

Leicester CYPJS
Summary of Participation practice and children's feedback from
September 2024 – February 2025.

Introduction:

Incorporating the voice of the child into youth justice practice, policy, and processes, is essential for creating a fair and effective system that provides children with meaningful opportunities to participate in shaping pro-social futures. Our service recognises that working collaboratively with children in the development of assessments, plans and delivering interventions, is paramount to effective outcomes and ensuring the safety of children and communities. This approach also promotes 'Child First' principles, specifically the 'collaboration with children' tenet. Collating and using the child's voice further reflects the principles of the Lundy Model. Most of our staff have been trained in the application of the Lundy model and our policies and processes are increasingly underpinned by this model.

This summary identifies current CYPJS practice and initiatives that promote participation and meaningful engagement of children at each phase of service delivery, from assessment, through to implementation and Delivery.

This will be followed by an analysis of children's feedback collated between September 2024 and February 2025.

This report will be made available to the Youth Justice Management Board in May 2025 for comment and recommendations..

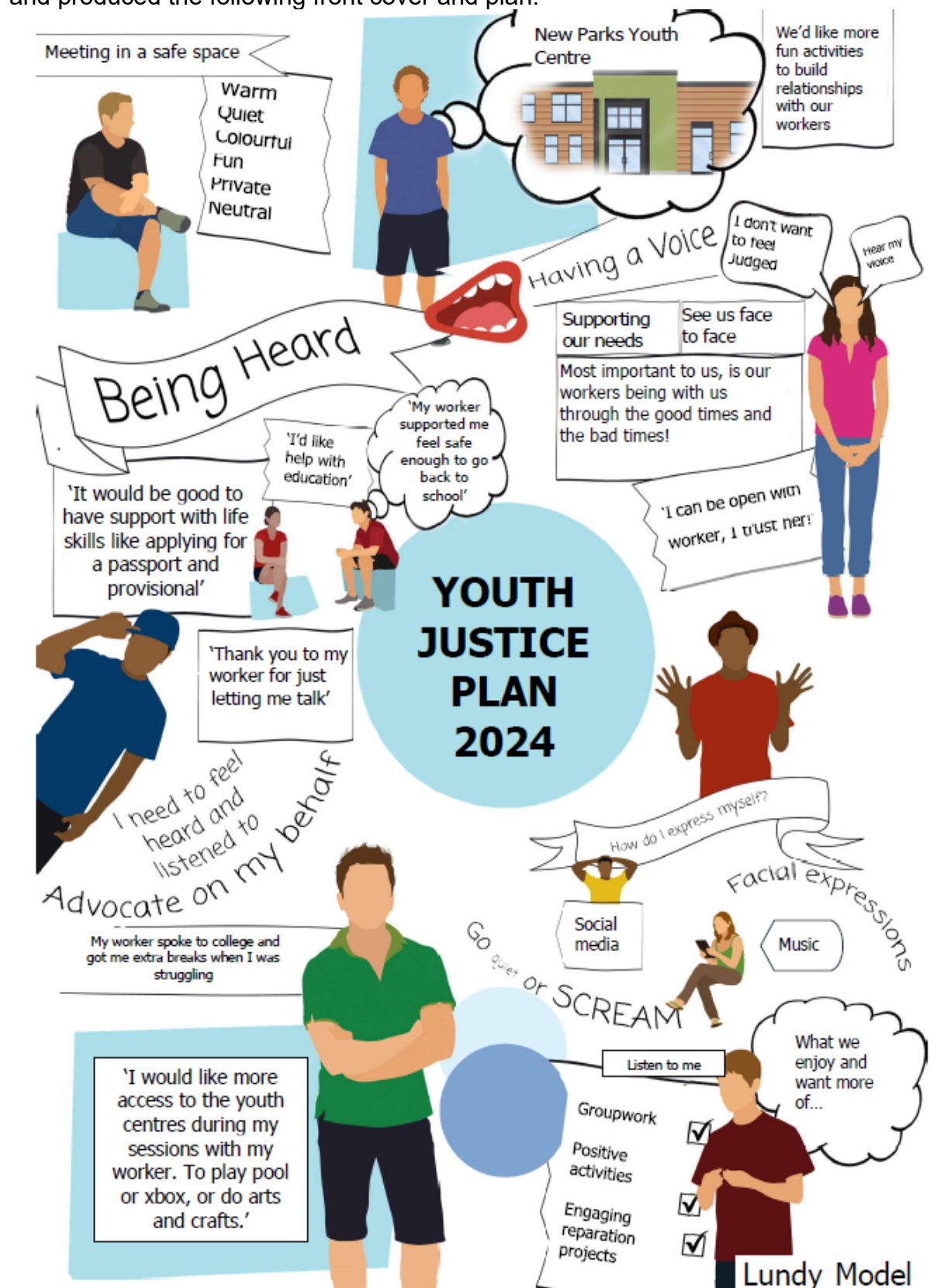
Promoting participation during assessment:

Promoting meaningful participation starts at the assessment phase and from the very outset of our engagement with a child. Our Quality Assurance (QA) activity identifies the consistent use of self-assessments as part of this process to inform practitioners professional judgement. There is flexibility from practitioners in terms of where assessments are undertaken, and this is predominantly in a child's home or community venue close to their home. Audit activity similarly identifies that practitioners gather information from a wide range of sources to inform their assessment which is key in identifying children's diverse needs from the outset, allowing for maximum responsiveness.

Promoting participation during Planning:

The service has made considerable progress in respect of a collaborative approach to planning. 'Co-produced' plans are routinely being completed across the service and there is an expectation of staff to produce plans in this way. 'Child First' principles have been disseminated across the service and a strength – based approach to practice is being embedded. Plans are also increasingly reflecting the importance of relationship building as key to delivering effective interventions and facilitating positive outcomes for the child. A collaborative approach to planning is also visible at a

strategic level. Children attended our 'Yearly Youth Justice Plan youth summit' in 2024 and produced the following front cover and plan:



Children & Young People's Justice Service

Childrens Plan 2024

We want safe spaces:

- Places where we live.
- Places where we can escape to when we need.
- Places where we will have someone to talk to and be listened to.
- A place where I can shout and scream if I need to.
- Spaces with activities that are different, not just sports.
 - We want creative arts and music.
 - We want to express ourselves.
 - Access to the Xbox.
 - Spaces that are just for girls.
 - Friendly faces in the community.

We want positive relationships:

- Regular contact with our workers.
 - A mutual understanding.
- To understand why we are involved with CYPJS, what will happen and what they will be doing.
- Workers should have an excellent understanding of our lives.
- We want to communicate in the way we want to.
- Workers to listen and see things from our point of view.
- Would like to do more activities with the worker.

We want help with life skills:

- How do we get a bank account?
 - How do we buy a house?
- How do we get a driving licence?
 - How do I get a passport?
 - To prepare and cook food.
- Where to go when we need help.
- Registering with doctors and dentists.

We want a better understanding of our emotions:

- More support with ACES when we need them.
- Access to counselling when we need it.
- We want someone who can help us to talk to our parents.
- Adult support when we need it.

Help with education, training, and employment:

- We need someone to speak on our behalf at school.
- We need someone to support us to get into training or college, someone who sticks around.
 - Activities provided by CYPJS to support education.
- Things to do that I want to do (we don't all want to do construction).
 - Feel welcomed at school.
 - Support to follow the right path.
- We need schools to have a better understanding of my needs.

"Just talking about what I did was good, and it helped me reflect on what I did"

"Learning about cannabis use and other drugs, having someone to have to be supportive in many aspects of my life"

"I Learnt to manage my emotions and behaviour and thought about victims"

"I definitely would have carried on carrying knives to protect myself without support"

"Being Listened to helped me most"

"I have a better relationship with my parents and do not see the police as much"

"I was helped to not hang out with the wrong people"

"I was provided with solutions for lots of my problems"

The summit included focus-group activities to capture children's voices, opinions, and experiences of CYPJS to help shape the priorities for the forthcoming year. The feedback from our children explored later in the report suggests that our service has been responsive to what children identified in the plan and their feedback indicates strengths from staff in relation to listening to children, engaging them in positive activities and building strong and trusting relationships with them. We are making substantial progress in fostering a culture of 'You said, we did.'

Promoting participation in Implementation and Delivery:

There are several examples of enabling children's participation via the implementation and delivery of intervention to children. This starts at grass roots level with policies that actively promote meaningful engagement from children.

The service has embedded the 'Enabling compliance' policy in response to non-compliance from children subject to statutory disposals. This sets out the steps for staff at each stage of the enforcement process, in effect lengthening the road to Breach. We are also in the process of firmly embedding 'Child review meetings' for children subject to Youth Rehabilitation Orders (YRO's) which allows the child and the personal and professional network for formally review progress and overcome any obstacles to facilitating positive outcomes for the child. These policies are underpinned by a flexible and responsive approach from our staff to ensure, that diversity issues are fully taken into consideration.

Dedicating time to building a trusting relationship with the child is a strong feature of practice across the service and is increasingly incorporated into intervention plans/ co-produced plans as a stand-alone target. Practitioners are adept at engaging with children in creative ways that are responsive to learning needs. Where children are assessed as suitable for Groupwork, this offer is being steadily grown with on-going delivery of the 'Which Way' Group work programme. an established driving related programme, 'BRAKE' and plans for ongoing development of a CYPJS specific Girls Group from May 2025 onwards.

We have a strong 'advocate' offer and have three youth advocates allocated across the three statutory casework teams to provide additional support to children with a high level of needs and where engagement and compliance is challenging. A mentoring model is also in place for children turning 18 and transitioning to probation. Ingeus, provide a mentor with 'lived experience' to support children with what is often a challenging time in their life and to promote their engagement with the probation service.

Our staff routinely engage in Adverse Children's Experience (ACE's) consultations with our ACE's team to ensure that a trauma informed approach is taken to working with children.

We have some strong examples of a 'You said, we did ' approach to the children we work with. In addition to the Youth Summit that informed the children's plan, we have engaged in other ways of capturing the child's voice, in 2024 we used podcasts to capture the voice of Black male children who wanted to share their experiences of arrest and custody in Leicester City. Their feedback was shared with Leicestershire

Police. Children also shared with us their want and need for positive activities, particularly with animals, sports, and arts. We now offer weekly martial arts provisions, graffiti workshops and have a working relationship with the RSPCA. Children's enjoyment of this was reflected in the feedback forms.

The Service have also facilitated the voice of the child in the recruitment and training process. In 2024, a young person receiving mentoring in the Early Intervention Team facilitated a training activity to new volunteer recruits. The child offered her perspective of what makes a good 'youth justice worker' and provide a question and answer session regarding how to best engage children from her experience and perspective.

Promoting participation at Court:

The National standards self-assessment of Court practice that we completed in 2024 identified some areas of improvement. This included ensuring children's and parents/carers understanding of court outcomes and collating feedback about children and families' experience of Court. In response to this, we have had some recent and exciting developments at Court. The Service now has a Youth advocate present at LYC on Mondays to support children and families before and after hearings, confirm their understanding of Court outcomes and gather feedback about their experience of attending Court via a questionnaire. The intention is that this feedback will be analysed on a quarterly basis and shared at the CYPJS and Court user group to drive improvements in this area.

Magistrates have received training around 'Child First' principles and are open to developing this knowledge about the role of diversion with a further briefing planned for magistrates at the end of March 2025.

Our Referral order co-ordinator is in the planning stage of organising for a group of children to 're-decorate' the waiting room at LYC to make this a more 'child friendly' environment. We are also in the process of gathering the views of children on a 'congratulatory' letter devised by the magistrates which they wish to send to children who have their Order revoked at Court on the grounds of good progress.

Children's feedback:

Children and their parents/carers are encouraged to provide feedback via a questionnaire at the end of their disposal/Order, regardless of whether their engagement is statutory or voluntary.

There are some differences between the questionnaires for children engaging on a voluntary and statutory basis, but the themes are the same; whether children feel supported, helped, were treated fairly and with respect, were listened to, found it easy to get to appointments, had greater confidence in avoiding criminal and anti-social behaviour in the future and how they felt about their overall experience of working with our service. Both end of disposal/Order evaluation forms provide the opportunity for feedback to be provided through a scaling system and through written comments, providing a combination of qualitative and quantitative data.

The Excel icon below provides a link to a summary of the numerical responses to questionnaires from September 2024 – February 2025. on a month by month basis and then six months combined. The feedback presented in table and graph format reflects responses to the scaling/numerical questions in the feedback forms across Early Intervention and statutory disposals. A summary of responses across the individual months is provided as well as a table showing all six months responses combined. Encouragingly, the feedback is positive.



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There is a higher response rate of feedback from children engaged with voluntary intervention. This is to be anticipated given that these children “actively” want to work with the service from the outset and are perhaps more willing to comment on the impact at closure. Nonetheless, the numerical responses overall indicate high levels of satisfaction with service delivery for both voluntary and statutory intervention. Particularly strong themes include children feeling listened to, supported, and feeling as though they have been treated fairly and with respect.

This positive narrative continues with the qualitative (comments) feedback and there was no notable distinction between statutory and voluntary service delivery. I have analysed and presented this data as themes:

- **What children enjoyed and thought helped the most:**

A strong theme was the value of positive working relationships between children and their case managers, prevention officers and youth advocates. Several feedback forms named individual workers as the thing that the child had enjoyed most about working with the service. Some of the children wrote the following about their case managers/prevention officer:

‘Give her a raise ‘love her’....’.xxxxx changed my life. She helped me with everything, and I would not be here without her.’

Another child wrote the following about his engagement with a member of staff from the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE’s) Team: *‘The times with xxxxx helped me so much, I didn’t speak about my childhood until then.’*

These comments really do highlight the importance of the relationship between the child and practitioner and that our staff are skilled in developing meaningful, positive relationships in the most challenging of circumstances.

Being listened to and being treated fairly and with respect was another strong theme that emerged in the children’s comments: *‘I was treated with respect and always listened to.’ ‘I was listened to, and I got to share my ideas/views.’*

Engaging children in positive leisure activities and practical asks was another key theme that emerged in children’s comments about what they enjoyed the most from working with the service. This was evident in responses from early intervention and statutory cases. There were

multiple references to physical exercise. Children cited that they enjoyed going to the gym, playing pool, playing football and tennis. Several responses identified their experience of martial Arts/boxing as one of the most enjoyable activities. Engaging in music based activities was also popular with children and some community work placements - such as working at the farm and the goodies bags for dogs was also referenced. One child was very complimentary about his trip to the local fire station to explore the role of a fire fighter as this was his future aspiration. Several children identified the value of learning new skills and activities with the service. In reference to their community work placement, one child said the following: *'The reparation.... because I was invested in the course, and it provided me with knowledge that can help me with my future.'* *'Talking,' 'eating' and 'chat' were articulated as being enjoyable and one child summed up their experience with the following comment: 'We had a good time in a serious situation.'*

- **What children felt supported with:**

Children identified a wide range of factors that they felt supported with. Feeling listened to and understood was a recurring theme; *'I felt extremely listened to and understood by my case worker.'* Children also identified feeling supported in the following ways:

'Looking at my reasons for losing my temper and thinking why I did it what I could do differently.'

'Getting into trouble, making bad decisions and choosing who I spend my time with.'

'My mental health is good...better.'

'To not get angry easy.'

'Having someone to speak to that also spoke to my parents so that they understood what I was feeling and how they can help with things going on.'

'He gave me such good relationship advice,'

'Meeting in school made it a lot easier for me.'

'Not to associate with bad people.'

'Helped me to learn about my future and how to develop my future without problems.'

'Looking at healthy relationships – what is a red flag and what is a green flag.'

'Knife Crime and support with family'

'We looked at how a victim would feel. I think this is important so that in any similar situation I can think of how the victim would be impacted.'

- **What children did not enjoy/ or felt did not help:**

Encouragingly, there were very few recorded responses to questions around what children did not enjoy. The two children that did respond to this identified that *'talking about what I*

did' was not an enjoyable aspect and another that their gardening activity for community work was neither enjoyable nor helpful.

- **What children would do to improve the service:**

There were similarly very few responses from children about how the service could be improved or what might be done differently. Those who did identify areas for improvement, said the following: *'more activities'... 'quieter environment' and 'workers who speak different languages'.*

It was fabulous to see that one child's response to their experience of the service was *'it was perfect.'*

Participation - Next steps:

Promoting children's participation with the service is an ongoing journey and CYPJS are part of the strategic vision for the Local Authority: *'Our vision is that every Child and Young Person is empowered to know about their right to not only be heard, but to have influence over decisions that are made about them and the services they receive in Leicester City.'* Strategic priorities for CYPJS moving forward are the YJMB and partnership's role in promoting participation, ongoing application of the Lundy Model, a children's CYPJS plan, development of the groupwork offer, embedding Child First approached and child centred policing. Tactically the focus is on co-production of plans, writing to the child, embedding child first practice, child first policing and consistent analysis and use of information from feedback forms. Strategically a quarterly feedback report will be presented to the Board and consideration to reference group for children to feed into the board.