

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Youth Justice Plan 2025 – 2028 and Feedback on Youth Justice Inspection - Her Majesty Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP)	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Cabinet Member for Jobs, Young People and Culture	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	<b>DATE</b> 16 October 2025
<b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b>  The report summarises the new priorities of the Camden Youth Justice 2025 - 2028 plan. It provides an overview of progress from the previous plan, references national and regional priorities and how we seek to deliver on these. It also highlights feedback from our HMIP inspection (May 2025).  <b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b>  No documents that require listing were used in the preparation of this report  <b>Contact Officer:</b> Charlotte Matthews, Camden Youth Justice Service Crowndale Centre, 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor, 218 Eversholt street, London, NW1 1BD 020 7974 3461 / <a href="mailto:charlotte.matthews1@camden.gov.uk">charlotte.matthews1@camden.gov.uk</a>	
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>  The Committee is asked to note the report.	

Signed: 

Tim Aldridge, Executive Director Children and Learning

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2025

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1. This report seeks to provide an overview of Camden Youth Justice Service (YJS) performance over the past 12 months to Committee, highlighting the key priorities that have been agreed as part of our YJS plan 2025 – 28 and providing key headlines from the results of the His Majesty's Inspectorate Prisons (HMIP) inspection May 2025, focussed on our work with children and victims. The purpose of the report is for the Committee to scrutinise YJS performance, Youth Justice Services falling under the remit of the Children Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2. Youth Justice Services (YJS) were created by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 with the purpose of preventing offending by children. Camden's YJS works with its key partners - police, children's services, health services, probation, community safety and voluntary and private sector providers. The Youth Justice Board oversees all Youth Justice Services and requires the YJS to look at and address various key themes including; children from groups who are over-represented, prevention, diversion, education, restorative approaches and victims, detention in police custody, remands and constructive resettlement. Camden have been assessed by the Youth Justice Board oversight framework as performing to a strong standard. This is the highest ranking. Camden are in the top quartile nationally of relevant oversight metrics, have strong plans and standards, financial compliance and a good or outstanding inspection outcomes. As a result of this, Camden are encouraged to share work with peers and partners.
- 1.3. Each year the Youth Justice Service is required to complete a Youth Justice Plan demonstrating its achievements over the past year and its priorities for the coming year as a condition of its grant. It supports the Council's We Make Camden ambitions by ensuring that Camden actively tackles injustice and inequality, creating safe, strong and open communities where everyone can contribute, is aligned with the Community Wealth Fund objectives and supports the Youth Mission where every young person has access to economic opportunity that enables them to be safe and secure by 2025.
- 1.4. With new arrangements in place, the Board now meets quarterly. New members joined the Board in June 2024 including representatives from Community Safety, Youth Early Help, Progress and Participation, Employment Services, Inclusive Economy, the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and a representative with lived experience of the criminal justice system. These representatives have strategic and operational oversight to support efforts to achieve our priorities. We have a strong and committed board; we are focussing on how partners take a lead on agenda items to ensure that work across other services feeds into the YJS priorities. This is particularly important in our prevention and disproportionality work.

## **2. Feedback from the inspection:**

- 2.1. Camden YJS was rated Outstanding by His Majesty's Inspectorate Prisons (HMIP) in May 2025. This was completed under the new inspection framework focussed on our work with children and victims. This was the highest grade that can be received, the YJS was one of the first inspected under the new HMIP framework and was the first to receive this rating nationally.
- 2.2. The inspection found that Camden YJS has an authentic culture of care and innovation for the children, families, and victims it works with. It highlighted that the service is supported by a strong management board, which has ensured that the needs of YJS children and families are prioritised across the partnership. It found that YJS senior leaders are aspirational and tenacious and that this is combined with a highly skilled and well-supported operational staff team. It found evidence of strong assessing, planning, and delivery to ensure that achieving positive change is effectively balanced with the safety of the child and the community. It highlighted that this work was supported by comprehensive partnership working, which enabled timely sharing of information, clarity in roles and responsibilities, and the provision of responsive interventions to address the identified needs of children.
- 2.3. HMIP found a strong focus on education, training, and employment (ETE), alongside the voluntary YJS Deferred Exclusion Programme (DEP) which enabled children to sustain mainstream placements or access engaging alternative provisions. They were impressed with the extensive post-16 offer which includes paid work experience and innovative employability projects as credible alternatives for children. They praised the diverse approaches taken with children, families, and victims and provided consistent high-quality work. Inspectors noted that practitioners were skilfully able to identify protected characteristics and individual needs, and responded practically, sensitively, and intelligently.

## **3. Performance summary April 2024 – 31 March 2025**

- 3.1. Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, 154 offences led to 61 children receiving criminal justice outcomes. 11 children received more than one criminal justice outcome. This is similar to the previous annual figures where 113 offences led to 49 children receiving criminal justice outcomes.
- 3.2. Of the 154 offences, 50 (32%) were for Violence against the Person, 20 were for Motoring offences (13%) 15 were for Drugs (10%) and 15 were for Theft and handling (10%). This is similar to previous years
- 3.3. Violence against the Person and Weapon offences have increased reflecting the national picture; however, they remain lower than pre-pandemic levels. Knife related offences remain static.
- 3.4. Most of the children in the cohort are 16 and 17 year-olds and make up 72% of the group. 4 of the group are girls, (7%) and 57 are boys (93%).

- 3.5. 12 of the 61 children have been a Child Looked After; this represents 20% of the YJS cohort, and an overrepresentation compared to the general population. It should be noted that some of these children may be in the care of the local authority due to their offending behaviour.
- 3.6. Camden has seen an increase in First Time Entrants since last year, but numbers are still lower than they have been prior to the pandemic. In the period April 2024 to March 2025, 40 children became First time Entrants compared with 34 in 2023/24.
- 3.7. Between October 2022 – September 2023 there were 36 children open to Camden YJS. 17 of those children (47%) went on to reoffend in the following 12 months.
- 3.8. During the period April 2024 – March 2025, there were 4 disposals that resulted in a custodial sentence. This is an increase on the previous year.
- 3.9. 14 children (23%) have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP).
- 3.10. Black and Mixed heritage children remain overrepresented in the YJS cohort with Asian and White children underrepresented. The 'other' category continues to increase and is also overrepresented. This group consisted of 1 Afghan, 8 Arab, 1 Iraqi, 1 Lebanese and 1 Moroccan. Black and Mixed children make up 27% of Camden's youth population (10–17-year-olds) but represent 44% of the YJS cohort. 71% of the YJS cohort are Global Majority children, an increase from 2024 which was 55%.
- 3.11. Comparison data for our YJS family, is available for the period 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024 – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025. Camden is in a family group with Westminster, Hammersmith & Fulham, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Hackney, Haringey, Barnet, Waltham Forest & Merton.
- 3.12. **First Time Entrants** – Across the family group, the average number of First Time Entrants was 47 for the period, Camden had 32, with a rate of 193 per 100,000 children. This is a reduction of 34% compared with the previous year. Both the number and the rate of first-time entrants is at the lower end of the family group. Across London the average is 57.
- 3.13. **Use of Custody** – Across the family group, the average number of children in custody was 3 for the period, Camden also had 3 children in custody. This was an increase on last year when we had zero children receiving a custodial outcome. Across London the average is 4.
- 3.14. **Re-offending** – for the period October 2022 – September 2023, Camden had 33 children in the cohort and 12 of those children committed 48 reoffences. The family average was a cohort of 56 children with 17 of them committing 49 reoffences. This shows Camden has both a smaller cohort and fewer children re-offending than average across the group

#### **4. YJS New plan Priorities for 2025 – 28.**

- 4.1. Throughout April YJS Staff, Board Members, Partners, children and families were sent and encouraged to complete a survey inviting views on what priorities should be moving forwards. A Working group with managers took place in April, followed by a YJS staff event held in May for Staff to look at current priorities from the 2023 - 25 plan and to discuss new ideas and themes that could form part of the new priorities set for 2025 onwards. Ideas and challenges were discussed in small groups and fed back to the team. This information was collated to produce a presentation for the second consultation event where Board members, partners, staff, children and parents were invited to discuss achievements and new priorities for the Service. The event focused on what the service would like to retain and discussions around current data. Participants were divided into two groups to look at the following ideas: Domestic Abuse/Toxic Masculinity/Work with girls and Transitions/Children who persistently re-offend/locality working & VCS relationships. The results from these events and the feedback surveys led to the design of the new priorities.
- 4.2. The Plan gives an overview of the work of the Youth Justice Service in Camden and sets out details of performance over the past year and priorities for the coming year. This Youth Justice Plan covers the 2025-28 period.

#### **5. Priority 1 Update: Continue to perform well against National and Local Indicators of performance:**

- 5.1. The YJS has sustained a low level of first-time entrants (children who are receiving criminal outcomes for the first time) although this is now starting to rise to pre-pandemic levels. We continue to have low use of remand and low levels of custody, although custodial cases did increase this year for the first time since 2021/22.
- 5.2. The focus over the next 12 months is to continue to monitor and review the offending themes and ensure that we have good resources to respond. We plan to explore the children who do not reoffend but have prevalent vulnerability factors. We will continue to work with partners on outcomes from learning reviews and ensure action plans are implemented. We are also working towards implementing the remand thematic report recommendations to reduce unnecessary use of remand.

#### **6. Priority 2 Update: Maintain and continue the work on tackling Disproportionality**

- 6.1. Over the last 5 years Camden YJS have been reporting disproportionality data to the YJS management board. Of note, the most current data tells us the proportion of White children in the YJS has reduced significantly from 41% to 30% in the last year. Positively, the overrepresentation of Black children receiving school suspensions has reduced from 1.8 to 1.5 times than White children, though clearly there remains work to be done. Also, since we last

reported to the board in March 2024, we have seen an increase in children being referred into the YJS through the Deferred Exclusion Programme (DEP), 89% of whom were Global Majority children. Another shift from the previous cohort is the increase in Black children committing more serious offences. In the 2024 the data showed us 0% of the Black children committed offences of 5-8 gravity, whereas in this report, they have committed 38% of serious offences. The small YJS cohort means that percentages must be viewed with some caution, however it remains important to understand trends and analyse what impact the work of the YJS, and more widely the partnership may be having on the overrepresentation of Black and Mixed children in Camden.

- 6.2. The focus over the next 12 months will be on the cross-directorate Race Equality and Justice Plan launched in Camden in July 2025. The development of this work was sparked by honest reflections on racism in our services and a shared determination to do better — for each other and for the children, families, and communities we serve. Built around Practice, People, and Leadership, it sets out clear, actionable goals supported by a detailed plan for change. We will also expand the criteria and promote further the Deferred Exclusion Programme (DEP) to reduce school-based exclusions and prevent first time entrants and measure the impact of the DEP so far and share this with schools.

## **7. Priority 3 Update: Maintain and encourage better use of ETE opportunities/interventions**

- 7.1. The YJS paid work experience placements continue, and so does the trend of children being offered permanent work placements following this. The Honest Grind Coffee initiative continues with older children working for money. 7 of the Reparation Projects enable children to receive an AQA qualification and 15 AQAs were presented to 13 children during 2024/25. We have also seconded an Educational Psychologist to work in YJS 1 day/week to support the team, assess children and approaches to enable engagement
- 7.2. The focus over the next 12 months will be on monitoring and evaluating the new paid work experience placements, impact, progression, and children's feedback. We will monitor and evaluate medium term paid work experience placements. We will continue to obtain feedback from children and employers as to what works well, and what is needed to make placements successful. There remains a small group of children that remain uninterested in paid work experience options. Our Peer Advocates will work with them to determine what more could be done to persuade them to try something new. Often it could be the location, going somewhere new that can be off-putting for children, though some children may be earning a regular income through exploitation/crime and so the incentive of a London living wage remains unattractive.
- 7.3. Recent internal evaluation of paid work experience proved to have a very positive impact on reoffending rates where only 1 out of 22 children who had been on a placement went on to reoffend.

**8. Priority 4 Update: Continue to invest in the staff teams' development and wellbeing**

- 8.1. Established during lockdown, monthly workshops for all staff continue to take place. The Practice Forum for front line staff continues, which is a *manager-free* zone to discuss all practice issues and there has been investment in Relational Practice for the team. Annual staff survey found that 95% of YJS staff agreed Camden Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) is a good place to work. The service regularly utilised Camden's Reward and Recognition scheme and created the employee of the month to appreciate staff. We have recently introduced *LOLS* – Log off and Learn Something which is a monthly protected space to learn as a team independently of the monthly workshops. Staff are able to work flexibly whilst maintaining the service needs, to ensure a better work-life balance and staff can access health and wellbeing support through Camden's corporate offer
- 8.2. During the next 12 months, we will continue to embed the focus on staff health and wellbeing as business as usual understanding that a healthy happy team leads to better outcomes for our children.

**9. Priority 5 Update: Evaluate and evidence Camden interventions and approaches**

- 9.1. The end of order feedback from children shows that a consistently positive impact is made by the YJS. Feedback from reparation projects on what works, what could be done better, and the impact of skills gained is reviewed regularly. Feedback from court appearances demonstrate improved understanding and communication approaches are strong from the staff team. Reparation is when children 'make things right' for the victim or the community by giving something back. Every child takes part in reparation and the number of hours you must complete will depend on the order length and how serious the offence was. In Camden we have a variety of reparation projects from carpentry, mosaics, bike repairs, boxing, community kitchen. Spontaneous positive feedback from parents highlight the impact our relational approaches have with their children.
- 9.2. The focus for the coming year will look at the end of order feedback from children and we will evolve the feedback themes from children, led by peer advocates. We continue to learn from other YJS', evidence bases and what works in youth justice. As stated, we will look at both the DEP and Paid Work Experience feedback to date and take any learnings from that.

**10. Priority 6 Update: Continue to use feedback from children and families to improve the service**

- 10.1. Last year we completed feedback surveys on court, Education, Training and Employment, Referral Orders, reparation, disproportionality, exploitation, specialist workers, and the experiences of girls. End of order surveys are completed with encouraging results and analysed annually. Our peer advocates

(paid staff members who are previous service users) offer a voice for children. Parenting workshops have taken place and we have acted on feedback, making changes and being transparent (*You said - We did*). We have recruited 3 new peer advocates and they are attending boards and link in with national policy groups. We have also revised both our victim and parenting survey in a bid to increase uptake.

- 10.2. We will ensure peer advocates attend board meetings on a rota in future and take an active role, where they feel comfortable. We will expand and review the '*you said, we did*' project and work with children so they know how they can access this. We will apply learning from peer advocate work in other service areas to consider how this can inform our approaches.
- 10.3. The end of order survey completed by children is extremely positive and the feedback given shows the impacts being made:
- *"My work with Arsenal has been the best thing I've ever done"*
  - *"I have someone to talk to and she helped me with a lot of my problems"*
  - *"How available and quick to respond they were often having an answer to all my needs with lots of patience and kindness"*
  - *"You can discuss your problems with them"*
  - *"Keeps me in a routine, helps me to stay out of trouble. someone I can talk to"*
  - *"Explaining what was right and was wrong"*
  - *"Having legal advice and someone to talk to about any issues. Also helped me do positive things like redecorate my bedroom"*
  - *"Being able to talk about things that will affect my life"*
  - *"Helped me to not do the things I used to do"*

## **11. Priority 7 Update: Strengthen the Prevention Approach provided within the YJS**

- 11.1. This year we have increased engagement with our Turnaround programme. Turnaround in Camden is a voluntary Early Help programme delivered by the Youth Justice Service and funding has been extended until the end of March 2026. Children are offered a minimum of 8 sessions over a 12-week period, it aims to help children to learn from the mistakes they have made and to be able to move on from less positive experiences. We plan to continue offering a similar voluntary support programme to children once the funding for this ends next year. We successfully organised an IYSS-wide residential for 12 children in June 2024. We have reduced out of court disposals year on year.
- 11.2. The focus for the rest of the period is to continue to deliver the Turnaround intervention and begin plans to establish the criteria for the voluntary offer that will replace it post March. Part of this includes monitoring and evaluating the current voluntary offer within YJS and across IYSS to consider what is sustainable post 2026.



## **12. Priority 8 Update: Responding to social inequality**

- 12.1. Small but significant changes are being made in this area. All children are offered snacks and drinks during their YJS appointments, and the new reception space has facilitated this. We also have a Mini Food Share in the space. The Service has invested in a range of vouchers to support families in practical ways, to buy food, household items and essential equipment, e.g. heaters, blankets and furniture. Other ways intended to support financially, such as home improvements have been beneficial. We have also enabled families to have day trips/engage with activities to nurture positive relationships and family experiences. We continue to signpost and promote a range of support available in Camden and again the new reception space has allowed us to display relevant information to children and their parents/carers.
- 12.2. We are working on ways to increase access to our modest food share; we have found that children do not want to carry a bag of food around the borough for their parents, so we are launching a welcome pack for families in 2025. The bags will contain leaflets, signposting, toiletries, household essentials, biscuits and a voucher so families can do a weekly shop. We plan to give these out at initial home visit appointments as a 'welcome' to the service to avoid any embarrassment. Finally, we will evaluate the impact of children who have received financial support to determine if it has made a difference.

## **13. Victim Strategy**

- 13.1. Ensuring that victims are provided with support and advice is a long-established part of our offer. We take a broad view of work with victims in our service. Whilst we get to know victims through the referrals to our Victim Liaison Officer (VLO), we also recognise there is a victim for every child we work with, who may not be in contact with us but who has rights under the Victim Code. The YJS Management Board has a strategic role in understanding the profile and characteristics of victims in Camden to help inform our victim work and our wider crime prevention agenda
- 13.2. Over the last 6 months, the Board committed to an accelerated programme of work to further strengthen our offer in line with the Victim Code. This has supported progress to ensure that all victims in contact with YJS have a justice journey that is timely, effective, inclusive, and transparent and a positive start to a healing journey that gives the support they need to process what has happened and begin to recover.
- 13.3. A new victim strategy has been agreed to focus on:
- 13.4. **Early Identification:** We want to do more to join up our early help systems to identify victims at an earlier stage and to offer intervention through voluntary programmes and participation.

- 13.5. **Breaking the cycle:** We know from extended learning reviews that being the victim of a violent crime increases likelihood of going on to cause harm to others and entering the youth justice service.
- 13.6. **Disproportionality:** Data tells us we have work to do to ensure that all members of our community feel able to ask for help when they have been the victim of a crime and access the relevant support.
- 13.7. **Camden wide approach:** We want to develop a clear and consistent approach to supporting victims across all council services. Embedding relational practice and shared learning to be at the core of what we do.
- 13.8. **Health and Well-Being:** We want children to thrive in Camden & recognise being the victim of a crime can have a detrimental impact on childhood. We will build on our trauma informed practice and multi-agency offer to support recovery.

#### **14. Challenges, risks and issues**

- 14.1. Staff development and wellbeing has continued to be a priority. High retention levels of staff teams enable long lasting relationships to be built with children, families, colleagues and partnership services.
- 14.2. One of the recommendations from our HMIP Inspection is that the Probation Service should work with the YJS Management Board to improve its involvement in the transitions of children to adult services to ensure they are more effective. This should include the appointment of a YJS seconded probation officer. Meetings have already taken place between the Head of Service and the Probation Camden and Islington Head of Service to seek interim arrangements that are realistic whilst they continue to recruit to their substantive posts within the team. Camden and Islington is a red area, indicating they are below sufficient staffing levels to maintain adequate service delivery.
- 14.3. Average workload remains low but these have increased recently through continued Turnaround programme as well as our Voluntary Support Programme (VSP), comprehensive exit plans and the Deferred Exclusion Programme (DEP). During 2024/25, 67% of orders were statutory compared to 33% voluntary.
- 14.4. Our Clinical Psychologist left in October 2024 which created a short-term gap in provision, however in April 2025 we welcomed a new systemic therapist into the Youth Justice Service (YJS) and clinical consultations are now running again. Throughout the year we have utilised our CAMHS nurse who has consistently seen a high number of the cohort, offering support directly and also supporting the staff team.
- 14.5. Our Remand budget for 2025-26 is set at £82, 550, a small increase from the previous year. Given the rise in remands, we experienced last year reserves

are low. In future London Accommodation Pathfinder (LAP) costs will be consumed from the remand budget, as it seeks to reduce children entering custody. This will further add financial pressure within this budget. Clearly it is difficult to anticipate spike events that can impact a remand budget; however, the prevention offer and developing victim offer we anticipate will in time, enable children charged for serious matters to be realistically considered for community-based packages of monitoring and support.

## **15. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services**

- 15.1. There are no immediate financial implications resulting from this report

## **16. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

- 16.1. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 section 38 places a duty on the Local Authority, along with partners, to secure that all youth justice services are available to the extent that is appropriate for the area.
- 16.2. Under Section 40 of the Act the Local Authority is required to formulate and implement a youth justice plan each year, after consultation with relevant persons and bodies, setting out how youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded as well how the team is composed, funded, how they operate and what functions they carry out. The plan is required to be submitted to the Youth Justice Board.

## **17. Environmental Implications**

- 17.1. There are no environmental implications for this Plan.

**REPORT ENDS**