

revolving
doors

Addressing racial disparity in the youth justice system: promising practice examples

September 2024





About Revolving Doors

Revolving Doors is a national charity that aims to break the cycle of crisis and crime. We focus on the 'revolving door' group: those who have repeat contact with the criminal justice system whose behaviours are largely driven by unmet health and social needs. These include combinations of problematic substance use, homelessness, mental ill health, neurodivergence and domestic abuse, often referred to as 'multiple disadvantages'. We combine policy expertise, independent research and lived experience to champion long-term solutions for justice reform that make the revolving door avoidable and escapable. We do this by working alongside national and local decision-makers. Revolving Doors have been commissioned by the YJB to produce this report.

About the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Ministry of Justice, that is responsible for overseeing the youth justice system in England and Wales. This report was commissioned by the YJB.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all those who supported us to identify practice and/or who provided details about this to include in the report. This report would not have been possible without the input of staff across the YJB, different youth justice services and third sector organisations. We'd also like to thank Hannah Collyer at YJB for all her support and guidance throughout the project and those who reviewed earlier drafts, including our member Anthony E who helped us to ensure this was an accessible document.

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Report summary





Revolving Doors were commissioned by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) to produce a review of good and promising local practice that is tackling ethnic disparity and over-representation in youth justice across England and Wales.





The table below summarises the examples covered as case studies in the report. The focus is on community-based practice which aligns with anti-racist and the Child First evidence base about what improves outcomes for children in youth justice. The examples included are not exhaustive and we recognise that changes to practice need to be accompanied by wider policy and cultural change for the persistent issues of over-representation to be addressed in the long-term.

We aim to show that a range of interventions can be introduced, working directly with children, or to influence specific parts of the system, and to encourage youth justice services and their partners consider whether such practice could be adapted or adopted elsewhere.



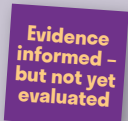

The monitoring and evaluation which underpins the learning or outcomes reported here is usually measured via self-report before and after recipients engaging in the programme. In most cases therefore, even where external evaluation has been conducted, findings are only able to tell us about a programme or intervention's potential or promise to improve outcomes. In most cases, the outcomes reported cannot be used as confirmation of whether engaging in the programme is effective relative to not receiving the programme, or receiving an alternative programme, or whether the intervention has had a direct impact on addressing racial disparities in that area.






Name of programme/intervention	Where it is being delivered	What it does	Type of evidence	Key learning and/or outcomes (evidence of promise)
Spark2Life Therapeutic Mentoring Programme	7 London Boroughs	Provides children aged 11+ (and young adults up to 30) who have been impacted by violence with between 6-12 months of support and advocacy from qualified mentors.	 Promising	Improvements in wellbeing (for 75% of participants), relationships (70%) and employment, education and training outcomes (65%). Most people (90%) did not reoffend whilst on the programme.
Coventry Youth Justice Service Mentoring Pathways	Coventry, West Midlands	Several charities offer mentoring to children in the youth justice system, those at risk of child exploitation and children who have experienced care, where there are concerns about offending behaviour. Mentors and children are matched based on shared lived experience or heritage, and based on skill set.	 Promising	Of children referred between July 2023 and January 2024: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 63% successfully completed their disposals and had not reoffended. 64% remained in stable accommodation. 14% were successfully closed to the exploitation team entirely There was also a reduction from 24% to 13% of children being assessed as high risk of exploitation.
Levelling the Playing Field , Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice and the Youth Justice Board	3 London boroughs Sheffield, Rotherham, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Coventry and Newport (Wales).	Aims to use sport and physical activity to engage and improve health and life outcomes for ethnic minority (including White minority) children, by increasing opportunities and support and ultimately reducing the number of children becoming involved with the youth justice system. This includes 65 trained mentors delivering support.	 Promising	Has helped children build relationships with staff that can help them to navigate the youth justice system. Future training for mentors would prioritise in-person delivery and have smaller regional groups as mentors' experiences vary greatly across different areas.
Ether Programme , Wipers Youth	11 London Boroughs	8-session programme for ethnic minority (excluding White minority) boys (and young men) involved with the justice system, which aims to address issues around race and identity, perceptions of self, self-esteem and confidence and attitude and behaviour.	 Promising	92% of participants reported improved confidence and self-esteem, 88% reported improved mental health and wellbeing and there was an 86% reduction in reoffending.

Name of programme/ intervention	Where it is being delivered	What it does	Type of evidence	Key learning and/or outcomes (evidence of promise)
The Call-In	Bristol	A six-month diversion scheme for 16 to 21-year-olds who have been involved with particular offences within Bristol East Central. Workshops, activities and one-to-one support is provided to help participants realise their goals and move into adulthood.		<p>In 2022, of those who had completed the programme, 85% had not reoffended and in 2023 this was 81%. In 2022, 55% of those who had completed the programme were in employment and 30% were in education or training. In 2023, 81% of successful completers had a positive education, employment or training outcome.</p> <p>Police officers reported that it had improved relationships with children and young adults in the community in East Central Bristol.</p>
Youth Community Volunteers on Out of Court Joint-Decision Making Panels	London Borough of Hackney	Hackney residents aged 19-25 ¹ are recruited and trained to be part of Out of Court Joint-Decision (OoCD) Making Panels, alongside other professionals, in attempt to build trust and confidence for children, their families and the community around decision making and diversion from the youth justice system.		<p>Three youth community volunteers have attended 34 OoCD panel meetings to date.</p> <p>Police leadership has been key to the initiatives progress and success.</p>
Y-stop app	England and Wales	A mobile app, training and tools for children (and young adults) to share their experience of stop and search, make a complaint directly to the police, connect with lawyers and other experts for support and/or be better informed about their rights.		A short film was released by Y-stop in 2015 about how police interactions safely and confidently. Part one has had over 1.5 million views and part two has had over 800,00 views.
Lewisham Youth Justice Service Family Therapy Team (LYFT)	London Borough of Lewisham	A home/ community-based model of family therapy to children between 11-18 at risk or involved in offending, and their families. The team work together other specialists that can support the children and their families including speech and language therapists and the mental health team.		24 families 'successfully' completed family therapy during the last cycle. Feedback from those who took part included that family members were closer now and that they engage better with one another.

1 While panel members are adults, their involvement in this programme aims to support outcomes for children in the youth justice system

Name of programme/ intervention	Where it is being delivered	What it does	Type of evidence	Key learning and/or outcomes (evidence of promise)
Kitchen Table Talks (KTT) , First Class Foundation	West Midlands	Supports and works closely with the parents of children involved with the youth justice system. Support is tailored based on parents' different cultures, and group sessions are designed to help parents with similar experiences connect and support each other.		Increase in wellbeing and confidence with parenting, and a reduction in isolation and feelings of shame.
Hope Hacks	Manchester, Coventry, Hull, Reading, London, Kent, Cardiff and Plymouth ²	A gathering of around 100 children (and young adults) who bring their experiences, hopes for the future and ideas for change. Discussion themes have included racism, exclusion and policing.		Social action helps children and young adults to engage, feel valued and share their views and experiences, which can help with public and voluntary sector to develop better services.
Young advocates for youth justice , Alliance for Youth Justice and Leaders Unlocked	Across England and Wales	A youth-led project that placed the voices and experiences of children (and young adults) affected by the youth justice system at the heart of decision-making.		70 AQA qualifications up to level three were awarded across the group and some young advocates are completing strategic internships at Leaders Unlocked to develop interventions that speak to the solutions the young advocates want to see.
Court report template , Islington Youth Justice Service	London Borough of Islington	Islington YJS changed their template for pre-sentence, breach and bail recommendation reports to include statements which include data linked to the local court and sentencing guidance in relation to over-representation, adultification and reducing criminalisation of children who have experienced care.		Feedback from sentencers has been positive – they have found the statements useful and helpful in their decision making . Data suggests that in Islington, the use of custody is reducing overall and that over representation of children from Black and Mixed ethnicities in relation to both remand and sentencing outcomes remains but is reducing somewhat.

2 Also: Glasgow and Belfast

Name of programme/ intervention	Where it is being delivered	What it does	Type of evidence	Key learning and/or outcomes (evidence of promise)
Anti-Racist Timelining Project , Cwm Taf Youth Justice Service	Cwm Taf, South Wales	Cwm Taf YJS will work with ethnic minority children to create a timeline of their life to learn more about their development and how discrimination, disadvantage and other cultural issues have impacted them. This is shared with other organisations working with the child, and they agree actions to support the child based on this. Anti-racist champions will work with these children directly or through their case workers.		Too early to say
Police stop and search training and development sessions , Islington Youth Justice Service	London Borough of Islington	Two-hour training sessions are held twice a month for all new police recruits who will be working for the Metropolitan Police in Islington and Camden Borough Command Unit. The training includes children who have been stopped and searched - and their parents - with the aim to improve future interactions between the police and the local community.		<p>Those who attended felt that their voices were heard, and they were given a meaningful space. However, 63% of children and young adults felt like the sessions would not have a positive impact on the future behaviour of student officers: demonstrating that there is a long way to go to rebuild trust between children and young adults and the police.</p> <p>Student officers found this ‘eye-opening’ and ‘informative’ especially considering ‘a not-very-diverse cohort’ of police officers took part.</p>
Efforts to inform and improve stop and search processes , Derby Youth Justice Service	Derby, East Midlands	A questionnaire is used to collect feedback about 10 to 17-year-old’s experiences of stop and search and two monthly scrutiny boards have been developed – one for Black boys and one for children and young adults more generally. Each met with the police monthly between May and November 2024 to discuss stop and search and other emerging issues.		The learning from the questionnaire and scrutiny board and survey helps Derby City YJS understand children’s experiences, make decisions and design services that meet the needs and experiences of those they are working with. They also share good practice and concerns with the police.

Name of programme/ intervention	Where it is being delivered	What it does	Type of evidence	Key learning and/or outcomes (evidence of promise)
Magistrates Disparity Toolkit	England and Wales	The Magistrates' Association is currently developing a toolkit for magistrates in the youth court. The aim is for this to be a short document which magistrates can quickly access to help them to prevent the risk of unequal outcomes.	Evidence informed – but not yet evaluated	Too early to say
Child First Custody and Training Research Pilot (CHIRP)	London Boroughs of Haringey and Lambeth.	Training for lawyers, custody sergeants and others working in police custody. Aims to address the disparity of experiences and outcomes for children at police stations, decrease detention rates, time spent in custody and number of children charged by encouraging a Child First approach.	Evidence informed – but not yet evaluated	Too early to say



About this report

This report includes examples of local practice to tackle ethnic disparity and over-representation that are being delivered by youth justice services and other organisations working with children in the youth justice sector. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) has commissioned this report with the aim of such examples to be disseminated nationally, and for change across the youth justice system to be promoted as good practice from one area becomes adopted and adapted in other areas. It therefore supports the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) strategic objectives to promote good practice and reduce racial disparities.

Defining good practice

This report builds on the YJB's previous definition of effective practice as 'practice which produces the intended results.'³ Therefore, we either sought to identify practices or programmes where there is tangible evidence that disparity and over-representation has been addressed, or where outcomes as defined by the organisation delivering the programme have been achieved. This meant that we did not just focus on only including practice that has been evaluated using 'hard' measures, i.e. those which are quantified and measured over time, but also those where there is qualitative, perceived or anecdotal indications of promise.

We also looked to ensure that examples of good practice reflected the Child First framework. Child First is a framework used in youth justice which is based on the best available evidence about what works to improve outcomes for children. The Child First evidence base highlights the benefits of seeing children as children, prioritising their best interests, adults meeting their responsibilities towards children, promoting strengths and empowering children to meet their potential, collaborating meaningfully with children and encouraging active participation, and ensuring children are diverted away from the youth

justice system wherever possible to minimise the stigma associated with criminalisation.⁴ In addition, we wanted to include interventions that demonstrated good culturally informed and anti-racist practice. To do this, we sought to identify examples of practice and programmes that:

- Actively acknowledged racial disparity, overrepresentation and harm.
- Understood and responded to the impact of racial trauma.
- Focused on the empowerment of ethnic minority (including White minority) children and their families.
- Recognised intersectionality and the different cultural and gendered contexts of children's lives.

Language used

The language used throughout this document reflects the Youth Justice Board's writing and style guide. We accept that some of the terms used here may not capture everyone's individual experience or the terms used by the organisations or programmes themselves.

When we use the term 'child' or 'children' we are referring to people under the age of 18.

For a full glossary of terms and list of acronyms please see page 41.

Background

In January 2024, Revolving Doors were commissioned by the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) to develop a report that presented case studies and examples of good practice in tackling racial disparity in youth justice system, from across England and Wales. This report focuses primarily on examples of practice in community (rather than custodial) settings as this aligns most closely with the

3 Chapman T and Hough J M (1998) Evidence Based Practice: A Guide to Effective Practice. London: HM Inspectorate of Probation

4 Youth Justice Board (2022) [A guide to Child First, London: Youth Justice Board](#)

strategic aims and oversight of the YJB. The secure estate was out of the scope of this report, although some interventions featured here are delivered in both community and secure settings. The scale of the problem in terms of disparity is well evidenced (see below), but there has been less discussion of potential solutions. This report attempts to remedy this.

Why focus on racial disparity?

Black children and those with Mixed ethnicity continue to be over-represented at all different stages of the youth justice system.

For example, in the year ending March 2023, Black children were involved in 20% of stop and searches (where ethnicity was known). This was 14 percentage points higher than the proportion of Black 10 to 17-year-olds in the 2021 population and the only ethnic group to be over-represented compared with the population.⁵ Runnymede Trust analysis of Home Office strip search data also showed that shows that Black children are 6.5 times more likely than White children to be strip searched by police.⁶

Between the years ending March 2010 to 2020, Black children in England and Wales were nearly five times more likely to be arrested than White children.⁷ Although numbers have decreased, Black children remained (in the year ending March 2023) over-represented when it comes to being cautioned or sentenced, accounting for 11% of this group compared with 6% of all 10 to 17-year-olds in England and Wales.⁸

Black children also remain over-represented in custody, accounting for 26% of the youth custody population compared with 6% of all 10 to 17-year-olds.⁹

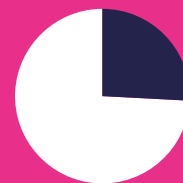
BLACK CHILDREN ARE 6.5 TIMES MORE LIKELY THAN WHITE CHILDREN TO BE STRIP SEARCHED BY POLICE



BLACK CHILDREN IN ENGLAND AND WALES WERE NEARLY FIVE TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE ARRESTED THAN WHITE CHILDREN



BLACK CHILDREN ALSO REMAIN OVER-REPRESENTED IN CUSTODY, ACCOUNTING FOR 26% OF THE YOUTH CUSTODY POPULATION COMPARED WITH 6% OF ALL 10 TO 17-YEAR-OLDS



5 Youth Justice Board (2024) [Youth Justice Statistics: 2022 to 2023](#)

6 Runnymede Trust (2024) [The racialised harm of police strip searches A response from the Runnymede Trust to a Home Office consultation](#). London: Runnymede Trust

7 Youth Justice Board (2021) [Understanding racial disparity How it affects children in their early years and within the youth justice system](#). London: Youth Justice Board

8 Youth Justice Board, [Youth Justice Statistics: 2022 to 2023](#)

9 *Ibid.*

Statistical analysis published in 2023 suggests substantial disparities in reoffending rates with a higher-than-expected proven reoffending rate for children from a Black or Mixed ethnicity background compared to White children, even after contextual factors such as offence type, local area deprivation, practitioner assessment of risk, and previous disposal are considered.¹⁰

The same analysis uncovered disparities in disposals following reoffending. For example, children from a Black, Asian or Mixed ethnicity background are more likely to receive a custodial sentence following reoffending compared to White children, even after similar contextual factors – such as offence type, practitioner assessment of risk, previous disposal – are accounted for.¹¹

Approach

We identified potential examples of evidence based, promising and good practice through the following methods:

- Desk-based research, including reviewing existing YJB outputs and academic and grey literature on the subject.
- Raising awareness of the project and putting a call-out for examples through Revolving Doors newsletter, YJB communications with the sector, and attendance at regional YJB meetings.
- Liaising directly with YJB staff to discuss disparity data and local outcomes data.

We did not limit the search only to programmes with an explicit focus on addressing racial disparity. We also included programmes that are open to all children, but that have achieved particularly good outcomes for children from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic backgrounds, or which are working in a way that has been evidenced to be important in addressing racial disparities and/or contact with the youth justice system more generally.

Where we identified examples, we then contacted key staff involved in the intervention or service to learn more, get a first-hand perspective and ensure that we were representing the service accurately in our writeup. We were particularly interested in drawing out learning from managers or practitioners.

Thereafter we checked whether there was research, evaluation or monitoring information linked to the practice, and/or if this reflected the wider evidence base, and whether the aims aligned with child-first and anti-racist practice. This process helped us to decide whether this example constituted evidence based, good or promising practice and should be included in this review. We also quality assured the examples included through a peer review process with academics, policy professionals and a Revolving Doors Lived Experience member. This helped us to ensure that the practice included was suitable and that we were not missing important initiatives.

The examples have been arranged thematically, rather than geographically as initially intended. This is because it became apparent that there are some similarities in interventions being delivered across different youth justice regions, either in terms of the overall aims of programmes or the model/ways of working being used. Therefore, these broad themes describe the types of support being provided or the strategies being implemented to make progress in addressing racial disparities in the youth justice system. In selecting the examples for inclusion in the report, we have sought to present a reasonable geographical spread where this is possible, as well as cover a range of different types of approaches to addressing racial disparities in the youth justice system. The examples included are by no means exhaustive of all the practice taking place across England and Wales but highlight a range of relevant examples that may be useful to inform practice in other areas. Additional examples with less detail than the case studies, can be found in some of the introductory sections to thematic areas.

10 Traverse (2023) [Understanding ethnic disparity in reoffending rates in the youth justice system Analysis of reoffending data](#). London: Youth Justice Board

11 *Ibid.*

Limitations

Firstly, it should be acknowledged that disparities in the youth justice system are driven by a range of factors including wider inequalities and systematic issues. For example, qualitative research¹² with children and youth justice practitioners highlighted how disparity may be driven by themes including marginalisation and exclusion from education and other support systems, poverty and local deprivation and individual, institutional, and systemic bias. Therefore, we recognise that the interventions included in this review need to be accompanied by changes in policy, practice and culture across multiple sectors and parts of society, if the issue of over-representation, which sits within a context of structural racism, is to be properly addressed.

Secondly, this document only contains a selection of examples that we had permission to include, and where details could be obtained about the provision and its impact and/or learning. It is by no means an exhaustive list, and we identified a limited number of examples of interventions that explicitly aimed to address the over-representation of ethnic minorities (including White minorities) in the youth justice system.

Therefore, we encourage decision-makers and practitioners to identify local grassroots and ‘by and for’ organisations that are working with the children who are over-represented in the local youth justice system, or who have disparate outcomes, to build on their expertise and ideas for change.

Finally, the YJB intentionally did not limit our search to interventions evaluated with methods typically perceived as providing the strongest evidence, such as randomised control trials or quasi-experimental evaluation design where impact is demonstrated using a robust counterfactual. They also wanted to highlight emerging practice, including new, untested innovations.

As a result, we are unable to confirm for most of the case studies included in this report whether they are effective at improving outcomes for children from ethnic minority groups or reducing disparities or overrepresentation in youth justice. Instead, we can conclude that they may have the potential to do so based on the evidence available so far, which either is encouraging qualitative data or evaluation conducted before and after programme participation or that the approach reflects the wider evidence base on this subject, despite the programme not actively collecting data in relation to disparities.

Where outcomes have been recorded, these sometimes only focus on the whole cohort of children and/or young adults that received the intervention, without disaggregating this by particular ethnic groups. In addition, few programmes specifically report on whether they directly contributed to reducing disparities in the youth justice system, again highlighting the need for further monitoring and evaluation to understand what works.

This report

The remainder of this report includes case studies that can be categorised in two ways.

- 1. Evidence informed but not yet evaluated.** They are implementing an approach that reflects the wider evidence base on this subject, despite the programme not actively collecting data in relation to disparities.
- 2. Demonstrating promising practice** due to encouraging qualitative data or evaluation conducted before and after programme participation. However, they require further monitoring and evaluation to definitively assess whether they are making a tangible difference to disparities.

These have then been organised by themes based on the approach being taken or the target group that the intervention being delivered is focusing on (e.g., police, families).

¹² Traverse (2023) [Understanding ethnic disparity in reoffending rates in the youth justice system: child and practitioner perspectives report](#). London: Youth Justice Board

The first set of themes can be categorised as examples of **practice that is directly working with children and their families**. These are included because working with families has been shown to be effective in improving relationships and reducing offending¹³ whilst developing strong and continuous relationships between key workers and children is considered key to success amongst children in contact with the youth justice system.¹⁴ The mentoring interventions and work with boys included here also support the building children's pro-social identity as they intend to empower children and build on their strengths. Diversion schemes are included because evidence shows that contact with the formal criminal justice system generally increases re-offending rates, and so if more ethnic minority (including White minority) children can be diverted into alternative forms of support – this has the potential to help to address racial disparities.

This is followed by examples of work that is **focused on the voices of children and collecting and sharing their views to influence positive change**. Working in this way reflects the Child First tenet of meaningfully collaborating with children, as well as the key aspects of Procedural Justice Theory, namely voice (giving people the chance to tell their side of the story), respect (people feeling respected and treated courteously by authority figures) and understanding (people understanding why decisions are made).¹⁵ There is evidence that promoting procedural justice impacts respect for and compliance with authority/rules¹⁶, whilst international research that found that improving procedural fairness can rectify perceptions of racial bias and inequality among ethnic minority communities.¹⁷

Thereafter, there are case studies about **influencing practice**. In their report on racial disparity in the youth justice system, JUSTICE outlined how a principle of good practice was ownership, where youth justice services take ownership of issues and try to address them.¹⁸ The first few case studies included in this section, where youth justice services have sought to use data to address over-representation or sought to influence policing practices, provide examples of youth justice services making changes and/or trying something new to address racial disparities. Lastly, there are examples of practice targeted at lawyers and judges, who play a key role in children's perceptions of the youth justice system and the outcomes they receive.

All the examples in this section have also sought to improve understanding of the issue of racial disparities amongst decision makers and those interacting with children in contact with the youth justice system, whilst attempting to improve relationships between children and key actors in the youth justice system. This is important given data consistently showing low levels of trust in youth justice processes amongst Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children.¹⁹

13 Trotter C (2021) [Collaborative Family Work in Youth Justice: Academic Insights 2021/02](#). Manchester: HM Inspectorate of Probation

14 McAra L and McVie S (2010) [Youth crime and justice: Key messages from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime](#). *Criminology & Criminal Justice*.10(2). pages 179–209

15 HM [Inspectorate of Probation](#). 'Procedural Justice'

16 *Ibid*.

17 Lee C G and others (2013) [A Community Court grows in Brooklyn: a comprehensive evaluation of the Red Hook Community Justice Center](#). Virginia: National Center for State Courts

18 JUSTICE (2021) [Tackling Racial Injustice: Children and the Youth Justice System](#). London: JUSTICE

19 Lammy D (2017) [The Lammy Review: An Independent Review into the Treatment of, and Outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Individuals in the Criminal Justice System](#). London: Ministry of Justice; Casey L (2023) [Baroness Casey Review: Final report](#). The Metropolitan Police; Ofori and others (2022) [Children and young people's voices on youth diversion and disparity](#). London: Centre for Justice Innovation



Working with children

Working with children

Mentoring

The term mentoring is broadly defined and can be applied to a range of settings and types of one-to-one support. For the purpose of this guide, we will build on the definition of youth mentoring used by Nesta:

Trusting, purposeful and ongoing relationships between a younger person or people, and an older, unrelated person, which involve the exchange of support, advice, encouragement, and skills development.

Overall, mentoring has been found to be effective in reducing crime and behaviours associated with crime and violence.²⁰

Below are some examples of mentoring interventions being delivered in England and Wales that have (amongst their aims) sought to reduce (re)offending amongst ethnic minority children. One similarity of these programmes is that the mentors work or volunteer for local community-based organisations. There is growing evidence that grassroots and community-based organisations can provide specialist, tailored and relatable support.²¹ For example, Alliance for Youth Justice research found that grassroots voluntary community sector organisations are vital in creating genuine engagement with ethnic minority children, who can relate to these practitioners because of their lived experience and expertise from the child's own community.²²

Another commonality across the different mentoring programmes considered here, is that mentors receive training, to be able to provide suitable support, with confidence. Training often covers trauma-informed principles and ways of working. In addition, these examples are similar in that they encourage aspirational thinking and often mentoring is delivered alongside an activity, such as sport or music.

Most children in the youth justice system have experienced adverse, and often traumatic childhood experiences, therefore mentoring can help address this through providing a social support and helping children build personal resilience.²³ In addition, the ability of mentoring interventions to support ethnic minority (including White minority) children develop a pro-social identity is particularly important considering that they can find themselves vulnerable to negative self-image because of racism and discrimination.²⁴ Black children in particular are often negatively impacted by criminal and pro-offending stereotypes in society.²⁵ This can impact how children see themselves, affecting their ability to develop a pro-social or non-offending identity, which is considered a key mechanism to enable positive outcomes and reduce likelihood of engaging in offending behaviour.²⁶

20 Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit. Available at: <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/toolkit/mentoring-2>

21 Alliance for Youth Justice (2024) [Bridging gaps and changing tracks Supporting racially minoritised young people in the transition to adulthood in the criminal justice system](#). London: AYJ

22 Ibid.

23 Liddle M with Boswell G, Wright S and Francis V (2016) [Trauma and young offenders: a review of the research and practice literature](#). London: Beyond Youth Custody

24 Benner A and others. (2018) [Racial/ethnic discrimination and well-being during adolescence: A metaanalytic review](#). *American Psychologist*. 73(3). Pages 855-883

25 Apena F (2007) [Being Black and in Trouble: The Role of Self-perception in the Offending Behaviour of Black Youth](#). *Youth Justice*. 7(3). Pages 211-229

26 Case S and Browning A (2021) [Child First Justice: the research evidence-base](#). Loughborough: Loughborough University

Spark2Life Therapeutic Mentoring Programme

Background

Spark2Life is a Black-led organisation that delivers a range of programmes for children in schools and children and young adults in the community, as well as training for professionals, with the ultimate aim to reduce and prevent harm and offending. One of the programmes delivered by Spark2Life is therapeutic mentoring.

Where is it delivered?

The London Boroughs of Waltham Forest, Newham, Hackney, Barking & Dagenham, Lewisham, Greenwich and Redbridge.

What does it involve?

Mentors receive accredited training through the AQA Wholistic Mentoring Programme, which is an eight-week course that covers different psychological theories and trauma-informed models, before they are matched to a child.

On average, mentees receive between six and 12 months of support, but this can be extended if required. This includes a one-hour casework and mentoring session per-week and one hour of advocacy work, such as representing the child in an agency meeting or providing support with court proceedings. Mentors aim to equip children and young adults with practical and emotional tools to better navigate life's challenges. Positive changes are targeted in the following four areas: resilience, social and emotional wellbeing, access to employment and education, desistance from crime.

Who is it aimed at?

Children aged over 11 and young adults aged 18-30 who have been impacted by violence (including as victims).

How are children (and young adults) referred?

Children and young adults who are considered to be at medium and high-risk of being impacted by violence can self-refer to the programme by talking to school staff or caseworkers who do

outreach in the community through Spark2Life's Detached Programme. They can also be referred by Early Help, Social Services, youth justice services, mainstream schools, pupil referral units and voluntary organisations.

How is it funded?

Spark2Life's mentoring work in the community has been funded by local authorities, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the Ministry of Justice, in many local authority areas they utilise a combination of funding sources.

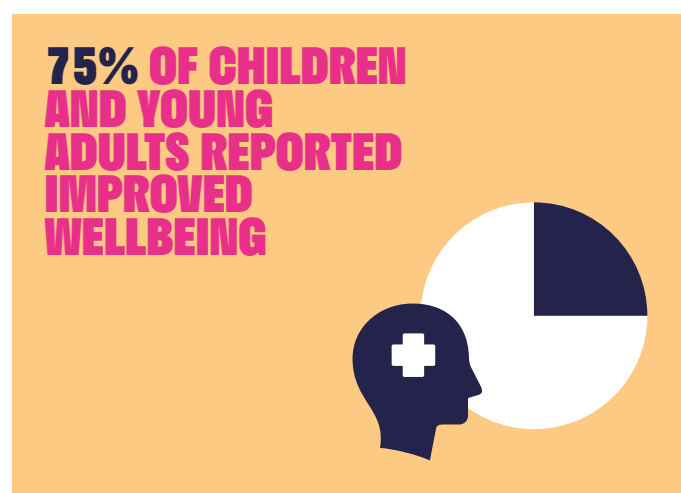
What is the reach?

In 2023-2024 Spark2Life provided long-term mentoring to 302 children and 22 young adults, 50% of whom were Black and a further 43% of whom were Asian or from another ethnic minority background.

Learning and outcomes

Data provided by the service (that is unpublished) which is collected through exit interviews, internal reporting and feedback from wider professionals (e.g., school staff), shows that during their time on the programme:

- 75% reported improved wellbeing.
- 90% desisted from reoffending.
- 65% engaged with employment, training and education opportunities
- 70% reported improved relationships with others.





A mentee who shared feedback with Spark2Life explained how they felt inspired and more positive from being on the programme:

“My Spark2Life mentor helped me feel happier and motivated. Spark2Life was there for me no matter what.”

Spark2Life participant, aged 17

In July 2024, the Youth Endowment Fund announced funding to expand and evaluate Spark2Life’s mentoring programmes.

Coventry Youth Justice Service Mentoring Pathways

Background

Since 2020, Coventry Youth Justice Service (CYJS) has developed a mentoring pathway in partnership with a consortium of third sector organisations to address issues associated with discrimination and disproportionality. To provide children with relatable role models they match mentors to children based on shared lived experience or heritage and based on skill set. They felt this to be important as the service’s workforce is not reflective of the local community. This decision reflects wider research findings

that show that for people of Black ethnicity in particular, trusting relationships with professionals rely greatly on representation and cultural competency. Children and their families are much more likely to speak with practitioners who share or understand their ethnic background and culture.²⁷

Where is it delivered?

Coventry, West Midlands

What does it involve?

A range of charities offer mentoring through the pathway. This includes:

- [St Giles](#) which has a focus on resettlement support.
- [Positive Youth Foundation](#) (based in the Hillfields area) which delivers several sports-based mentoring offers with a focus on supporting children from ethnic minorities (excluding White minorities).
- [First Class Foundation](#) which runs a regional peer parenting project.
- [Guiding Young Minds](#) which offers mentoring with a focus on supporting children where youth justice service has not successfully engaged the child/family.
- [Coventry Boys and Girls Club](#) which offers sports- and/or music-based mentoring through a newly equipped youth club based in Coventry University.
- [Aptitude Community Interest Company](#) (CIC) which offers sports- and/or music-based mentoring delivered through a youth club in the Radford area of the city.

Mentors and the Youth Justice Service have a bi-monthly tracking meeting that enables best practice and new ideas to be shared/developed. As children can access the organisation where the mentor is based after that support finishes, it is also hoped that this will improve their social capital.

27 Williams and others (2020) [Therapeutic Intervention for Peace \(TIP\) Report](#). London: Power the Fight

Who is it aimed at?

The mentoring offer is available to children in the youth justice system, those at risk of child exploitation and children who have experienced care, where there are concerns about engagement in offending behaviour.

How are children referred?

Children can be referred by the police, youth justice service and local authority staff. CYJS oversees referrals. There are various ways to identify which mentoring service would best fit the child, this includes through weekly triage of the different offers. Teams being placed in the same building helps conversations easy to facilitate between the staff member who knows the child best and the key point of contact at each of the mentoring organisations.

How is it funded?

The mentoring pathway is funded by a community safety partnership grant from the police and crime commissioner.

What is the reach?

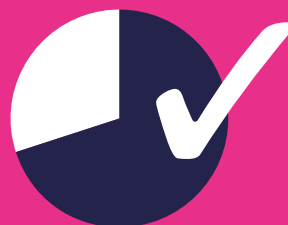
An internal evaluation was undertaken in June 2024, of referrals for one-to-one mentoring completed between July 2023 and January 2024. The sample included 36 children who had an age range of 14-18. 55% per cent were from a Black or minority ethnic background.

Data also shows that 31% of the children accessing mentoring have also experienced care.

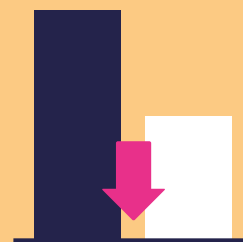
Learning and outcomes

The mentoring pathway was praised for addressing diversity needs in the most recent [HMIP inspection report](#). The [joint targeted area inspection](#) of Coventry credited community-based mentoring by people with lived experience for making children safer.

63% OF CHILDREN SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THEIR DISPOSALS



OF THE CHILDREN ASSESSED TO BE AT RISK OF CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION, THERE WAS A REDUCTION FROM 24% TO 13% BEING ASSESSED AS HIGH RISK OF EXPLOITATION



An internal evaluation completed in June 2024 showed that out of the 36 children referred between July 2023 and January 2024, 17% achieved early revocation of a Court Order. The other children had referrals to prevent entry into the criminal justice system. In addition, 63% of children successfully completed their disposals, are now closed to the youth justice service and had not reoffended by the end of the evaluation period.

Of the children assessed to be at risk of criminal exploitation, there was a reduction from 24% to 13% being assessed as high risk of exploitation. Another 14% were successfully closed to the exploitation team entirely. During the sample period, 64% of children remained in stable accommodation with no changes in placement and no missing episodes reported.

Levelling the Playing Field

Background

Levelling the Playing Field is delivered by the Alliance of Sport in Criminal Justice working alongside the Youth Justice Board. The pilot programme, launched in 2020, aims to use the power of sport and physical activity to engage and improve health and life outcomes for ethnic minority (including White minority) children who are on the fringes of or already involved with the youth justice system in England and Wales. This programme has been set up because children from 'ethnically diverse backgrounds' are underrepresented in the participation of sport and physical activity and are significantly overrepresented in the youth justice system.²⁸

Levelling the Playing Field operates through empowering local community organisations, who are best placed to engage local children, through sport, physical activity and mentoring. The programme seeks to increase opportunity and support for children, as well as increased connectedness and trust with local criminal justice agencies, and ultimately reduce the number of children becoming involved with the youth justice system.

Where is it delivered?

Community interventions are delivered in the London boroughs of Croydon, Lambeth and Lewisham, the City of Newport (Wales), Sheffield, Rotherham, Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Coventry.

Interventions are also delivered in the secure estate in HMYOI Cookham Wood, HMYOI Feltham, Oakhill STC, Rainsbrook STC, HMYOI Werrington, HMYOI Wetherby, HMP&YOI Park and Hillside SCH.

What does it involve?

One aspect of Levelling the Playing Field is bespoke mentoring programmes. This aims to train local experts already within communities, who already have relationships and trust with

local children, building on the support they already provide. Staff working at local delivery partners receive training encompassing a Level 3 Workforce Mentoring qualification, Royal Society of Public Health (RSPH) Level 2 Award in Improving the Public's Health and training in trauma-responsive mentoring. Training aims to build mentors' capabilities and confidence in developing trusted relationships with children, having difficult conversations, discussing complex issues, challenging behaviour, and how and when to signpost further services. Peer to Peer learning has been identified as a key element of the training approach.²⁹

Mentors then go on to provide support and development opportunities for the children they work with.

Who is it aimed at?

The project seeks to support children (male and female) aged 10-18 years of age and who are identified as being on the fringes of, or already involved with, the youth justice system in England and Wales. Predominantly, they are children from 'ethnically and culturally diverse' backgrounds. The mentoring element of Levelling the Playing Field aims to support the children with the highest needs one-to-one.

How are children referred?

This varies by each organisation and as mentoring is funded directly by organisations, data is not collected on this.

What does it cost and how is it funded?

Levelling the Playing Field is funded by a grant from the London Marathon Foundation. To date, £514,644 funding has been sourced and distributed to specialist partners through this grant and the Tackling Inequalities Fund, the Together Fund and the Ministry of Justice Youth Justice Sport Fund.

²⁸ <https://levellingtheplayingfield.org/faq>

²⁹ <https://www.levellingtheplayingfield.org/component/content/article/97-latest-news/286-mentoring-training-aspire?Itemid=437>

However, the mentoring strand is not directly funded through this grant. Levelling the Playing field covered the training costs, and thereafter organisations were expected to fund this directly.

What is the reach?

The first cohort involved training of 65 mentors across four regions.³⁰ During the training 109 mentees received supervised and supported mentoring as part of the practical learning of the mentors.

To date 22,518 ethnic minority (including White minority) children have engaged in Levelling the Playing Field, representing over 100 different ethnicities and the programme has worked with nearly 100 organisations.

Learning and outcomes

The pilot programme is currently being evaluated by the University of Birmingham. The interim report published in 2022.³¹ The programme was praised for creating a strong, trusted network of statutory and community organisations that focused on prevention and diversion for ethnic minority (including White minority) children in the delivery areas. This multi-agency working was credited with helping children and young adults to form positive and trusted relationships with key individuals, including staff from statutory services, which was important in their ability to navigate encounters with the justice system. The final report will be published in 2025.

To date there has not been a formal evaluation of the mentoring strand of the programme. However, learning shared on the Levelling the Playing field [website](#) included that it took longer to develop trust between the course leaders and the learners online than it would have done in person, and that online delivery made engagement and quality assurance more challenging. There will be more face-to-face delivery going forward, post-pandemic, to help build rapport and share practice.

In the future, mentor training will also be delivered in smaller, regionalised groups, so sessions can be tailored to the different area's unique needs because it became apparent that issues faced by mentors varied greatly depending on the area in which they were based. Lastly, the initial training demonstrated the importance of engagement at all levels. As every part of an organisation needs to be committed to the training and clear on the requirements for it to be a success.

A staff member who took part in the mentoring training [highlighted](#) the benefits of this for both themselves and the children they work with because it allowed them to better identify someone's needs and tailor support accordingly.

“It's definitely benefited me... expanded my experience. It has made that opportunity to engage with someone who may need it most, 10 times more beneficial for both sides...having the perspective of a qualified mentor adds an extra layer of understanding to what kind of support a young person may need after a sport session has finished. Are we reporting any concerns in the right way, do we need to inform school or other external organisations? Knowing that child better through mentoring helps us make the right decisions.”

(Ant, Youth and Inclusion Manager, Rotherham United Community Sports Trust)

Jeni, Mentor Project Manager at Sport 4 Life in Birmingham, one of the pilot programme partners, provided the following [advice](#) on setting up mentoring programmes:

1. Allocate staff time to be able to provide one-to-one support and build relationships with children. There are no half measures.
2. Mentors benefit from access to organisational resources that they can draw upon.
3. Building rapport may begin with a drop-in hour or a 15-minute conversation about how they're feeling, how's school or whether there been any issues.

30 <https://www.levellingtheplayingfield.org/component/content/article/97-latest-news/286-mentoring-training-aspire?Itemid=437>

31 Hammond H (2022) [Levelling the Playing Field: interim progress report](#). London: Alliance of Sport

4. It is important to have structures to assess children and young adults short- and longer-term needs and reasons behind disengagement with other services.
5. Asking children and young adults about their aspirations for the future encourages them to dream big, helping to trigger a more positive mindset. Talking can really spark and empower a children and young adults to find their own destination.
6. Mentors need to be reliable, consistent and trustworthy. They need to be confident in their ability to build professional relationships and show children and young adults that they care about them.

Tailored support for boys

In the year ending December 2022, boys comprised 84% of the total child first time entrants (FTEs) to the youth justice system and 86% of children who receive a caution or sentence, whilst making up 51% of the general population of 10 to 17-year-olds.³² Furthermore, boys have always made up most of the cohort of children who reoffend, but the proportion of this group that they make up has increased over the last ten years, from 79% to 86%.³³

The Lammy Review acknowledged that the disproportionate stereotyping of young Black boys and men as being ‘gang-affiliated’ was a significant factor contributing to the high level of arrests, charges, prosecutions, and imprisonment of this population.³⁴

More recently, across the services that were inspected as part of the thematic inspection of the experiences of Black and Mixed ethnicity boys in the youth justice system, staff and managers reported that the large majority of Black and Mixed ethnicity boys had experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and had high levels of need, such as special educational needs (SEN)

and mental health difficulties, which had not always been identified or properly addressed until they came into contact with the youth justice service.³⁵

A recommendation stemming from this thematic inspection was that specialist provision was needed for Black and Mixed ethnicity boys, and that gaps needed to be addressed either by youth justice services delivering it in-house, or by commissioning it from appropriate local community organisations.³⁶ The case study below is an example of such specialist provision.

When identifying examples of practice, we also came across initiatives that were focused on positive masculinity and working with boys. For example, the **Boys Masculinity Group Programme**, delivered by **Calderdale Youth Justice Service** in West Yorkshire is a 12-session programme is about masculinity and culture. Sessions are held in safe and supportive locations, such as the local YMCA and food is provided. Topics covered include healthy relationships, expectations of boys and men and mental health, whilst issues including colour, culture, the impact of traditions are addressed to enhance the boy’s understanding of differences and commonalities among the group.

Ether programme, Wipers Youth

Background

Wipers Youth is a Black-led social enterprise that aims to help children and young adults recognise and develop their strengths, talents and positive attributes. One of their services is the Ether programme, which is a leadership course that intends to motivate and inspire ethnic minority children and young adults.

Where is it delivered?

Across eleven London Boroughs including Ealing, Enfield, Hammersmith & Fulham, Haringey, Hackney, Islington, Lambeth, Newham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest.

³² [Youth Justice Statistics: 2022 to 2023](#)

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ [The Lammy Review](#), Ministry of Justice

³⁵ HM Inspectorate of Probation (2021) [The experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system, A thematic inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation](#). Manchester: HM Inspectorate of Probation

³⁶ *Ibid.*

What does it involve?

Ether is an 8-session programme that aims to address issues around race and identity and perceptions of self, as well as self-esteem and confidence, attitude and behaviour, including independent thinking.

Sessions also include discussions around stereotypes, breaking barriers and perceptions of masculinity.

Wipers wider provision means that after children and young adults have completed the Ether programme, they can receive further support, if required, for example from a mentor and/or get involved in initiatives such as becoming a Wipers youth ambassador.

Who is it aimed at?

Ethnic minority (excluding White minority) boys and young men involved with the youth justice system.

The programme can be delivered to clusters and small groups of children and young adults from the same area, estate or friendship group.

How are children (and young adults) referred?

Youth justice service staff refer children that they are working with.

How is it funded?

The programme has received funding from London's violence reduction unit Stronger Futures programme as well as being contracted directly by youth justice services in London.

What is the reach?

In 2022, the programme engaged 94 children and young adults across 11 London boroughs.

Learning and outcomes

In 2022, 44 children and young adults on the programme achieved a Level 1 AQA accreditation in Leadership & Personal Development. An independent report drawing together data from the Ether programme and the Aspire Higher programme in 2021/22, found a 92% improvement in participants' confidence and self-esteem, and an 88% improvement in reported mental health and wellbeing.³⁷ Where data on reoffending could be collected (around 60% of programme participants) it showed an 86% reduction in reoffending.

Diversion

Diversion is where children with a linked offence receive an alternative outcome that does not result in a criminal record, avoids escalation into the formal youth justice system and associated stigmatisation. This may involve the youth justice service (YJS) delivering support or an intervention that may or may not be voluntary and/or signposting children (and parent/carers) into relevant services.³⁸

Diversion can occur at different points in the youth justice system: at the point of arrest, before charges are made, or in court through alternative forms of sentencing.

Local areas take different approaches to diverting children away from the formal youth justice system. Diversion services are developed by the Police, YJS and other partners and involve multi-agency decision making.

³⁷ Rocket Science (2023) [The Ascension Project Final Report](#). London: Rocket Science

³⁸ Youth Justice Board (2021) [Definitions for Prevention and Diversion](#)

Both international evidence³⁹ and that from England and Wales⁴⁰ has found that diversion schemes result in better long-term outcomes for children than traditional, formal routes. However, data analysis suggests that such benefits have been unequal, with Black and ethnic minority (including White minority) children less likely to benefit from existing diversion schemes.⁴¹ Although there is a limited literature exploring why children from minority ethnic backgrounds are less likely to access diversionary options⁴² - evidence shows that requiring an admission of guilt can result in unequal access to diversion for Black, Asian and ethnic minority children as they have lower levels of trust in the justice system than White children and are therefore less likely to plead guilty or admit to an offence.⁴³

The first example showcased is a deferred prosecution scheme. While some diversion schemes require an admission of guilt to participate, importantly, this is not required in deferred prosecution. The second case study is a programme linked to out-of-court disposals (OoCD) which can be used for children who have admitted an offence, but it is decided it is not in the public interest to prosecute.

The Call In, Bristol

Background

The Call In was established in 2019 as a partnership project between Avon and Somerset Police, Bristol City Council, the Office of Police and Crime Commission and Golden Key to divert children and young adults aged 16-21 years old away from crime and the criminal legal system.

The deferred prosecution pilot focused on East Central Bristol due to the level of drug supply offences in the area. In addition, data showed that Black and ethnic minority (excluding White minority) boys and young men were disproportionately in contact with the justice system in the area, and it was identified as a hotspot for serious violence. Recognising the need to divert this group from the formal justice system and reduce the risk of exploitation Avon & Somerset Police's East Central Neighbourhood team proposed The Call In pilot.

Golden Key was a partnership between statutory services, commissioners, the voluntary sector and people with lived experience across Bristol. It was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and ended in June 2023.

Thereafter it was agreed that The Call In required a new host and that a Black led grassroots organisation would be best suited to deliver the programme. This was because of the nature of the work; race equity expertise and credibility were required, and a community approach was needed.

Mwanzo Project launched August 2023⁴⁴. It is a Black Led Grassroots Community Interest Company founded to continue delivery of The Call In and respond to the gap in provision for children and young adults who are at risk/involved in offending, exploitation and street conflict. The founder had led The Call In since it was first established, developing the programme and overseeing delivery, so Mwanzo Project was well placed to continue delivery.

39 Petrosino A with Turpin-Petrosino C and Guckenberg S (2010) Formal System Processing of Juveniles: Effects on Delinquency. Campbell Systematic Reviews 6(1); Wilson D with Brennan I and Olaghere A (2018) Police-initiated diversion for youth to prevent future delinquent behaviour. Campbell Systematic Reviews 14(1)

40 Haines K and others (2013) The Swansea Bureau: A model of diversion from the Youth Justice System. International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice, 41 (2), pages 167-187

41 ZK Analytics (2021) Ethnic disproportionality in remand and sentencing in the youth justice system Analysis of administrative data. London: Youth Justice Board; Kenton O and Moore R (2021) The quality of delivery of out-of-court disposals in youth justice. London: HM Inspectorate of Probation.

42 Bateman and others (2022) 'Race', disproportionality and diversion from the youth justice system: a review of the literature. London: Nuffield Foundation

43 Lammy D (2017) The Lammy Review. Ministry of Justice; Bowen P (2017) Building Trust: How our courts can improve the criminal court experience for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic defendants. London: Centre for Justice Innovation

44 <https://www.mwanzo.co.uk/>

Where is it delivered?

Bristol and South Gloucestershire. Eligible children and young adults have been arrested in Bristol East Central for specific offences and reside in Bristol or South Gloucestershire.

What does it involve?

Shortlisted candidates are initially visited at home by the police and offered a place on the programme. If they consent, they are then assessed by the Mwanzo Team and invited to attend an Initial panel meeting chaired by the Neighbourhood Inspector to officially enrol. The panel consists of a Mwanzo Mentor, a service coordinator who specialises in education, employment and training, the Service Manager and a community representative.

The Call In seeks to create opportunities for children and young adults to engage in support that is accessible to them, provide them with the chance to build relationships with mentors and role-models who they can relate to, support their transition to adulthood and unlock their potential. The programme includes a range of interventions that can be tailored to meet the needs of children and young adults. This includes:

- One-to-one mentoring focusing on counternarratives, building relationships, creating safe spaces, consequential thinking, building self-confidence, self-esteem and developing conflict resolution skills.
- Culturally sensitive group workshops to build independence and lifelong skills including financial literacy, reflective spaces and harm minimisation.
- Supporting access to a range of positive activities that can help improve physical and emotional wellbeing, including therapeutic interventions.
- Life coaching and goal planning, including creating personal development plans and exploring their interests and goals.

Bi-monthly review panels are held to review the child or young adult's progress, celebrate success and to address any concerns or challenges with the programme. Children and young adults also have access to a personal budget fund of around £250 to support their transition and personal development, for example, by contributing to training courses, and paying for essential items like phones and travel passes.

All Mwanzo Project staff are qualified mentors and coaches in addition to be trained in psychologically and trauma-informed approaches and equipped with the skills to empower children and young adults to feel able to speak about their experiences and to support them around their wellbeing. In addition to either having lived experience or demonstratable understanding of barriers faced by this group.

Whilst hosted by Golden Key on average each child or young adult received 120 hours of activities and workshops, and 60 hours of Golden Key direct support over the six-month programme.⁴⁵ Mwanzo Project has adopted the same model of support.

Who is it aimed at?

The scheme is open to 16 to 21-year-olds. Offences that qualified included possession with intent to supply class A and B drugs, possession of an offensive weapon or knife blade/sharp pointed article in a public place, and robbery.

How are children (and young adults) referred?

Cases are referred by the police and, where the child is under 18, are approved by the Bristol Youth Justice Service Out of Court Disposal Panel (OOCDP).

What does it cost and how is it funded?

Running costs for The Call In in 2021 were around £90,000, or £6,923 per participant. This includes a project manager, a part-time project and support worker and mentors.

45 <https://www.goldenkeybristol.org.uk/the-call-in>

Funding for The Call In has changed over time. It was originally funded by Avon and Somerset Police, Golden Key and Bristol City Council and Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner until January 2022. The programme was funded to work with an additional cohort in 2023 through the government ADDER (Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement and Recovery) programme that aims to provide a whole-system response to combatting drug misuse in the 13 most affected areas across England and Wales.

Mwanzo Project has secured funding to deliver the programme for another year. The programme's delivery continues to be funded by Avon and Somerset Police, Project ADDER, and Bristol City Council. A challenge has been not being able to access funding streams available for voluntary organisations for The Call In because the programme is linked to statutory processes.

What is the reach?

When the programme was evaluated in 2022, 31 people had enrolled, 58% of whom were children, and 68% of whom were Black, Asian or Mixed heritage.

By January 2023, 45 children and young adults had been enrolled on the programme. 87% of this group were Black, Asian or Mixed heritage with the largest ethnic being Black African.

Learning and outcomes

If someone successfully completes the six-month programme, they are not charged with the offence and avoid going to court and potentially serving a custodial sentence.

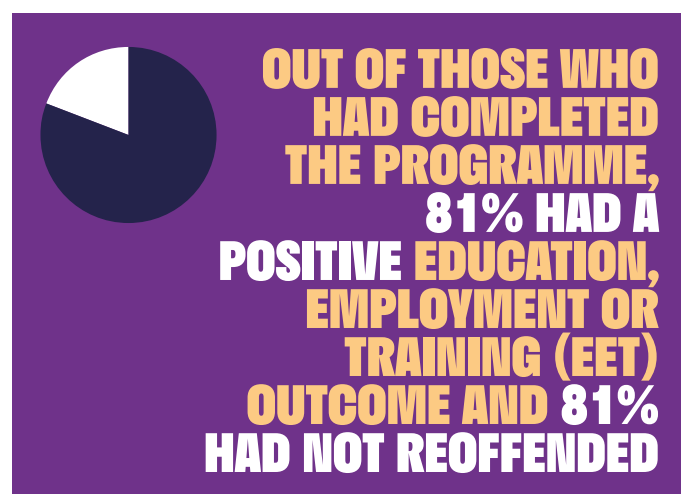
For those that successfully completed the Call In, Golden Key reported that 55% were in employment, 30% were in education or training and 85% had not reoffended, however the time-period in which these outcomes were recorded is not clear.⁴⁶ More recent internal data from January 2023, showed that out of the 45 people that had been part of the programme, 70%

had completed this, and out of those who had completed the programme, 81% had a positive education, employment or training (EET) outcome and 81% had not reoffended. In addition, 100% of the group had access to at least one health and wellbeing session and at least one EET session.

In the evaluation published in 2022, Avon and Somerset Police reported benefits including finding new ways to work with local communities. Police officers felt that it had improved relationships with children and young adults in the community in East Central Bristol, including by changing perceptions of the police amongst those who took part in the scheme.⁴⁷

Furthermore, stakeholders involved highlighted that if the project were to be replicated in other parts of Bristol, it would have to be delivered by those with equivalent roots in the local community who have the 'cultural competence' to interact with Black, Asian and Mixed ethnicity children and young adults. It would also require a core group representing key agencies and community interests that were bought into the scheme's aims.⁴⁸

Mwanzo Project believe that principles underlying the success of the programme are: adopting a trauma informed approach, effective partnership working, community investment and involvement, youth voice and a commitment to innovative practice and system change.



⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Frank Warburton Consultancy (2022) [Evaluation of The Call-In project Bristol: Final report](#). Bristol: Golden Key

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Youth Community Volunteers on Out of Court Joint-Decision Making Panels in Hackney

Background

In March 2019 Hackney Children and Families Services invited several trained peers, supported by the Youth Justice Sector Improvement Programme (YJSIP) and the Youth Justice Board to conduct a Sector Led Youth Justice Peer Review primarily focussing on the Strategic Oversight and the Effective delivery of Youth Out of Court Disposals (OoCD). The Peer Review Team observed that while all cases to be considered for an OoCD were discussed in respect of applicable disposals, essentially the final decisions were taken by the police. The team suggested that a more assertive challenge may be helpful in some cases, notably those relating to domestic incidents within the home and incidents involving children who had experience of care. Consequently, the idea to include youth community volunteers in the OoCD Joint-Decision Making Panel was formed. It was hoped that this would help to build trust and confidence for children, their families and the community around decision making and diversion from the youth justice system.

These community volunteers were trained to participate in the service's existing OoCD panel process: an OoCD panel involves a range of professionals from different organisations who consider the offence type, the circumstances surrounding the child and the impact on the victims and their views to agree which type of OoCD and programme will be most effective and proportionate. A practitioner represents the 'child's voice' in this meeting, after using a child centred assessment tool which explores the child's lived experience and factors like neurodiversity.

Where is it delivered?

London Borough of Hackney, London

What does it involve?

Hackney Youth Justice Service developed a bespoke eight-week training programme that is delivered in collaboration with the police, a Specialist Clinical Practitioner and Speech & Language Therapists. This training programme covers a range of topics including what an Out of Court Disposal is, the processes involved, case studies and practice, evidence for a diversion, adolescent development, values, assumptions and stereotypes – including disproportionality and anti-racist practice, adverse childhood experiences, trauma informed approaches, speech and language needs in the youth justice system, victim awareness and restorative approaches. Throughout the process feedback is collected through discussion, one to ones and feedback forms. Thereafter, panel members have a dedicated person as a point of contact and support.

After attending the training, the time commitment involves between one and four hours a month for a period of six to 12 months. The meetings take place virtually and agreed expenses are covered. Youth Panel Volunteers are expected to actively listen and participate in the Panel's process, sometimes review written anonymised case information in advance, strictly maintain confidentiality and declare any conflict of interest.

Who is it aimed at?

Youth Community Volunteers are Hackney residents aged 19-25⁴⁹.

Hackney Youth Justice Service particularly welcome applications from young residents who reflect those communities that are disproportionately represented in the youth justice system. This includes but is not limited to applicants from Black, Asian, Dual Heritage backgrounds, Turkish background, Gypsy Roma and Travellers, as well as young adults with special education needs, speech and language needs and disabilities.

49 While panel members are adults, their involvement in this programme aims to support outcomes for children in the youth justice system

How are Youth Community Volunteers identified?

Youth Community Volunteers are recruited through a range of methods. This includes advertising the opportunity on the Young Hackney and Hackney council websites and social media, internal communication to reach staff working with young adults (e.g., staff bulletins), and through the volunteer centre in Hackney.

The person profile used to describe what Hackney are looking for in a Youth Panel Volunteer lists looking for people who are:

- Passionate about supporting children and representing their perspective and children's rights.
- Passionate about influencing decision making that affects children considering equality and social justice.
- Confident to work with professionals and maintain professional boundaries.
- Inclusive and take a non-judgmental approach.
- Understanding of lived experience of children in relation to safety, crime, access to community opportunities, racism and discrimination.
- Emotionally mature and resilient.

Those interested are invited to complete an online application form (there is support available to do this as needed). Applicants are then invited to informal interviews where their interest in the role and what they are looking to achieve is explored, and the role, expectation and training commitment is explained.

How is it funded?

The initiative was funded through internal resources, which covered time for the design and delivery of the training and the recruitment process. This also included some time from the Volunteers Coordinator in Young Hackney.

What is the reach?

Five volunteers were recruited and received the training. Three then went on to fully participate in the panels as two individuals found full time employment.

Learning and outcomes

In total the **three youth community volunteers attended 34 OoCD panel meetings**. These individuals now have other commitments which means that they cannot participate in the panel meetings, so Hackney Youth Justice Service are planning on recruiting and training a new cohort of volunteers.

Youth Justice Service Police leadership has been key as buy-in to the involvement of youth community volunteers was important to the initiatives progress and success. Hackney YJS also worked closely with Young Hackney's Engagement and Participation Team to decide how the idea could be implemented.

Legal rights and advocacy

In its report on children and young adult's voices on youth diversion and disparity, the Centre for Justice Innovation highlights that: "Having a clear understanding of legal processes is vital to children and young people's trust in the justice system as well as their capacity to make informed decisions". Examples of such decisions include whether to admit guilt or accept a formal or informal diversion.⁵⁰ This is particularly important considering that data shows that there are lower levels of trust in the youth justice system amongst ethnic minority children. To be able to increase trust, and enable informed decisions, children need to be given information in a way that allows them to understand the processes to which they are subject to and the implications of such processes.⁵¹

50 Ofori and others (2022), *Children and young people's voices on youth diversion and disparity*. London: Centre for Justice Innovation

51 Bateman 'Race', disproportionality and diversion from the youth justice system

The Y-Stop app

Background

The aim of Y-Stop was to give children and young adults the tools to interact with the police safely, equipping them with all the skills and knowledge needed to handle a stop and search. Y-Stop was a collaboration between charities, lawyers, children and young adults, youth workers, community and media organisations. It was run by the charity Release, in partnership with StopWatch. It started in 2013, after feedback from children and young adults in schools, colleges and youth clubs found that stop and search is a disempowering, frightening and frustrating experience for children and young adults across the UK. It also leads to significant lack of trust and confidence in the police.

Where is it delivered?

UK-wide.

What does it involve?

Y-stop provided an app, training and tools to increase children and young adult's confidence and skills to deal with stop and search. It did this through raising awareness of how to deal with this difficult situation in a positive manner. It also aimed to reduce the risk of conflict and harm caused by contact with the police, improving children and young adult's relationships with the police and increase awareness amongst communities about stop and search.

The app enabled children and young adults to:

- Report their stop and search experiences or ones you witness
- Record video/audio of the police interactions and send it to Y-Stop
- Connect with lawyers and experts for support
- Make a complaint directly to police
- Know what their rights are to keep safe

Children and young adults led the design and development of the app and wider project to ensure it would be a useful tool, and a video was shared to show how to use the app.

Y-Stop is currently being redeveloped, and its use is shifting to be a one-stop app for people recording and registering their interactions with the police, as well as knowing their rights on arrest and any further criminal interactions.

Who is it aimed at?

Any child or young adult with a smart phone that wanted to share their experience of stop and search, make a complaint directly to the police, connect with lawyers and other experts for support, or be better informed about their rights.

Funding

The project was supported with grants from Open Society Foundation and Trust for London.

Reach

A short film was released by Y-stop in 2015 about how to manage police interactions safely and confidently. Part one has had over 1.5 million views and part two has had over 800,00 views.





Working with families

Working with families

In his independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system, David Lammy MP highlighted the need to engage and support parents of children in contact with the youth justice system.⁵² Research published in 2020 showed that more work needed to be done to ensure that parents of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children can access appropriate resources to understand and navigate the system, and to build their trust and engagement.⁵³ This research also highlighted the value of whole-family, strengths-based discussions, which is a focus of the first case study, and partnerships with peer and community organisations, which the second case study provides an example of.

Family therapy

LYFT Lewisham

Background

Lewisham Youth Justice Service Family Therapy Team (LYFT) aims to provide a unified and localised service that delivers an integrative home/ community-based model of family therapy to children and their families. In this service, family therapy works collaboratively with the youth justice service speech and language team, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and liaison and diversion workers. The youth justice service restorative justice practitioner is also part of the team.

Where is it delivered?

London Borough of Lewisham

What does it involve?

The LYFT team is ethnically diverse and reflective of the local community, which is predominantly Black and Mixed ethnicity.

At the start, each child attends an induction with their parent or carer. During this appointment, the practitioner facilitates a restorative meeting between the child and their parent or carer. This phase is intended to help everyone see that they share responsibility for each of their problems and one another's wellbeing, in turn reducing blame.

An individualised therapy plan is then developed, which usually lasts for six to eight months and involves weekly home-based sessions that seek to enable family members to set goals and develop skills to achieve and sustain these. During this time, children and families also have access to a range of services, including family mediation and interventions for those who have been affected by domestic abuse.

Clinical measures are completed at the beginning, middle, and end of the support to help the families and therapist notice and measure improvements. This includes measures of family functioning (SCORE-15⁵⁴), parental self-efficacy (Parental TOPSE tool⁵⁵) and a self-assessment of the parent's relationship with their child. If there are concerns regarding mental health, children complete a strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ⁵⁶), and a referral is made to Therapy Hub's CAMHS team. For parents, anxiety and depression are measured, and where consent is given, a referral is made to the family GP.

Where eight months is not sufficient, there must be a clear plan and specific reasons as to why this is. Once the plan ends, progress checks can occur with the family's agreement. However, the team tend to only liaise again if the family are re-referred.

52 Lammy D (2017) [The Lammy Review](#). Ministry of Justice

53 Youth Justice Policy Unit (2020) [Improving parental engagement Considerations for practitioners and policy officials on empowering and meeting the needs of parents of Black, Asian and minority ethnic children in the Youth Justice System](#). London: Ministry of Justice

54 <https://score-15.co.uk/>

55 <https://www.topse.org.uk/site/>

56 <https://www.sdqinfo.org/a0.html>

Who is it aimed at?

Eligible children must be aged between 11 and 18 years old and at risk or involved in offending. The criteria has changed to include those who live outside of the home or who may be in custody, not just those living with their parents/carers.

How are children referred?

LYFT is a referral service. Referrals are made from sources such as CAMHS, youth justice services, children's social care, and Early Help. Co-location has been credited with enabling more referrals and joint-working has helped to simplify referral pathways.

How is it funded?

Funding streams have changed over the years, but currently, LYFT is predominantly funded internally through the Youth Justice Board grant. A senior therapist was initially employed due to a one-off pot of funding from the NHS England Integrated Care Board. This post is now being sustained by the current youth justice service budget.

What is the reach?

24 families have 'successfully' completed family therapy during the last cycle, of which 21 referred children were male. 96% of these referred families were Black, African or Caribbean, South Asian or Mixed ethnicity.

Learning and outcomes

At the end of therapy, families are invited to share their reflections about the benefits of their experience of therapy, and individual learning and offer anything that may help to improve service delivery for future families. The most common theme for families was an expression from parents that they wished the therapy had come sooner. Examples of feedback shared with LYFT are included below.

“This has helped my family to engage better with each other.”

LYFT recipient

“We could just be ourselves this is the best thing that could have ever happened to us.”

LYFT recipient

“We are closer now.”

LYFT recipient

“I would advise other parents to give it a go, be patient and trust the process.”

LYFT recipient

The service has been identified as effective and innovative practice by [Centre for Justice Innovation](#) and in the HM Inspectorate of Probation [effective practice guide](#) for Black and Mixed ethnicity boys in the youth justice system, based on the thematic inspection.

Staff and managers shared the following learning with HM Inspectorate of Probation:

- Engagement is facilitated by delivering interventions at times when the family is available, and in their home, as opposed to a clinical environment. By collaborating in this space they identify the family as experts.
- The team take a gradual approach and are flexible when building engagement. They recognise the need to build a relationship before children and families can be challenged.
- The team also seek to understand children and families' experiences of racism and oppression and 'speak' to this so that they can address their needs.

Kitchen Table Talks, West Midlands

Background

Kitchen Table Talks (KTT) were delivered by First Class Foundation (formerly First Class Legacy Ltd) between September 2020 and April 2023.⁵⁷

The ultimate aim of the KTT project was to contribute to the reduction of serious violence

⁵⁷ The programme is still operational in Birmingham, but the outreach service across the West Midlands has finished. This case study focuses on the Violence Reduction Unit commissioned service that has been evaluated.

across the West Midlands. The intention was that by engaging parents and increasing their skills and resilience, children will engage more positively with the youth justice service, and, as a result, will be less likely to reoffend.

Where is it delivered?

Across Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

What does it involve?

First Class Foundation described KTT as a culturally competent, psychologically informed, peer to peer outreach, engagement, and support programme to support and work closely with the parents of children involved with the youth justice system. KTT also aimed to act as a bridge between the parents and the youth justice service.

The service was delivered by family support practitioners. Once someone had engaged, practitioners kept in touch weekly by phone, text or WhatsApp message. Alongside this there was a monthly in-person forum where parents were invited to share their learning with one another and gather information from professionals. These meetings took places in venues such as cake shops and cafes.

If parents did not feel ready to engage or comfortable in a wider group, monthly home visits were offered to break the ice and offer support. There were also online webinars each week, which were recorded for those who could not attend to watch back.

Who was it aimed at?

Parents and carers of children in contact with the youth justice system.

How are parents referred?

Each of the seven youth justice services in the West Midlands could refer parents to the KTT. There was an online referral system that practitioners could use. Alongside this, KTT raised awareness of the support through roadshows, events and social activities in schools and the community.

How is it funded?

Kitchen Table Talks was a Youth Justice Board-funded pathfinder programme. Between March 2022 and March 2023, the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit funded the service. The sessions were free to access for parents and guardians.

What is the reach?

198 parents were referred to KTT between late 2020 and February 2022, 31% of whom were Black (African or Caribbean) or Mixed heritage, and 11% of whom were Pakistani.

More recent data on the [KTT website](#) explains that they have helped more than 690 families in the region.

Learning and outcomes

An evaluation of the service, published in 2022, found that there was a statistically significant increase in participants' wellbeing and perceived confidence with parenting from before to after their engagement with KTT⁵⁸. This continued to increase the longer participants were engaged.⁵⁹ The evaluation found that engagement with KTT likely reduced isolation and feelings of shame, but it was too early to understand if there had been an impact on children's offending behaviours.

The focus on self-care was found to be important in engaging parents and helped to distinguish KTT from statutory services. The evaluation also commended the service for providing a programme that particularly engages parents from ethnically diverse communities.

58 No comparison was made to parents who did not take part in the programme

59 Caulfield and others (2022) [West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit Evaluation Serious Youth Violence pathfinder: Evaluation report](#). Wolverhampton: University of Wolverhampton and University of Birmingham



Providing a platform for children to influence change

Providing a platform for children to influence change

JUSTICE's report on tackling racial injustice in the youth justice system highlighted how youth justice services need to actively listen to the communities they serve and children that they come into contact to be able to understand causes of concern and to explain or address them.⁶⁰ Additionally, research shows that when children and practitioners coproduce participation, engagement and inclusion processes, this can create effective practice relationships,⁶¹ and that when children are given a voice and participate in the design of the work of youth justice services, their level of engagement, compliance, and motivation to change increases.⁶²

An example of this is the **Independent Office for Police Conduct's Youth Panel** which is made up of 40 children and young adults aged 16-25 from across England and Wales. The panel talk to their peers and help identify potential solutions to increase children and young adult's trust and confidence in policing and the police complaints system. Work they have completed includes presenting their perspective on equality and diversity and contributing to the IOPCs decision maker training on racial discrimination.⁶³ In addition, the **Police Race Action Plan** partnered with community groups to run **sessions in schools** in Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester and Nottingham to discuss the plan with children and get their thoughts.⁶⁴ Lastly, as part of the **Brent Pathfinder programme**,

which aimed to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 for children from ethnic minority backgrounds and prevent criminal justice contact in the longer-term, over 100 children were engaged in the **youth panel**. This involved podcast recording sessions and other group activities. The work of the youth panel was found to help create consensus on the need to include children's views in decision making, by highlighting the importance of providing a platform for ethnic minority children in Brent to share their views and giving children the opportunity to inform the services they receive.⁶⁵

Although they do not have an explicit focus on addressing racial disparities, the examples below present two different approaches to platforming the voices of children in contact with youth justice and supporting children to speak directly to commissioners, policy makers and frontline staff about their experiences and share their ideas for change. The first example takes a place-based approach to hearing from a wide range of children in a specific area. The second was a national initiative that supported and trained a small number of children to influence decision makers. Both put children centre stage and support them to draw on their experiences to propose and develop solutions.

60 JUSTICE (2021) [Tackling Racial Injustice: children and the youth justice system](#)

61 Drake D H, Fergusson R and Briggs, D B (2014) [Hearing new voices: Re-viewing Youth Justice Policy through Practitioners Relationships with Young People](#). Youth Justice (4). Pages 22-39; Case S P, Haines, K R (2015) [Children first, offenders second positive promotion: re-framing the prevention debate](#). Youth Justice, 15(3). Pages 226-239.

62 Creaney S (2014) [The position of relationship-based practice in youth justice](#). Safer Communities, 13(3). Pages 120-125.

63 More information can be found here: [Our Youth Panel | Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\)](#)

64 <https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/youth-voices-shape-police-race-action-plan>

65 Cordis Bright (2023) [Overarching evaluation of the Covid-19 Pathfinder programmes](#). London: Cordis Bright

Co-designing solutions

Hope Hacks

Background

The [Hope Collective](#) is a community interest company that aims to provide children and young adults with ambition, opportunity and something to aspire to – a hope for a better and brighter future. They coproduce services with children and young adults to help them develop personally and within their communities. They focus on communities where there is social deprivation.

The Hope Collective has devised a series of events called Hope Hacks. These bring together children and young adults from across the United Kingdom with cross-sector leaders and decision makers to explore and develop innovative solutions to some of the societal challenges that underpin serious violence, discrimination, trauma and exclusion.

Where is it delivered?

To date, Hope Hacks have been carried out in Manchester, Coventry, Hull, Reading, London, Kent, Cardiff, and Plymouth⁶⁶.

What does it involve?

A Hope Hack is a gathering of around 100 children and young adults who bring their experiences and views to reimagine a fairer society through their eyes.

The Hacks are organic, place-based and, most importantly, put children and young adults centre-stage. They are hosted by members of Hope Collective's Youth Management Group – 16 to 25-year-olds who meet fortnightly to discuss opportunities and plans.

A Hack often has some form of presentation by a child or young adult which could be artistic in nature (a rap, a poem, a story) to help frame the day. Of key importance, a Hack is not about drugs, knife crime or violence. It is about 'hope', change, growth.

The Hack will then move into smaller groupings hearing views and experiences around the discussion themes, which could include health, housing, education, employment, exclusion, racism and policing. Feedback is given from each smaller group to the whole Hack audience.

Who is the initiative aimed at?

Children and young adults who want to share their hopes for the future and ideas for change,⁶⁷ and leaders, activists and staff working at local organisations in the area where a Hope Hack is being delivered.

Hacks are expanding into some specialist audiences – such as children and young adults in custody, a Hack for young women and a Hack for policing professionals.

How are children (and young adults) referred?

Local voluntary sector agencies, the police's violence reduction network and schools all invite children and young adults to attend. Hope Hacks are always over-subscribed.

How is it funded and what does it cost?

It costs around £7,000 per Hack (for a venue, facilitators, lunch, preparation) and takes about two to three months to organise. Children, young adults and many charities give their time for free. National Citizens Service and violence reduction units have provided funding.

What is the reach?

Over 23 Hope Hacks took place between 2021 and 2023. Over 2,500 children and young adults have attended them to date. Another 20 Hope Hacks are planned.

⁶⁶ Also Glasgow and Belfast

⁶⁷ Local areas have focused on different age ranges for Hope Hacks, for example in Manchester it was 13 to 21-year-olds whilst in Humberside it was 15 to 25-year-olds

Learning and outcomes

Data in relation to racial disparities is not available. However, wider outcomes recorded by Hope Collective include that:

- Social action helps children and young adults to engage, feel valued and voice their truth.
- Hope Hacks promote integration across public and voluntary sectors to meet current challenges.
- Hope Hacks enable local place-based system discussion around the socio-economic benefits of prevention, and the coproduction of prevention services, which matter to children and young adults.
- Hope Hacks develop a youth platform to guide and plan better services.

Influencing policy and practice

Young advocates for youth justice

Background

The young advocates project was a youth-led project that placed the voices and experiences of children and young adults affected by the youth justice system at the heart of decision-making. The project was delivered in partnership by the Alliance for Youth Justice (AYJ) and Leaders Unlocked between 2020 and 2024.

Where is it delivered?

Across England and Wales

What did it involve?

Young advocates received support from specialist staff to help them achieve their goals (individually and as a group). This included training on social and peer research, one-to-one support to check and reflect on progress and set personal goals, and a professional mentor who could support with individual career aspirations. Guest expert speakers also worked with the group to explore their priority topics in more detail.

Young advocates delivered a peer research project over two phases. This involved agreeing priority topics and having solution-focused discussions to learn more about the views and experiences of children and adults who have had contact with the justice system and developing recommendations.

Young advocates participated in a range of activities to inform policy and intervention design and delivery. This included contributing to Dame Carol Black's Independent review of drugs, participating in the Youth Endowment Fund's Serious Violence Roundtable, creating media reporting guidance for press regulator IMPRESS, and scrutinising HMI Probation's review of thematic inspections and submitting recommendations to the Director of Strategy and Research.

In 2023, some of the young advocates attended the first evidence session of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Children in Police Custody's Inquiry into Achieving the Rights of Children in Police Custody. Two advocates also attended a session led by the National Appropriate Adult Network (NAAN) to learn about appropriate adults, the training that NAAN provides to its members, and to share their experiences of police custody. The information the young advocates shared was used to make sure NAAN's training enables adults supporting children in police custody to do this in a way which is useful and compassionate.

Young advocates were also paid as youth participation consultants by both Stockport and Warwickshire Youth Justice Services to support staff to develop local youth participation mechanisms. The group co-designed a half day training session which covered what works about the young advocates model, how to make the experience and opportunity meaningful for every individual, and personal best practice experiences from professionals. The training was delivered to staff in all professional positions and included group work where the young advocates supported staff to apply the knowledge learned to a specific upcoming youth participation idea.

Who was it aimed at?

Children and young adults aged 12 to 21 who had personal experience of the criminal justice system, violence and/or school exclusion and alternative education and considered themselves a ‘team player’.

How were children (and young adults) referred?

Originally there were six core members who were recruited via AYJ and Leaders Unlocked’s networks. Alongside partner organisations, these individuals were directly involved in recruiting more young advocates to expand the reach of the project, including friends, family and peers involved in other youth projects.

What were the costs and how was it funded?

The project was funded by BBC Children in Need. The AYJ and Leaders Unlocked plan to explore new funding avenues to continue the project.

What was the reach?

There were 18 young advocates aged between 13 and 21 from across England and Wales, 10 of whom identified as Black or Mixed heritage and 2 of whom identified as British Asian. Each had previous and/or ongoing experiences of the justice system, including of pathways into the system such as school exclusion, criminal exploitation, victimisation and violence.

The peer research they conducted reached more than 200 children and young adults, aged 12 to 25 from across England and Wales.

Learning and outcomes

Manchester Metropolitan University accredited the work the young advocates completed on the peer research project, resulting in a total of 70 AQA qualifications up to level three awarded across the group.

Some young advocates are currently completing strategic internships at Leaders Unlocked to develop specific interventions that speak to the solutions the young advocates want to see. This includes an intervention in schools and pupil

referral units in Nottinghamshire to educate pupils and on grooming, exploitation, county lines and a range of diversion and intervention programmes.

Reflecting on their experiences in the first youth-led [report](#), young advocates spoke about how the opportunity helped them grow their confidence and participate in activities they never thought possible:

“The roundtables were amazing it was great to speak to such important people in high power positions, for them to want our opinions was absolutely amazing, it makes you feel valued important and impactful. Being involved in the Young Advocates has definitely grown my confidence, given me better hope and opportunities for the future, and opened new doors for me, a lot of amazing opportunities that I never thought in a million years I’d be involved in.”

Young Advocate

Following the launch of the most recent [report](#) and recommendations, attendees’ feedback included that they will work to capture and act on the views and experiences of children in contact with their services.

“I will be taking youth voice more seriously.”

Young advocates showcase attendee

“We will work to ensure we work even more with young people to support our thinking and our actions.”

Young advocates showcase attendee

The report itself also highlighted children and young adults’ experiences of racism and made recommendations about changes to policy and practice that could address racial disparities. Including training for professionals in contact with children to increase knowledge of culture and discrimination.

Specific data in relation to racial disparities is not available.



Influencing policing practices

Influencing practice

Using data to influence practice and address disparities

The examples below use individual, local and national data to raise awareness of and try to address disparity in the youth justice system amongst decision makers and/or people working with Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic children.

Both examples showcase how an individual youth justice service is responding to their own local disparities. Taking a data-driven approach and, in particular, understanding and responding to disparities at the hyper-local level is a promising approach, as evidenced by outcomes data from Islington. Their response (an adaptation to their court template) is also highly replicable. The second project is at an early stage of development and does not have any outcomes data. However, it has been adapted from an approach with a strong evidence base.

Islington court report template

Background

In 2019, Islington Youth Justice Service amended their court reports⁶⁸ in response to high levels of over-representation of Black and Mixed ethnicity children receiving community, remand and custodial sentences.

This decision also reflected a recommendation from the [Disproportionality Project](#) which sought to address issues relating to the disproportionately high representation of Islington and Haringey's Black and Mixed ethnicity children in the youth justice system. The final report recommended exploring the possibility of regularly reporting on and scrutinising disproportionate court outcomes for Black, Asian and Mixed ethnicity children in local courts.

Where is it delivered?

London Borough of Islington

What does it involve?

Islington Youth Justice Service changed their template to present their assessment of the child and the diversity information before the offence analysis. This supports a more trauma informed understanding of the child's context and behaviour to support the youth justice service's recommendation for a suitable disposal.

All court reports include statements as part of the sentencing proposal. The statements outline data and sentencing guidance in relation to over-representation, adultification and reducing criminalisation of children who have experienced care. These are standardised statements about these different issues which can be included where relevant. The youth justice service works with the data team to present statistics that are specific to court outcomes for the local youth court. This data is amended for the Crown Court, and is included in pre-sentence, breach and bail recommendation reports. Below is an example of a statement included in a report for a child from a Black ethnic group.

This child is from a Black ethnic group. Analysis of our local data, covering the period 2016/17 to 2020/21, shows that the rate of custodial sentences for Islington 10 to 17-year-olds from a Black ethnic group was 14.6 per 1,000, compared to an overall borough average of 6.5 per 1,000 young people. 80% of custodial sentences in 2021-2022 were for children of Black or Mixed heritage ethnicities, compared to 39% of Islington 10 to 17-year-old Islington population, as such the data represent a disproportionately high number of young people from Mixed and Black groups receiving custodial sentences.

⁶⁸ Including pre-sentence, breach and bail recommendation reports

Who is it aimed at?

Judges sentencing children in Islington

How is it funded?

This work has been covered by internal resource.

What is the reach?

Between April 2022 and March 2023, there were 69 hearings for 49 children that had court reports.

Learning and outcomes

An internal longitudinal review of court practices conducted in 2023 found that there was a significantly high agreement between with recommendations made in the template and the sentences issued at court (concordance). For example, of the 46 appearances with substantive outcomes, 45 were concordant with the proposed recommendation and one sentencing outcome was not.

The report included feedback from sentencers that the template and data in relation to local courts and over-representation influenced their decision making and court outcomes for children, and that the content was useful.

Examples of this feedback are included below.

“Decided to draw back from imposing custody given the report.”

Sentencer

“There were several references/explanations of the theory behind the recommendation which was very helpful.”

Sentencer

“The defendant’s ethnicity was highlighted throughout the report, and we took account of disproportionality in our decision making.”

Sentencer

Whilst it cannot be directly linked to this project, as there may be many contributing factors, local data suggests that the use of custody is reducing overall and that over representation of children from Black and Mixed ethnicities in relation to both remand and sentencing outcomes remains but is reducing. For example:

- In the 2021 Census, 25% of children in Islington identified as Black and 17% identified as Mixed ethnicity.
- 84% of children that received a custodial remand in Islington in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 were Black or Mixed ethnicity, compared to 80% of children in 2022-2023.
- 100% of children that received a custodial sentence in Islington in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 were Black or Mixed ethnicity, compared to 60% of children in 2022-2023.

The data collected shows promise, and Islington will continue to implement a range of initiatives to try and address the issue of racial disparities in the youth justice system and monitor longer-term outcomes of these.

Cwm Taf Anti-Racist Timelining Project

Background

Cwm Taf Youth Justice Service have recently developed an Anti-Racist Timelining Project. The approach has been adapted following the success of their timelining project for children who have experienced trauma, and which was based on the Enhanced Case Management (ECM) psychology-led approach.⁶⁹ Timelining involves creating a detailed timeline of the child’s life to date to provide an understanding of their personal development and the difficulties they have faced.

The project aims to upskill practitioners to challenge disproportionality within the youth justice service cohort.

69 Cordis Bright (2017) [Evaluation of the Enhanced Case Management approach](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government

Where is it delivered?

Cwm Taf, South Wales

What does it involve?

Ethnic minority (including White minority) children referred to the youth justice service will be allocated to an anti-racist champion, or the case manager will consult with an anti-racist champion within the service. These staff members have skills and interests in anti-racism and are already trained in trauma-informed practice. The decision to consult with a champion or allocate a case to an anti-racist champion will be made on a case-by-case basis. Factors include what stage of the youth justice system the child is at (prevention or statutory), how long the child's case will remain open, who the child has the best relationship with and the level of assessed need.

Case managers need to gain consent from parents/carers and children where the approach is being applied to non-statutory cases due to the need to share information with multi-agency professionals.

Thereafter, the youth justice service will facilitate a multi-agency contextual timelining exercise to consider the impact of discrimination, structural disadvantage and cultural issues. This will be informed by national statistics about racial disparity and local data relating to the child's unique circumstances. Children and families will be encouraged to work in partnership with the youth justice service and contribute their experiences which are shared at the contextual timelining meeting.

This exercise will inform a meeting led by a lead worker, which will be attended by multi-agency professionals that will explore how the child's presenting behaviour may have been informed/impacted by their unique experience of direct or indirect racism. The aim is to develop multi-agency practitioners' understanding of what is driving the disproportionality, to explore and challenge it, and work with partners to remove barriers that can impact access to services.

A set of recommendations will be agreed following the multi-agency contextual timelining meeting. Case management progress will be regularly reviewed, with the frequency depending on the type and length of the intervention, and recommendations and actions re-visited to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Who is it aimed at?

All ethnic minority children (including White minority) in contact with Cwm Taf Youth Justice Service will be able to access the project.

What is the reach?

The initiative has only recently started, with one child going through the process so far.

How is it funded?

The project is not externally funded. Instead, Cwm Taf Youth Justice Service is using existing resources. The champions are in-house workers including a manager, two senior social workers, a youth justice worker and an education worker. This means that children with a range of needs can be supported.

Learning and outcomes

It is too early to comment on outcomes from this initiative, but it will be monitored internally.

Influencing policing practices

In research published in 2022, 37% of Black children reported that they ‘completely distrust’ or ‘somewhat distrust’ the police compared with 11% of White children.⁷⁰ One reason for these stark differences in levels of trust is that trust is considerably lower (58% compared to 74%) among children who had been stopped and searched⁷¹, which is something that disproportionality affects Black children (see p.4)

The two examples below demonstrate different ways that children and their families can engage with the police and give their opinions on stop and search processes. They have the potential to improve relationships between the police and those communities that are disproportionately affected by stop and search processes.

Police stop and search training and development sessions in Islington

Background

Islington Youth Justice Service deliver training to support trainee police recruits to better understand the experience of specifically minoritised children and families in regards to stop and search. The training session was developed in partnership with senior officers in the Metropolitan Police in the Learning and Development directorate.

Where is it delivered?

London Borough of Islington

What does it involve?

The training is run bi-monthly for two hours.

The session was initially developed with the focus of incorporating the lived experience of children. It was then further developed in May 2022 to include the lived experience of parents. The sessions are developed to be fluid so if specific subjects or topics come up, they can be incorporated in the discussion.

Following a welcome and introductions, the room is split into smaller groups with a child and a youth justice lead in each. Children share their experience of policing and stop and search to open discussions around topics such as race, disproportionality, communication, use of police force and experiences of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ policing. In the second half of the session, the focus is on the impact of policing on families. This includes conversations around topics such as parents of children with additional needs and the impact of children being arrested.

The aims of the sessions include to improve future interaction between the police, children and families, provide the student officers with thoughts and ideas they can take forward into their roles and provide an opportunity for children and their parents to ask student officers questions.

The sessions are intended to be actively anti-racist and have a trauma informed lens. Youth justice service staff have received external training on adultification and disproportionality which they can build upon, whilst they also feed into discussions about children’s learning needs, the impact of inter-generational trauma and how perceived racism can impact behaviours.

Who is it aimed at?

All new police recruits who will be working for the Metropolitan Police in Islington and Camden Borough Command Unit.

It has also expanded to proactive policing teams such as the robbery squad and gangs team, who children have most contact with.

70 Evans and others (2022) [Forgotten voices: policing, stop and search and the perspectives of Black children](#). London: Crest Advisory

71 ‘Bateman and others (2022) [‘Race’, disproportionality and diversion from the youth justice system](#)

How are children and other attendees identified?

Children who are open to services within Young Islington are invited to attend, as well as their parents/carers. This includes children being invited to attend as part of reparation hours. If children are not able to attend, they can provide written information in response to specific questions, which they complete with their case manager.

Islington youth justice leads, case managers, education psychologists, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) officers and other relevant staff within the service also attend to support learning and group work.

Violence Reduction Unit Parent Champions for Islington and Camden are also invited to attend sessions.

What does it cost and how is it funded?

As of March 2023, the Metropolitan Police had secured funding for their community input training. Parent champions are paid by the Metropolitan Police to attend these sessions.

What is the reach?

Between November 2021 and March 2023, 175 student officers attended training and development sessions that involved a total of 31 children and young adults and 11 parents or carers.⁷²

Outcomes

Feedback collected by Islington Youth Justice Service found that those who attended felt that their voices were heard, and they were given a meaningful space. However, 63% of children and young adults who completed the feedback questionnaire felt like the sessions would not have an impact on the future behaviour of student officers in a positive way. This demonstrates that there is a long way to go in terms of rebuilding trust between children and young adults and the police. Additionally, parents felt all officers not just student officers should complete this training.

Student officers who provided feedback explained that they found this 'eye-opening' and 'informative' especially considering 'a not-very-diverse cohort' of police officers were taking part.

Islington Youth Justice Service are looking to complete an evaluation of the impact of this training.

Efforts to inform and improve stop and search processes in Derby

Background

Derby City Youth Justice Service (YJS) has developed a questionnaire for 10 to 17-year-old children about their experiences of stop and search. The aims of the questionnaire are to use the data to improve the support provided to children in contact with the youth justice system.

Alongside this they have developed a two scrutiny boards – one for Black boys and one for children more generally, that each met with the police once a month for six months between May and November 2024 to discuss stop and search and other emerging issues. Derbyshire Police have commissioned Leaders Unlocked to lead on these scrutiny panels in response to wanting to hear the views and experiences of children and young adults, and for the Superintendent leading to influencing policies and policing practices to have an understanding when engaging with children in Derbyshire.

Such initiatives form part of wider work in the city that is focusing on children in contact with the youth justice system and violence reduction.

Where is it delivered?

Derby City, East Midlands

⁷² Marshall C (2023), Islington Youth Justice Service Review of Joint Working with Police Learning and Development Professionalism Directorate. London: Islington Council

What does it involve?

About the questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed by Derby YJS's diversity lead in 2019 to find out whether children had been stopped and searched, to understand differences in experience across different local areas, and to check whether children are aware of their rights. In addition, both positive and negative feedback is shared with police officers, to praise good practice and raise concerns.

Youth justice practitioners complete the questionnaire with each child on their caseload. They explain that the purpose of this is to get to know them, rather than focus on their crime and the subsequent punishment.

There are 17 questions in total. The first 4 collect information on the respondents' characteristics, including ethnicity and nationality. If the child or young adult has experience of being stopped and searched, they are asked for more information on this experience, including how this made them feel and how this has affected them. If they have not been stopped and searched before they are asked if they are worried about this, and what support they would like.

About the youth scrutiny board

The youth scrutiny board and Black boys' scrutiny board both meet once a month. The youth scrutiny board focuses on the issue of stop and search. Sessions so far have been held at community space and another at the police station. Attendees are shown real-life footage of stop and searches and asked about how they thought information was communicated and what could have been done differently. Therefore, they can challenge the police where they have concerns. Going forward sessions will review challenging situations after attendees felt that the police were only sharing examples of stop and searches that had 'gone well', where people were complying, rather than examples from their local areas where they felt the police were heavy-handed.

In the scrutiny board with Black boys, statistics and data on disparities are shared, and there are conversations about race and identity.

Both initiatives provide children with the opportunity to learn more about the stop and search process, ask practical questions about this and to apply this knowledge in their own lives. For example, in one of the panel meetings, the children and young adults were told that body worn footage is held by the police for 28 days, and the rules police are expected to follow in the use of body worn cameras.

Who is it aimed at?

All children in contact with Derby Youth Justice Service are invited to complete the questionnaire and offered the opportunity to be a member of the youth scrutiny board.

What does it cost and how is it funded?

Derby Police funded Leaders Unlocked to deliver the Youth Scrutiny Board.

What is the reach?

The questionnaire is completed with every child on Derby Youth Justice Service's caseload.

Attendance has varied at the youth scrutiny panel sessions. This has ranged from between three and eight children and young adults, who have the option to be supported by their YJS worker. The session is led by a superintendent who is in charge stop and search for the city, and attended by the two diversity leads for Derby YJS.

Learning and outcomes

The questionnaire enables practitioners to collect feedback and advocate for children they are working with. For example, feedback was shared from one child that was searched that their ethnicity was recorded as White British, even though they were Mixed ethnicity. They were annoyed that they had not been asked this question. A practitioner was able to follow up with the officer in question directly, who admitted that they had made a mistake.

After a scrutiny board meeting a superintendent also offered to investigate particular stop and searches and asked for specific details when a child fed back that Asian people were targeted where they lived. Therefore, the service manager felt that the sessions had created a dialogue and broken-down barriers between the police and children in the communities they serve and improved children and young adults' confidence.

They shared the following reflection with us when speaking about the impact of the initiative.

“They're walking out taller because they feel heard.”

Staff member Derby YJS

Having the same superintendent at the panel meetings was felt to be important in building relationships, and staff providing their name and organisation but not role (e.g., manager, superintendent) was felt to be important in removing hierarchies.

If they take part in the scrutiny board, the police give the children a reference to support future employment, education or training.

For Derby YJS, the learning from the scrutiny board and survey helps to prioritise resources and develop interventions based on the needs and experiences of the children they are working with. Moreover, local data shows that there have been overall reductions in reoffending, breaches and first-time entrants to the youth justice system in Derby, including amongst Asian British and Black children. Derby YJS believes that these initiatives and wider work have helped to achieve this.

Work with judges and lawyers

When children enter the youth justice system, they risk being criminalised and having ongoing contact: the proven reoffending rate for the year ending March 2022 was 32.2%.⁷³ In addition, analysis conducted by the Youth Justice Board in 2021 found that all ethnic minority groups were more likely to receive custodial remand and less likely to receive community remand compared to White children, and that in almost all cases, Black, Asian and Mixed ethnic groups were more likely to receive harsher sentences than White children.⁷⁴ Research conducted in 2022 found that police and youth justice professionals do not always understand the implications of different diversionary pathways⁷⁵, whilst a survey with over 300 legal professionals highlighted concerns around racism and discrimination amongst the judiciary.⁷⁶ The case studies below seek to address these issues and to create equality in experiences of White and ethnic minority children who come into contact with the youth justice system

Training

Child First Custody Training and Research Pilot (CHiRP)

Background

The [Mayor of London's Tackling Ethnic Disproportionality in Youth Justice Action Plan](#) included a commitment from the Metropolitan Police, the MoJ and the Law Society to discuss how to better present the option to obtain legal advice for children. Following this, the Metropolitan Police have rolled out a Presumption of Legal Advice (PoLA) for children in all London custody suites. Now that London children will be very likely to have legal

representation if they come into police custody, it is important that they receive the most appropriate advice according to their needs and opportunities.

Lawyers play a pivotal role in enabling children to be diverted away from the youth justice system, but they need to be able to understand the needs of the children that they represent and to understand diversion options and processes. Custody sergeants have an important role in ensuring a Child First approach when children enter a custody suite, making robust decisions to authorise detention only when 'necessary' and ensuring custody is only used as a last resort. Where a child is detained, making adaptations to minimise trauma, expediting interviews and reducing detention times. Custody sergeants also have a role in ensuring diversion is actively under consideration, and that full disclosure is given to legal teams as well as an indication of suitability for diversion.

There are a number of other roles that are key in facilitating the best outcomes for children in police custody, including project ENGAGE workers, Appropriate Adults, Youth Justice Services, and children's services.

Therefore, it is hoped that by providing training to criminal defence lawyers, custody sergeants, and others present in the custody environment, a systemic Child First approach can be taken. In turn, it is hoped that this will support lawyers to give appropriate legal advice, advocating for children to be interviewed without the need for detention in police custody and promoting opportunities to adapt the custody process and to actively explore diversion options. Lawyers will also receive communication training which it is hoped will help them to establish better rapport with children, better understand their needs and identify welfare concerns.

73 Youth Justice Board (2024) [Youth justice statistics: 2022 to 2023](#)

74 ZK Analytics (2021) [Ethnic disproportionality in remand and sentencing in the youth justice system: Analysis of administrative data](#)

75 Ofori and others (2022) [Children and young people's voices on youth diversion and disparity](#)

76 Monteith and others (2022) [Racial bias and the bench: A response to the Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy \(2020-2025\)](#). Manchester: University of Manchester

This may result in children feeling more comfortable to open up about their situation, enabling legal representatives increased opportunities to explore diversion and provide children with appropriate advice.

Where is it delivered?

London Boroughs of Haringey and Lambeth

What does it involve?

The aim of the pilot is to address the disparity of experiences and outcomes children experience at police stations and to decrease the time children spend in custody by encouraging a different, Child First approach.

This training will take place over one and a half days and will be delivered by a combination of lawyers from the Youth Justice Legal Centre, Youth Practitioners Association, London Criminal Court Solicitors Association and Child Rights Youth Justice CIC – working alongside team of psychotherapists. Alongside this, there will be a one-day training session for custody sergeants, PACE inspectors and other agencies who interact with children in custody.

Training will include Child First principles, the legal framework for the detention of children, local routes to diversion, welfare duties and anti-racism. In addition, there will be modified working processes for custody staff for the duration of the pilot.

The Metropolitan Police have developed a Service Level Agreement and checklists for custody sergeants to prompt this changed process pathway. Similar checklists / prompt sheets have been prepared for legal representatives.

One of the training modules will cover communicating with children and understanding their communication needs because this can be a barrier to engagement with lawyers and custody sergeants – children need to be able to understand what is happening to them and why decisions are being made.

After the training has been completed, there will be some ongoing supervision and those who took part will be able to access wider support.

It is hoped that when required, a criminal defence lawyer who is also a specialist in working with children, is available at both Wood Green and Brixton police stations. Some of the lawyers taking part in the training will be freelance, which should help with this.

Who is it aimed at?

Police station lawyers, custody sergeants, PACE Inspectors, Project Engage Youth Workers, Appropriate Adults, Youth Justice teams, Liaison and Diversion workers and Local Authority Emergency Duty Workers.

How is it funded?

The project is jointly funded by the Metropolitan Police, Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and Haringey and Enfield local authorities.

73 Youth Justice Board (2024) [Youth justice statistics: 2022 to 2023](#)

74 ZK Analytics (2021) [Ethnic disproportionality in remand and sentencing in the youth justice system: Analysis of administrative data](#)

75 Ofori and others (2022) [Children and young people's voices on youth diversion and disparity](#)

76 Monteith and others (2022) [Racial bias and the bench: A response to the Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy \(2020-2025\)](#). Manchester: University of Manchester

What is the reach?

The pilot aims to train 50 criminal defence lawyers who are working at Brixton or Wood Green police station, in addition to 60 custody sergeants across both suites and 20 local authority staff.

Learning and outcomes

CHiRP will be evaluated as part of a wider Nuffield Foundation commissioned project that is identifying and piloting a set of Child First measures for use in police custody (July 2023-October 2025).

A separate pilot evaluation will be published in late 2025. Overarching measures of success are decrease in detention of children and reductions in the length of detention, overnight detention and number of children charged, particularly for over-represented groups. This includes ethnic minority children and care experienced children.

Resources

Magistrates' Association Disparity Toolkit

Background

The Magistrates' Association (MA) is an independent charity and the only membership body for magistrates in England & Wales.

In 2019, a variety of representatives were invited to attend a roundtable, including Ministry of Justice officials, statutory agencies working in youth justice and charities working specifically on the issue of disproportionality.

The aim of the roundtable was to consider what could be done by the MA, and youth magistrates more broadly, to address increasing disproportionality in the youth justice system.

The roundtable involved two sessions. The first explored how disproportionality in the wider youth justice system affected court processes, and the second focused on what role youth magistrates could play in redressing disproportionality.

Themes arising from the discussion included stop and search, engagement with the police and unconscious bias. The MA began development of a disparity toolkit to mitigate against disparate outcomes in the Magistrates' Court following this roundtable.

Where is it delivered?

In England and Wales.

What does it involve?

The Magistrates' Association is currently developing a toolkit for magistrates in the youth court. The content was initially shaped by the roundtable discussion in 2019, with YJB, MOJ and MA collaborating following those discussions to draft and develop the disparity toolkit. Rather than prescriptive instructions the toolkit will ask a series of guiding questions for magistrates to consider, covering subjects like engagement with the child, information on the child, trust in and understanding of the system, support networks and diversion.

The aim is for this to be a succinct day-to-day reference document which can sit on the bench and assist magistrates in mitigating against the risk of disparate outcomes in the youth court.

The content is currently being reviewed and the MA hope to have this published by the end of 2024. It must be approved by the Judicial College before it is published.

Who is it aimed at?

Magistrates sitting in the youth courts

How is it funded?

The toolkit is being funded by the Magistrates' Association.

Learning and outcomes

Too early to say - it is still being developed.

What next?

Racial disparities persist in the youth justice system – from stop and search and strip search rates, through to sentencing outcomes, the custody population and reoffending rates. Such racial disparities are driven by numerous factors including wider societal inequalities and systematic issues. We acknowledge that **changes to practice need to be accompanied by wider policy and cultural change for over-representation to be addressed in the long-term.**

In many cases **there is limited data to show the impact of interventions on different groups of ethnic minority children and on addressing racial disparities in the youth justice system** more generally. Therefore, to better understand ‘what works’ in reducing over-representation of ethnic minority children (including White minorities) in the youth justice system **further monitoring and evaluation that focuses on this will be important.** All-too often promising pilots do not get long-term funding. **Programmes need to be funded for an extended period to allow long-term change to be realised.**

The examples included in this resource are not exhaustive. We know that there are a range of **grassroots and ‘by and for’ organisations that would be well placed to support efforts to reduce over-representation of ethnic minority children in the youth justice system** due to their expertise and connections with children in their local communities.

Nonetheless this exercise has demonstrated that there is a range of emerging, promising and good practice in England and Wales that can play an important role in reducing disparities and over-representation in the youth justice system. **The examples included here have shown that a range of interventions can be introduced, working directly with children, or to influence specific parts of the system** - such as policing, custody and court.

We hope that the resource encourages critical examination of existing provision and inspires thinking and practice amongst local partners in areas where there are racial disparities in the youth justice system, but where these types of programmes do not exist.



Glossary

Adultification	Adultification bias is where children are treated as being more mature than they actually are by a reasonable social standard of Development – this often affects children from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in particular.
'By and for' organisations	Organisations led by and for communities facing long-term systemic injustices, discrimination and exclusion, with a particular emphasis on advancing racial justice and gender justice. ⁷⁷
Child	Under 18-year-olds
Pre-sentence report	When somebody pleads guilty to an offence, or is found guilty after trial, the court may request a pre-sentence report to assist them in sentencing.
Out of Court Disposal Panel	A multi-agency panel that assesses the most appropriate out-of-court disposal for children who are being considered for diversion from the youth justice system.
Social capital	The strength of communities, relationships and trust.
Young adult	18 to 25-year-olds
Youth justice service	Covers youth offending teams and youth offending services

List of acronyms and abbreviations

CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
ECM	Enhanced Case Management
FTE	First-time entrant
IOPC	Independent Office for Police Conduct
OoCD	Out of Court Disposal
OCDP	Out of Court Disposal Panel
MOPAC	Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime
YJB	Youth Justice Board for England and Wales
YJS	Youth Justice Service
YOI	Youth Offender Institution

⁷⁷ Comic Relief Community Justice Fund definition that was created in consultation with community experts

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Wider resources

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Peer Power Participation and co-creation in the Youth Justice System [resource pack](#)

Y-Stop [stop and search resources](#)

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