

LONDON ADOLESCENT SAFEGUARDING AND YOUTH JUSTICE NEWSLETTER

March 2025 ISSUE

Dear colleagues,

I recently had the pleasure of speaking to the annual conference of London youth magistrates alongside Charlie Taylor, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, and the Youth Justice minister Sir Nic Dakin. It was great to be able to reflect back to the magistrates the many successes of the youth justice system, to which they have made an important contribution. It was also sobering to hear Charlie Taylor's assessment of the appalling conditions in much of the youth custodial estate. This made the reflections from the magistrates on the continuing need to reduce the use of remands, particularly the use of short remands while local authorities try to find suitable accommodation, all the more important. We also discussed how we, as local authorities, could increase confidence in community alternatives and better represent the excellent work which is done by children's services and youth justice teams to improve safety, reduce offending and protect the public.



One example of the innovative work in youth justice, which is being led by London local authorities, is in the London Accommodation Pathfinder (LAP) which is demonstrating its effectiveness as a high quality alternative to custody. This week the LAP strategic manager, Charlotte Matthews, shared the many positive outcomes being achieved, against a very challenging backdrop, with the Youth Justice minister and YJB chief executives at a remands roundtable at the MOJ. It was encouraging to hear the importance that the MOJ and YJB places upon the LAP and the confidence they have that this is an approach which should spread in order to reduce the number of children in custody. The event brought LAs together with social investors to explore innovative ways of funding future developments, which we will now look to take forward in London.

There is much to celebrate in our work to develop a child first youth justice system but, as Charlie Taylor's damning assessment of English YOI's reminds us, there is still much more we need to do.

Florence Kroll

DCS Royal Borough of Greenwich, ALDCS Adolescent Safeguarding policy lead, chair of the London Adolescent Safeguarding Oversight Board (LASOB) and chair of the ALDCS

THIS MONTH'S UPDATES

- **Updates from the London Adolescent Safeguarding Oversight Board (LASOB)**
- **LIIA ANNUAL PLAN and Adolescent Safeguarding Plan 2025-2026**
- **The Metropolitan police - sexual and criminal exploitation of children**
- **Child Criminal Exploitation Roundtable - Key Takeaways**
- **London's Inclusion Charter**
- **Online Harms**
- **Recommended Reading: Against Youth Violence - A Social Harm Perspective. Written by Luke Billingham and Keir Irwin-Rogers**
- **Recommended Reading: Adultifying Youth Custody: Learning lessons on transition to adulthood from the use of youth custody for young adults**

UPDATES FROM THE LONDON ADOLESCENT SAFEGUARDING OVERSIGHT BOARD (LASOB)

- **NRM Pilot Update** - Colleagues from Croydon presented the impressive work undertaken as part of their National Referral Mechanism local decision-making pilot. Through the Croydon pilot (which is one of ten in London) the time to conclude whether a child is experiencing exploitation as defined by the Modern Slavery Act has been cut to 45 days (compared with upwards of 500 days for the national scheme). This reduced decision-making times, prevents delays that often leave young people in vulnerable situations including spending extended periods remanded in custody awaiting a decision on their status. The LASOB chair will write to the Home Office to seek clarification of when the successful local decision-making pilots will be rolled out to all areas. The Deputy Mayor for Crime and Policing has agreed to be a co-signatory to this letter.
- **Online Harms** - The VRU presented findings on the risks young people face online and introduced The Social Switch Project, which trains professionals to support young people in navigating digital risks. Evidence suggests that providing offline opportunities, such as after-school activities, helps reduce the likelihood of online exploitation.
- **Reducing the Criminalisation of Children in Care and Care Leavers** - An update was provided on the ongoing review of the MOPAC-led protocol. As well as further embedding work for children in care, the revised framework will bring a renewed focus to reducing criminalisation for care leavers aged 18-25, who are currently four times more likely to receive a caution or conviction than their peers.
- **Your Choice Programme** - colleagues from LB Hillingdon shared their experience of Your Choice and their successes in reducing the number of teenagers entering care, improving stability for those already in care, and decreasing missing episodes. The Your Choice randomised control trial involving 1500 children assessed as at medium or high risk of risk outside the home is nearing its conclusion and the evaluation report will be published before the end of 2025.
- **Policy Workshop Insights** - Members reviewed key takeaways from the recent policy workshop, which focused on the government's Safer Streets mission. Areas for attention from the workshop were around neighbourhood policing, the risk of over-criminalisation under new anti-social behaviour measures, and safeguarding in schools. The discussion also touched on strategies for tackling violence against women and girls, the transition of young people from youth to adult services, and opportunities for improving community-based support. Members agreed greater clarity / guidance was required to align the Safer Streets mission with the Opportunities mission to ensure each complemented the other.

LIIA ANNUAL PLAN 2025-2026

The London Innovation & Improvement Alliance (LIIA) is committed to improving outcomes for children and young people across London. Alongside adolescent safeguarding, LIIA takes forward programmes in relation to four other key priorities on behalf of the London Directors of Children’s Services. Our 2025–2026 annual plan outlines the priorities and programmes designed to support local authorities and their partners in delivering high-quality services to children, young people and their families.

The adolescent safeguarding programme plan below includes a number of key initiatives which will see launches in 2025. These include the new MACE (risk outside the home) protocol, new Safeguarding Adolescents in London (SAIL) practice guide and the revised protocol for reducing criminalisation of children in care and care leavers. Look out for these launches and the accompanying learning opportunities.

For more details of the adolescent safeguarding plan see below and explore the full LIIA plan [here](#).

LIIA Annual Plan 2025 - 2026



London Innovation & Improvement Alliance (LiIA)

Working to improve outcomes for London’s children and young people



Projects & Areas of Work	What will we do?	Why will we do it?	
Priority Area: Adolescent Safeguarding	London Safeguarding Adolescents in London (SAIL) Practice Handbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissemination of the adolescent safeguarding practice handbook: training, webinars, bite-sized products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building safety for young Londoners. Greater consistency of language and practice across London and better information sharing for children moving between boroughs
	Adolescent Safeguarding in education - Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framework for schools / colleges to promote the range of adolescent safeguarding initiatives in London. Delivered with / through education safeguarding sub-group (SELL) and VRU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools / colleges understanding support available and best practice in relation to adolescent safeguarding
	MACE Operating Protocol Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-produce a revised partnership multi-agency violence / exploitation protocol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent approach to multi-agency child exploitation arrangements across London which promote adolescent safety
	Your Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support London LAs to deliver Your Choice, which includes the maintenance of pan-London Communities of Practice for Your Choice practitioners and a Clinical Leads Network Work towards a financially sustainable model Complete the London Young People Study (Efficacy Trial of the Your Choice Programme) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice development by upskilling practitioners across London. An enhanced offer to young people affected by violence supporting their safety
	Violence & Exploitation Support Services: optimising the impact of VESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver a complimentary Local Authority delivery model operating alongside VESS, working closely with the Alliance, Local Authorities and other partners, with a focus on improving access to, and coordination of, support for children and young adults impacted by violence and exploitation in London Improved and simplified pathways to support Ensuring children and young people get the right support from skilled practitioners Development of data products (strategic and operational), informed by the data from VESS, supporting both service improvement and pan-London strategic analysis related to violence and exploitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced harm from violence and exploitation Timely and effective support for CYP affected by violence and exploitation
	Reducing criminalisation of children in care and care leavers protocol (review and re-launch)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed protocol, co-produced with all relevant stakeholders Dissemination and overview of implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced criminalisation of children in care and care leavers Improved life chances More opportunities to repair harm and a better experience for victims of harm / crime
	Policy workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivering/ facilitating themed workshops through LASOB. Policy recommendations - to address specific actions or changes as a result of discussions in the workshops. Develop action plans/ collate collaborative documents outlining steps to implement policy change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influence policy development. Increased awareness and understanding. Improved collaboration and strengthening partnerships with stakeholders. Participants actively advocating for change in their respective sectors.
	Data & Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and develop the dashboard for London adolescent safeguarding oversight board (LASOB) and London safeguarding partnership executive Develop; analytical products based on CEN census, a suite of dashboards to support the violence and exploitation support work of LIIA commissioned by MOPAC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference data available to inform LASOB. Deeper intelligence and insight available to support this theme

THE METROPOLITAN POLICE - SEXUAL AND CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

 New Report on Child Exploitation & Missing Children



A new report revisits the Metropolitan Police Service's handling of child sexual and criminal exploitation, highlighting progress made and areas still needing improvement.

Key Improvements:

- Better risk assessment for missing children.
- Increased training for investigators and more officers assigned to child exploitation teams.
- New policies and training introduced for officers to assess risk more effectively.
- A new IT system, Connect, aims to enhance data tracking but still has challenges with accuracy.
- Enhanced response times.

The Metropolitan Police Service's handling of the sexual and criminal exploitation of children
Causes of concern – revisit

Read the full report [here](#).

CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION ROUNDTABLE – KEY TAKEAWAYS

Crest Advisory recently hosted a virtual roundtable to discuss the practical implications of the new Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) offence and prevention orders. The session, chaired by John Poyton OBE, featured insights from Duncan Evans (NCLCC) and Johnny Bolderson (Catch22) and brought together professionals from local government, law enforcement, the voluntary sector, and academia.

◆ Key discussions included:

- What should be included in new guidance to support the use of the legislation.
- Challenges and opportunities in applying CCE prevention orders.
- How we can work together to develop an effective approach to tackling child criminal exploitation.

 Read the full briefing [here](#).

**Child Criminal Exploitation:
The practical implications of the new
offences - roundtable summary**

March 2025



LONDON'S INCLUSION CHARTER

London's Inclusion Charter: New Strategic Guides for Education Leaders

London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) has published new strategic guides for inclusion co-designed by education leaders. Last year, the VRU launched London's Inclusion Charter, a commitment to ensuring all young people feel safe, have a sense of belonging, and are supported to thrive in their education settings.

The Strategic Guides have been designed to help education and local authority leaders put the Inclusion Charter's four guiding principles into action.

What's inside? A set of practical guides with clear strategies and links to helpful resources to promote inclusion and tackle exclusions, absenteeism, and suspensions.

Who are they for? School leaders, teachers, and local authority teams looking for evidence-based ways to build a more inclusive learning environment.

Why do they matter? They're shaped by the voices of nearly 4,000 students, parents, and educators—ensuring they reflect real experiences and needs. The guides are full of practical steps based on the Charter's four guiding principles.

Visit [London's Inclusion Charter webpage](#) to find the guides and share them with your networks!



ONLINE HARMS

The Social Switch training programme focuses on online harms. It emphasises the importance of young people having trusted adults to turn to when facing challenges online. Evidence suggests that less time spent online reduces exploitation risks, making after-school interventions valuable in providing offline opportunities.

The programme has two strands: practitioner training on digital harms and digital skills opportunities for young people. The aim is not to remove them entirely from the online world but to equip them with skills for safer digital engagement.

Sign up to the next Social Switch training [here](#).

RECOMMENDED READING

Against Youth Violence - A Social Harm Perspective Written by Luke Billingham and Keir Irwin-Rogers

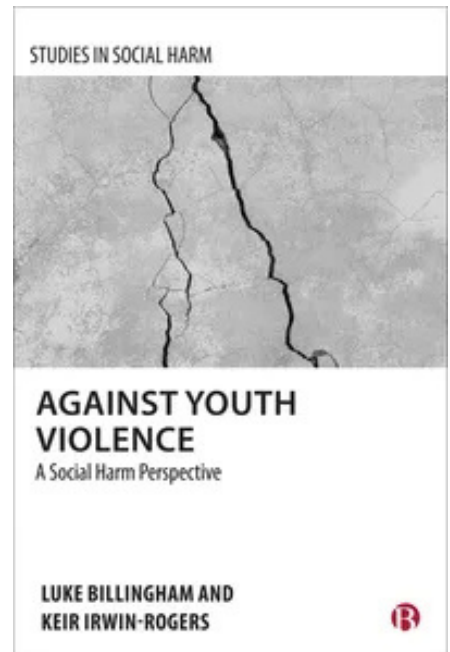
Now available as **open access** (for free!) a must read, co-authored by LASOB member Luke Billingham.

Looking beyond traditional crime-focused approaches, this book explores youth violence through the lens of social harm, examining its deeper structural causes and broader societal impact.

This book examines how inequality and social harms drive such violence and highlights key future goals for policymakers, researchers and practitioners.


Published by Bristol University Press, it challenges conventional narratives and offers fresh perspectives on prevention and intervention.

 Find out more [here](#).



Adultifying Youth Custody: Learning lessons on transition to adulthood from the use of youth custody for young adults

A new publication from **AYJ (Alliance for Youth Justice)** explores how retaining young adults in the children's custodial estate changes the nature of institutions and has had a damaging impact on already fragile arrangements.

 Read the full article [here](#), and John Drew's excellent accompanying blog [here](#).

The Alliance for Youth Justice (AYJ) publishes a monthly newsletter packed with updates, insights, and policy developments on youth justice.

If you're interested in staying informed about key issues affecting young people in the justice system, we highly recommend subscribing.

 Sign up [here](#).





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Please let us know your feedback on this newsletter [via email](#) so we can keep improving future editions.

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THANKS FOR READING!

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