

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Camden Youth Justice Plan 2025 – 2028 (CL/2026/24)	
REPORT OF Cabinet Member for Jobs, Young People and Culture	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Cabinet Council	DATE 25 th February 2026 2 nd March 2026
STRATEGIC CONTEXT Camden 2025 is our communities’ vision for Camden. The priorities set out within the Youth Justice Plan align with Camden 2025 by focusing on tackling disproportionality, supporting children to have the best start in life and opportunities to reach their potential. The report has been informed by collaboration with children, parents and staff consultations to consider where we need to be focusing our attention to deliver brilliant services. Our Camden Plan is the council’s response to Camden 2025. The identified priorities seek to strengthen how we collaborate with children, families and communities, to make better connect and collaborate to ensure our statutory services deliver what residents need to feel safe, thrive and contribute to their community.	
SUMMARY OF REPORT The report summarises performance data from 2024-25 and 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 His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation inspection (May 2025). The report is coming to the Cabinet as it is part of the Terms and Conditions of the Youth Justice Board grant to all Youth Justice Services that the Youth Justice Plan goes through full Council. The Youth Justice Plan has been approved by the Youth Justice Service Board and has been shared with the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee. Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing were used in the preparation of this report.	

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to recommend the Council to approve the Youth Justice Plan 2025 - 2028.

Council is asked to approve the Youth Justice Plan 2025-28.

Signed:



Date: 30th January 2026

1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1. 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. Each YJS has 3 main Key Performance Indicators – Reducing First Time Entrants (to the Youth Justice System), Reducing Re-Offending and Reducing Custody. 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 YJS are encouraged to share work with peers and partners.
- 1.2. Each year the Youth Justice Service is required to complete a Youth Justice Plan demonstrating its achievements and performance over the past year and its priorities for the coming year as a condition of its grant from the Youth Justice Board (YJB). 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.
- 1.3. Following consultation with staff, children, parents, and board members, the following priorities will be in place for the next 3 years, whilst retaining some flexibility around changes from the Social Work National Reform. Previous priorities will continue to be embedded and become business as usual.
 - Tackling Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA)
 - Supporting Victims of Youth Crime
 - Addressing Disproportionality
 - Enhancing Education, Training and Employment Offer (ETE)
 - Continue to expand and improve on the YJS Prevention Offer
 - Enhancing transitional safeguarding and reduce the risk of reoffending for children leaving our service

Business as usual/embed the following:

- Investment in the staff teams' development and wellbeing
- Using feedback from children and families to improve the service
- Responding to social inequality
- Embed the 3-month re-offending tool to look at patterns and trends as they emerge
- We will also look at how best to use our own data alongside wider data collated throughout the directorate

- 1.4. Since the plan was written, 2-year funding from Public Health and IYSS has led to the recruitment for an IYSS Nurse to start in early 2026. This role will initially focus on Youth Justice children before working with children across the wider service. This resource will complement existing health provision within the team but will additionally offer support for general physical health to our children.
- 1.5. Camden YJS was rated Outstanding by His Majesty's Inspectorate Prisons (HMIP) in June 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
- 1.6. 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
- 1.7. 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 were impressed with 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
- 1.8. The previous Youth Justice Plan covered the period 2023 – 25, and the updates on those priorities are below:
- 1.9. ***Priority 1 Update: Continue to perform well against National and Local Indicators of performance:***
- 1.10. 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.
- 1.11. 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.

1.12. Priority 2 Update: Maintain and continue the work on tackling Disproportionality

1.13. 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.

1.14. 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.

1.15. Priority 3 Update: Maintain and encourage better use of ETE opportunities/interventions

1.16. 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

1.17. 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.

- 1.18. 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.
- 1.19. **Priority 4 Update: Continue to invest in the staff teams' development and wellbeing**
- 1.20. 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
- 1.21. 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.
- 1.22. **Priority 5 Update: Evaluate and evidence Camden interventions and approaches**
- 1.23. 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.

- 1.24. 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.
- 1.25. **Priority 6 Update: Continue to use feedback from children and families to improve the service**
- 1.26. 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.
- 1.27. 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.
- 1.28. 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"
- 1.29. **Priority 7 Update: Strengthen the Prevention Approach provided within the YJS**
- 1.30. 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.

1.31. 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.

1.32. **Priority 8 Update: Responding to social inequality**

1.33. 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.

1.34. 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.

1.35. Some of the highlighted achievements within the Youth Justice Plan 2023 – 25 include:

- Maintained low first-time entrants into the Youth Justice System
- Expansion of the Deferred Exclusion Programme, predominantly benefitting Global Majority children, keeping them in school
- Increased use of out of court disposals for Black children (rather than court ordered interventions)
- Investment in adultification training, leading to reduction in over assessing risk
- Expansion of the paid work experience placements for 16+ children, with positive feedback from children and employers
- 15 AQA's awarded to 13 children completing reparation activities
- secured funding for part time Educational Psychologist
- consistently strong feedback on impact of YJS engagement from children
- Recruitment of new peer advocates to support collaboration and engagement with YJS cohort

- 1.36. **Performance Summary 1 April 2024 - 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.
- 1.37. 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 very similar to previous years.
- 1.38. 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. 4 children committed more than 1 offence in this category, with three committing gravity level 7 violent offences. The majority (90%) of these offences had a gravity rating of 3.
- 1.39. 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%).
- 1.40. 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.
- 1.41. **First Time Entrants**
Locally 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. The continuation of the remand thematic recommendations will continue to ensure no children are unnecessarily remanded.
- 1.42. **Custody**
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.
- 1.43. **Reducing Re-offending**
Camden's current cohort (October 2022 - September 2023) consists of 36 children who were tracked for twelve months. Measuring reoffending rates of a cohort is always retrospective as it must allow 12 months for all children on the cohort to desist or reoffend. Hence this is the most recent local data available.
- 1.44. **Number of offenders**
The period October 2022 - September 2023 shows 47%, 17 of the 36 children re-offended within the time period, in comparison to 21%, 11 of 52 children in the previous year. This is a decrease in performance on the previous year, although the shrinking cohort impacts the figures.

1.84. Re-offences

Re-offences per reoffender has reduced from 5.27 to 2.61. In real terms that's 17 re-offenders who committed 47 reoffences, compared with 11 re-offenders who committed 58 reoffences, in the previous cohort. More children are re-offending but are committing less re-offences when compared with the previous cohort.

1.85. In summary, this data shows that there has been an overall downward trend in the number of children in the re-offending cohort and remains below levels in 2016/17. The main change for this cohort is a slightly higher number of children re-offending but committing fewer re-offences. Only 2 of the children committed more than 5 reoffences (26%), this is in stark contrast to most reoffending cohorts where a small group of prolific reoffenders are responsible for a large proportion of reoffences. In terms of reoccurring themes to help proactively identify which children may become prolific is complex. The groups each year are small and have bespoke needs. However, what we do know is long periods of absence from school, additional learning needs, long periods of social care involvement for neglect and abuse, parental mental health and substance misuse are all commonplace. This correlates closely with our priorities focusing on ETE innovation, responding to social inequality and staff development/wellbeing. It is paramount for all our children that they have a consistent relationship built on trust over time so they can begin to open up about what may help move away from offending.

1.86. Census data for Camden (2021) shows a decrease in the Black and Mixed population but an increase in the Other groups. Analysis of the YJS cohort shows that Global Majority children make up 70% of the cohort and are overrepresented in the Youth Justice Service.

1.87. Black and Mixed heritage children remain disproportionately represented in the YJS cohort with Asian and White underrepresented. The 'other' category continues to increase and is also overrepresented, the group consisted of Afghan x 1, Arab x 8, Iraqi x 1, Lebanese x 1 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%.

1.88. The new Priorities listed in 1.3 are set for 3 years and progress will be reported in the annual update of the Youth Justice Plan and shared with the YJS Management Board.

2. PROPOSAL AND REASONS

2.1. The Youth Justice Plan 2025 - 28 comes to Cabinet for approval and acceptance of the new Priorities.

2.2. In accordance with the conditions of the grant youth justice plans, in England only, must be signed off by the full council in accordance with Regulation 4 of the 'Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000'. This regulation does not apply to Wales. If you have not been able to

achieve full sign off, your plan can be submitted with the approval of the Board Chair with confirmation of full sign off submitted at a later date. The 'sign off' by the Chair is an indication that the wider management board have approved the submitted plan and all sections outlined in the Youth Justice Plan Structure have been covered.

- 2.3. The deadline for having the plan signed off and submitted to the Youth Justice Board was 31.07.2025. At this time, the Plan was signed off by the Chair of the YJS Management Board, Tim Aldridge, on behalf of the Board and its members.
- 2.4. The Youth Justice Board have confirmed that when plans are being annually reviewed and updated they do not need full cabinet and council sign off but still require submission to the YJB.

3. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 3.1. There are 3 options open to cabinet:
Option 1: Cabinet is asked to agree the Plan with its new priorities in appendix 1.
Option 2: Cabinet may do nothing, which would mean the Youth Justice Service will be in breach of its terms and conditions of grant from the Youth Justice Board and work on new priorities will be paused.
Option 3: Cabinet may wish to seek further information from the Youth Justice Service before accepting the new Youth Justice Plan.

4. WHAT ARE THE KEY IMPACTS / RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

- 4.1. There are no impacts/risks to this Plan being approved. Not approving the plan however will put us in breach of our conditions of grant with the Youth Justice Board.

5. CONSULTATION/ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1. Throughout April, YJS Staff, Management Board Members, Partners, and children and families were sent and encouraged to complete an anonymous survey inviting views on what priorities should be for the service 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 were used to produce the new priorities.

- 5.2. See appendix 2 for the list of attendees to the Priorities event. See appendix 3 for the PowerPoint presentation delivered to the consultation event. See appendix 4 for responses to the anonymous consultation survey.
- 5.3. The Youth Justice Plan identifies priorities to support mitigating inequalities that exist within Camden. There are specific priorities set to support children from Youth Justice backgrounds to remain in and secure education, training and employment opportunities. It also continues to have a specific priority on addressing and overrepresentation of particular groups within the youth justice service.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. Section 40 of the Act requires the Local Authority to formulate and implement for each year a youth justice plan covering how services are to be provided and funded, how teams are composed, operate and what functions they carry out

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The Youth Justice Service is funded through existing local authority funding, Youth Justice Board grants and partnerships contributions. Approval of the plan does not have financial resource implications.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no environmental implications for this Plan.

9. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 9.1. Work on the new priorities is already underway and will continue over the next three years. At the end of each financial year, the Plan will be updated to reflect progress on these priorities and include the latest Key Performance Indicator results. The YJS Action Plan also attached at Appendix 5.

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Camden's Youth Justice Plan 2025 - 28

- Progress on Previous Plan: pages 3 - 6
- New Priorities: pages 13- 14 and 19-20

Appendix 2: List of attendees to the Priorities event

Appendix 3: PowerPoint presentation delivered to the consultation event

Appendix 4: Responses to the anonymous consultation questionnaire

Appendix 5: YJS Action Plan 2025-28 with key headlines

REPORT ENDS