

LONDON ADOLESCENT SAFEGUARDING AND YOUTH JUSTICE NEWSLETTER

July 2025 ISSUE

Dear colleagues,

As you'll see from this month's newsletter, there is so much going on in our partnership Adolescent Safeguarding programme, with many of our longstanding projects reaching key milestones in the coming months (see our LASOB updates below). We will be doing a great deal of engagement activity so please do get involved.

Within our programme we have always been keen to see youth justice as an integral part of adolescent safeguarding in London, rather than something which is separate or siloed. It was great to hear this echoed by Steph Roberts-Bibby, Chief Executive of the YJB, when she joined June's meeting of the London Directors of Children's Services.

At that meeting we agreed our common cause to campaign for improvements in the treatment of children in the custodial estate and to ensuring that youth justice is fully incorporated into the Families First social care reforms which are underway in children's services.

The YJB has led the way in promoting the Child First principles, which we are all benefitting from in children's services, and together we will seek to ensure that children, whether in conflict with the law or not, are treated as children and given the best chance to be safe and to thrive by the adults around them.



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)
- Violence & Exploitation Support Service (VESS)
- Practice Spotlight at ALDCS 2025
- National Referral Mechanism - a call for change
- Desistance work with young people
- Publication of Research - Applying the Child First Framework in Youth Justice Services
- Updates from partners

UPDATES FROM THE LONDON ADOLESCENT SAFEGUARDING OVERSIGHT BOARD (LASOB)

The May LASOB meeting focused on a range of ongoing work to strengthen local and regional adolescent safeguarding responses, with updates including:

- Feedback from the Greenwich workshop on the **Philomena Protocol**, which is helping reduce unnecessary police involvement when children go missing from care, and improving relational safeguarding. These training workshops, delivered by the MPS / ALDCS to children's services and care providers, are being rolled out across London to support effective use and understanding of the protocol.
- Reflections on the **Haringey Stop & Search pilot** (see below in the Practice Spotlight item), which is now being tested in every London borough and is bringing a safeguarding lens to the stop and search experience.
- Progress on **Pan-London initiatives**, including:
 - The revised protocol to **reduce the criminalisation of children in care and care leavers**, now extended to care leavers up to age 25 and nearing finalisation for an autumn launch.

The development of the **Violence Exploitation Support Service (VESS)**, offering early intervention through a "single front door" model (see communication materials below)

Updates on the review of the **Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) protocol**, with plans for activities supported by the London Children's Safeguarding Partnership for dissemination and implementation in Sept/Oct.

Development of the **Safeguarding Adolescents in London (SAIL)** digital resource. Look out for this new resource with releases from July onwards.

Violence & Exploitation Support Service (VESS)



The Violence & Exploitation Support Service (VESS) is a pan-London initiative providing holistic, trauma-informed support to young Londoners (aged 25 and under) who are affected by violence and exploitation.

Commissioned by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), VESS brings together leading organisations – including Safer London, St Giles Trust, New Horizon Youth Centre, and Anna Freud – to form an alliance that delivers wraparound support. LIA supports VESS to ensure awareness and appropriate referrals into the service in its interface with LAs and other partner organisations.

Each young person is paired with a dedicated caseworker and surrounded by a team of professionals tailored to their needs, helping ensure the right support is delivered at the right time.

👉 Click on the image below to learn more about how VESS is supporting young people and families across the capital.



For questions on referrals and the service offer please contact referrals@saferlondon.org.uk and to arrange a presentation to your organisation or team(s), please contact veesspresentations@annafreud.org.uk

PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT AT ALDCS 2025

In May we saw the official launch and celebration of Practice Spotlight at the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) London Children's Services Summit 2025.

It was an inspiring day that welcomed over 200 delegates from across each of London's 33 Local Authorities, police and health partners, government and regulators including [Department for Education](#), [Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime \(MOPAC\)](#), [London's Violence Reduction Unit](#), [Metropolitan Police](#), [NHS England](#) and [Ofsted](#) joining us to celebrate practice that is making a difference to the lives and outcomes of children, young people and families in London.

The event, with Practice Spotlight at its centre, was symbolic of the culture of collaboration that is taking root in London.

We are also delighted to confirm the launch of the ****Practice Spotlight Digital Area****, a very special resource that houses all the examples of practice shared and allows stakeholders and partners to directly engage with your many examples of practice and those leading the work! You will find the 'Building Safety for Young Londoners' category of particular interest. The **Haringey Stop and Search Safeguarding** pilot in this category was featured at the ALDCS Summit and has since gone on to win the MJ Award for Innovation in Adults and Children's Services.

Each section includes an introduction that summarises the examples of practice and themes identified by the review panels to support your exploration.

- ➔ You can access all examples of practice through the category that most fits with what you are looking for!
- ➔ Each section includes a helpful introduction that summarises the examples of practice and themes identified by the regional review panels to support you in finding exactly what you're after!
- ➔ You will also find contact details included with each example of practice so that you can make connections with the right person at a local level!

LONDON CHILDREN'S SERVICES PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT



WELCOME – Practice Spotlight shines a light on London Children's Services most innovative and impactful practice that is transforming the lives of children and families. It is this motivation that binds us together and cements our connection to one another and the children, young people and families we serve.

EXPLORE – More than 100 examples of practice were submitted across 9 categories by London's Local Authorities who shared their work that is making the biggest difference to children and families.

▶ Background to Practice Spotlight

1. Racial equity	2. Impact for children with special educational needs and disabilities	3. Building safety for young Londoners
4. Supporting and strengthening the workforce	5. Delivering excellence for care leavers	6. Improving outcomes for children with complex needs who are in care or on the edge of care
7. Delivering together with health services	8. Making data speak for London's children	9. Delivering positive impact through early intervention

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LiiA Together for London's Children
LONDON INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT ALLIANCE

NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM - A CALL FOR CHANGE

This month, we highlight a powerful joint letter from Florence Kroll, Chair of the Association of London Directors of Children's Services, and Kaya Comer-Schwartz, Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime. Addressed to Jess Phillips MP, Minister with responsibility for safeguarding. The letter outlines the urgent need for reform in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for children, drawing on the success of local decision-making pilots in London.

Key Points from the Letter on NRM Reform:

- **Support for Local Decision-Making:** The letter urges the Home Office to fully implement local decision-making for children within the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), based on the success of London's pilot schemes.
- **Faster Outcomes for Children:** Local panels in London made conclusive decisions in an average of 58 days, compared to 637 days through the national Single Competent Authority (SCA).
- **Improved Safeguarding:** Local decision-making has led to better safeguarding outcomes and more integrated, child-centred responses.
- **Concerns Over a Two-Tier System:** Currently, only one-third of children benefit from local panels, leaving the majority in prolonged uncertainty.
- **Call for National Roll-Out:** The authors request a clear timetable and resources for national implementation to avoid continued disparity.
- **Voluntary Sector Involvement:** The letter highlights the value of including voluntary sector practitioners and expanding the list of first responders.

 View the full letter by clicking the image below



National Referral Mechanism

Dear Jess Phillips,

We are writing to you on behalf of London local government to highlight opportunities in relation to the operation of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for the identification of victims of modern slavery. In particular, we would welcome your support in addressing issues in relation to children, drawing on London's experience of running seven local decision-making pilots (across ten local authority areas). Our principal request is that a timetable for full implementation of local decision making for children is shared and that the resources to deliver this improved approach for children are identified.

We welcome the recent announcement of resources to extend the local decision making model to ten further local areas in the coming year. Providing greater coverage by local panels will undoubtedly benefit children in the pilot locations, and we would strongly advocate for the Home Office to extend this benefit to children across the country by rolling out this approach nationally.

DESISTANCE WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

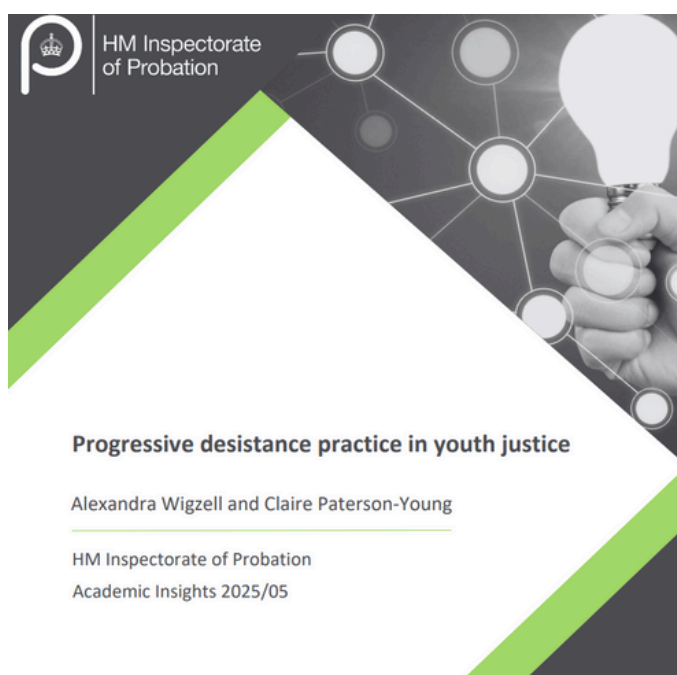
Youth Justice: New Insights into Desistance Practice

This month's featured research comes from HM Inspectorate of Probation's Academic Insights series, focusing on [Progressive Desistance Practice in Youth Justice](#). Authored by Alexandra Wigzell and Claire Paterson-Young, the report challenges traditional adult-centred desistance models and calls for a more nuanced, child-focused approach.

- The authors outline four core principles for effective desistance practice with young people:
- Context matters – Desistance will look different for each child.
- Relationships are key – Especially caring, professional relationships that also support the wellbeing of practitioners.
- It's about social justice – Support structures should avoid stigma and promote inclusion.
- Focus on long-term development – Not just reducing offending but fostering healthy growth.

The report also stresses that adolescence is a unique developmental stage, where identity is still forming and support systems (like carers or youth workers) play a more critical role than in adulthood.

You can read the full report and explore the typology of desistance groups by clicking the link below 🖱️



Context

The relevance of desistance thinking to children's lives is context dependent and will mean quite different things for different children. We illustrated this in relation to the place of identity in children's desistance, demonstrating that it plays a varying role in children's pathways away from crime.

Relationships

Caring professional relationships play a crucial role in supporting children's desistance and should be a principal focus of youth justice policy and practice. Importantly, if we want practitioners to build caring relationships with children, we must also care for our practitioners and managers.

Socio-structural supports

It is clear that desistance is a social justice issue, with non-stigmatising socio-structural support fundamental to facilitating children's pathways away from offending.

Long-term healthy development

If desistance thinking is to be appropriate to youth justice, we advocate an emphasis on children's long-term healthy development, moving beyond a narrow focus on reducing offending. We term this child-focused theorisation *progressive desistance practice*.

PUBLICATION OF RESEARCH - APPLYING THE CHILD FIRST FRAMEWORK IN YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICES

In June the Youth Justice Board published its report, Applying the Child First Framework in Youth Justice Services.




 Read the full report on GOV.UK [here](#)

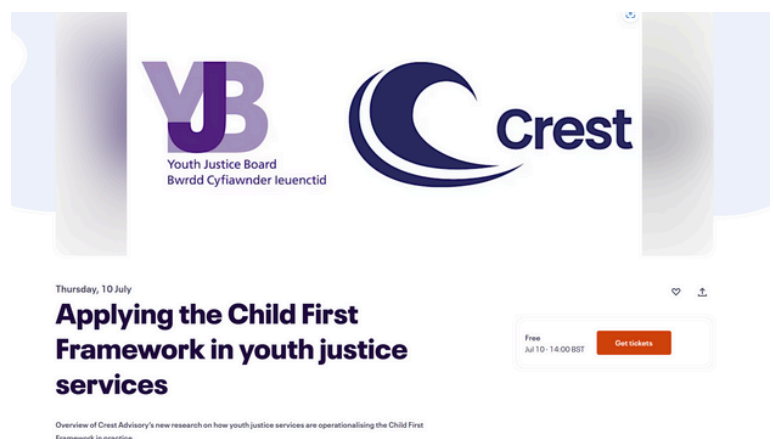
Child First is the guiding principle of the youth justice system in England and Wales. It means seeing children as children, focusing on their rights, needs and potential, and diverting them from the justice system. The Child First framework (YJB, 2022) is a tool created to help professionals make good decisions using the evidence on what works best for children in the justice system to improve outcomes, prevent offending and achieve safer communities with fewer victims.

This report, produced by Crest Advisory, explores how the Child First framework is being understood, applied and implemented across youth justice services in England and Wales. Drawing on research with both children and practitioners, it provides valuable insights into the enablers and barriers to embedding Child First in practice and offers practical recommendations to support its continued implementation.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of how the Child First tenets are being applied and highlights examples of promising practice, as well as areas where further support is needed.

👉 Applying the Child First Framework in Youth Justice Services – join the webinar hosted by YJB and Crest Advisory to explore the research findings in more detail:

 Thursday 10 July 2025
 2:00pm – 3:30pm
 [Register here on Eventbrite.](#)



Thursday, 10 July

Applying the Child First Framework in youth justice services

Overview of Crest Advisory's new research on how youth justice services are operationalising the Child First Framework in practice.

Free
Jul 10 - 14:00 BST

[Get tickets](#)

UPDATES FROM PARTNERS

Looking for more good reads? Check out these great newsletters from our partners – well worth a read if you're interested in what's happening across the field.

📌 This edition shares updates on violence reduction efforts across London, including early intervention initiatives, community-led programmes, youth sector leadership, and new research shaping future delivery.

Highlights include:

- Details on the Prevention Partnership Panels pilot, including how boroughs can get involved
- Year 2 of the MyEnds community-led programme and its impact so far
- Highlights from the Young People's Action Group (YPAG), including new partnerships and recruitment
- News from the Inclusion Charter and the upcoming Inclusive London event
- New research on serious violence and trauma-informed practice shaping future work



📌 This edition covers key updates from across London, including new priorities for policing and community safety, support for victims and vulnerable groups, and upcoming changes to national crime and policing policy.

Highlights include:

- The new Police and Crime Plan 2025–2029
- Funding updates from the London Crime Prevention Fund (LCPF)
- A pan-London support service for survivors of sexual violence
- Early intervention projects for domestic abuse perpetrators
- Read on for the full round-up, insights from recent events, and the latest on partnership work across the capital.



The Youth 2 Adult (Y2A) Hub in Newham is the first of its kind in the UK – a multi-agency hub supporting 18–25-year-olds and 17-year-olds transitioning to probation with a developmentally appropriate and maturity-informed approach.

📌 [Read more about the Y2A Hub](#)

MEMBERS AREA ACCESS

As always, [you can click here to register for access](#) to our dedicated Members Areas.

GET IN TOUCH

Please visit our website: liia.london for more detailed information on each of the ALDCS priorities, or contact the team directly to discuss anything in greater detail.

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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