



## **NAYJ response to the Youth Sentencing Stocktake January 2026**

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### **About the National Association for Youth Justice (NAYJ)<sup>1</sup>**

The NAYJ is the only individual member organisation within England and Wales which campaigns exclusively for the rights of and justice for children in trouble with the law. It seeks to promote the welfare of children in the youth justice system in England and to advocate for child friendly responses where children are suspected of infringing the law.

### **About this response – summary and limitations**

The NAYJ has taken the time to respond to this stocktake at short notice due to the importance of the issues raised and the pressing need for ambitious reform to achieve better outcomes for children in trouble with the law.

#### *Summary*

This response argues for a principled approach to sentencing children that is genuinely child-centred, evidence-based and consistent with the statutory principles to prevent offending and ensure the welfare of the child. It also strongly argues that in order to fulfill these principles, custody should only be used as a last resort and new measures should avoid netwidening and unnecessarily increasing system

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<sup>1</sup> <https://thenayj.org.uk/>

contact, all of which tends to have a particularly negative impact on children from minoritised backgrounds. Research has shown that system contact increases recidivism (McAra and McVie, 2015).

It highlights clear evidence that short custodial sentences are harmful, ineffective, and disruptive, and that their continued use, alongside Detention and Training Orders and mandatory minimum sentences, risks normalising custody and exacerbating disproportionality, particularly for Black and care-experienced children. Reform should therefore focus on raising the custody threshold, abolishing DTOs, and removing mandatory custody, while strengthening proportionate, community-based alternatives. The response cautions against over-criminalisation through intensive or surveillance-led interventions and argues that measures such as YRO ISS and electronic monitoring should remain strictly optional, if used at all. It also stresses the need to modernise Referral Orders, prioritise diversion and out-of-court resolutions, and ensure family support is voluntary and delivered through appropriate services. Overall, sentencing reform must reinforce child distinctiveness, reduce unnecessary intervention, and promote long-term desistance and wellbeing.

Children should not be not disadvantaged compared with adults in any future changes. The Sentencing Act 2026 will create situations where children may serve longer in prison than adults even where they are serving a comparable sentence length. These differences were highlighted in a blog published by the NAYJ in September 2025 and are not repeated here.<sup>2</sup> Equally, it is critical to ensure that what are considered progressive adult changes are not imported wholesale to children, especially as some of the measures will *increase* the total period of time that a person is deprived of their liberty when electronic monitoring is factored in.

### *Limitations*

We note the extremely short timeframe for response that has been provided. This response must be read with that caveat in mind.

We also note the closed nature of the consultation. We strongly urge that Ministry of Justice to conduct an open and wider consultation before taking any proposals forward. In particular, specialist youth justice lawyers should be consulted.

### **Consideration of issues raised in the stocktake**

- **Problem One: Youth Custody may not always be used as a last resort.**

International and UK law is clear that custody for children must be used only as a last resort and for the shortest time necessary. The National Association for Youth Justice strongly agrees with this principle and is concerned that current practice is drifting away from it. Evidence cited in the Stocktake itself shows children being sentenced to custody for low-level, summary, and non-violent offences that could reasonably be managed in the community with appropriate support, supervision, and

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<sup>2</sup> <https://thenayj.org.uk/what-about-children-implications-new-sentencing-bill-children/>

welfare-based intervention. This indicates a failure to apply the statutory seriousness threshold consistently.

Custody is inherently damaging to children. It disrupts education, family relationships, health care, and healthy development, and it increases the risk of further criminalisation rather than promoting desistance. The fact that average sentence lengths are falling while custody is still being imposed suggests not greater proportionality, but rather that deprivation of liberty is being used where it is neither necessary nor lawful.

The disproportionate use of custody for Black children is particularly alarming and reflects systemic inequality that must be addressed urgently. Any reform that aligns youth sentencing more closely with adult frameworks risks further entrenching harm and injustice, rather than strengthening the principle of custody as a genuine last resort, as required by children's rights standards and long-standing evidence.

- **Problem Two: Short sentences are not necessarily effective at reducing reoffending**

The National Association for Youth Justice agrees that short custodial sentences are ineffective and actively harmful for children. Short periods in custody risk normalising imprisonment as a routine response to children's offending, rather than preserving it as an exceptional measure of last resort. This undermines both the statutory framework and children's rights principles.

Short sentences do not allow sufficient time to address the causes of offending and instead produce severe disruption. Children are removed from education, family support, health services, and trusted professionals in their community, often for only a matter of weeks or months, before being returned with weakened support networks and increased instability. This disruption is not neutral as it increases vulnerability and compounds disadvantage, particularly for children already experiencing trauma, exclusion, or poverty.

The reoffending data cited in the Stocktake reinforces this concern. An 81 percent reoffending rate for sentences of six months or less demonstrates that short custody neither rehabilitates nor protects the public. Allowing children to receive short custodial sentences while adults benefit from a presumption of suspension risks entrenching injustice and contradicts the principle that children require greater, not lesser, protection from the harms of imprisonment.

- **Problem Three: Lack of robust, flexible non-custodial sentencing options.**

NAYJ recognises the concern that current community sentencing options may lack flexibility. Referral Orders were introduced over 20 years ago and have remained largely unchanged despite profound shifts in the youth justice landscape during that period. The cohort now receiving Referral Orders is markedly different from that envisaged at their introduction, with children often presenting with more complex needs, prior out-of-court disposals, and greater levels of social and welfare adversity.

This raises legitimate questions about whether Referral Orders, in their current form, consistently provide sufficient structure and support for all children sentenced to them. However, this does not justify a default move towards more intensive criminal justice intervention. Sentencing a child to a Youth Rehabilitation Order at first court appearance risks over-criminalising children for a first offence and undermining long-standing principles of minimum intervention and diversion.

Any reform should therefore focus on strengthening and modernising the Referral Order framework, improving consistency, resourcing, and support, rather than replacing it with more punitive or intrusive disposals. The absence of a 'middle ground' should not result in increased use of custody or the escalation of sanctions, but in child-centred responses that remain proportionate, welfare-led, and rooted in community-based support.

- **Problem Four: Family environment can have a significant impact on a child's rehabilitation, but existing tools to address this are underused by the Courts.**

We agree that family environment is a critical factor in a child's rehabilitation, but caution strongly against responses that remove children from their families as a default solution. Separation from family risks long-term damage to relationships, emotional wellbeing, and identity, and is itself a recognised source of harm for children. Such approaches also risk exacerbating the existing and unacceptable over-representation of looked after children within the criminal justice system, many of whom enter care because of system intervention rather than safeguarding need.

Families who are struggling should not be treated as a criminogenic risk to be managed through sentencing. Where there are serious concerns about harm, neglect, or abuse, established Children's Social Care pathways already exist, including section 47 enquiries, which are specifically designed to assess risk and provide statutory support. These mechanisms are more appropriate than criminal justice disposals for addressing safeguarding concerns.

The decline in Parenting Orders reflects a justified preference for voluntary, trauma-informed engagement. The issue is not the absence of coercive tools, but inconsistent access to high-quality family support across areas. Similarly, while YROs with Intensive Fostering may be appropriate in rare cases, their expansion must not substitute for investment in community-based family support. Any reform should prioritise strengthening universal and targeted family services, not increasing the use of separation or compulsory intervention through sentencing.

### **Other problems**

- **17/18 boundary**

NAYJ considers the 17/18 boundary to be a significant source of unfairness and inconsistency. Where a child offends while under 18, they should be sentenced under the Youth Justice framework, regardless of whether they turn 18 during proceedings. Sentencing should reflect childhood status at the time of the offence, not any administrative delay. The current approach risks exposing children to adult

disposals that are more punitive, less developmentally appropriate, and inconsistent with domestic and international children's rights standards.

Extending youth sentencing provisions based on age at offence would better align with the statutory aims of preventing reoffending and promoting welfare. Careful consideration would need to be given to ensure that those who are being punished for offences committed as children do not suffer adult punishments, while preserving the need for distinct and bespoke services for children

- **Overarching aims for any sentencing reform.**

We agree that the aims set out are necessary and consistent with the statutory framework. Prioritising the prevention of reoffending, safeguarding children's welfare, and treating detention as a genuine last resort reflect both domestic law and the UK's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, these aims must be interpreted and applied in a way that reflects the evidence on what reduces reoffending for children.

Preventing reoffending cannot be achieved through increased use of custody or short custodial sentences, which disrupt education, family relationships, and community support and are associated with the highest reoffending rates. Effective reform must therefore prioritise diversion, proportionate community-based responses, and continuity of support, rather than escalation of punishment.

In addition to the aims identified, sentencing reform should explicitly seek to reduce disproportionality, particularly for Black children and care-experienced children, and to avoid unnecessary criminalisation through overly intensive interventions. Reform should also include a review and modernisation of Referral Orders, which have remained largely unchanged for over two decades despite significant changes in the profile and needs of children sentenced to them. Finally, an essential additional aim should be to ensure that sentencing decisions are developmentally informed and based on a child's age at the time of the offence, not procedural timing. Without these further aims, reform risks reproducing existing harms rather than delivering a system that is fair, effective, and genuinely child centred.

### **Custodial sentencing**

- **Option one: Introduce a presumption against sentences 12 months or less in favour of suspended sentence orders while mirroring the Progression Model.**

While there is an urgent need to ensure children are not disadvantaged in terms of time spent in prison compared with adults, the NAYJ is firmly against the use of suspended sentence orders (SSOs) for children. Sentencing children must remain clearly distinct from sentencing adults, reflecting children's developmental status, reduced culpability, and heightened vulnerability. Yet this proposal would mean transposing an adult sanction, untested with children, onto youth justice.

There are important developmental implications of using SSOs with children that must be considered. Delayed punishment, or the activation of custody following

breach or further offending, may not be meaningfully understood by children, weakening the connection between behaviour and consequence and risking perceptions of unfairness. This undermines legitimacy and may reduce, rather than enhance, engagement and compliance.

There is also a risk that suspended sentences become a mechanism for repackaging punishment rather than reducing it, particularly if courts use them as a default response to perceived risk rather, than as a genuine alternative to custody. Overall, the NAYJ is concerned that the introduction of suspended sentences would risk expanding, rather than shrinking, the reach and impact of punitive intervention in children's lives.

- **Option Two: Raise the custody threshold so that only more serious offences can result in custodial sentences.**

NAYJ supports raising the custody threshold as a principled and effective way to give meaning to the requirement that custody be used only as a last resort for children. Both options 2a and 2b move away from adult sentencing approaches and instead recognise that youth sentencing must be distinct, developmentally informed, and tightly constrained by seriousness and necessity.

Out of the options put forward, Option 2a, limiting custody to offences punishable by life imprisonment, most clearly embeds the principle of last resort in law and would be the most appropriate way forward. It provides a clear and defensible threshold, would significantly reduce the use of custody, and avoids the risks associated with short custodial sentences and suspended sentences, including disruption, normalisation of custody, and net-widening. While it would exclude some serious offences from custodial eligibility, this reflects the long-established evidence that even serious harm does not automatically justify the deprivation of a child's liberty where effective community-based alternatives exist.

Option 2b would still deliver a substantial reduction in custody and has the advantage of aligning with the existing section 250 threshold. However, it continues to permit custody for a wider range of offences and therefore risks retaining practices that have already been shown to be ineffective and damaging for children.

In both options, the removal of mandatory minimum sentences for knife offences is welcomed, as mandatory sentencing is incompatible with child-centred justice and contributes to disproportionality and increasing child vulnerability. Overall, raising the custody threshold is preferable to approaches that repackage punishment or increase conditionality.

- **Option Three: restrict the use of the DTO as a sentencing option.**

We support the removal of the Detention and Training Order as a sentencing option. DTOs are structurally incompatible with the principle that custody should be used only as a last resort and for the shortest time necessary. Their availability for sentences as short as four months has normalised the use of custody for children, particularly for non-violent and lower-level offences, despite clear evidence that short custodial sentences are ineffective and harmful.

There are no features of the DTO that are sufficiently positive or distinctive to justify its retention. The fixed 50:50 custodial and community structure prioritises punishment over welfare and rehabilitation, removes children from education, family, and community support for limited periods, and then returns them with increased instability. This approach is associated with high reoffending rates and entrenches criminalisation rather than supporting desistance. Any perceived benefit of guaranteed community supervision can be more effectively delivered through robust, proportionate community sentences without the damaging disruption of custody.

Removing the DTO would have materially different effects from simply raising the custodial threshold while retaining it. Abolition would eliminate a sentencing route that enables short custody, reducing the risk of courts continuing to rely on familiar custodial disposals. Custody would be reserved for the most serious offences through section 250 sentences, where deprivation of liberty can be more clearly justified. Great care would need to be taken to guard against sentence inflation where custody is considered appropriate by the Court and previously a DTO might have been imposed.

### **A note of caution in the resulting use of custody**

Ambitious reforms that see a significant reduction in the use of custody for the most serious offences would need to be accompanied by careful work to ensure that children in this cohort are provided with appropriate care and support. The long-held promise to close children's prisons should be honoured and those children who detained should be placed in secure children's homes where their needs can be best met (End Child Imprisonment, 2024).

### **Alternatives to Custody**

- **Option one: Make YRO's available to children who plead guilty for a first offence**

We do not support making Youth Rehabilitation Orders routinely available for children who plead guilty to a first offence. While the intention of increasing flexibility is understandable, sentencing a child to a YRO at first appearance risks over-criminalising children and widening the reach and intensity of formal criminal justice intervention at the earliest stage of contact. This is contrary to the statutory aim of preventing reoffending and to the well-established evidence that minimal intervention and diversion are most effective for children.

Introducing YROs for first offences would undermine the ethos of Referral Orders, which are deliberately community-based, participatory, and less formal. This is not a marginal concern: the availability of a more intensive disposal creates a strong risk of up-tariffing, particularly for children perceived as 'complex' or risky, despite this being their first conviction. The inclusion of up to 18 potential requirements further increases the risk of disproportionate and intrusive intervention.

Rather than expanding YRO eligibility, reform should focus on two areas. First, Referral Orders require modernisation to reflect the changed cohort now receiving them, including improvements in criteria, delivery, consistency, resourcing, and

support. In particular, we advocate for the removal of the guilty admission requirement for sentence to a Referral Order. Second, greater emphasis should be placed on widening and strengthening out-of-court resolutions, ensuring prevention and diversion remain the primary focus of youth justice services. Formal sentencing escalation should be the exception, not the default, for children at first court appearance.

- **Option Two: legislate for the Referral Order with Intensive Contracting (ROIC) and add and Electronic Monitoring (EM) requirement.**

We recognise that a Referral Order with Intensive Contracting would be preferable to custody and is consistent with the principle that children should be managed in the community wherever possible. As an alternative to deprivation of liberty, it represents a less harmful and more proportionate response for children for whom custody is considered 'viable'.

However, there is a risk that a statutory ROIC, particularly with electronic monitoring and extended duration, becomes a Youth Rehabilitation Order in all but name. Increased intensity, surveillance, and length raise concerns about net-widening and over-criminalisation, especially at first court appearance. Any such disposal must therefore be tightly limited, clearly exceptional, and demonstrably justified as being in the child's best interests rather than a default escalation.

The role of volunteer panel members also requires careful consideration. The restrictive and technical nature of an ROIC, particularly where electronic monitoring is imposed, may be difficult for volunteers to oversee and explain to children. This raises broader questions about whether volunteer panels are appropriate for high-intensity orders at all. As part of any reform of Referral Orders, the composition, training, and role of panels should be reviewed, including whether decision-making in intensive cases should rest with youth justice professionals.

Overall, while ROIC may align with diversion from custody, its design must avoid replicating the harms of more punitive disposals and should sit within a wider reform of Referral Orders that preserves their participatory, child-centred ethos.

#### **Decision Two: Whether to roll out piloted additional YRO ISS powers**

- **Option One – Roll out the full YRO ISS powers, as piloted, across the country.**

NAYJ has significant concerns about the national rollout of the additional YRO ISS powers. While YRO ISS is clearly preferable to custody, the evidence does not support the conclusion that increasing intensity, duration, and surveillance improves outcomes for children. Research consistently shows that highly intensive and enforcement-heavy community sentences for children are no more effective, and often less effective, than proportionate, relationship-based interventions in reducing reoffending.

The Stocktake itself acknowledges that the pilot produced no clear evidence of benefit. This reflects a wider evidence base indicating that surveillance-focused interventions, including electronic monitoring, may increase technical breaches, disrupt trust, and prioritise compliance over engagement, without addressing the underlying causes of offending. Studies of Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programmes have repeatedly found limited impact on reoffending and a risk of net-widening, particularly for children with complex needs (see Ellis, Pamment & Lewis, 2009).

The extension of the activity requirement to 12 months is also concerning. Longer, more restrictive orders risk over-criminalisation and disengagement, and practitioners' reluctance to use this power suggests it is not developmentally appropriate. Positive practitioner feedback about routine and structure does not constitute evidence of effectiveness, particularly where outcomes for children are unclear.

In this context, rolling out the full YRO ISS powers nationally risks embedding a punitive, surveillance-led model that is inconsistent with child-centred justice and the statutory aim of preventing reoffending. A more proportionate approach would prioritise voluntary engagement, stable relationships, and welfare-led support, rather than expanding high-intensity enforcement in the absence of robust evidence of benefit.

- **Option Two – Only make EMWR an optional additional requirement for the YRO ISS or YRO**

NAYJ does not support the mandatory rollout of the piloted YRO ISS powers. The available evidence does not demonstrate clear benefits in reducing reoffending, and the Stocktake itself recognises that the evaluation produced no robust conclusions. In this context, national implementation as a default or mandatory approach would be premature and risks embedding a surveillance-led model of youth justice that is inconsistent with children's welfare and developmental needs.

If Electronic Whereabouts Monitoring is to be retained at all, it should only be available as an optional requirement, applied sparingly and on an individualised basis. Keeping EMWR optional allows courts to tailor responses to the specific circumstances, risks, and needs of the child, rather than imposing a blanket measure that may be unnecessary, disproportionate, or counterproductive. A mandatory approach risks normalising intrusive monitoring, increasing breach and enforcement activity, and shifting the focus away from support and engagement.

Any use of EMWR must be clearly justified as being in the child's best interests and demonstrably preferable to custody in that individual case. An optional framework better supports proportionality, judicial discretion, and child-centred decision making, and reduces the risk of net-widening and over-criminalisation within the youth justice system.

- **Decision Three: Mandatory minimum sentences**

The National Association for Youth Justice strongly opposes mandatory minimum custodial sentences for children. They are contrary to the welfare principle which requires an individualised approach. Short mandatory custodial sentences, such as the current four-month DTO for repeat knife offences, are highly disruptive and have no credible deterrent effect. They remove children from education, family support, and community services for brief periods, only to return them with increased instability and a heightened risk of reoffending. The evidence consistently shows that such sentences do not reduce violence and instead contribute to further criminalisation.

If a distinct response to knife offences is retained, a Youth Rehabilitation Order with Intensive Supervision and Surveillance would be preferable to custody, provided it is not imposed mandatorily. A mandatory YRO ISS risks replicating the same problems as mandatory custody by prioritising punishment and compliance over individual need. Any YRO ISS must be flexible, proportionate, and tailored to the child's circumstances, maturity, and underlying drivers of behaviour. Blanket requirements, including mandatory electronic monitoring or extended activity periods, risk being counterproductive.

For YRO ISS to function as a credible alternative, significant additional resourcing for Youth Justice Services would be required. Courts are more likely to have confidence in community-based responses where they are properly funded, relational, and capable of addressing violence through education, support, and safeguarding rather than enforcement alone. Removing mandatory custody and investing in tailored, well-resourced community interventions would better serve public protection and the statutory aim of preventing reoffending.

### **Home environment**

- **Option One: Work to expand use of the YRO with IF**

We recognise that a child's home environment can affect their ability to comply with and benefit from community sentences. However, significant caution is required in expanding the use of Youth Rehabilitation Orders with Intensive Fostering. Removing a child from their family, even within a therapeutic framework, risks profound and lasting harm, including damage to identity formation, disruption of family relationships, emotional insecurity, and long-term instability. For many children, enforced separation from family can be as disruptive as custody and may cause significant and irreversible damage to their lives.

Beyond resourcing, there are substantial barriers to the use of YROs with Intensive Fostering. These include the risk of exacerbating the over-representation of care-experienced children in the justice system, inconsistent availability and quality of specialist placements, and the challenge of ensuring continuity in education, health care, and relationships. There is also a risk that intensive fostering is used to compensate for the absence of adequate family support services, rather than

addressing underlying safeguarding or welfare needs through children's social care pathways.

Where concerns about harm, neglect, or family breakdown are significant, existing child protection mechanisms, including statutory children's social care interventions, are more appropriate than sentencing-based solutions. Any expansion of YROs with Intensive Fostering must therefore be strictly limited, genuinely exceptional, and clearly justified as being in the child's best interests, rather than as a default alternative to custody. Priority should instead be given to strengthening family support in the community, preserving relationships wherever possible, and avoiding interventions that may deepen instability and harm in children's lives.

- **Option Two: A call for evidence on working with families of children following conviction**

We support a call for evidence to better understand effective ways of engaging and supporting families following a child's conviction. However, any consideration of greater structure or oversight must recognise the core purpose and expertise of Youth Justice Services. While YJS practitioners routinely work with families as part of supporting the child, family intervention is not, and should not become, their primary function.

Expanding or formalising the role of YJS in delivering family support risks role drift and overlap with children's social care, whose statutory remit, training, and safeguarding responsibilities are specifically designed to address family functioning, parenting capacity, and child protection. Blurring these boundaries may reduce effectiveness, create confusion for families, and weaken accountability between services.

The decline in parenting orders and the preference for voluntary engagement reflect a legitimate concern about coercive interventions and a recognition that trust-based approaches are more effective. Variability in practice is better addressed through improved access to high-quality family support services and clearer referral pathways into social care and early help, rather than increasing enforcement expectations on YJS.

The current evidence base on parental engagement is limited and fragmented, particularly in relation to mandated interventions. A national call for evidence is therefore appropriate, but it should focus on clarifying roles, strengthening multi-agency coordination, and identifying how families can be supported through the right service at the right time, rather than expanding youth justice into areas more properly addressed through children's social care.

- **Option Three: Legislative options to strengthen family engagement**

We have significant concerns about proposals to mandate parenting interventions following a child's conviction. Such approaches risk criminalising families and imposing judgement on parents or carers for behaviour that may arise from a wide range of factors unrelated to parenting capacity, including trauma, exploitation, poverty, exclusion from education, or unmet mental health needs. Treating family

involvement as a default problem risks oversimplifying the causes of children's offending and undermines a child-centred, welfare-based approach.

Mandatory parenting orders or contracts also raise unresolved practical and ethical questions. If parents do not or cannot engage, what are the consequences? The use of fines or enforcement against parents risks extending punishment beyond the child and may exacerbate hardship, particularly for already disadvantaged families. This approach risks damaging trust, reducing engagement, and increasing resistance rather than improving outcomes.

Where families request support, it should be made available promptly and on a voluntary basis, drawing on children's social care, early help, and community services with appropriate expertise. Youth Justice Services should facilitate access to support, not police compliance. A different approach is particularly important for parents of older children, whose autonomy limits parental control, and for families of children involved in serious offending, where safeguarding and welfare concerns are better addressed through statutory social care processes rather than criminal justice mechanisms.

Overall, strengthening family engagement should focus on access to high-quality voluntary support and clear pathways into social care where needed, not on expanding coercive or punitive interventions that risk harming families and entrenching injustice.

### **Additional consideration – reforming criminal records for children**

Any reform of youth sentencing must also consider the operation of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and the point at which offences committed in childhood become spent. Criminal records arising from childhood offending can have long-lasting consequences that extend well beyond the sentence itself, particularly in relation to employment, education, training, and housing. Where convictions or disposals remain disclosable for prolonged periods, they risk undermining the very aim of youth justice by restricting life chances and entrenching disadvantage into adulthood. This is especially concerning given the strong evidence that most children naturally desist from offending as they mature. Sentencing reform that reduces custody and limits unnecessary criminalisation must be accompanied by reform of disclosure and rehabilitation periods, ensuring that children are not permanently marked by childhood behaviour. Without this, even proportionate and welfare-led sentences may continue to produce lifelong harm that is inconsistent with a child-centred justice system and the statutory duty to promote rehabilitation and future desistance.

### **Conclusion**

The NAYJ agrees that ambitious reform is urgently needed but cautions against rushed decisions, without appropriate consultation with those who have expertise in youth justice. Any reform should be firmly grounded in the principles that apply to children and should focus on reducing system contact and avoid net-widening. It is also essential that those children who continue to be given custodial sentences are

provided with the support in appropriate environments: the welcome reduction in the number of children in penal detention in recent years has been accompanied by a deeply concerning deterioration in their safety and well-being in prison.

We would be happy to meet with officials to discuss further.

**The National Association for Youth Justice (NAYJ) Board of Trustees**  
**30 January 2026**

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