

Two years on: a thank you

Today marks two years since I became the current Chair of the Youth Justice Board. The world certainly feels like a different place, as does the youth justice system. Children in particular have been through a lot and I believe that how we respond to their additional needs now and over the next few years will make all the difference. It's a big challenge, but there is certainly no shortage of commitment from the YJB and our partners.

I'd like to use this opportunity, two years into the role, to thank our various partners for their continued engagement and support. Our unique position as the organisation responsible for oversight of the youth justice system also brings a unique opportunity for us to convene partners across the system.

There are too many organisations and forums, from youth workers to academics, to thank in turn, so I will offer a few examples of the brilliant work our partners have embarked on over the past few months alone.

Last week I chaired a meeting with senior colleagues from across policing organisations, with a very welcome introduction from Minister Atkins. There was clear agreement from all involved that children must not be an 'add on' to policing strategies, and that their specific needs and vulnerabilities can be better addressed with more attention and through continued improvement to how our partnerships work. We all agree that getting this right means children will be better supported resulting in less offending by children, fewer victims and safer communities for all.

I was honoured to attend the Butler Trust awards ceremony in March, which celebrated inspiring and talented staff from across the justice system. Throughout my career I have witnessed a youth justice sector brimming with talented and dedicated people, and this is well documented in the case of Paul Wood from West Sussex Youth Justice Service who was one of the worth winners of a [Butler Trust award](#).

On the topic of youth justice services, the most recent youth [annual report](#) from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation highlighted the commendable performance of youth justice services over the last year. Of those inspected in the last year, two-thirds were rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' and none as 'inadequate'. Although there is a space for improvement, and a role for the YJB in supporting that improvement, this is a huge achievement for services operating within a pandemic.

Lastly, and most importantly, I'd like to shine a light on the incredible work of our [Youth Ambassadors](#) whose expertise and advice has had such a positive influence. They have presented to ministers and senior leaders, influenced the direction of external funding and are currently working on a participation strategy which will reflect the very best of co-creation. I look forward to seeing more of their work, watching our networks grow further and supporting their goal of enabling participation and co-creation across

the youth justice system.

I am more motivated than ever to see further improvements through the remainder of my chairmanship. I remain committed to addressing racial disparity, improving delivery of local youth justice services, supporting children so they are less likely to be exploited and/or to offend, and to see improvements to the secure estate, which includes the opening of a secure school. I am confident that with the continued support of partners we will see significant progress over the coming years.

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