



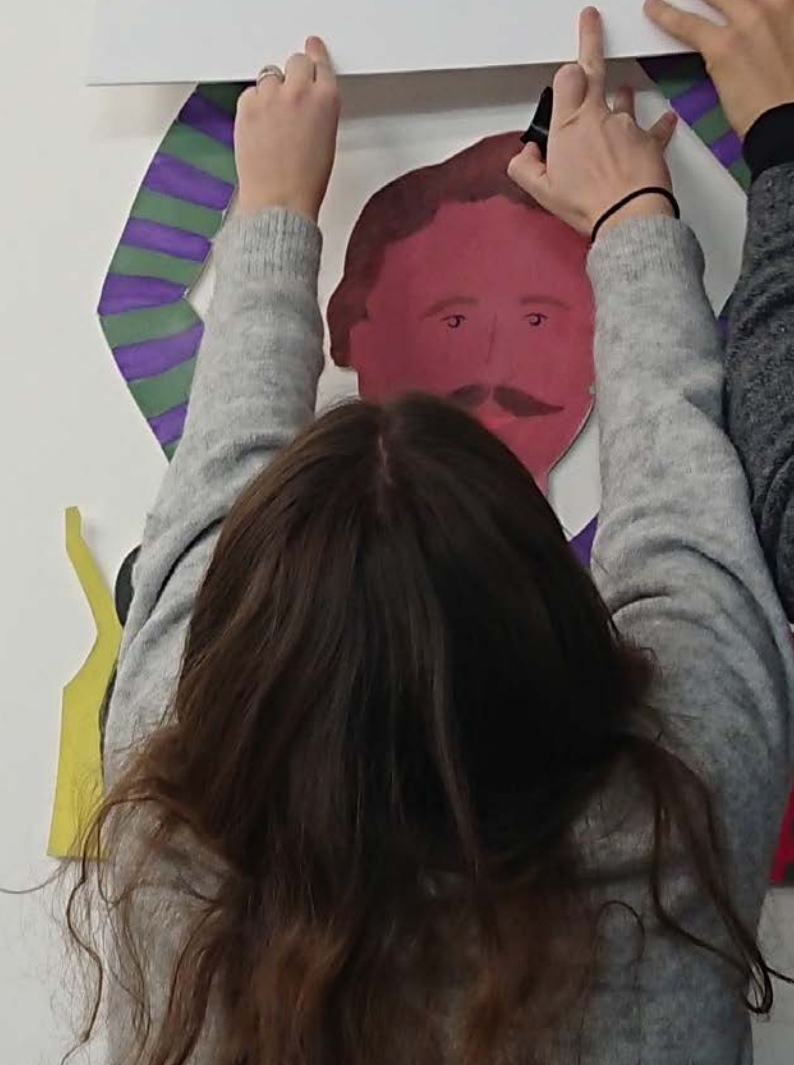
# Impact and Learning Report 2019/20

Standing up for kids  
**JUST FOR KIDS**



# COMPASSION

WE UNDERSTAND THE DIFFICULTIES THAT  
PEOPLE FACE AND ALWAYS ACT WITH  
EMPATHY



# 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.



# Why We Exist

**There are many ways that a child or young person can find themselves in trouble and not know where to turn. They might be excluded from school, facing homelessness, in need of support from social services, facing financial hardship or in trouble with the police having been exploited by drug traffickers. They end up navigating a world where it feels nobody wants to listen to them or hear them. They desperately need somebody to work with and for them, to stand up for their rights and hold those with power to account. That's what we do at Just for Kids Law.**

Since we were founded in 2006, we have developed a unique model of casework. It is holistic, both in the way that it provides support for multiple areas of need that a young person may have, and in the way that children and young people are supported by a team of youth advocates, lawyers and youth opportunities workers who are co-located to provide a joined-up package of help. We take evidence from this casework to fight for wider

reform, bringing the voices of young people to the fore, challenging the government in the courts and lobbying in Westminster and Whitehall with a clear focus on children and young people's rights.

The fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic has been devastating for children and young people. There are increasing numbers in and on the edge of the care system, being excluded from education, facing homelessness and being criminally exploited. Combined with rising deprivation and public services under greater pressure, our work is more important than ever.

The following stories illustrate the unique benefits of our casework model, which empowers the children and young people we work with, helping them stabilise their lives. All names have been changed, as well as other identifying details, to protect the anonymity of the young people involved.

# Eliot

## *A victim of county lines drugs trafficking excluded from school*

16-year-old Eliot lived in London. He had a hugely difficult childhood having been the victim of severe domestic violence which resulted in multiple hospitalisations. He later fell victim to county lines drugs trafficking and we referred him to the National Referral Mechanism which is a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking and ensuring they receive the appropriate protection and support. He received a positive conclusive grounds decision and was moved out of London to live with his grandmother for his safety.

Unfortunately, after only a month Eliot was permanently excluded. Initially, Eliot was referred to the local Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) where he was at risk of being trafficked again. This PRU was the only one in the local authority's region, but it was in a city as opposed to the village Eliot had moved to. Being in a city, it would likely expose Eliot to the same influences that had pushed him into exploitation in London. Our lawyers managed to successfully argue that the local authority should fund Eliot's attendance at a local free school to keep him out of danger. This free school has an amazing therapeutic curriculum and since joining Eliot has been able to get involved with cookery and artistic skills classes.

# Jack

*A young man forced out of his family home with nowhere to turn.*

Jack was 19 years old when he approached Just for Kids Law. He had mental health difficulties, had been known to children's services since he was very young and had a very difficult relationship with his parents. When he turned 17, he was asked to leave the family home forever. He approached the local authority's housing department (unaware of the difference between children's services and housing services). Housing services accommodated Jack under the Housing Act in an unregulated placement – which is not regulated or checked by official inspector – and provided him with a £25 food voucher.

Jack was never referred to children's services, despite the fact he was a child at the time and was not provided with any other support. He had no choice but to start working, despite the impact on his benefits, which he struggled to manage, resulting in him accruing rent arrears. He was at risk of eviction when he approached us for help. Our legal team argued that in failing to assess his needs under the Children's Act 1989 and provide him with accommodation as a looked after child, the local authority acted unlawfully and that it should now treat him as if he were a care leaver, and provide him with leaving care services to assist his transition into young adulthood. Our challenge was successful, and Jack is now being provided with leaving care services and most of his rent arrears have been cleared.

# Danielle

## *A young migrant fighting for her rights*

We first supported Danielle shortly after our immigration legal team was established in 2017. She had come to the UK as a child in 2008. Our immigration lawyer supported her to make an application for limited leave to remain which was refused by the Home Office. The Home Office then certified Danielle's case because they believed it to have no prospect of success upon appeal, meaning she was not able to appeal the decision at the Immigration Tribunal. We initiated judicial review proceedings against the Home Office, after which they conceded to remove the certificate on Danielle's refusal, and she was granted the right of appeal. At this point, we referred Danielle to The Helen Bamber Foundation for specialist support and for the provision of a Medico Legal Report in support of her case. The tribunal adjourned the hearing of her immigration appeal in order to wait for medical evidence, which addressed Danielle's early years in Nigeria.

In 2019, Danielle was granted limited leave to remain with recourse to public funds on exceptional and compassionate grounds. Whilst working with us on her case, Danielle was actively involved in our participation work and volunteered with our fundraising team. In the judgement on her case, the Judge spoke at length about Danielle's support from and active involvement with Just for Kids Law – leading her to make positive findings about Danielle's level of integration in the UK and finding that Danielle's removal from the UK would be a disproportionate interference with her right to a family life and private life.

# Vanessa

*A young mother struggling to keep her children.*

Vanessa is a 21-year-old mother with 3 children. She gave up her first child for adoption; her second was removed from her care earlier last year; and the third is in her care. She is a survivor of child abuse, gang rape and domestic violence, and is a care leaver. We advocated for Vanessa to be given a chance as a parent by the local authority, who were moving for her most recent child to be removed from her care at birth. The local authority agreed and stepped down her case from care proceedings to public law outline and child protection concurrently.

We then supported Vanessa to advocate for her son to receive better care from his foster carers, as he was arriving at contact meetings with cuts in his ears and inappropriate clothing. Our advocate helped Vanessa express her wishes and feelings in multiple child protection conferences and core group meetings, helping her express difficult feelings about the local authority's handling of her child's case.





# A resilient organisation, making a big impact

**It has certainly been one of the most difficult times ever known for the voluntary sector. Yet we have come through 2019/20 stronger and better placed to deal with further challenges and the future.**

We achieved nearly all the goals we set ourselves: we recruited a specialist housing solicitor, expanding the capacity of our legal team; we put in place a comprehensive package of support for our frontline staff including reflective practice and clinical supervision; we started work on a new participation and youth engagement strategy that will be published in autumn 2020; we piloted new outcome measures to show the difference we make through our casework with individual young people (see p14); and we moved into new offices.

All this was achieved whilst at the same time dealing with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our staff rose to the challenge, continuing to support young people and fighting for reforms to wider policy and practice. We quickly put in place additional support for staff, including carrying out homeworking assessments and access to a new confidential employee support programme.

We are particularly proud of the fact that, for a charity of our size, we've achieved some incredible reforms that will make a big difference to the lives of many children and young people (see pp20-22). These include changes to the law on criminal records that will ensure thousands of young people are not held back from fulfilling their potential, support for vulnerable children facing a criminal trial who have speech and language difficulties so they are able to actively participate in the trial and providing financial help and accommodation support for thousands of young people leaving care to enable them to make a success of their lives.

We ended the year with our finances in better health than ever before. Our unrestricted reserves have increased and are now the equivalent of just over 6 months running costs. In an increasingly uncertain and unstable world, this is vital. There is no question that we are a sustainable, secure organisation with strong foundations for the future. A more detailed overview of our finances and all our work is available in our annual report and accounts at <https://justforkidslaw.org/about-us/our-annual-reports>.

Of course, we are by no means perfect. We want to be open about where we think we can and should do better. That's why we are transparent in this report about what we didn't achieve and what we have learned (see pp28-29). We have much more to do and get right on race equality and diversity, including at senior management level. We also know some of our casework systems and processes can be improved and that our approach to safeguarding could be even better – an independent review of our all our safeguarding work will provide us with vital learning. We need to do more to grow our managers to be brilliant leaders. The Covid-19 pandemic has taught us that we can better make use of video communications to engage stakeholders and supporters. Our future plans (p30) are clearly focused on where we need to improve.

We hope you agree that Just for Kids Law has shown itself to be a strong and resilient organisation, punching well above its weight and achieving real change to the lives of children and young people facing great adversity. A big thank you to all our funders, supporters, partners and collaborators, as well to the Board of Trustees who have steered the charity so well. You are vital to all that we do and achieve.

The year ahead will be one of yet more change as a new CEO takes over, we settle into our new office and continue to adjust to a very different working world. Whatever challenges we face we know the organisation will continue to thrive and achieve even more.

**Enver Solomon, CEO and  
Carolyn Regan, Chair of Trustees**



Enver Solomon,  
CEO



Carolyn Regan,  
Chair of Trustees

# Our Casework Data



We worked with **784 children and young people**, mainly in **31 London boroughs**, through our casework providing youth advocacy, legal advice and representation and youth opportunities support.

We supported these young people to address a range of needs, relating to housing, social care, education, immigration and criminal justice issues, working on **1,018 individual cases**.\* Just under a third (325 cases) were one off advice.



## How we respond to young people who need our support?

Case taken on



One-off advice provided

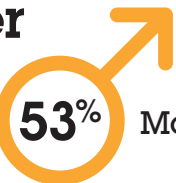
Signposted – no capacity



The number of children and young people we worked with and the number of cases we supported them to resolve is 25% lower than in the previous two years for several reasons. Firstly, we stopped providing one off support on immigration due to our Let Us Learn project spinning out to become a new charity, We Belong (see p24). Secondly the number of youth advocates in our team was halved due to us reconfiguring our programme employing trainee advocates and then having to delay the start of it. Finally, the pandemic initially affected our ability to take on new cases as we did more intense work with those we were already supporting. In addition, the closure of schools and limitations of social services led to a reduction in referrals to our education and community care lawyers.

## Gender

Female

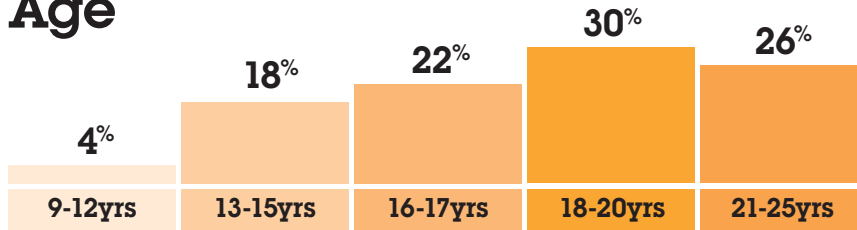


Male

**5%** Unknown

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

## Age



## Ethnicity

Asian 9%



Black African 20%



Black British 16%



Other Black background 17%



White 22%



Mixed and other ethnic background 16%



## Social services involvement\*



Half of our clients report some involvement with social services



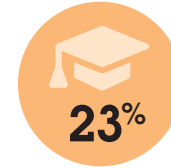
Nearly a third have had some experience of being in the care system.

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

## What issues do we help them with?



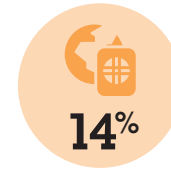
Criminal Justice



Education, training & employment



Social care and health



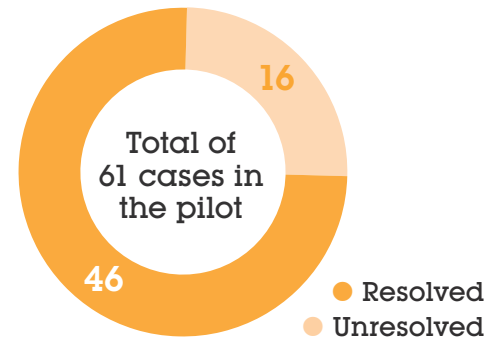
Immigration



Housing and finance

# Our outcomes pilot

We carried out a pilot to report outcomes that show how we resolve cases across all the issues we work on with children and young people. This is a new approach to outcome measurement we developed. The pilot included 61 cases. In three quarters (46 cases) a resolution was achieved.



## OUTCOMES

### Crime 12

Given an out of court disposal	4
Case against young person not progressed	7
Received mitigated sentence compared to sentencing guidelines	1

## OUTCOMES

### Community care 12

Retained or improved social services support	5
Accessed new social services support	7

## OUTCOMES

### Education 5

Remained in preferred education	3
Accessed additional support in education	1
Accessed education	1

## OUTCOMES

### Housing 7

Accessed accommodation	5
Secured improvement in current accommodation	1
Avoided homelessness (including eviction)	1

## OUTCOMES

### Immigration 2

More secure immigration status achieved	2
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## OUTCOMES

### Family 4

Social services intervention level stepped down	4
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## OUTCOMES

### Financial Position 4

Secured new funding, grants or benefits	4
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Of the cases that were not resolved we either lost contact with the young person or the young person decided they did not want our help. In 2020/21 we will be extending the pilot to record outcomes against all the cases we work on. For cases we are unable to resolve we will begin to consider what we could have done differently to avoid that outcome and seek support from our funders and partners to improve in future.



# Our client survey

Since 2019 a SMS text message survey, which was independently validated by NCVO Charities Evaluation Services, has been sent to nearly half of all young people we work with after we have supported them for three months. In 2019/20 it was sent to 325 young people (42% of all those we worked with) and 85 responded which is just over a quarter (26%).\*



**76%**

of young people reported that their situation has improved since they've been supported by us.



**76%**

of young people reported that they feel more confident when facing problems since they've been supported by us.



**77%**

of young people reported that they know more about their rights since they've been supported by us.

*\*We have been more transparent in our reporting of the survey data than in our previous 2019 impact report and will be reviewing the survey further to look at how we can send it to more young people we work with and increase the response rate.*



SOLICITOR  
LEGAL BADASS

9



# Supporting Young People

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

**Our team of youth advocates, a youth opportunities worker and lawyers have achieved many things standing up for the rights of individual children and young people and empowering them to move forward. Our casework and outcomes data demonstrates our impact, but we also want to pick out some of the highlights of how we have been able to make an even greater difference to young people's lives.**

## Tackling housing difficulties

Many of the young people we work with have housing problems and are facing homelessness. Without a safe place to live they are forced into crisis as they transition into adulthood. Our advocates and legal team have been able to work with them to get the support from statutory agencies they are entitled to, but we have not previously had a housing legal expert on our team. This was a gap that we have been keen to address. Now, thanks to funding from Comic Relief, we have been able to employ a lawyer who is an expert on housing matters to provide tailored legal advice

and representation. They have already made a huge difference to our casework expertise and capacity. It was particularly noticeable during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown how many young people were not getting the emergency accommodation they needed. Our housing lawyer was able to ensure they did not end up on the streets and were able to overcome many obstacles put in their way.

## Defending the rights of children excluded from school

We are one of the only organisations in the country that provides legal representation for children facing exclusion from school. Despite the fact that the process for challenging unfair exclusions is complex, there is no legal aid available. The reality is that there is an advice desert across much of the country. That's why we piloted legal clinics in Birmingham and Manchester with pro bono support from lawyers at Fieldfisher and also launched an innovative new online resource – the School Exclusions Hub. The website provides all the necessary resources for supporting a child through every stage of the school exclusion process. It has already begun to increase the provision of advice and representation for children across the country

attracting more than 150 members signing up as individuals or organisations to use the resource and over 10,500 unique visitors to the site. We are now planning to further develop the Hub and at the same time explore the creation of a long-term legal clinic with pro bono partners.

### **Giving young people a lifeline during lockdown**

The sudden move to lockdown was extremely challenging for lots of the young people we work with. Our youth advocates and lawyers had to stop face-to-face work but continued to provide intensive support over the telephone to our clients. The depth of need we had to respond to was much greater than before with many more young people needing urgent hardship support. With additional funding from the London Community Support Fund we were able to provide emergency support to purchase food, clothing and other essentials. The lockdown also left young people out of education and unable to complete their studies. Thanks to an emergency grant from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation we quickly provided laptops and Wi-Fi dongles to nearly 20 young people who were facing the prospect of not being able to continue with their college work because they had no way of studying online. It made a huge difference to them at a time when they could have immediately been pushed into crisis.

### **Protecting victims of child criminal exploitation**

There is now greater recognition of criminal exploitation with children and young people being groomed and exploited by organised crime networks to sell drugs. Often these children are made to travel across counties in so-called 'county lines' drugs trafficking. It is estimated that around 4,000 teenagers in London alone are being exploited through child criminal exploitation, or 'county lines'. However, despite laws to protect victims of exploitation from prosecution, too many practitioners are unaware of such provisions, meaning that children continue to be needlessly criminalised, dragging them further into a current of crime from which it is difficult to escape. Since it became law in 2015, we have been at the forefront of using the Modern Slavery Act to divert exploited children from the criminal justice system. Our criminal solicitors continued to take on these cases, regularly linking up with statutory agencies to make referrals to the National Referral Mechanism for victims of modern slavery and ensuring that positive referrals were taken into account by courts and prosecutors. We have developed great expertise in this area and are highly skilled at ensuring victims of criminal exploitation get the protection that they need.



Children  
and their  
families  
never housed  
in B+B's for  
longer than the  
6 weeks

Children will  
never be  
permitted to  
occupy B+B's

# Fighting for Change

**Strategic Aim:** Secure system changes to the law, policy and practice for children and young people

**It's not just the children and young people we support who benefit from the impact of our work: we fight for wider change that affects all children and young people, taking the evidence from our direct casework as a starting point. For a charity of our size, we've achieved some incredible reforms that will make a big difference to the lives of so many children and young people.**

## Support for children facing criminal trials

We have been campaigning for many years to ensure vulnerable children with special educational needs and disabilities can effectively participate in criminal proceedings. The courts are complex and frightening for most adults let alone children who are very vulnerable. Despite attempts in recent years to make the experience of criminal trials more child friendly, there are still many children we represent that say they don't understand what goes on in court. We achieved a significant victory in a case we took to the High Court that recognises the youth justice system is filled with 'vulnerable young people with complex needs' who need support to understand what is happening in court and

communicate effectively. It will mean many more children are able to have access to intermediaries, and specialist speech and language experts, during criminal trials. Following the Covid-19 pandemic with the move towards remote hearings in courts, the need to ensure the effective engagement and participation of children in criminal cases is more important than ever before.

## Changing the law on criminal records

In January 2019 we secured a landmark Supreme Court judgment on the disclosure of youth reprimands and cautions that are supposed to divert children away from the criminal justice system when they are accused of minor crimes. Some reprimands and cautions can appear on police criminal record checks for decades after they were issued. The Supreme Court ruled that this system is disproportionate and damaging to the future rehabilitation of children, preventing them from moving on from their past. The government finally brought forward legislation that changes the law so that these cautions are not subject to a criminal record check. This removes a huge barrier that blighted the lives of several thousands of young people, a shockingly disproportionate number of whom are from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.



## Helping care leavers move into adulthood

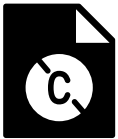
Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the government rushed through changes to guidance that sets out the level of support given to young people when they leave the care. Young people who have been in the care of the state often face much worse outcomes and struggle to move their lives forward. Ensuring they are given all the support they need as they transition into adulthood really matters to them. We were invited by the Department of Education to comment on a further iteration of the guidance in relation to care leavers, and secured significant additions in relation to the level of financial support they receive, known as discretionary payments, and how accommodation moves during the pandemic take place for them. This will affect tens of thousands of care leavers across the country.

## UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

We host the Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) and it was a significant year marking the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). CRAE was set up in 1991 after the UK ratified the convention to monitor the government's commitment to upholding the document. We collaborated with the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Unicef UK to hold a reception in parliament in March 2020 that was hosted by the Children's Minister, Vicky Ford. The event was a celebration of the binding human rights covering every area of children's lives: from their right to be free from poverty and their right to education and play, to their right to be free from

violence and their right to have their views and opinions taken seriously. The Children's Minister explicitly pledged her support for the Convention as well as highlighting progress made on embedding it across Government including a Children's Rights Impact Assessment template and training for civil servants produced in collaboration with CRAE. It was a significant recognition of the importance of upholding the rights of the millions of children in England.

# Fighting for change who we made a difference to



## Criminal record checks

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Approximately **25,000 cautions issued every year to children** will no longer be subject to a criminal record checks removing a barrier that had blighted their lives.<sup>1</sup>



## Defendants in criminal trials

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**16,000 vulnerable children**, are more likely to be given additional support from a specialist speech and language expert when going through a criminal trial.<sup>2</sup>



## Care leavers

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Nearly **41,000 young people aged 18 to 21 who leave care** every year will receive better financial support and are less likely to face multiple accommodation moves during the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>3</sup>



## UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Children's Minister pledges the government's support for upholding the rights of all **12 million children in England**.

<sup>1</sup> Based on average number of children given cautions for each of the last ten years.

<sup>2</sup> The most recent annual youth justice data states that in 2018-19 27,000 children were proceeded against in court and it's estimated that at least 60% of children in the youth justice system have difficulties with speech and language.

<sup>3</sup> Most recent data from Department for Education on number of care leavers.





# Participation and Youth Engagement

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

**Participation by children and young people forms a key part of our work and we are passionate about promoting youth engagement to achieve wider policy and practice reform. Over the last year we have made significant progress employing a new Youth Engagement and Participation Manager, who has led work on developing a new participation strategy and providing effective consolidation and coherence for all our participation activities. There have been some great examples of meaningful participation work we want to showcase.**

## **We Belong**

In November 2019, the first UK-wide charity run entirely by and for young migrants, was launched. We Belong builds on the success of our Let us Learn project, which was set up in 2014 to fight for young migrants to have access to student finance. We subsequently developed the talents of the project's young leaders until they were ready to

establish their own charity. The new organisation is a testament to the tenacity and resilience of its founders, all the young migrants involved and to the youth participatory ethos that is central to Just for Kids Law. To capture the learning from the work in January we published an evaluation of the process behind We Belong's transition from a project to a standalone charity. The report, *It's Our Time*, provides a vital learning resource for other youth-led projects looking to become independent organisations and demonstrates our commitment to learning from the process and then sharing it across the voluntary sector.

## **Involving young people in our organisational development**

Support from the Oak Foundation has enabled us to increase the capacity and resource for our participation and youth engagement work. This has enabled us to take a more structured approach to involving young people in our organisational development. We consulted with them on the design and fit out of our new office. However, the big achievement has been the new approach we have taken to including them in the recruitment

of new staff. They have conducted interviews over Zoom, developing their own questions and assessment tests. Young people told us that having a voice and being heard in the process made them feel 'powerful, understood, not lonely anymore, relieved, emotional, that they mattered'.

### Speaking truth to power

Reflecting on their lived experiences can be traumatic for the young people we work with at Just for Kids Law. That's why we think very carefully about how we bring their voices and stories to the attention of decision makers and aren't always able to make it happen. Through our projects supporting young people to speak out on homelessness, school exclusion and the youth justice system we have witnessed some really powerful moments when young people had the courage to speak truth to power. This included young people speaking to senior leaders at the Solicitor's Regulatory Authority as part of their consultation on standards in the criminal courts, engaging with MPs to submit questions in a parliamentary debate about school exclusions and taking part in a panel discussion about youth homelessness with the Deputy Mayor for London.



# Creating a Strong Organisation

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

**If we don't ensure Just for Kids Law is a strong organisation, we can't make a difference to the lives of individual children and young people or secure wider policy and practice reform. With the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic this is more important than ever before. Over the year we have done a lot of work on organisational development some of which we think is important to highlight.**

## Staff support and well being

The wellbeing and resilience of staff has been a major priority for us. We put in place reflective practice for all our staff that do direct work with children and young people. We have also offered clinical supervision to staff so they have a safe space to reflect on the vicarious trauma associated with our casework. The Covid-19 pandemic required us to quickly put further support in place. This included a new confidential employee support service, carrying out homeworking assessments and providing suitable homeworking equipment including desks, chairs and upgraded laptops. We have also provided

staff access to wellbeing sessions run by Islington and Camden Mental Health Trust and put in place a tailored programme of resilience training and support for our managers. We are now proud to be an organisation that actively focuses on the wellbeing of staff.

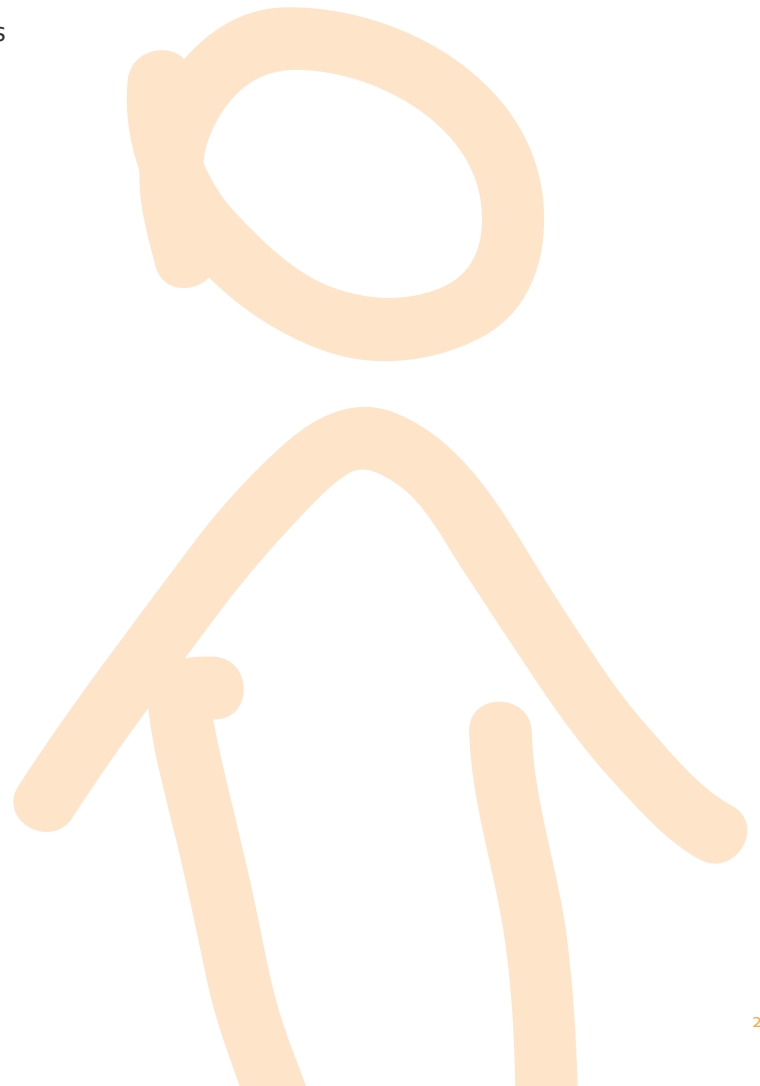
## A new office and IT upgrade

Just for Kids Law spent many years housed in the basement of a law firm. It was only in 2017 that we moved to our own office. This was still far from ideal – cramped, poor quality, freezing in winter and far too hot in summer. One of our key goals in 2019/20 was to move to a new office and upgrade our IT so that staff have a fit for purpose working environment and are also supported to work remotely. Shortly before the Covid-19 lockdown was put in place, we found an ideal office and despite the limitations imposed by the pandemic we made progress planning the move, including consulting with staff and young people on the fit out, design and new IT. It is a significant step change for the organisation and even with the shift to more homeworking very important for us. So much of our work is relational involving human contact and staff work closely together – having a good office environment really matters.



## Stronger governance

During the year we also took steps to strengthen the organisation's governance by completing a review and update of the charity's Articles of Association including new terms of office for trustees and a review of young people's involvement in our board. A decision was taken to increase youth representation on the board so that young people account for a quarter of members. Later in 2020/21 an additional two young trustees will be recruited who have previously been supported by Just for Kids Law. This demonstrates our commitment to young people with lived experience playing a key role in our governance.



# Learning Matters to Us

**We have achieved a great deal, but we didn't manage to realise all of the objectives and plans we set for ourselves. The Covid-19 pandemic inevitably created challenges for us, but it would be wrong to blame it for everything we didn't achieve. Key things we failed to do last year:**

- The number of children and young people we worked with and the number of cases we supported them to resolve is lower than we planned. As noted on p12 this is for different reasons including the Let Us Learn project becoming a separate charity, the number of youth advocates in our team being reduced due to us changing our programme for taking on trainee advocates and also the pandemic initially affecting our ability to take on new cases. As we build capacity in our advocacy team and review our case numbers we expect to work with more young people. However, because the depth of our casework is more significant due to the multiple challenges young people are facing the overall increase may not be so great next year.
- We had a very successful year surpassing many of our income targets, but we were not able to

meet our objective to gain funding to take on an additional immigration caseworker. Due to the greater depth of casework we are doing in this area we have been unable to provide as much one-off legal advice as we would like. However, we do plan to address this by getting funding for a new caseworker in 2020/21.

- We said in our last impact and learning report that we are not complacent about the fact that didn't have all the right organisational policies in place. We learned that we needed to be open with ourselves about this. Unfortunately, we haven't managed to make the progress we had hoped for. We implemented a new salary policy but we have yet to finalise a number of others and, critically, start the implementation. This means we still don't have the standard of policies we want to have in place on areas such as lone working, health and safety, IT and GDPR/data protection and supervision and appraisals. We know this isn't where we want to be and will ensure it is taken forward.
- The Black Lives Matter movement and the consequences of it for the charity sector have really highlighted for us the gap that exists within the organisation by not having a strong equality and diversity policy and action plan in place. This is one

of the key policies we have failed to take forward at such a critical time. It has understandably led to some staff unease and frustration. We know this must be a priority but equally we know it needs to be done well and sensitively so that our approach does not do more harm than good.

**We have reflected on what we didn't achieve and considered what we need to learn and what we need to do differently. Learning is paramount to us because it ensures we are always seeking to improve our work with and for children and young people. We want to be transparent about our main areas of learning:**

- **Developing and growing our managers to be great leaders is incredibly important:** The Covid-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter movement created a lot of unexpected issues and stresses for staff. Our managers have been required to provide a different level of support. We had already recognised that we needed to put in place training and development for our managers. However, the events have highlighted the need to continuously work to support our managers to do the best possible job and to ensure the organisation enables them to do that. Building their resilience as leaders is a key part of this as well as ensuring the Senior Management Team works really well together with the wider management team.
- **Our systems and processes for our casework need to be improved further:** Our direct work with young people is challenging and can put a great deal of pressure on staff. All we have done to support their wellbeing has made a difference

but by having open and honest discussions we have also learned that more can be done to improve our casework systems and processes. This includes carrying out an independent review of our safeguarding practice, reviewing how we use our client database and looking at the processes we have in place for reviewing and closing cases.

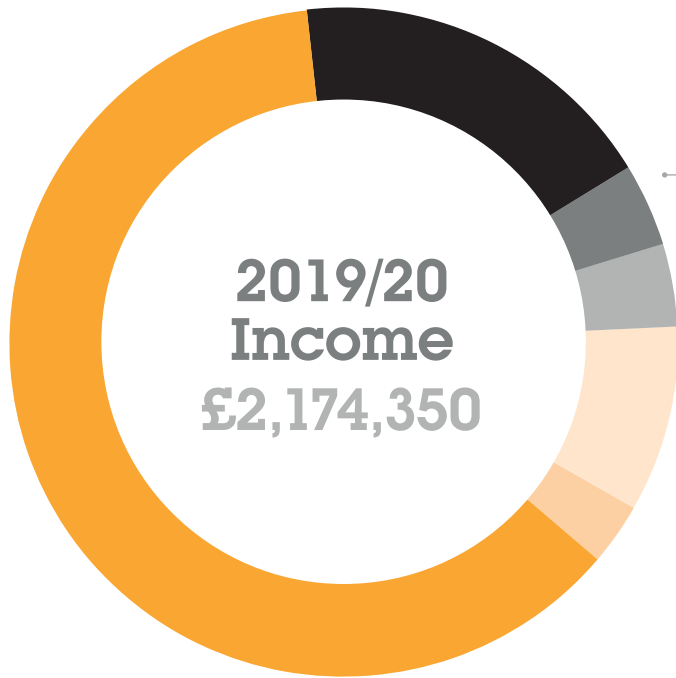
- **Making the most of digital engagement:** Our work with young people is all about building trusting relationships. Human contact is a vital part of this. Digital engagement will never be able to replace it. However, the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic has helped us learn that we can make greater use of digital platforms for other areas of our work. This includes using digital engagement to seek funding and support from donors and reach much larger audiences of stakeholders to campaign for policy and practice reforms.
- **An honest and open conversation about race:** In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, the voluntary sector has been challenged to face up to the issue of race equality and recognise its shortcomings. We are no different. Our client group is disproportionality from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds, but our staff group is not as diverse. We have a strong track record of doing work to address racial disproportionality in the youth justice system. We were one of the only children and young people's charities who met with the UN Rapporteur on Racism during their visit in 2018. However, we have not stopped to take stock and consider what we need to learn and potentially do differently both internally and externally. This will be a priority going forward.

# Looking to the Future

## In 2020/21, we will build on our achievements and learning to take forward some specific objectives and plans:

- We will carry out an independent review of our safeguarding practice, policy, and procedures to enable us to learn how we can improve and what we need to do differently in this critical area of work.
- We will review our main casework database to ensure it is fit for purpose to capture the data we need to demonstrate our outcomes and implement the required changes including training and support for staff who use it.
- We will implement a new set of organisational policies with a particular focus on equality and diversity. An equality and diversity action plan will be put in place that sets out ambitions to have a more diverse workforce reflecting the ethnic backgrounds of the young people we work with, and for.
- We will implement our new participation strategy ensuring a more consistent and clearly defined approach is taken across all our participation and youth engagement work with children and young people. This will include looking at whether or not we create a new Youth Ambassadors group.
- We will grow our organisational leadership taking forward a programme of development for our managers and the Senior Management Team including management training, resilience coaching and facilitated learning workshops.
- Our legal team will continue to increase its capacity by exploring the development of a legal clinic on school exclusions in partnership with corporate law firms informed by the findings of the pilot we carried out in 2019/2020. We will also continue to seek funding to take on an additional immigration caseworker.
- We will make greater use of digital platforms to support our fundraising work with donors and to support how we influence stakeholders to achieve for policy and practice reforms. This will include launching new websites for our Youth Justice Legal Centre and for the Children's Rights Alliance for England that we host.
- We will revise and extend our three-year strategic plan by one year so it runs up to June 2022 enabling us to fully take stock of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the organisation and inform the development of a new strategy to take us forward.

# Our funds



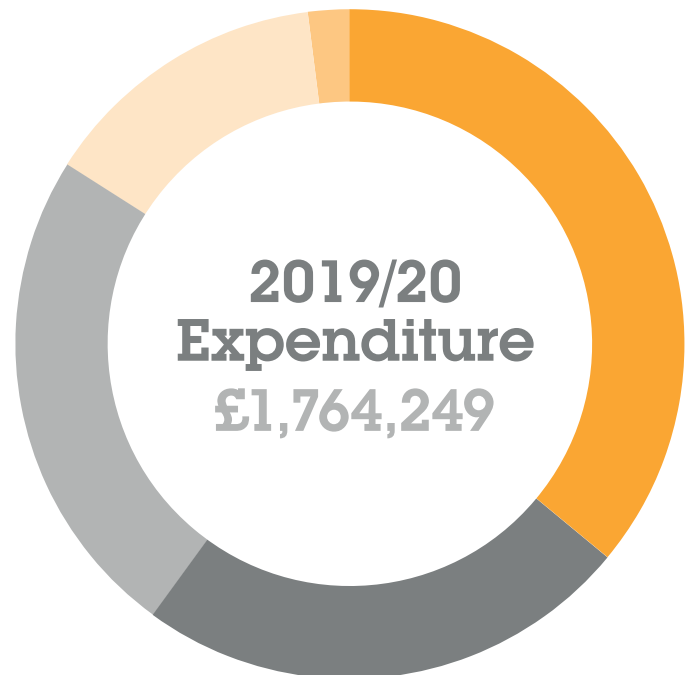
## INCOME BREAKDOWN

● Trusts and Foundations	£1,341,640
● Donations	£389,957
● National Lottery Community Fund	£80,373
● Corporates	£98,242
● Legal aid	£198,936
● Training and other income	£65,202

A list of funders can be found on our website at:  
[justforkidslaw.org/about-us/our-funders](http://justforkidslaw.org/about-us/our-funders)

## EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN

● Central	£633,241
● Legal	£406,184
● Programmes and participation (including youth advocacy and youth opportunities)	£429,311
● Policy and campaigns	£253,948
● Fundraising costs	£41,565



These summary financial figures have been extracted from the full Annual Report and Accounts which were approved by the Board of Trustees on 22nd October 2020. However, the figures have not been separately audited.





Empowering children and young people.  
Standing up for their rights.

We are ambitious about what we want to achieve.  
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children and young people have their legal rights and  
entitlements respected and promoted and their  
voices heard and valued.

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