**13.2** 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. This will include monitoring research commissioned by the Youth Engagement Fund via their research toolkit which provides access to many promising approaches to addressing offending behaviour and preventing 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.

## **14.0 Evaluation**

### **14.1 HMIP 2023 Annual Report: inspections of youth justice services**

In January 2024, the YJB published its annual statistics, looking at data from April 2022 to March 2023. These showed a small increase in the number of children who were first-time entrants (one per cent compared with the previous year), the first increase seen in the last 10 years. There was also an increase in the number of stop and searches (13 percent compared with the previous year). (HMIP 2023 Annual Report, p.10)

Evidence gathered online found that several factors consistently emerge as central to improving the life chances and outcomes of children. These include the importance of establishing positive, secure, consistent and trusting relationships between practitioners and children, as well as working collaboratively with children to identify goals, find solutions and build on their strengths, while working to address their needs. (HMIP 2023 Annual Report, p.10).

One of the most significant concerns HMIP identify in relation to youth justice during this period is the pressure on partnership resourcing and funding. The power of the partnership is critical for YJSs. HMIP assert that their very existence is predicated on partnership commitment and statutory responsibility. (HMIP 2023 Annual Report, p.10-23).

HMIP found that boards were most effective when board members were active participants who understood the distinct and diverse needs of YJS-involved children, could direct resources to meet these needs, and were influential advocates for them. Fundamental to boards' effectiveness was their ability to listen to the experiences of children and their parents or carers, and then use this information, both strategically and operationally, to develop and improve services. (HMIP 2023 Annual Report, p.19).

## **Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028**

Many YJSs have a stable workforce and have demonstrated that they are able to balance office and remote working, providing staff and children with flexibility in how services are delivered. (HMIP 2023 Annual Report, p.21).

HMIP typically found strength in the strategic and operational analysis of children's needs. The strongest performing areas had embedded a child-first and trauma-informed approach across the partnership. Interventions were delivered to a consistently high standard, which demonstrated the quality of partnership working. Children were able to access a range of services and support, and specific pathways for targeted, specialist and timely provision. Many YJSs are increasingly prioritising timely and appropriate neurodevelopmental pathways and recognising the importance of making sure YJS children can access speech, language and communication provision. (HMIP 2023 Annual Report, p.24).

Examples of effective transition arrangements with probation services and good links with courts and sentencers (HMIP 2023 Annual Report, p.25).

Interventions were often highlighted as a gap in provision for a variety of different reasons. Staff identified particular interventions that they lacked in their YJS, such as addiction support, restorative justice, domestic abuse, young fathers, speech and language therapy and prevention). Some said that the interventions they did have were old, out of date or did not meet current needs, and that there was a lack of innovation in what was available. (HMIP 2023 Annual Report, p.25).

HMIP found that reparation was often under used, or there were limited options available for children. Services for victims were not being adequately prioritised, and vacancies or gaps in specialist roles had led to significant delays in children receiving the services they required. They also found that a lack of review, monitoring or quality assurance sometimes meant partners were not proactively evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the resource or service they were providing. (HMIP 2023 Annual Report, p.25).

Some staff reported that they were unclear about what provision was available locally and that a mapping exercise was required, with clear pathways showing how to access those services. (HMIP 2023 Annual Report, p.26).

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HMIP found that only nine of the 20 YJSs had a seconded Probation Officer in post. (HMIP 2023 Annual Report, p.27).

HMIP expect timely and relevant information to be available and appropriate facilities to be in place to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children. These areas had detailed policies, procedures and guidance documents, where diversity was considered throughout, and which were evidenced-based and regularly reviewed and evaluated. HMIP found strong evidence that quality assurance drove performance and led to high-quality services. (HMIP 2023 Annual Report, p.28).

Several staff mentioned the various issues around the geography of their area, saying that services available in one part of their area were not available in another, creating a postcode lottery for the children. (HMIP 2023 Annual Report, p.29).

Other notable findings included:

- The majority of children were aged 17 or older (40 per cent), followed by children aged 15 to 17 (34 per cent).
- The majority were male (91 per cent, an increase from 86 per cent the previous year).
- The majority were of white heritage (61 per cent), a decrease from last year (75 per cent); 36 per cent were of Black and minority ethnic heritage, an increase from last year (23 per cent). Two per cent were recorded as 'other groups' and two per cent were not clearly recorded.
- In 50 per cent of the cases HMIP inspected, the children had identified disabilities. Of those, the majority had learning difficulties (75 children), followed by a cognitive disability (39 children) and then mental illness (24 children).
- The majority of children subject to court orders had received referral orders (77 per cent), followed by youth rehabilitation orders (23 per cent).
- Violent offences accounted for 55 per cent of the cases inspected, followed by robbery (nine per cent) and drugs and motoring offences (five per cent). Sexual offences (contact and non-contact) accounted for five per cent and burglary for three per cent of the cases inspected.
- In 76 cases a knife was feature in the current/inspected offence. In 59 cases a knife had been a feature in previous offences.

## Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

- In 24 per cent of the inspected cases, children had been cared for by the local authority within the inspected period: 14 per cent of these children lived in the area covered by the YJS and 10 were living out of the YJS area.
- In 32 per cent of cases, the children did not have their religion recorded.

### 15.0 YJS Partnership Budget 2025/26

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.

£105,347 reduction

Agency	Cash	In-Kind Contributions	Partnership Funding	Total
Brent Council	£621,258	-	-	£621,258
Police	-	£90,000	-	£90,000
National Probation	£5,000	£50,000	-	£55,000
Health Service	-	£120,000	-	£120,000
MOPAC	£45,000	-	-	£45,000
Youth Justice Board	£588,339	-	-	£588,339
Other Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)	£114,000			£114,000
Other - Turnaround (MoJ)	£100,266			£100,266
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,473,863</b>	<b>£260,000</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£1,733,863</b>

# **Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028**

**Sign off, submission and approval**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Kudhail', with a small horizontal line underneath.

**Signed**

**Palvinder Kudhail**

**Chair of the Brent Youth Justice Service Management  
Board**

**Date: 15/06/2025**



# Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

## Appendix 1 YJS Management Board Membership

Name	Job Title	Sector / Partnership Area
Palvinder Kudhail	Director – Early Help and Social Care	CYPCD Brent Council
Serita Kwofie	Head of Service Early Help	CYPCD 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
Roxanna Glennon	Head of Inclusion	CYPCD Brent Council
DI Tony Killeen	Detective Inspector Offender Management Northwest Borough Command Unit Metropolitan Police	Metropolitan Police
Sgt Karl Jameson:	YJS Supervisor – NW BCU	Metropolitan Police
Kelli Eboji	Head of Service Looked After Children and Permanency	CYPCD Brent Council
Stephen Gordon	Head of Service Localities	CYPCD Brent Council
Emmanouela Kladouchou	Psychology Lead & Enhanced Treatment Team Lead. Principal Clinical & Forensic Psychologist	Brent and Kensington and Chelsea CAMHS
Rachel Summerfield	Magistrate – Chair of the Youth Bench	Willesden Magistrates Court

## Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

Anna Alexandrou	Early Help, Panel Officer (minutes)	CYPCD Brent Council
James Salter	Youth and Youth Justice Manager	CYPCD Brent Council
Catherine Williams-Baffoe	Deputy Youth Justice Manager	CYPCD Brent Council
Antoinette Morgan	Quality Assurance and Practice Development Manager	CYPCD Brent Council
Maxine Willetts	Chief Executive Young Brent Foundation	Young Brent Foundation – Voluntary Sector
Sanjay Shah	Performance and Management Information Officer	CYPCD Brent Council
Jessica Manning / Bhavita Gohel	Oversight Manager	Youth Justice Board
Divine Bremathas	Programme Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer	Brent Integrated Care Partnership Brent Council

### Dates of the YJS Management Board Meetings

Meetings 2025/26
10 April 2025
24 July 2025
23 October 2025
22 January 2026

# Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

## 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 and Practice Development Manager	1	YJB/Brent Council
Team Managers	4	YJB/Brent Council
Restorative Justice Lead	1	YJB/Brent Council
Case Managers	10	YJB/Brent Council
Data Quality Officer	1	YJB/Brent Council
Youth Participation Worker	1	YJB/Brent Council
Early Intervention Officer – Triage	1	MOPAC
Reparations Worker	0.5	YJB/Brent Council
<b>Total</b>	<b>21.5</b>	

The service wide YJS staff group of 21.5 FTE is supplemented by the following 7.6 FTE secondments and co-location arrangements:

## Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

Post	FTE
Police Officer	2.0
Seconded Probation Officer	0.6
Prospects Employment Advisor	2
CAMHS Practitioner	1
YJLD Liaison and Diversion (CNWL)	1
VIA Substance Misuse	1
<b>7.6</b>	

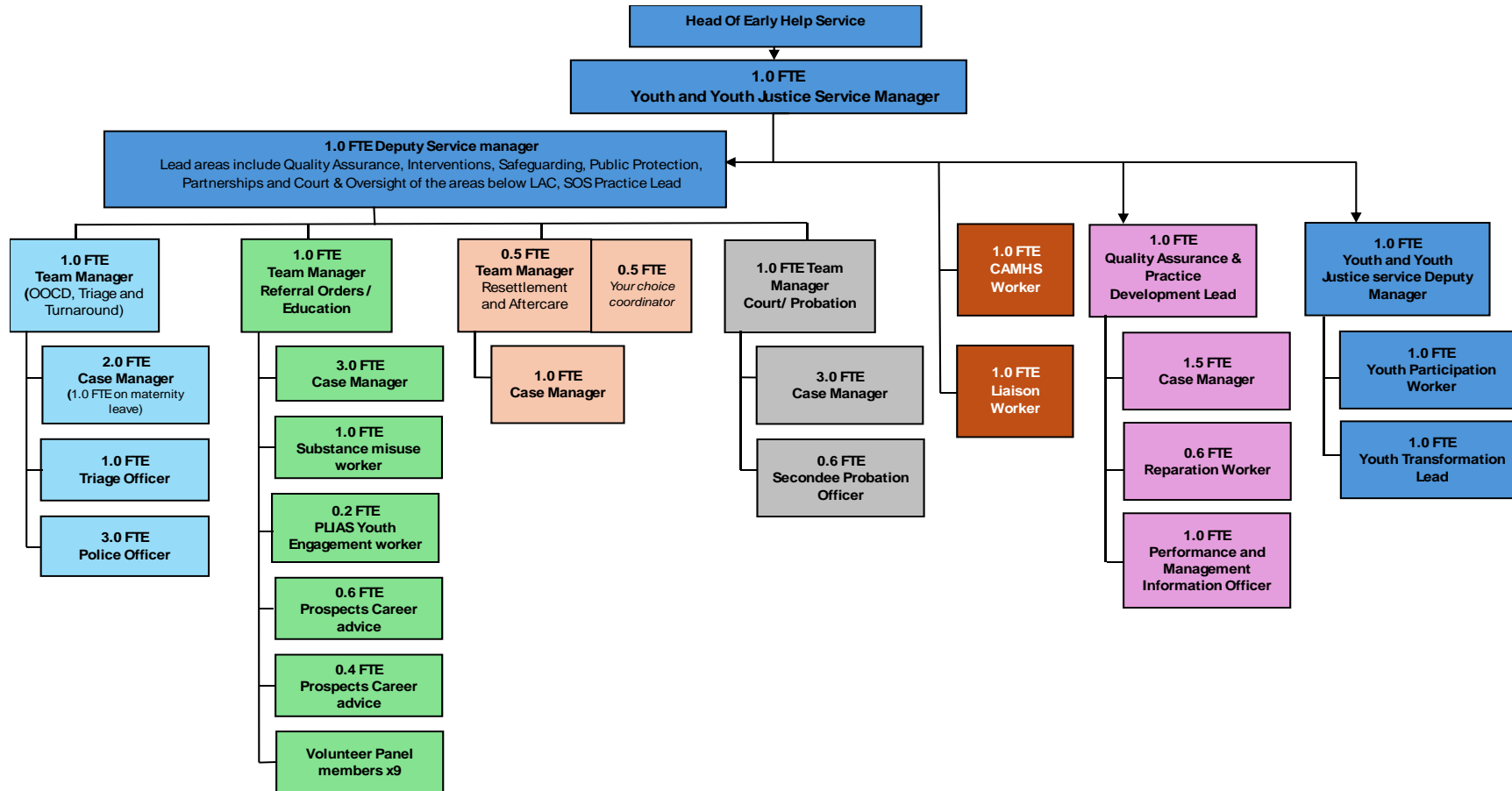
**Staff by gender and ethnicity** (There are no staff currently registered as disabled)

Gender	Total
Female	23
Male	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

Ethnicity	Total
BAME	23
White	7
Prefer not to say	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

# Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

## Brent Youth Justice Service Staff Structure 2025/26



Pre-Court	First Tier, Community and Custody Disposals					
First-time Entrants, Early Interventions, Pre-court Disposals, Data Quality, Turnaround, Engage	Referral Order Panels, Education, Employment and Training; Volunteer Panel members	Gangs, Your Choice, Contextual Safeguarding, No Knives Better Lives, Resettlement and Aftercare	Court, Custody, Bail, and Remand, Reoffending, Intensive Supervision & Surveillance, National Referral Mechanism, Probation, Transitions		Quality Assurance and Practice Development, Restorative Justice, Reparation, Group work & Interventions, Participation & YJS	Youth Strategy, Youth Engagement, FWC Interventions

# Brent Youth Justice Plan 2025-2028

