

Impact & Learning Report

2020/21

Standing up for kids
JUST FOR KIDS  LAW





Vision, Mission and Values

OUR VISION

For all children and young people in the UK to have their legal rights and entitlements respected and promoted and their voices heard and valued.

OUR MISSION

We exist to work with and for children and young people to hold those with power to account and fight for wider reform. We do this by providing individual legal representation and advice as well as direct advocacy and youth support; and through strategic litigation, campaigning, and equipping others to work for children's rights.

OUR VALUES

We act with integrity, compassion, respect, and courage. We put these values into practice in our relationships with the children and young people we work with, our colleagues, and our partner organisations. This means:

- **Integrity:** we strive to make Just for Kids Law's vision a reality and we hold ourselves to the highest possible standards;
- **Compassion:** we understand the difficulties that people face and always act with empathy;
- **Respect:** we treat everyone with the same care, professionalism and understanding regardless of their story, experiences or background;
- **Courage:** we stand up for what is right, even in the face of opposition or adversity.

Introduction

Since Just for Kids Law was founded in 2006, innovation and resilience have been central to our approach to supporting, advising, and representing children and young people. We stand by their side to assert their rights and entitlements, listen to their voices when they are not being heard and provide them with the opportunities to build the lives they want to live.

Our work in 2020/21 took place against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, and as our reporting year began in June 2020, the consequences of both the pandemic and the public health restrictions to tackle it were having a major impact on our operations. The initial optimism that disruption would be short-term gave way to the realisation that things would not be the same for some time.

The ‘stay at home’ guidance in place at the beginning of the first Covid-19 lockdown meant that many of our clients were invisible to the services that should have been supporting them – organisations ‘going online’ to maintain their services didn’t reach those without digital access and children and young people found it very difficult to get the support they were entitled to. All of this was taking place against the background of the growing impact of Brexit, an ever more hostile environment for children and young people with insecure immigration status, support services under pressure and increasing levels of child poverty.

Against the landscape of Covid-19 and its impact on our clients, JfKL rose to the challenge and again demonstrated its innovation and resilience. Our advocates supported clients through video and phone calls, and in person when necessary. Our legal team remained in the office, seeing clients and attending court. We recognised the strain this put on staff and provided them with good IT and support for their wellbeing – this was important to mitigate some of the effects of supporting children and young people experiencing trauma when working with them from their own homes. Our policy team worked at pace to ensure children’s rights and entitlements were at the fore in the Government’s response to the pandemic. We also experienced significant changes in leadership during the pandemic, with the departure of our Chief Executive and an interim CEO hired to hold the fort before Louisa McGeehan joined as permanent CEO in February 2021.

While it was a tough year, we also recognise the successes and we are proud that JfKL continued to deliver our services, sometimes with reduced capacity, and that we were always there for the children and young people who rely on us. We built up our hardship fund to provide more emergency support for clients without access to the essentials. We successfully moved the organisation into a new, fit-for-purpose, office which enabled us to allow for social-distancing when staff needed to be there. We had some great successes in our advocacy, legal, and policy work and developed our participation work successfully online. We also learned a lot about what works and where we could make improvements across the organisation. You can read about some of these achievements in this report.

We are deeply grateful for all of the additional help we received from supporters and funders during this time. It really made a difference in allowing us to support the children and young people we worked with. We also thank our staff and our Board for their commitment to our organisation which has enabled us to come through a challenging period well-placed to continue to learn and develop.

Louisa McGeehan, CEO *and*
Anthony Landes, Chair of Trustees



A view from a Just for Kids Law Ambassador

I was first introduced to Just for Kids Law when I was 16. I was going through a very difficult time – I was newly diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, and dealing with family issues and educational difficulties. I found JfKL when I was in college. I was going through a really hard time with my mum, and JfKL helped me to get housed under section 20 of the Children Act (1989) when I was very ill with multiple sclerosis. At the time, I was also interested in becoming a lawyer and JfKL supported me to get involved in a Criminal Law summer programme at UCL. It felt like a match made in heaven because I wanted to progress in law.

One of the best decisions I have ever made was to agree to become a JfKL Ambassador in 2015 because JfKL has been a very huge support system for me. Our group is made up of 12 determined, confident, and courageous young people – some are also campaigners within JfKL. The JfKL Ambassadors, who represent the voice of young people and JfKL clients, meet at least once a month to give feedback to and guide JfKL's work.

We make decisions by:

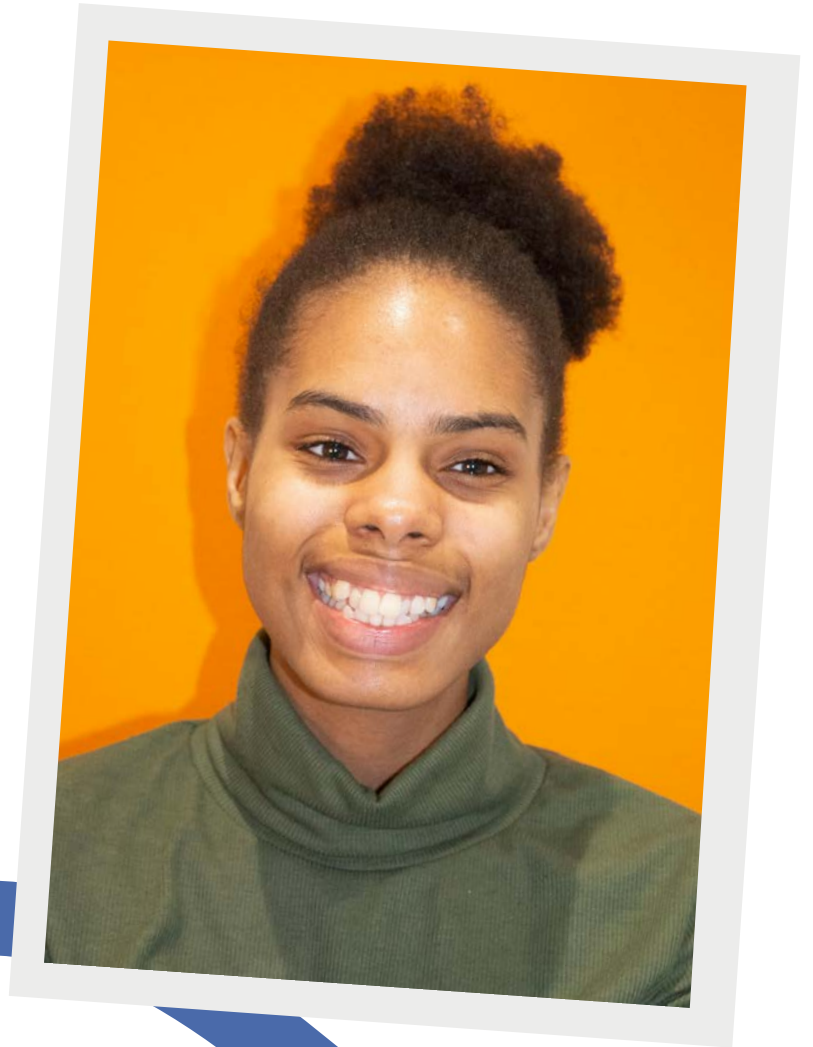
- joining and creating working groups with members of the JfKL Board, including the Trustee Recruitment Working Group;
- supporting Fundraising by creating fundraising bids and attending meetings with potential funders;
- consulting with the Legal, Therapy, Advocacy, Policy and Campaigns, and Youth Projects Teams within JfKL;
- actively taking part in the recruitment of staff; and
- sharing our important perspective and experience of JfKL as a former or current client and young person.

This year, I appreciated our monthly Zoom meetings because I was in self-isolation as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. These were a really positive pick me up which helped me to cope during difficult times! Being an Ambassador has helped me to not only focus

on the difficulties I was going through but also helped to improve my confidence and showed me skills I did not know I had.

My favourite moment in Ambassadors was interviewing the actor/comedian Richard Blackwood – someone who I’ve listened to on the radio and watched on TV since I was a kid. We talked about believing in yourself and having a vision for your future, and he gave me a quote which I live by: “Aspire to inspire before you expire”. And that’s why I’m an Ambassador at JfKL. I feel like a mini-Advocate, fighting on the side of other young people who don’t know about their rights or who need help to get through issues in their lives. It’s nice to know that even when I was going through a tough time, I was able to help make things better for other people.

Brie, Just for Kids Law Ambassador



Why We Exist

Just for Kids Law was co-founded in 2006 by Aika Stephenson and Shauneen Lambe, two criminal lawyers who realised that good quality legal representation alone was not enough to keep children out of the criminal justice system – they had complex issues in their lives that led them to offend and leaving these issues unaddressed kept them trapped in a cycle of reoffending. Today, our innovative and holistic approach combines youth advocacy, legal representation, and youth opportunities support to help young people break negative cycles and move from striving to thriving.

Children and young people come to us with a multitude of issues, from facing homelessness to immigration problems to criminal charges. Without someone on their side, these young people are silenced, unable to access the support they are entitled to, and decisions are made for them not with them. We hear their voices and stand up for their rights, doing our utmost to make sure they get what they need and are treated fairly. We have become an essential support agency for children and young people who have no one else to turn to.

Our legal team has expertise in crime, education and community care, and immigration law. Together with our youth advocates, they consistently achieve positive outcomes such as:

- Avoiding criminal prosecution;
- Preventing school exclusion;

- Attaining regular immigration status;
- Accessing housing or social care support.

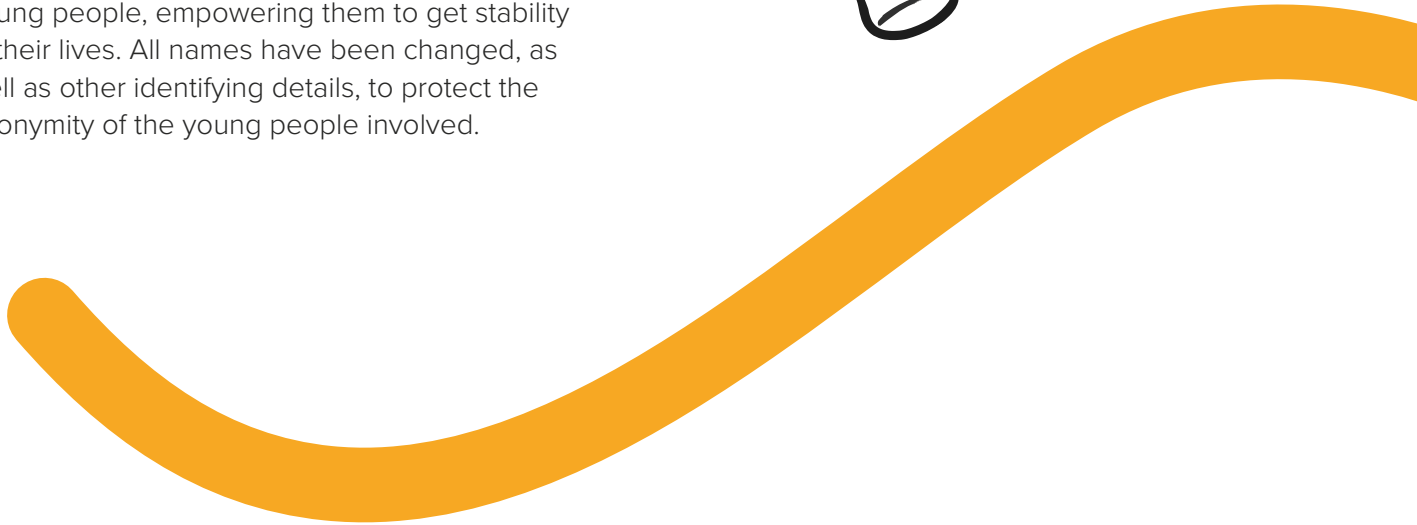
We aim to support our young clients with whatever issues they need help with for however long they need it. Our advocacy, legal support and youth opportunities services are all under one roof. In doing so, we foster consistency in the lives of our clients who have become so used to being passed from service to service.

It's not just the children and young people we support who benefit from the impact of our work. We fight for wider systems change, informed by evidence from our direct casework. We've achieved some incredible reforms that will make a big difference to the lives of many children and young people. Through the Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE), we protect the human rights of children by holding Government

to account and using regional and international human rights mechanisms to ensure that the rights of all children are recognised and realised.

We also believe that children need to be represented by professionals who have the specialist skills necessary to understand their rights and work in a way which recognises the trauma that children may have experienced. The Youth Justice Legal Centre is a centre of excellence in youth justice, providing youth justice professionals with the knowledge and expertise they need to properly represent children with complex life experiences.

The following stories illustrate the strengths and impact of our way of working with children and young people, empowering them to get stability in their lives. All names have been changed, as well as other identifying details, to protect the anonymity of the young people involved.



Jack's story

Jack's parents called the Youth Justice Legal Centre advice line for information after Jack was arrested for criminal damage and possession with intention to supply class A and B drugs. Jack's parents had called the police, concerned for his wellbeing, after he had been acting strangely and broke a mirror by punching it. When attending the family home, the police searched Jack and found a large quantity of drugs he had bought for himself and his friends. After his arrest, a voluntary police interview was arranged.

Jack's parents were initially hesitant about him exercising his right to have a solicitor present at interview. However, the advice line team convinced them that it was really important that Jack was represented by a solicitor, specifically a youth justice specialist. As Jack was 17, the YJLC team were also able to advise the family on the implications of Jack turning 18 between offence and conviction. The family were invited to the launch of our legal guide on turning 18 in the criminal justice system and were given relevant information. On our advice, the police are now looking into dealing with the matter by way of an out of court disposal, considering the disproportionate impact a decision to prosecute would have on Jack with his 18th birthday soon approaching.



Zoe's story

Zoe approached us when she was 17 after being asked to leave the family home by her mum following a physical altercation. Zoe was staying with her Nan and sleeping on the sofa in the living room surrounded by her things in boxes due to a lack of space. She desperately needed her own space. Her mum had made it clear that she would not let her return and her Nan was struggling to support her.

Zoe had contacted her social worker previously to ask for support on a number of occasions, but the social worker encouraged her to stay at her Nan's, despite this being unsuitable, until she turned 18 so she could seek private accommodation.

Our legal team took on Zoe's case and issued an urgent pre-action protocol (PAP) letter in advance of her turning 18 to protect her rights. Zoe was accommodated by the local authority within a week. We then sent further PAP correspondence and the following day, the local authority accepted that Zoe was a looked after child and had been accommodated under section 20. They also accepted that this should have happened previously when she asked her social worker for support months earlier. This means that Zoe will qualify for leaving care support, meaning she will be given a personal adviser, pathway plan, and care grants or bursaries.



Rhianna's story

Rhianna self-referred to JfKL in 2015, initially seeking legal advice that related to her immigration status. Rhianna joined our Let Us Learn group (now We Belong) which was calling on universities to set up scholarships or bursaries to support young migrants to continue learning and pursue educational and career ambitions. Let Us Learn encouraged her to understand the barriers she was facing when trying to access third level education and our Youth Opportunities Worker supported Rhianna to access a recently created bursary – and Rhianna's application was successful.

This was one step closer to Rhianna achieving her goal of a career within the finance sector.

Whilst awaiting her visa which would grant her the right to work in the UK, and during the pandemic, Rhianna attended online workshops in our "How to Survive Lockdown" series facilitated by our Youth Opportunities Worker and Youth Engagement and Campaigns Organiser with sessions that included "Building Resilience" and "Building Positive Mental Health". Rhianna has always challenged herself to take on leadership responsibilities during workshops by co-facilitating an activity or game and has benefited from these opportunities to grow in confidence.

Once Rhianna's visa arrived, she created a CV with the Youth Opportunities Worker that she was proud of and that contained experiences and opportunities she had through engaging with JfKL.

Our Youth Opportunities team provided mock interviews and presentation feedback, as well as participating in a Dress for Success appointment, and one-to-one calls on the days when interviews were quite tough. Rhianna was subsequently offered and accepted a permanent position.

Phoebe's story

Phoebe's dad contacted our Youth Justice Legal Centre advice line after an incident at school in which Phoebe (aged 15) had allegedly lashed out at a teacher. Phoebe, who has a diagnosis of autism, had been excluded from school as a result of the incident. The school's police liaison officer had also asked her to sign a community resolution order and threatened an interview under caution at the police station if she did not sign.

Our youth justice lawyer took full instructions from the family and liaised with both the police and school about the situation. She also shared resources from our School Exclusions Hub with the family, helping them to understand their rights and take steps to request and review their records. With the guidance provided on the Hub, the family were able to successfully challenge Phoebe's exclusion and the school governors' discipline panel overturned the headmaster's decision.

Despite our representations, the police insisted on interviewing Phoebe. However, one of our youth specialist criminal solicitors attended to represent her and, ultimately, the police decided to take no further action.



Omer's story

Omer arrived in the UK as an unaccompanied minor from Afghanistan, aged 16. He fled Afghanistan after witnessing his father and brother being killed by the Taliban.

He was taken into care by one local authority outside London (LA1) but was housed in a different inner London borough (LA2), where he lived with a foster carer before he went into moving on accommodation at age 18 as a care leaver. When he turned 21, he was asked to leave his moving on accommodation but LA2 would only offer him shared accommodation in LA1 where he had never lived and had no social networks. Since he had nowhere to stay in LA2, he became street homeless. His mental health deteriorated, and he wasn't accessing support from his GP or from specialist mental health services. He was taking medication for PTSD symptoms and pain, and he overdosed on his medication twice. Things felt hopeless and he didn't know where to turn for help. He sought support from his Leaving Care team in LA1, but they were unsupportive and the relationship broke down.

He got in touch with Just for Kids Law, having heard about us from a friend, and was allocated an Advocate. Through our hardship fund, he was found a safe place to sleep over the weekend. With significant advocacy, combined with legal support from an external housing solicitor, LA2 eventually accepted a housing duty and provided him a one-bedroom flat with a minimum ten-year tenancy. His Advocate also supported him to access help for his physical and mental health through his GP and his local mental health team.

Because of the breakdown in relationship with his Leaving Care team in LA1, his Advocate supported him to request a new personal adviser and build a positive relationship with this person who will support him until he is 25.

Additionally, his Advocate supported him to secure limited capability to work with the Job Centre, on the basis of his ongoing physical and mental health difficulties, improving his financial position through increased universal credit payments. He has also supported Omer to apply for Personal Independence Payments – additional money to help with everyday life.

Lastly, his Advocate engaged our internal Immigration Lawyer to apply for his indefinite leave to remain, and internal legal representation to initiate a family reunion application enabling his mother and sister to join him in the UK. He and his Advocate are planning for their work to end this year, once they've requested a Key Worker from his Leaving Care Team, and Omer accesses internal Youth Opportunities support to resume his college studies.

“My Advocate and others at JfKL really helped me ... before there was no hope. I was living in darkness and couldn't see any light, nothing positive. They helped me get the support I should get from social services. Other services were talking, but not doing things. When I met my Advocate for the first time, I knew he would work at maximum energy to support me. It was the first time I could feel people really trying their best for me. There's been a lot of change. I feel safer. I have a home where I feel at home, help with my mental health. Everything feels positive. I am very grateful.”

(Omer, age 23).





Our Casework Data

This year, we worked with almost the same number of children and young people as in 2019/20. However, we have seen a worrying increase in mental health concerns and crises amongst the children and young people supported by our advocacy team and this, combined with some statutory services being harder to access, has made it quite difficult to end work with clients and help young people move on from our services. This has also meant that we have had to limit the number of new clients we take on in some areas, so we have also seen the age profile of our clients increase.

We worked with 785 children and young people, mainly in 31 London boroughs, through our casework providing youth advocacy, legal advice and representation, participation and youth opportunities support.

We supported these children and young people to address a range of needs relating to housing, social care, education, immigration, and criminal justice issues, working on 1,297 individual cases. Around 20% of these cases were one-off advice.

785*
Children and young people

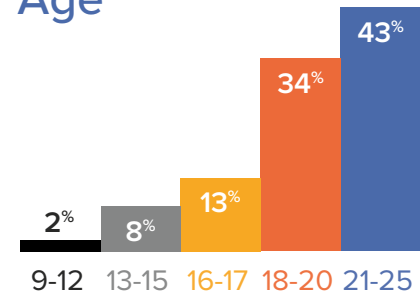


1,297
Individual cases

Gender identity



Age



* Note that each young person we work with may have more than one case relating to different needs they have.

Ethnicity

82%*
of clients were
from Black, Asian
and minority ethnic
backgrounds

Black African	28%
Black British	16%
White British	13%
Black Caribbean	10%
Other ethnic group	6%
Other white including Irish and Irish Traveller	5%
Mixed white and Black Caribbean	4%
Other mixed/multiple ethnic background	3%
Asian Pakistani	3%
Other Asian background	4%
Asian Indian	2%
Asian Bangladeshi	1%
Other Black background	1%
Mixed White and Black African	1%
North African/Maghreb	1%
South or Central Latin American	1%
Arab (Middle East)	1%

*based on young people who tell us rather than all young people we work with

Involvement with children's services*



Around 60% of our clients are in care, care leavers, or have had some involvement with children's services.



For advocacy clients, almost 80% are in care, care leavers, or have had some involvement with children's services.

Disability



More than a quarter*
of our clients have some
form of disability

The issues and areas where we offer support



Crime

37%



Education and training

21%



Housing and homelessness (18+)

13%



Community care

10%



Participation

6%



Immigration

4%



Employment

3%



Financial position

3%



Health

2%



Family

1%

Our client survey

To understand our clients' experience of Just for Kids Law and the impact of our work, we regularly survey our clients against three measures.

In a survey carried out in May 2021:



90%

felt that their situation had improved since being supported by JfKL.



93%

felt more confident about facing problems since having help from JfKL.



87%

reported knowing more about their rights and entitlements since working with JfKL.

Supporting Young People

Strategic Aim: Secure positive outcomes for individual children and young people

Despite disruption to the courts and staff illness, our legal team continued to provide advice and representation to children and young people. Following an audit of our legal aid work, we achieved Specialist Quality Mark accreditation with the auditors remarking on the 'impressive scope' of our work.

We strengthened the leadership of our programmes and participation work with the appointment of a new director and expanded our advocacy team to include a second manager with case-holding capacity to develop our holistic casework offer and further define our model. This enabled us to better support our staff in working with children and young people against the challenging backdrop of the pandemic.

We also developed our youth opportunities offer to provide a variety of ways to support a larger number of children and young people, ranging from bitesize support to work experience and opportunities to contribute to youth interview panels.

We achieved numerous successes for children and young people in 2020/21 including:

- Having criminal cases discontinued or dealt with through out-of-court disposals and achieving acquittals at trial, helping children avoid the life-long consequences of a conviction as an adult for incidents that took place when they were a child;
- Advocating successfully against the prosecution of victims of trafficking and exploitation;
- Supporting children to oppose school exclusions and remain in education with their entitlements respected and their educational needs met;
- Securing housing for homeless children and young people, and enabling young people leaving care to receive their entitlement to a safe home;
- Advocating for young people who should have been treated as looked after children to obtain the support they were entitled to and achieve the compensation they were due;

- Supporting care-experienced young parents to engage with children’s services to demonstrate their capability to keep their children safe, despite their own negative experiences;
- Obtaining secure immigration status for young migrants coming to the UK as children, enabling many to become British citizens;
- Advising and training professionals working with children and young people to develop the skills to properly represent children involved with the youth justice system;
- Involving young people in workshops and activities to develop skills that would support them in achieving employment and accessing higher education;
- Ensuring children and young people access their right to practical, financial, and housing support from children’s services and care leaving teams, and are heard in decision-making processes that impact their lives.



Fighting for Change

Strategic Aim: Secure changes to the legal, policy and practice environment for children and young people

It's not just the children and young people we work with directly who benefit from the impact of our work. We fight for wider change that affects children and young people across the UK, taking evidence from our casework as a starting point.

Key successes in 2020/21 included:

CHILDREN ON REMAND

We achieved the removal of children from the Covid-19 regulations concerning custody time limits. For the year ending March 2021, there was an average of **560 children in prison** with **40% of these on remand**. Without our intervention, children could have spent an extra two months on remand because of delays in the courts. We ensured that the changes introduced by statutory instrument were retrospective, which meant that children who had been remanded in the Crown Court since the regulations came in would have their custody time limit automatically reduced and their trials re-listed to come within the previous limit of 182 days. This success was particularly significant because the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is clear that children should only be detained as a last resort and for

the shortest possible time. The use of remand is also a significant contributory factor in the disproportionate number of Black and minority ethnic children in prison, which we continue to raise as a systemic problem in the youth justice system.

COVID SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS REGULATIONS

We achieved substantial changes to new regulations which changed the school exclusions challenge process during Covid-19 through a combination of legal and policy work. In the last full year prior to the pandemic (2018/19), there were almost **7,900 permanent exclusions** and almost **440,000 fixed period exclusions**. The changes were likely to impact children with special educational needs or disabilities in particular, but we were able to introduce new safeguards and have the most damaging parts of the regulations dropped. We were also pleased to see that new guidance from the Department for Education on going back to school explicitly states that schools should find alternatives to discipline and not look to exclude young people whose behaviour results from trauma and a lack of support in lockdown.

This is a direct result of concerns we and others in the sector raised in joint briefings and meetings with officials.

TURNING 18

We continued to campaign on the issue of turning 18 between the commission of an offence and the completion of their case, which has significant negative consequences for around **1,400 children** a year, including loss of anonymity and longer rehabilitation periods. Our work has resulted in growing awareness and support including by The Law Society and, following our written and oral evidence, the Parliamentary Justice Select Committee. We worked with Conservative MP Rob Butler to introduce a Ten-Minute Rule Bill on this issue, which secured cross-party support and raised the issue with the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice as part of discussions on the recently introduced Police, Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill. We will use the Bill as an opportunity to raise the issue further in parliament and garner further support from MPs and Peers.

PROMOTING AND PROTECTING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Hosting the Children's Rights Alliance for England, we monitor and campaign for the rights of **12 million children**. This was an important year for this work as it saw the start of the next examination of the UK government on how well it is respecting children's rights. As part of this process, the civil society report we drafted was

endorsed by **90 organisations** - an increase from 76 endorsements of our last report to the UN Committee. **67% of the UN's List of Issues Prior to Reporting** partially or wholly reflected the suggested questions in our submission.

SUMMARY

- Removal of children from the Covid-19 custody time limits regulations which extended how long someone could spend on remand
- Secured changes to new regulations which changed the school exclusions challenge process during Covid-19 through a combination of legal and policy work
- Campaigning on the issue of children turning 18 between the commission of an offence and the completion of their case
- 67% of the UN's List of Issues Prior to Reporting partially or wholly reflected the suggested questions in our submission

Participation and Youth Engagement

Strategic Aim: Developing an organisation in which youth participation is central to all our activities

Despite the challenges to be overcome in working directly with children and young people as a result of Covid-19, we made good progress in realising the ambition underpinning this strategic aim in 2020/21. The arrival of a new Director of Programmes and Participation gave this work a fresh impetus and we ended the year with good foundations in place on which to build further in the year ahead.

Key successes in 2020/21 included:

- Launching our organisation-wide participation strategy, which set out our definition and framework for participation at JfKL to support meaningful and consistent participation practice;
- Involving children and young people in influencing our programmes, policies, working practices, and the external policy/ practice environment through Government consultations, parliamentary events, and ministerial meetings around issues affecting children and young people excluded from school, care leavers, young people within the youth justice system, and housing issues;
- Developing our model for youth campaigning and supporting young campaigners to engage with the media and produce films and podcasts with expertise and support from our Communications Officer and our Youth Engagement & Campaigns Organiser;
- Facilitating and supporting the JfKL school exclusions steering group through which young people are planning and developing campaigning activity informed by their personal experiences of being excluded from school;
- Empowering young people to contribute their experiences to the Independent Care Review;
- Facilitating young people's involvement in YJLC training for legal professionals;
- Planning to launch a new youth campaign on housing rights for care leavers;
- Our Youth Engagement and Participation Manager developing and rolling out a Participation Resource Bank of policies, guidance, and templates enabling participation practice to be undertaken by all staff.



Creating a Strong Organisation

Strategic Aim: Maintain and develop a robust organisation using our strengths to maximum impact

Our work achieving individual outcomes for children and young people and campaigning for systemic change is under-pinned by a central team managing enquiries and referrals, fundraising and finance, recruitment and employment, and IT and communication. This all contributes to achieving our strategic aims.

Despite the challenges of maintaining operations and supporting staff during the pandemic, we made significant progress in strengthening our organisation.

Key successes in 2020/21 included:

- Moving into our first dedicated and fit-for-purpose office at Crystal Wharf in Islington in August 2020, following a successful but complicated move from our previous office. While managing the usual logistical challenges of an office move, a Covid-19 risk assessment was completed so that the new office was safe to use by both clients and staff. The new office now provides a professional and welcoming environment as a firm foundation for our work;

- Providing staff with new IT equipment which proved invaluable when, inevitably, our working patterns were disrupted by the pandemic;
- Managing significant changes in leadership during this time. During the lockdown period, we said goodbye to our Chief Executive, Enver Solomon, welcomed an interim Chief Executive, Frances Mapstone, and then our new permanent Chief Executive, Louisa McGeehan – the senior leadership team demonstrated great resilience in supporting a smooth transition while maintaining business as usual throughout;
- Progressing work to review our policies and processes and engaging a specialist HR advice provider to support developments in our people management;
- Investing in developing the skills of our manager cohort to enable them to grow in their roles and develop into the multi-skilled leaders the organisation needs them to be;

- Developing our communications capacity with the appointment of a new Communications Officer resulting in significant improvements to our web presence and a greater social media reach. Our work continued to attract media attention, particularly in relation to the impact of Covid-19 measures on disadvantaged children and our significant successes in strategic litigation.

We have benefited from the generosity of our funders and supporters who enabled us to support our staff and the children and young people we worked with during a difficult time. We are deeply grateful for all their support and understanding which enabled us to achieve the work outlined in this report.



Learning Matters to Us

As well as celebrating our successes in a challenging year, we also reflected on areas where we could do better and set ourselves some challenges for the year ahead.

Although we understood the reasons behind this, we recognised that the age profile of our clients had increased – 77% of clients are now young people aged 18 - 25 years old. There is more we need to do in 2021/22 to help clients who have been supported by us for some time to move on in a managed and supportive way so that we can create capacity for working with more clients at the younger end of our age range.

One key theme arising out of the pandemic was the increase in need for mental health support for young people that was not being met by statutory services. We therefore sought funding to establish a dedicated therapeutic service to meet the needs of our clients in the right timescales for them. We succeeded in obtaining funding from Permira to establish a pilot in-house therapeutic service and entered into a partnership with The Children's Society to provide it. We look forward to reporting the outcomes from this in our next report.

In 2020/21, we integrated an initial set of advocacy outcomes into Apricot, captured at case closure, and began scoping complementary

methods for reflecting on and capturing the impact of our advocacy, youth opportunities, and participatory work with children and young people. We planned a re-design of our Apricot case recording system to be implemented next year, that will improve recording of our direct work, management oversight and reporting functions, and better enable us to draw out practice trends to inform our policy and campaigns work.

We engaged NCVO to undertake an external evaluation of our holistic casework offer to strengthen our understanding of how our way of working makes a difference to the children and young people we work with. We want to know how elements of our model contribute to making a difference and whether our model is particularly effective or less effective depending on the circumstances of individual clients. This will involve developing a theory of change for our casework and in-depth interviews with clients and staff. We will use these evaluation findings to inform our practice and to influence the outcomes we measure to be better able to demonstrate the impact of our unique model.

One real positive arising out of the need to work remotely was the success of online events, enabling us to reach a wider audience and recruit a better range of speakers and participants, so we plan to continue running events online as we emerge from the pandemic.

After benefiting from great generosity from funders during the Covid-19 pandemic, we experienced changes to our fundraising landscape in its aftermath with greater challenges in raising the income we need to maintain our services without statutory funding. As a result, we recognised the need for additional fundraising resource at a senior level to enable us to adapt and maximise our opportunities.

We also recognised the work needed to restore and boost our organisational culture after a long period of disruption and significant change. Like many charities, we engaged staff in discussion around the implications of the Black Lives Matter movement and we recognised the need to reflect on our own record as an organisation. Throughout all our work with children and young people, we have been actively challenging and working to tackle racism - for example, our work on disproportionality in the criminal justice system and school exclusions. However, we realised that as a relatively young organisation with limited resources, we had not given the same attention to our internal culture and systems. We recognised that in some areas we were strong but in others we had some work to do to live up to the high standards we set ourselves.

In February 2021, we created an equality, diversity and inclusion sub-committee of our Board to give this a focus at the highest level of our governance, chaired by our Treasurer and including staff representatives from across the organisation along with two independent members. We aim to complete this work in 2021/22 to put in place an equality, diversity and inclusion policy and implementation plan to drive our work in this area so that we become as strong on addressing racism and inequality internally as we are externally.

These areas for improvement will be taken further during the year ahead as we are creating our new strategic plan for June 2022 and beyond.



Our funds

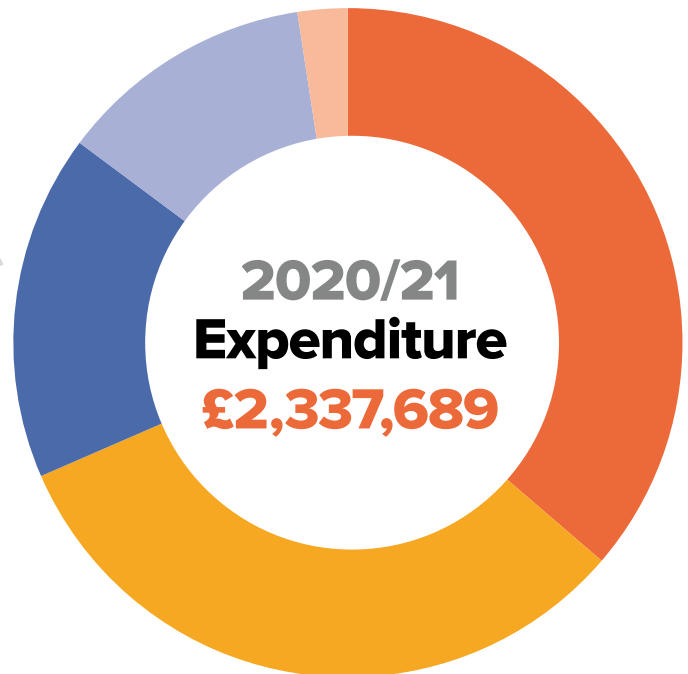


INCOME BREAKDOWN

● Trusts and Foundations	£1,756,983
● Donations	£100,558
● National Lottery Community Fund.....	£196,064
● Corporates	£102,893
● Legal Income.....	£367,675
● Training and other income.....	£50,625

EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN

● Central.....	£848,561
● Legal	£752,200
● Programmes and participation	£390,701
● Policy and campaigns	£289,678
● Fundraising costs.....	£56,550





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Just for Kids Law
Unit 2, Crystal Wharf
35 Graham Street, London, N1 8GJ
T: 020 3174 2279
www.justforkidslaw.org
enquiries@justforkidslaw.org

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