



ANNUAL REPORT

2025-2026



Children and Young People's
Centre for Justice

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Overview

In the year spanning April 2025 – March 2026, CYCJ embarked on the first year of activity under its 2025-28 Strategic plan. This plan describes the concentric circles of influence around a child that can be improved in order to achieve our vision of **'...ensuring that Scotland's approach to children and young people is rights-respecting, contributing to safer communities and better outcomes for our children, young people and families.'**

The three strategic priorities: 1. system change, 2. community and 3. the adults around the child/young person, put the children we seek to support at the heart of everything that we do. This year, those children and young people have remained central to our planning, thinking and delivery.

Our work across all workstreams have met significant milestones, whether through collaborating with stakeholders and developing partnerships, to ground breaking events, significant publications, or national policy influencing.

Highlights include:

- **Launching of the CYCJ eLearning platform**, offering practitioners of all disciplines a flexible online training option to help build knowledge of topics relating to children and young people who could be at risk of harm, harming others and coming into conflict with the law.
- **Publication of the Men Minds Comic**, developed from a participatory research project. The comic aims to help young men and boys open up about their mental health, with a copy having been distributed to every secondary school and college in Scotland.
- **Delivery of the 23rd Kilbrandon Lecture by CYCJ Associate Professor Carlene Firmin**. Professor Firmin's talk, entitled, "When common sense is complicated: a call for cultural reform to safeguard children beyond their homes", called for a contextual safeguarding approach to address extra familial harm.
- **Publication of the 2025 edition of CYCJ's annual Youth Justice Practice Guidance**
- **Publication the Criminal Exploitation of Children Framework for Practice**
- **Hosting of the 2025 National Youth Justice Conference**

Impact and outreach

In 2025-26, CYCJ continued to reach out to contacts, colleagues and the practice community both at home and abroad. The year provided ample opportunities for speaking at conferences, delivering workshops and raising the profile of CYCJ. In May, Pamela Morrison and Lauren Emmerson delivered a presentation in Athens at the **13th International Seminar of the European Forum for Restorative Justice**. Their workshop explored the potential use of restorative practices in addressing the vulnerabilities faced by children on the move and how this applies to children placed in Scotland's secure centres whose homes may be in England and Wales.

At the start of June, Fiona Dyer and Pamela Morrison delivered a workshop with colleague Ingun Fornes from the University of Bergen, at the **5th World Congress on Justice with Children** in Madrid. Their session explored 'Reimagining the detention of children: Advancing Rights-Respecting Justice in Scotland and Norway', with over 160 countries represented across the three days at the congress. Fiona also presented, "Reimagining the relationship between care and justice frameworks when responding to extra-familial harm", at the **Contexts of Contextual Safeguarding conference** at Durham University.

On **World Social Work Day** in March, Fiona Dyer presented to a conference of over 100 social workers in Inverness on co-building hope and harmony. The event was aimed at social workers from various disciplines, and coincided with the launch of the National Social Work Agency.

This year, CYCJ was delighted to continue its international connections. We hosted a visit with Andrea Davidson, Interim CEO of the Violence Reduction Unit in Victoria, Australia. This was an excellent opportunity to share practice and insight and about the care and justice systems in Scotland more broadly. Our team also hosted a roundtable discussion with Aileen MacDonald, Shadow Minister for Youth Justice in New South Wales Australia. She was interested



Figure 1 – Photograph of visit with Andrea Davidson

to hear about Scotland’s approach to youth justice, particularly ending the use of YOIs. During her visit, Aileen met several of our key stakeholders and was able to have a thorough overview of Scotland’s policies and practices for children and young people in conflict with the law. We also connected with Tasmanian Government colleagues at St Mary’s Kenmure, who were conducting a review of justice services for children.



Figure 2 - Visit from Aileen MacDonald



Figure 3 - 2025-26 highlights in numbers



Figure 4 - Photograph of CYCJ team Kiltwalk finishers

Opportunity for further connection came when Professor Fiona Dyer's invitation to the **Royal Garden Party** at Buckingham palace, where she spent the day with others whose work focuses on supporting children and young people. Fiona Dyer also attended the **Butler Trust Awards** at Holyroodhouse Palace alongside CYCJ EGG Chair Professor Sandy Cameron where professionals from across the justice sector were recognised for their achievements.

Members of our team successfully completed the Kiltwalk in April 2025, walking from Glasgow Green to Loch Lomond to raise funds in memory of our colleague Ruby, who sadly passed away in December 2024. As 'stepcount queen', we wanted to walk the Kiltwalk in her honour and raise funds for a charity close to her heart, Classrooms for Malawi. Ruby regularly volunteered with Classrooms for Malawi, participating in building classrooms and supporting the community.

Practice development – supporting practitioners

Partnerships, groups and forums

Forums

CYCJ facilitates forums which provide spaces for practitioners to discuss, connect and collaborate on different topics. In 2025/2026 this work continued. Forum meetings are hosted by members of the CYCJ Practice Development team, and provide a unique space for professionals from various sectors to come together in a supportive environment.

Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) Practitioners' Forum:

The Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) Forum met throughout 25/26, providing a dedicated space for practitioners to explore EEI-specific issues. The meetings covered a range of themes and welcomed guest speakers who offered insights and support on relevant subjects. The forum explored topics such as the benefits of mentoring, restorative practices and youth work, plus examples of where children's rights are being included within EEI processes. Guest speakers to the forum included representatives from YouthLink Scotland, North Lanarkshire council, East Lothian council, Glasgow City council, MCR Pathways and CYCJ's restorative justice practice development advisors.

The forum continued to inform the work of the EEI Working Group under the Whole Systems Approach Implementation Group, identifying that the diversity of aims, recognition of the importance of holistic assessment and wider issues impacting children were key themes to explore moving forward.

Diversion from Prosecution (DfP) Forum:

The Diversion from Prosecution (DfP) Practitioners' Forum has met regularly over the past year. Content has included hosting an input from YouthLink Scotland in relation to supporting children and young people who have been charged with knife crime offences, and a session on completion reports. The forum has also paid a particular focus on the newly published DfP guidance, using this as a platform to increase awareness and understanding of the changes to diversionary practice.

Secure Care Practitioners Forum:

The Secure Care Practitioners forum provided a reflective space for colleagues to develop and share learning about working with children in secure care and

upholding the secure care pathways and standards. CYCJ conducted an evaluation of this forum this year to ascertain the needs of the forum members. The forum now includes members of the Secure Care Champs Group, which meets on a bi-monthly basis.

Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act Practitioners' Forum:

In 2025, CYCJ collaborated with Social Work Scotland for a practitioner forum on the commencement of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act. At the first forum meeting in October, representatives from 18 local authorities attended to hear about areas of work in preparation for commencement. Subsequent meetings discussed local practices and movement restriction conditions.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour Forum:

CYCJ received support to continue hosting the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Forum in conjunction with the Lucy Faithful Foundation Scotland. Four meetings of the forum were held throughout the year, welcoming guest speakers to both online and in person events.

The forum welcomed speakers from a range of disciplines and areas of expertise. The first speakers, Christine McCarlie (AIM Associate Trainer and Director of Safer Futures Ltd) and Ann Brady (Team Leader, The HALT Service, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership) focused on how the team around the child with harmful sexual behaviour can transform lives. Linda Valenta, SAIFF, delivered an input, 'Let's Talk: Addressing sibling sexual harm in the sibling relationship', and Nic Roberts presented at the December forum on 'Using the good lives model in practice.'

Restorative Justice Development Forum:

This forum was newly created in spring 2025, in collaboration with Community Justice Scotland, designed for leaders and managers interested in developing Restorative Justice in their area or organisation, with a particular focus on sharing what works and overcoming challenges and barriers. The forum hosted a diverse range of speakers sharing learning from across the UK and Ireland and attracted 93 attendees in its first year, demonstrating the popularity of this space for leaders coming together to discuss and share insights into embedding RJ in Scotland.

Scottish Government Implementation Groups under the Youth Justice Improvement Board (YJIB):

Children's Rights Implementation Group (CRIG):

The Children's Rights Implementation Group, co-chaired by Professor Dyer, focuses on the promotion of children's rights within the justice system, particularly where rights are marginalised. It has two subgroups focusing on **Children's Rights in Court** and **Speech, Language and Communication Needs**.

The group also monitors the Children's Rights Tracker, which allows members to identify how well children's UNCRC Article 37 and 40 rights are being upheld. In August, August's CRIG included an input from Scottish Government Children and Families Analysis Team on their work 'Measuring Scotland's Progress in Fulfilling the Rights in UNCRC: Mapping monitoring data for Articles 37 and 40' which mapped Scottish data to the Global Child's Children's Rights-Based Indicators. This identified available and non-available data, and areas where further data analysis or breakdown is required.

An important piece of work undertaken by the Children's Rights in Court subgroup has been to create the guidance toolkit on Upholding Children's Rights in Court. Another significant output of the CRIG has been to assess the Promise Plan 24-30 route maps, in particular the justice route map, to ensure that children's rights are reflected throughout.

Advancing the Whole System Approach (AWSA) Implementation Group:

The Advancing the Whole System Approach Implementation Group (AWSAIG) met throughout 25/26, and discussed a variety of topics, including the use of Movement Restriction Conditions and role of Scottish Courts and Tribunal Services in delivering a rights respecting approach to children in court.

The EEI Review Working Group and Workforce Development Subgroups also met. The Workforce Development Group (WDG) have been investigating the needs of practitioners in relation to the commencement of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024. The WDG conducted a training needs survey, which has helped them to identify topics and gaps in understanding of the youth justice workforce.

Children in Police Custody Group:

This group kicked off its work in 2025 by examining the results of focus groups conducted with police custody staff. These focus groups provided an insight into the current concerns with practice, and opportunities moving forward from their practice experience.

In the autumn, the group set out a work plan which focused on data, capacity and the specific health and social needs of children in police custody. Throughout the year they received inputs on Police Scotland's Voluntary Interview Pathway, from the TRY Justice Network, Mindroom and on Police Scotland's 2030 vision.

The group also had significant input to the creation of the multi agency guidance on children in police custody as a result of changes brought in via the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024.

Secure care

Practice Development Advisor Sharon McGinty joined the team in 2025 to lead on our secure care workstream, working closely with colleagues from many different disciplines to identify areas of need for those working in and with Scotland's secure care services.

The **Secure Care Champions Group** met throughout 2025, supporting and connecting practitioners, sharing insights from their work on the ground. The **Secure Care Practitioners' Forum** continued to connect, and following an evaluation of both the Champions Group and the Practitioners' Forum, it was decided that these groups would merge.

In March 2026, we published a key summary of our draft response to the Future of secure care consultation from the Scottish Government, which received positive feedback from stakeholders. This was due to our extensive involvement in the Reimagining secure care work and some of the complexity around the proposed changes. Throughout Q4 of 2025/26, our team worked closely with children and young people to ensure their views and opinions were front and centre of our final consultation response.



Restorative justice

The work of the restorative justice team has continued to develop throughout 2025/26, marked by significant publications, stakeholder engagement and presentations.

The launch of the Restorative Justice Development Forum and the attendance of over 93 practitioners demonstrates a shared commitment to embedding RJ in Scotland.

In November, we celebrated RJ week with a plethora of RJ activity. The restorative justice team hosted a Day of reflection, learning and action in Glasgow, attended by over 70 practitioners. Delegates heard inputs from a range of speakers before collaborating on activities to imagine what RJ delivery for children and young people could look like. This event was extremely popular, with over 100 delegates on the waiting list! For the first time, we collaborated with Community Justice Scotland (CJS) and Sacro on a shared campaign of social media activity for RJ week, highlighting pieces of work and content that connected to the European Forum for Restorative Justice's theme, "From Question to Principle: Embedding Restorative Justice in human rights."



Figure 5 - Photograph of Restorative justice stakeholder event

In March, two important RJ publications were launched: the Restorative Justice test case summary report, and the Restorative Justice policy and practice framework. The test case summary report outlines the findings from the Test Case project, a joint project between CYCJ and CJS which explored key themes in service delivery

that require consideration and/or resolution in the future development of a nationally consistent restorative justice provision across Scotland. The Restorative Justice Policy and Practice Framework was also published by the Scottish Government, which sets out minimum standards and expectations against which RJ practice can be benchmarked, monitored and evaluated to ensure consistency in the delivery of practice, in line with key restorative justice principles.

Practice Development Advisors Lauren Emmerson and Pamela Morrison have delivered presentations at Restorative Justice: Exploring a Highland Model in Inverness, the 13th International Seminar of the European Forum for Restorative Justice and at Social Work Scotland's Annual Conference on "Using Restorative Justice to Promote Positive Systemic Change, Boost Social Work Job Satisfaction, and Improve the Experience of Service Users."

Implementation of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024

This remains a core part of CYCJ's work, to ensure that practitioners of all specialisms successfully navigate the changes brought about through this legislation. We have worked closely with stakeholders to publish guidance, promote regulations, and disseminate vital information about required changes.

We launched a dedicated webpage to collate key information and indicate the key milestones and areas of focus for implementation. Since the launch of this page in July 2025, this has been viewed over 1000 times by over 500 users - indicating the wide reach and need for this hub of information. As resources are developed, we have been adding these to this page, so that users can access one central location for all information about the Act's implementation progress.

We launched a practitioner forum with Social Work Scotland to connect and prepare for commencement of the Act. The Implementation and Resource group which was developed during the Bill's progression through Parliament has been reconvened for implementation, with various working groups to focus on particular aspects, including: Part 1 of the Act in relation to the Children's Hearings System, raising the age of referral, and secure care, Children in Police custody, Children's Rights at Court, Secure transport and Workforce development.

Significant publications were launched in March to provide guidance on how all children under 18 are viewed whilst in police custody, and how children's rights in court are upheld, as a result of certain sections of the act being implemented.



These guidance documents, published via the Youth Justice Improvement Board, were accompanied by CYCJ webinars to help raise awareness of the changes.

Criminal Exploitation of Children and Risk of Serious Harm

CYCJ's work focusing on the criminal exploitation of children continued throughout 2025/26, and reached an important milestone with the publication of the Criminal Exploitation of Children framework for practice, co-authored with Action for Children. The framework, alongside additional practice tools and supplementary documents, supports practitioners to recognise and respond to the exploitation of children as a child protection issue. The framework was launched in August, alongside a dedicated eLearning module, at a webinar, where we were joined by over 90 delegates. As part of the launch activity, we also welcomed Adam Elliot, facilitator of 'the Long Game' and expert by experience, to a round table discussion with practitioners across youth justice. Drawing on his own experiences of exploitation, Adam has challenged and influenced national thinking working with the Home Office, schools, professionals, and frontline teams across England.

Events and training

Training

The CYCJ team continued to be invited to speak at conferences, events, seminars and symposiums, sharing their expertise to professionals both at home and abroad. This has enabled us to support practitioners across a variety of disciplines, contributing to our third strategic priority – supporting the adults around children and young people. Throughout 25/26 we have regularly been asked to deliver inputs at stakeholder meetings, often on our specialist areas such as the implementation of the Children (Care and Justice) Act, children's rights and managing risk of serious harm.

Delivery of START-AV and FRAME and CARM training were a core part of our training calendar, ensuring that practitioners have up to date knowledge and understanding of risk management and assessment practices.

eLearning

In order to reach a wider range of practitioners, we launched our eLearning platform in 2025, created in collaboration with the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of Strathclyde. Learners can access a range of paid and free modules, which take approximately 4 hours each to complete.

1000+
Learners Reached

5
Modules Developed



Modules launched in 2025/26:

- Criminal exploitation of children with Action for Children
- Formulation with the Risk Management Authority
- Digital safeguarding in practice with the Lucy Faithfull Foundation
- [Children \(Care and Justice\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024 - what you need to know](#)
- Rights respecting in residential care with Care Visions

Post graduate certificate in children and young people in conflict with the law

Our post graduate certificate course has been designed to contribute the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and the upholding of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and covers key areas for practitioners who wish to better understand and embed children's rights into their practice. In 2025, we once again delivered this course to a full cohort of students. Their feedback has made it clear that this continues to be a vitally important course for practitioners, with one of our students reflecting that,

"This has completely changed my approach, and I proudly see myself as a right-respecting practitioner thanks to what I have learned from this course and what I know is right for children based on the research and resources it has made available to me."

- Course participant

Developmental Wellbeing Approach

Throughout the course of 2025/26, CYCJ has been piloting the use of the Developmental Wellbeing Approach with local authorities across Scotland. This is a trauma-informed, rights-based way of working with children and young people that focuses on supporting healthy development to reduce harmful behaviours. It enables practitioners, children and young people, and families to co-create safe, appropriate strategies that respond to individual needs and contexts across home, school, and community settings. This was initially piloted with 16 colleagues from a variety of local authorities and third sector organisations in the summer prior to a further pilot with 12 local authority colleagues in Aberdeenshire, who gave excellent feedback, enabling us to begin embedding the approach across Scotland with support from the Henry Smith Foundation.

Webinars

Our webinars continue to prove a popular resource amongst practitioners. They featured guest speakers and members of our team alike – and as a free resource, aim to reach a wide audience of anyone interested the topics. We hosted a total of 17 webinars, on topics such as legislative changes, diverse experiences of children and young people, age of criminal responsibility, major report and guidance publications, secure care and children's rights. In February, our webinar featuring research from saw a record number of signups with over 700 delegates registering to attend.

National Youth Justice Conference 2025

The culmination of several months' planning work, conference hosted over 200 practitioners, policy makers and researchers for networking, learning and presentations. This year's theme explored Childhood, Safeguarding and the Children's Hearings System, and heard from experts in contextual safeguarding, criminal exploitation of children and the Children's Hearings System. The conference programme included workshops, keynote speeches and lightning talks that offered delegates practice insights and updates. Day 1 of the conference concluded in a special satellite session of the 5th World Congress on Justice with Children, where delegates watched recordings of two of the congress's most powerful speakers.



Figure 6- Photograph from National Youth Justice Conference

“Excellent. It was a fantastic time to consider lots of issues around youth justice and talk to other, sharing ideas from practice.”

“The conference was wonderful, both in terms of content from inputs, quality of workshops and opportunities to network and connect.”

- Delegates

23rd Kilbrandon Lecture and Kilbrandon Children’s Research Webinar

Professor Dyer chaired the 23rd Kilbrandon lecture, given by CYCJ Associate, Professor Carlene Firmin. The sold-out lecture, entitled, “*When common sense is complicated: a call for cultural reform to safeguard children beyond their homes*”, gave delegates a comprehensive understanding of the need for child protection mechanisms to include contextual safeguarding.



Figure 7 - Photograph of Professor Carlene Firmin

The Kilbrandon events continued with the Kilbrandon Children's Research webinar on 5 December. Our team members Dr Nina Vaswani and Iain Corbett delivered a presentation on "*Masculinities under pressure: marginalisation, misconceptions and mental health.*", alongside colleagues Ayesha Sheikh and Dr Sophie King-Hill. The presentations on the theme of masculinities and working with boys and young men, were followed by a panel discussion.

Participation and engagement

Participation

STARR and Secure Care

The STARR group entered a developmental phase this year which has given members time to reflect on past achievements and consider new opportunities which reflect recent changes to policy and practice, as well as the changing goals of the group members themselves. The group have been involved in UK wide research into secure and attended the Scottish Government PaCT Communities Conference in June 2025.

In May 2025, CYCJ began delivering creative art sessions in secure care to provide children with opportunities to learn new skills and express their experiences in more accessible visual formats. Through these sessions children have been involved in developing a growing suite of artwork which is being incorporated into CYCJ's communications outputs. These sessions have been very well received by those involved, and have helped to nurture the positive relationships which are essential to meaningful participation.

Youth Justice Voices

The participation team continued to support the groups formed within the Youth Justice Voices project, jointly delivered by CYCJ and Staf. This partnership has led to many fantastic outcomes in influencing policy and planning in the Scottish youth justice landscape. From March 2026, CYCJ took more of a supporting role whilst Staf formally leads the development of these groups.

YOYO Fund

At the end of 2025, CYCJ were awarded funding through Corra Foundation's 'You're Only Young Once (YOYO) Fund', a youth-led participatory funding grant which supports projects which will make positive differences to children and young people impacted by substance use. CYCJ's 'Learning About Substance Use' project gives children in secure care the opportunity to conduct their own research project into substance use and support. Children taking part are able to develop research and critical thinking skills through engaging activities and games, and are supported to share their learning in formats that relate to their own skills and interests.

School engagement

We hosted a series of workshops in Drumchapel High School around compassionate community responses to offending, and our participation team contributed to Girvan Youth Trust and Girvan Academy's Modern Thinking Day for S3 pupils. Alongside colleagues from Action Against Stalking, Ayrshire Harbour, Fearless, Police Scotland and Thriving Communities, 75 students participated, learning about crime rates, how to ask for help, others' feelings and respecting others' opinions.

HMP&YOI Polmont

The Future Change social action group facilitated by our Participation Team in HMP&YOI Polmont received recognition as a finalist for the Youth Link Scotland National Youth Work Awards in the Participation and Voice category. Despite missing out on the award to Shetland Youth Voice, the team were delighted to have their work highlighted in this way. The group was also featured on LBC News, Smooth and Heart radio in July. The Future Change social action group had received funding from the Corra Foundation Promise Partnership fund, to make a difference in their wider communities. Following a 'Dragons' Den' style shortlisting process, the Future Change members selected the winners of the £10,000 funding. The members of the group were joined by the winners, colleagues from SPS, CYCJ and LBC Scotland correspondent Alan Zycinski where they discussed the need for a compassionate approach to young people in conflict with the law. You can [listen back to the piece here](#).

The participation workstream was recognised in the Scottish Parliament, through a motion from Michelle Thomson MSP. The motion congratulated Future Change on

their nomination for a National Youth Work Award, and recognised the uniqueness of the group and the activities they undertake. The motion was supported by 17 other MSPs, which you can [read at the Scottish Parliament website here](#).

The Activate course continued in HMP&YOI Polmont, alongside a new programme of work exploring masculinities. The Future Change social action group met throughout this quarter, delivering their final piece of funded works which saw Christmas gifts distributed to all young people in HMP&YOI Polmont and within secure care. MSP for Falkirk-East, Michelle Thomson, visited one of the participation sessions within HMP&YOI Polmont to hear more about the young people's work.

In October, a new mural at HMP&YOI Polmont was unveiled. The piece is a lasting testament to the young men living on the estate who contributed to the Men Minds participatory research project.



Figure 8 - Photograph of mural at HMP & YOI Polmont

In Q4, another Activate course commenced, with 13 students taking part. A new programme on masculinities started in Q4, with young men researching "what it means to be a man." The participants interviewed a range of guests, including Willie Miller from Men Matter Scotland, Comedian Gary Faulds, James Docherty from SVRU and Chris Paul and Peter Canevale from The Anchor.

Policy influencing

Opportunities for policy influencing this year have been significant. With major consultations and legislative change coming through the Scottish Government and Parliament, we have been able to share our knowledge and expertise with policy makers to a great degree. A significant success came through the passing of the [Children \(Care, Care Experience, and Services Planning\) \(Scotland\) Bill 2025](#), which CYCJ influenced via consultation, and directly with MSPs. Particularly, a great step forward was taken with the places of safety amendment, put forward by Willie Rennie MSP, being accepted into the bill. This would enable police officers, once regulations have passed Parliament, and where appropriate, to take under 18s to an alternative location instead of police custody.

In July 2025, we published our [Policy Positions Paper - ending the overcriminalisation of children and young people in Scotland](#), which focused on alternatives to police custody, community alternatives to secure care and raising the age of criminal responsibility. This paper, alongside the many consultation responses, have helped us demonstrate the evidence which drives our calls for change. Consultation responses have covered topics such as live facial recognition, youth justice inquiries, short term prisoner release, parole reform, identification of victims of modern slavery, financial transparency and profit limitation in children's residential care, restraint and exclusion and more.

Significantly, we worked closely with children and young people on our response to the Future of secure care consultation, and published a brief summary of this ahead of the full consultation response, in late March 2026.

Research and resources

Research

Bairns' Hoose

The Self-Assessment and Readiness Tool report was published this year, and agreement of the Pathfinder Gantt Chart was also reached.

Challenging Justice Inequalities

The Challenging Justice Inequalities project which was launched in 2024, reached several important milestones throughout 2025/26. A Youth Advisory Group (YAG) was formed for this project, who would co-produce a programme of research, comprised of a group of young people who have been in contact with the justice

system. The YAG explored research ethics and research methods before moving into the 'planning phase' of the project. In November, they launched recruitment for research participants comprising children and young people and front-line police officers. The research team ran creative zine-making focus groups to explore young people's thoughts and experiences of policing in a reflective way and interviewed police officers, including front-line officers, campus cops and those who work for British Transport Police.

Men Minds

In May, the work of the Men Minds research project reached a new high as they launched a comic during Mental Health Awareness Week. The project was co-produced with a group of young men, who formed the Young People's Forum. Produced in conjunction with comic artists Ell Balson, Megan Sinclair, and UniVerse Comics at the University of Dundee, they [created a comic](#) to reduce stigma and normalise conversations about young men's mental health. The stories in the comic are based on real-life experiences that have been shared during the research, although the characters in the comic are fictional. A copy of the comic has been shared with every school and college in Scotland. This work was showcased at the [Stories of Strathclyde event](#) hosted by the Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures, celebrating the different ways that colleagues across the University are making a difference for children and young people.

Later in the month, the team [published a policy brief](#) which they shared with MSPs and stakeholders at the Scottish Parliament. The team also welcomed stakeholders to both an in person and online event where colleagues from social work, third sector, education, residential care and universities discussed how we can better support young men's mental health. Finally, the Young People's Forum were involved in a Q&A session following performances of 'Mentology' by Polmont Youth Theatre, as they had given their input to the creation of the show. The Men Minds project was shortlisted for Project of the Year at the UK National Men and Boys Awards, a fantastic recognition of this innovative and impactful project.

Continuing the work of the Men Minds project, we launched the Young Men Minds programme at a conference hosted by Glasgow City Council Education

Figure 9 - Front cover of the *Men Minds* comic.



Services in the City Chambers. 180 delegates attended from every secondary school in Glasgow (including more than 110 pupils) coming together to hear about the Men Minds methods and approach. Young men from Men Minds shared their experiences and provided advice and tips to the schools in attendance.

Over the next 12 months, Young Men's Minds groups in each secondary school will engage with other pupils, mentors and teachers - to identify and research the issues affecting boys' wellbeing, and to coproduce solutions together in their schools.

Resources

Reports and articles: In addition to the publications already mentioned, we also published the Evaluation of the Scottish Child Interview Model for Joint Investigative Interviewing.

We submitted an article to *Youth Justice* entitled Towards Child-Centred Justice as a System-Level Paradigm Shift: Conceptualising a New Framework Through the Scottish Whole System Approach, co-authored by Professor Fiona Dyer, Cedric Foussard, and Professor Jennifer Davidson. Fiona Dyer also collaborated with Cedric Foussard and Mariana Perez on a [piece for the Law Gazette](#) on child centred justice which was published in September.

In May 2025, Fiona Dyer was published in the Prison Service Journal. Her piece Reimagining custody for children in Scotland, explored the developments in Scotland from a rights perspective, which influenced change in approaches to children in detention.

Alongside a colleague from the department of Social Work Social Policy, Ross Gibson published an article examining intervention methods in Secure Care.

In Q4, Participation, Engagement and Policy Advisors Erin Hastings and Julia Swann submitted a successful abstract to the anthology Youth and Democratic Processes: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Inclusion, Mattering, and Well-being.

Blogs: thought leadership pieces from our team at CYCJ and guest authors alike proved a popular resource for our audiences again in 2025/26. We published eight blogs on topics from restorative justice, lived experience, psychological safety, and harm prevention. We [marked our 13th anniversary](#) as a University of Strathclyde centre with a blog about the milestones we have achieved in this time. We also published our [annual blog about the National Youth Justice Conference](#), which picked out the themes and highlights from across this event.

Information sheets: these continue to be a vital resource for practitioners to understand specific topics in a digestible, shorter form document. In 2025/26, information sheets covered the following topics: secure care, movement restriction conditions and Police Scotland's planned voluntary interview pathway. We also shared a **factsheet** on the enhanced role of Justice Social work under Section 1 of the Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Act 2023.

Proforma: Alongside colleagues from Education Scotland and Social Work Scotland, we published a proforma document to support social work practitioners to gather relevant information about a child's education, with the aim of upholding children's rights.

Podcasts: In 2025 we took our podcast series, Creative Conversations with CYCJ on to YouTube! Bringing these important conversations to video format as well as audio has helped to reach a wider audience and allowed us to be more creative with how we promote these episodes. This year we had some fascinating conversations, looking at topics such as contextual safeguarding, child centred justice, antisocial behaviour and harmful sexual behaviour.

Communications

In May 2025, Professor Fiona Dyer and Lorraine Gillies were featured in 1919 Magazine, giving their expertise from their co-chairing of the Independent Working Group on Antisocial Behaviour. [In this viewpoint article](#), they discussed their work on the Independent Working Group and the reports that it has published which set out exactly what needs to be done to address this issue.

After the introduction of a dispersal zone in the centre of Glasgow, Fiona Dyer was [interviewed by BBC Radio Scotland Drivetime](#), BBC Reporting Scotland and LBC about the plans, highlighting the evidence showing that these zones have been proven ineffective in tackling antisocial behaviour, and the importance of taking a preventative approach.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, cycj.org.uk attracted 79,424 users, including 77,534 first-time visitors and 8,719 returning visitors. During this period, the website generated 168,444 page views, with users viewing an average of 2.1 pages per visit. The United Kingdom remained the primary source of website traffic, accounting for 44% of all users. Traffic was also received from a diverse international audience, with China (23%), Singapore (12%) and the United States (11%) representing the largest overseas sources.

CYCJ's social media presence continues to grow across our channels. In 2025 we made the decision to concentrate our activity on professional networking site LinkedIn. It has achieved excellent organic growth in this time from 3,182 to 6,539 marking a 105% increase. We have continued to utilise video content to engage our audiences on Facebook and Instagram, which has resulted in modest growth in following across both channels. Instagram followers increased from 877 to 1,012 (15%), while Facebook followers rose from 1,650 to 1,788 (8%).

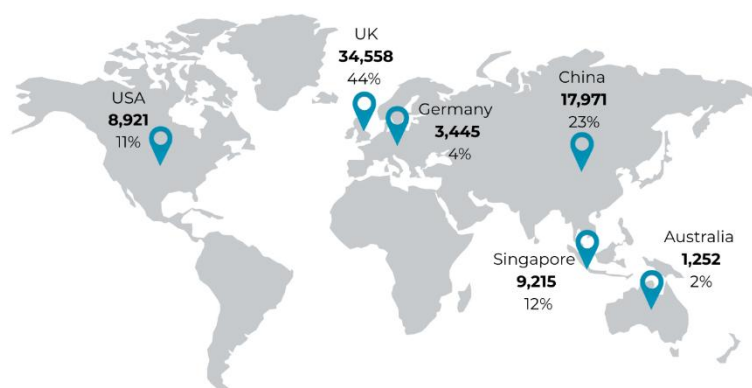


Figure 10 - Geographic distribution of CYCJ website users by country, 2025/26.

We also engaged with our audiences via email this year, providing a monthly update on all our work and opportunities from our partners via the eBulletin. This newsletter reached a milestone in March 2026 as we sent out issue 150 to subscribers. In 2025/26, we sent a total of 54,325 emails to our subscribers and have a consistently low unsubscribe rate compared to the industry standard for the non-profit sector.



Figure 11 - CYCJ 2025-2026 in numbers

Governance and people

In Q3, Martin Dorchester stepped down from our Executive Governance Group, and in Q4, Laura Buchan who represented Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, was replaced by Rachel Weir.

CYCJ's Associates Scheme welcomed new members Dr Tim Chapman, whose specialism in restorative justice is a great asset to this group, alongside Dr Samantha Burns who has an expertise in participation and had connected with Scottish practitioners at the 2025 National Youth Justice conference.

This year we welcomed Sharon McGinty as our Secure Care Practice Development Advisor. Our participation team expanded this year, as we welcome Orielle Taylor as Participation Lead and Haley Sneed as Participation and Engagement Advisor. Ruby Kay Dalwood joined us as Administrative Assistant, covering whilst Elizabeth Paterson is on maternity leave. We also welcomed Kirsty Deacon as our new research associate, who is working across several research projects.

Our research team hosted Kemal Saruhan, who completed a 4-month placement as a visiting researcher from Turkey from September to January. In Q4 we welcomed Craig Houston as research intern, to examine the link between antisocial behaviour and school exclusion.

Gina McNulty completed her two-year student placement with us, working in the participation team and research team members and Leyla Kerlaff and Holly Bird finished with the team in September.

In August, our dearly missed colleague, Dr Ruby Whitelaw, was awarded the Advocating equality, diversity and inclusion medal at the Strathclyde Medal Awards.



Children and Young People's
Centre for Justice

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