

REPORT

Education, violence and the SEND system in England and Wales: a policy and practice review

Baz Ramaiah, Conor Carleton, Róisín Killick (The Centre for Education and Youth), Dr Hilary Emery, Dr Alice Tawell, Dr Ian Thompson (Department for Education, The University of Oxford), with specialist expert input from Margaret Mulholland (ASCL)

May 2025



The Centre
for Education
& Youth



Contents

1. Executive summary	3
2. Background	10
3. Methodology	12
3.1 Overview.....	12
3.1.1 Research questions	12
3.2 Rapid literature review	12
3.3 The advisory group	14
3.4 Limitations	16
4 Findings	17
4.1 Overview of the literature	17
4.2 Why are children who are cautioned or sentenced for a serious violence offence likely to receive an EHCP later than children who do not offend?.....	17
4.3 What are the current challenges in the SEND system and the ALN system preventing support for children at risk of violence or already involved in the justice system?	21
4.4 How can we improve the identification of SEND and support given to children with SEND across England and Wales, specifically for those children at risk of serious violence and those already involved in the YJS?	26
4.5 Is there evidence of racial inequality in SEND and ALN identification and support across England and Wales? Is there evidence of other inequalities in access to SEND support, especially for groups that may be at higher risk of involvement in violence?.....	29
5 Insights for practice	32
6 References.....	39
Appendix 1 – Prisma Diagram for Rapid Literature Review.....	47

1. Executive summary

Background

- There is a high prevalence of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)¹ among children in the Youth Justice System (YJS) in England and Wales. Social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH) is the most common SEND among children cautioned or sentenced for a serious violence offence (The Department for Education, 2023). Some have argued that the prevalence of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) is also particularly high (Holland, Hutchinson and Peacock, 2022; Welsh Parliament, 2023).
- Some researchers argue that cognitive, language and emotional regulation needs may make some children with SEND more vulnerable to participation in violence (Hughes, Williams & Chitsabesan, 2017). SEND can also affect a child's journey through the YJS, increasing their likelihood of reoffending (Hughes & Peirse-O'Byrne, 2016). It is, therefore, vital that children with SEND who are at risk of involvement in violence or are already in the justice system receive high-quality support for their needs
- Current SEND support in England and Wales is grounded in the Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) and Individual Development Plan (IDP) systems. However, despite these systems being in place, children with SEND are often being failed by both systems in ways that may increase the risk of their offending (Youth Justice Board, 2022; Ofsted, 2024).
- The Youth Endowment Fund has, therefore, commissioned this research to understand the challenges in the SEND system and the YJS and how they can be overcome to provide children with SEND who are at risk of, or already involved in, violence with better support.

Methodology

- **Our research set out to answer four research questions:**
 - Why are children who are cautioned or sentenced for a serious violence offence likely to receive an EHCP (or an IDP in Wales) later than children who do not offend?
 - What are the current challenges in the SEND system and the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system preventing support for children at risk of violence and those already involved in the YJS?
 - How can we improve the identification of SEND and support given to children with SEND across England and Wales, specifically for those children at risk of serious violence and those already involved in the YJS?
 - Is there evidence of racial inequality in SEND and ALN identification and support across England and Wales? Is there evidence of other inequalities in access to SEND support, especially for groups that may be at higher risk of involvement in violence?
- **To answer these research questions, we used three research methods:**
 - **Rapid literature review:** This is a rapid search, retrieval, sifting and synthesis of literature relevant to our research questions from across four

¹ Throughout this report we will use 'SEND' to refer to both SEND in England and ALN in Wales

databases. Our process produced 61 pieces of literature that are reviewed in this report.

- **Expert advisory group interviews:** We recruited an advisory group of 11 individuals with experience as researchers or practitioners or other professional expertise in SEND and violence, as well as two young people with lived experience of these themes. All 11 participated in semi-structured interviews on their experience and attitudes related to our research questions.
- **Expert advisory group panels:** We convened the full advisory group at research inception to shape our approach towards the research and after data collection and analysis to workshop and co-produce the report's recommendations.
- **Findings from all three methods have been synthesised** to produce the overall findings and insights for practice in this report.

Why are children who are cautioned or sentenced for a serious violence offence likely to receive an EHCP/IDP later than children who do not offend?

- **Children who offend may present with challenging behaviour in school, which is not considered by educational staff as a marker of a potential undiagnosed SEND.**
 - Children who offend often have SEMH, SLCN or another SEND that affects their communication in ways that lead them to behave aggressively or in ways that can be viewed by teachers as defiant. Similarly, inhibited executive function and low levels of cognitive empathy may contribute to children with SEND being vulnerable to engaging in more risky behaviour in schools.
 - When SEND does lead to challenging behaviour in schools, there is evidence that education staff may treat this behaviour exclusively with school disciplinary processes without pursuing a diagnosis or trying to understand a potential underlying, undiagnosed SEND. This can lead to these children with SEND who go on to offend, therefore, not being put forward for EHCP assessment and not receiving one until later than their non-offending peers. This analysis is supported by findings that children with a SEND who have not been awarded an EHCP score higher on measures of conduct and emotional problems in the research literature.
- **Children involved in or vulnerable to violence are less present in school, reducing the number of touchpoints with educational services where they may be put forward for EHCP assessment.**
 - Detailed analysis by the Department for Education (2023) finds that children in England cautioned or sentenced for a serious violence offence are more likely than those who don't offend to have been suspended from school multiple times (often at a young age), have been persistently absent from school, not be registered or on the roll of any school whatsoever or be permanently excluded between years 7 and 10.
 - Other analysis also finds that children who offend are more likely to have moved schools in the middle of the academic year or to have moved to a school in a different local authority during their time in secondary school.
 - These disrupted education journeys can mean children spend less time in the education system in which they could come into contact with professionals who could spot markers of SEND and put the children forward

for EHCP assessment. Equally, movement between areas and schools can also mean a loss of trusted relationships and information that is key to the initiation of the SEND assessment process.

- **Children involved in or vulnerable to violence are part of demographic groups that generally experience challenges in accessing and navigating systems within public services.**
 - Some evidence suggests that children with an underlying SEND are less likely to receive an EHCP if they live in an area of high deprivation. This suggests that poverty can be a barrier to receiving an EHCP as well as a predictor of participation in violence.
 - Children in poverty may have parents whose socioeconomic circumstances mean that they are unable to act as the kind of parent advocate that is central to securing an EHCP assessment in the current system.
 - Attitudes towards SEND and the social stigma associated with it may act as a barrier for some communities, e.g. Gypsy, Roma and Travellers, from accessing SEND assessment services.

What are the current challenges in the SEND and ALN system preventing support for children at risk of violence or those already involved in the YJS?

- **Staff across the YJS often lack knowledge and understanding of how to accommodate and support children with SEND.**
 - The police lack training in working with children with SEND, leading to escalations that make children more likely to be pushed into the criminal justice system rather than towards a youth diversion programme. These escalations can also be traumatic for a child, for example, the use of physical restraint on a child with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
 - There is often a lack of awareness around SEND in the wider YJS. Where there is an awareness, this can often be superficial. This lack of understanding can lead to the misapplication of SEND screening tools, leading to an underdiagnosis of needs.
- **There is a widespread lack of adaptation of education and youth justice services to the needs of children with SEND.**
 - Schools may be struggling to accommodate the needs of children with SEND. This may include struggling to give children with SEND a sense of belonging or the academic support they need. This can lead to social isolation, disengagement and increased risks of violence. Schools may also find it challenging to make extra-curricular activities accessible to children with SEND, increasing the vulnerability of these children to recruitment to criminal exploitation.
 - The YJS often fail to make explanations of rights, entitlements and implications of arrests clear and accessible to children with SEND, especially those with SLCN and hidden disabilities. Even when a diagnosis is known, the YJS may not adapt processes, such as interviews, to the language skills and needs of children with SEND.
 - The education offered in youth offender institutions (YOIs) is typically not adapted for children with SEND, with major issues of staff capacity, capability and resourcing preventing this accommodation.

- **A lack of early identification of SEND in children at risk of or involved in violence leads to a lack of early intervention to support them with their needs.**
 - A lack of awareness around SLCN in secondary schools may lead to these needs going unidentified. Similarly, SEMH is often not identified until a child is a teenager. As a result, children with an underlying SEND and at risk of violence may not receive support as early as they could.
 - Multiple pieces of evidence show that children often enter the YJS without their SLCN having been previously identified. Earlier identification and intervention could prevent these children from ever offending or set up YJS to provide better support for these children if they do offend.
- **There are frequent challenges with information sharing and coordination across the multiple agencies working with children with SEND.**
 - The movement of information between agencies can often be slow and incomplete and can require a lot of individual effort from staff in the YJS.
 - This issue of information sharing extends to children's resettlement after incarceration, with these children's education, employment and training destinations not knowing about their SEND prior to their arrival and, therefore, not providing sufficient specialised support.
 - The multi-agency system can lead to inefficiencies and funding challenges that frustrate effective cross-sector working.

How can we improve the identification of SEND and support given to children with SEND across England and Wales, specifically for those children at risk of serious violence and those already involved in the YJS?

- **Co-location of practitioners such as speech and language therapists (SALTs) and educational psychologists in the youth justice and youth offending services improves the ability of these services to identify and support children with SEND.**
 - We reviewed a large amount of evidence on the potential positive impact and benefits of co-location for children with SEND who enter the YJS.
 - Co-location of SALTs, psychologists and health teams within the youth justice process has supported improved speed, seamlessness and efficiency of SEND assessments. This includes improvements to systems for onward referral and routine uses of standard assessment batteries, such as AssetPlus.
 - Co-located experts have been reported as effective in supporting tailored training on working with children with SEND to YJS and Youth Offending Team (YOT) staff in a way that has been perceived to improve support for children with SEND.
 - Co-located experts have also supported the adaptation of programmes and practices in the YJS and YOTs to the needs of children with SEND.
 - Co-location can also support new types of coordinated, cross-sector action in preventing children with SEND from getting involved in violence (such as the work of the Margate Task Force).
- **Early identification of SEND can support high-quality early interventions for children at risk of or involved in violence.**
 - There is a wide consensus across the literature and between experts on the need for earlier identification and intervention for children with SEND who are at risk of involvement in violence.

- It is possible that using statutory school readiness assessments as a part of SEND screening can support the early identification of needs, with 'SEND passports' being used so these needs can be quickly communicated to the services a child comes into contact with.
- However, there are perceived risks around early identification, such as the potential for harmful labelling of children with SEND.
- **There are some adaptations of processes and programmes in the YJS, which effectively support children with SEND.**
 - Some YJS professionals are successfully making their programmes, approach to communicating and general systems much more accessible to children with SEND.

Is there evidence of racial inequality in SEND and ALN identification and support across England and Wales? Is there evidence of other inequalities in access to SEND support, especially for groups that may be at higher risk of involvement in violence?

- **Boys in England who are from certain ethnic groups or are growing up in poverty are more likely to have an identified SEND.**
 - Children who are Black or of Mixed ethnic background are more likely to have an ASD diagnosis than their peers from White backgrounds. Aside from ethnicity, pupils who are on free school meals or do not have English as an additional language are also more likely to receive an ASD diagnosis. Despite this overall pattern, Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire, an area of low deprivation, had the highest ASD diagnosis rate in England between 2015 and 2017.
 - Children who are of Black Caribbean and Pakistani ethnic backgrounds are more likely than their White peers to be identified as having learning difficulties and other SENDs. Boys of Black Caribbean ethnicity are considerably more likely to have an SEMH diagnosis than their White peers. However, when poverty and other socioeconomic factors are controlled for, White children are more likely than any other ethnic group to receive a diagnosis of any SEND (except for SEMH, where boys of Black Caribbean ethnicity remain overrepresented). This suggests that poverty plays a major role in mediating SEND identification.
 - SLCN diagnoses are significantly more common among children who are of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller or Black African backgrounds compared to White British children. Equally, SLCN is more common among children living with socioeconomic disadvantage.
- **There is a lack of robust evidence on the causes of racial and other demographic disparities in SEND identification.**
 - It is possible that some of the racial differences in identification may be due to implicit biases against certain racial groups that are derived from the long history of racism in the UK.
 - The experience of being racialised may also lead to SEND diagnoses – for example, the impact of intergenerational poverty on families of Black Caribbean ethnicity may lead to anger, frustration and behaviours related to conflict that are diagnosed as SEMH.

Insights for practice

- Based on our review of the evidence, we believe there are three types of insights for practice that should be pursued by the government:
 - Improving support in the education system to prevent children with SEND from participating in violence
 - Improving support for children with SEND in the YJS to improve pathways away from reoffending
 - Reconsidering how education, justice and social services can grow to become universally inclusive to all children, including those with SEND at risk of youth violence
- **Improving support in the education system to prevent children with SEND from participating in violence**
 - The government should fund a pilot programme of co-locating services, such as SALTs or youth workers, in mainstream schools in areas with a high incidence of violence.
 - Ofsted should update its area-level SEND inspection framework to drive improved information sharing about children with SEND at risk of or involved in violence within and between areas.
 - The government should improve support for SLCN in schools by investing in early intervention and scaffolding teaching that accommodates SLCN.
 - The Department for Education should collaborate with schools, the youth sector and SEND experts to develop guidance on how to support children with SEND so that they feel a stronger sense of belonging at school.
 - Official bodies should collaborate on an inquiry into racial disparities in SEND diagnoses and issue recommendations on reducing any identified systemic bias.
 - The government should create a register of children who are not in school and support local councils in using this new system to support SEND identification for children who are less present in school.
- **Improving support for children with SEND in the YJS to improve pathways away from reoffending**
 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and Ofsted should produce a joint strategy for improving the experiences and outcomes of children with SEND in the YJS.
 - Professional bodies for police officers, solicitors and magistrates should create standards and training to improve support for children with SEND during custody, court and legal procedures.
 - The Home Office should collaborate with the Department for Education to fund and deliver the creation of a specialist SEND intermediary role to work within YOIs.
 - The government should reform its YOI rules to remove barriers for children with SEND in custody from accessing education (particularly Keep Apart lists).
 - The government should invest in understanding and overcoming the barriers YOTs experience in using co-location, with the aim of supporting more widespread uptake of co-location approaches.
- **Reconsidering how education, justice and social services can grow to become universally inclusive to all children, including those with SEND at risk of youth violence**
 - As part of a longer-term vision, the government should further investigate and invest in increasing the universal accessibility of public services,

including making school curricula and assessments more inclusive, overcoming systemic racism in public services and delivering an ambitious strategy for eliminating poverty.

2. Background

SEND in the youth justice system

In the UK, a child is considered to have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) if they have a disability or difficulties with learning in school which require specialised support (Department for Education, 2015). There is a high prevalence of SEND among children involved in the Youth Justice System (YJS) in England and Wales. Official figures show that children with social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH) are nearly twice as likely to be cautioned or sentenced for a serious youth violence offence than peers without SEMH (Department for Education, 2023). Other figures over the last decade suggest that as many as 46% of children who have offended may have a possible or borderline intellectual disability, 30% have clinically diagnosed attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (British Psychological Society, 2015), 23% have learning difficulties and 15% have autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (Hughes, Peirse & O'Byrne, 2016). Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) are perceived to be especially prevalent, with estimates ranging between 60 and 90% for all children in the YJS having SLCN (Welsh Parliament, 2023). It is also possible that these figures fail to capture a large number of children in the YJS whose needs fall just below a formal SEND diagnosis (Hughes, Williams & Chitsabesan, 2017).

This high SEND prevalence has led researchers to argue that the cognitive, language and emotional regulation impairments some children with SEND have may make them more vulnerable to participation in violence and entry into the YJS. Some children with SEND may struggle to discern real friendships, making them vulnerable to criminal exploitation (Thompson, 2019). The social isolation experienced by many children with SEND may make them vulnerable to recruitment into gangs (Children's Commissioner's Office, 2019). The hyperactivity, impulsivity and poor emotional regulation associated with SEND, such as ADHD or SEMH, may put children with these needs at higher risk of criminal and violent behaviours (Hughes et al., 2012).

SEND can also have a strong impact on a child's journey through the YJS. Children with SLCN and ASD often have particular difficulty understanding the technical language involved in court proceedings and can struggle to understand instructions given to them by police, officials and YJS staff (Parsons & Sherwood, 2016). Children with SEND may continue to be vulnerable to bullying and exploitation in young offender institutions (YOIs) (Hughes & O'Byrne, 2016). Children with SEND can also struggle to access and benefit from programmes delivered by YJS that can support their successful resettling and reduce the likelihood of them reoffending (Mitchell et al., 2011).

Given these issues, there is good reason to believe that improved support for children with SEND could decrease the likelihood of them participating in violence and entering the YJS. For those who do enter it, better provision could improve children with SEND's safety during their journey through the YJS and reduce their likelihood of reoffending. It is, therefore, vital that children with SEND who are at risk of or involved in violence receive high-quality support for their needs.

Current support for children with SEND

At present, the system for SEND support in England is grounded in the Children and Families Act 2014, which created the system of 'SEN support' and 'Education and Health Care Plans' (EHCPs). Children are eligible for SEN support if their school believes them to have an SEND. If a child has needs which exceed the provision of SEN support then

they can be more formally assessed for an EHCP. An EHCP creates access to cross-sector funding and accountability for that child to be supported with their needs until the age of 25. In Wales, 2020 legislation created the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system. SEND is now rebadged as ALN in Wales, with the current ALN Transformation Programme aiming to unify ALN support across schools, pupil referral units and further education.

However, this current support does not appear to be sufficiently accessible to children at risk of or involved in violence. While children with an EHCP are less likely to offend than children without an EHCP, children who become involved in violence often receive an EHCP at a later age than their peers who do not participate in violence (Department for Education, 2023). Similarly, it has been reported that children often only receive an assessment for SEND, such as SLCN, when they first come into contact with the YJS (Hopkins, Clegg & Stackhouse, 2016). Current provisions for children with SEND in the YJS have also been a source of considerable concern for official bodies (Children's Commissioners Office, 2019; Youth Justice Board, 2022; Ofsted, 2024). These worries are situated against a background of official concern that the SEND system in England produces poor outcomes for children with SEND, has low levels of support from parents and is financially unsustainable (National Audit Office, 2024).²

About this report

As a result of these concerns with the current provision and the vital need to support children with SEND who are vulnerable to or involved in violence, there is an urgent need to understand challenges in the SEND and ALN systems and the YJS and how these can be overcome. In this context, the Youth Endowment Fund has commissioned this report to develop insights for practice that can lead to better support for children who have SEND or ALN and are at risk of becoming or have become involved in violence.

² While undeniably very important, our report focuses on issues beyond SEND funding in the education and youth justice sectors

3. Methodology

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 Research questions

Our research process was guided by four research questions:

1. Why are children who are cautioned or sentenced for a serious violence offence likely to receive an EHCP (or an Individual Development Plan in Wales) later than children who do not offend?
2. What are the current challenges in the SEND system and the ALN system preventing support for children at risk of violence and those already involved in the YJS?
3. How can we improve the identification of SEND and support given to children with SEND across England and Wales, specifically for those children at risk of serious violence and those already involved in the YJS?
4. Is there evidence of racial inequality in SEND and ALN identification and support across England and Wales? Is there evidence of other inequalities in access to SEND support, especially for groups that may be at higher risk of involvement in violence?

3.1.2 Overview of methods

In order to answer the above four research questions, we used the three research methods set out in Table 1. We discuss each research method in more detail in the following subsections.

Table 1 - Overview of research methods

Method	Overview
Rapid literature review	This is a rapid search, retrieval, sifting and synthesis of literature relevant to our research questions from across four databases. Our process produced 61 pieces of literature that are reviewed in this report.
Expert advisory group interviews	We recruited an advisory group of 11 individuals with experience as researchers or practitioners or other professional expertise in SEND and violence, as well as two young people with lived experience of these themes. All 11 participated in short interviews on their experiences and attitudes related to our research questions.
Expert advisory group panels	We convened the full advisory group at research inception to shape our approach towards the research and after data collection and analysis to workshop and co-produce the report's insights for practice.

3.2 Rapid literature review

Our rapid literature review aimed to identify relevant, available literature that would inform answers to the four questions guiding this research.

'Society should ensure that all children and young people make a fulfilling transition to adulthood'

3.2.1 Defining key terms

We defined the key terms and the corresponding scope of this literature review through discussion with our expert advisory board. These definitions are described in Table 2.

Table 2 - Definitions of key terms for the literature review

Term	Definition
SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We include all SEND set out in the Department for Education’s guidance on awarding EHCPs (Department for Education, 2015)
Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We adhere to the Youth Endowment Fund’s definition of violence: ‘Violence is the use or threat of intentional physical force. It can include murder, physical assault, sexual assault, harm (or the threat of harm) with a weapon, and robbery’ (Youth Endowment Fund, 2024, p.2). This definition remains deliberately ambiguous as to whether children are victims or perpetrators of violence. We also include criminal exploitation as part of our definition. We exclude violence of children against parents.

3.2.2 Literature search strategy

The following databases were searched in the initial identification of articles for this study: Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest Social Science Premium Collection and the Digital Education Resource Archive. The searches were carried out in each database, and references for the search results were saved as an Excel file. We checked the relevance of each article before deciding to include it as part of our bibliography. We also conducted a hand search to identify relevant documents that were not indexed in electronic databases, including government department websites such as Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) websites. This search produced 597 records; 391 of these records were then removed due to duplication, leaving a total of 206 publications to be screened.

3.2.3 Literature screening and cataloguing strategy

After the initial screening of the 206 abstracts to identify which articles appeared to be relevant, 84 papers were reviewed independently for eligibility for inclusion by two members of the research team, with reasons for exclusion recorded. Inclusion and exclusion criteria are detailed in Table 3. Any disagreements over the application of criteria were resolved by a third reviewer. Thirty-five documents were identified for full review at this stage.

Next, we used a snowball approach to screen articles that were cited in any of our identified and eligible papers and articles. This search identified a further 52 documents, which were, again, independently reviewed for eligibility, and disputes were resolved where necessary. Twenty-four additional eligible documents were identified for full review. Our advisory board recommended two more pieces of literature for our team to review, creating a final total of 61 pieces of literature to be reviewed.

Table 3 – Literature screening criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refers to SEND and youth justice risk or involvement • Refers to children and young people aged up to 18 (papers including under 18s and over 18s will be included) • Was published between 2010 and 2024 • Was published in the English language • Focuses on England and/or Wales or UK-wide if England and Wales are explicitly discussed • Has full text available • Draws on primary or secondary research (including single programme evaluations, secondary data analysis and evidence reviews) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is not available in the English language (translation of the language of publication not available - time and cost constraints) • Includes only individuals above 18 years old • Does not present empirical evidence • Focuses on victims of crime • Focuses on adolescent-to-parent violence.

3.2.4 Data extraction and synthesis strategy

Two members of the research team conducted data extraction on the 61 pieces of literature. We undertook this using a bespoke literature review matrix, extracting data on detailed information, including data relevant to the study’s research questions, study population, research methodology and analysis of the quality of the research findings. We then synthesised the extracted data, organising our findings by research question.

3.3 The advisory group

3.3.1 Overview

We recruited an advisory group of 11 individuals with expertise in SEND and violence or lived experience in these areas for involvement throughout our research. The purpose of the advisory group was threefold:

1. To ensure our research methodology was grounded in the best available expertise on SEND and violence – for example, in the choices of database and inclusion/exclusion criteria for the rapid literature review.
2. To provide authoritative expert responses to aspects of our research questions that the literature does not presently answer.
3. To use their expert insight to shape our research and policy recommendations into what is practical and desirable for the wider SEND and violence sectors.

The advisory group was mostly recruited by drawing on the research team’s extensive networks in the education and violence space. The two young people in the group were recruited from The Centre for Education & Youth’s (CFEY) Young Collective, a specially

‘Society should ensure that all children and young people make a fulfilling transition to adulthood’

recruited group of 40 young people that the CFEY works with as research participants and peer researchers on a regular basis. Table 4 provides more details on the backgrounds and expertise of the board.

Table 4 - Overview of advisory board members

Type of expertise in SEND and violence	Name	Background
Practitioners	Alistair Crawford	Co-chair of the National Network of Special School Providers Whole school SEND representative, East Midlands and South Yorkshire
	Katherine Walsh	Director of Inclusion, River Learning Trust Whole school SEND representative, South Central England and North West London
	Lisa Baldestone	Headteacher, South Cumbria Pupil Referral Service Alternative provision representative, ASCL
Researchers	Professor Hannah Smithson	Director, Manchester Centre for Youth Studies Co-convenor, Greater Manchester Youth Justice Partnership
	Jo Hutchinson	Director of SEND and additional needs, The Education Policy Institute
	Lesley Nelson-Addy	Education manager, The Runnymede Trust
Formal bodies	Philippa Stobbs OBE	Former assistant director for the Council for Disabled Children
	Dunston Patterson	Former youth justice advisor, the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales
	Barbara Peacock	SEND improvement advisor, Local Government Association
Lived experience	Demetri Addison	Lived experience of SEND or youth violence
	Grace Thompson	Lived experience of SEND or youth violence

Individuals from the advisory board were consulted on an ad hoc basis throughout the research process for their expert insights into the emerging findings of our evidence review. Further to this, they were each interviewed to explore their experiences and attitudes in relation to our research questions and participated in two meetings of the full advisory board.

3.3.2 Expert advisory group interviews

Each member of the advisory board participated in a short semi-structured interview that was conducted online. Questions in the interview scripts were developed by drawing on emerging findings from the rapid literature review, probing further into areas related to research questions where there were noticeable gaps in the literature and testing policy and practice recommendations emerging from the literature. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and thematically analysed. All interviewees provided informed consent to participate in the interview process.

3.3.3 Expert advisory group panels

The whole advisory board met online at project inception to share insights that shaped the development of the initial research protocol for the rapid literature review. This included insights related to definitions of SEND and violence, appropriate inclusion and exclusion criteria, and recommendations for databases to search. An early draft of this final report with a long list of potential recommendations was circulated to the advisory board towards the end of the research and reporting process. This draft was used to structure an in-person meeting of the whole advisory board, where the long list of recommendations was discussed, stress-tested and winnowed down to the recommendations at the end of this report.

3.4 Limitations

We recognise that our methodology has some limitations. While conducted rigorously, we used a rapid approach rather than a systematic approach for our literature review. This means that our review does not exhaustively cover all the available and relevant literature on SEND and violence. Similarly, our advisory board represents a wide range of experts relevant to our research questions but did not include anyone with expertise in the ALN system in Wales. As a consequence, our report focuses more on SEND and violence in England than in Wales. We believe that future research can develop the present findings to further extract differences between the English and Welsh systems and contexts for SEND and violence.

4 Findings

4.1 Overview of the literature

In total, we reviewed 61 texts that were retrieved and catalogued and met our inclusion criteria. Of the primary research we reviewed, 16 of these pieces exclusively used quantitative methods (typically secondary data analysis of large government datasets), 13 exclusively used qualitative methods (either interviews or focus groups) and 10 used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. Further to this, nine of the reviewed primary research documents used a literature review methodology.

Thirty-four of the reviewed documents were articles published in peer-reviewed research journals. Twelve pieces of literature were reports from the government of England or Wales, and six pieces were reports published by third sector organisations or think tanks. Nine pieces of literature were position papers published by nongovernmental organisations, representative bodies or government officials (such as the Children's Commissioner).

Thirty-two pieces of literature either involved primary data collection with children or analysed secondary data from children. Twenty-one pieces of literature involved data collection with adults, typically Youth Offending Team (YOT) staff or YJS staff, though one study exclusively interviewed educational psychologists and another conducted focus groups with the parents of children who had offended. Twenty-three pieces of literature focused on all types of SEND, while two specifically examined ASD. Fourteen pieces of literature focused on SLCN, likely a reflection of the high base rate of SLCN among children who offend.

We also note that 33 pieces of literature used study populations or were based entirely on children and the YJS in England. While 25 papers covered England and Wales, it was observable that these papers tended to skew more towards England in their focus. Only three reviewed papers had an exclusive focus on Wales. As a consequence, our findings for each research question tend to focus more on evidence related to children with SEND and involvement in violence and youth justice in England. The present paucity of literature on ALN in Wales and the related lack of literature comparing approaches to SEND and ALN between England and Wales should prompt more research to be conducted in this area.

4.2 Why are children who are cautioned or sentenced for a serious violence offence likely to receive an EHCP later than children who do not offend?

This research question was prompted by an analysis from the Department for Education showing that children who receive a caution or sentence for a serious violence offence typically receive an EHCP around the age of 13. By contrast, children with an EHCP who do not offend typically receive this EHCP at the much younger age of four (Department for Education, 2023). While the government's analysis describes this disparity, the data do not offer much explanation as to why this gap in awarding ages exists. Our review sought to draw on evidence to propose some explanations.

Children who offend may present with challenging behaviour in school, which is not considered a marker of a potential unidentified SEND by education staff

Several pieces of reviewed literature highlighted that some SENDs can lead the children with them to present with challenging behaviours in schools. This is especially the case if these SENDs have not been identified and are not properly supported.

The strongest evidence supporting this relationship between challenging behaviour and SEND underidentification was found by Lee et al. (2024) in a cohort study of 2,738 children in England. The researchers found that of the children within the sample who were assessed to have an underlying intellectual disability, those who had not been awarded an EHCP tended to have higher scores for conduct problems and emotional problems on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (a common instrument for assessing children's social service and health needs). This suggests that presenting with more challenging behaviours in schools can lead to a lower likelihood of EHCP assessment and award, although the evidence only shows an association rather than any causation. However, interviewees also echoed this finding, noting that schools often do not think of putting children with disruptive behaviours forward to the local authority for EHCP assessment because of ongoing disciplinary procedures involving the child within the school.

Other literature evidence provides similar support for the existence of the relationship between challenging behaviours and perceptions of underlying SEND. Interviewing 31 children with SLCN on court orders, Hopkins, Clegg & Stackhouse (2016) found that 22% of interviewees reported struggling to understand teachers at schools, with 61% avoiding communication with teachers as a method of resolving conflict. The researchers note that this behaviour may be interpreted as defiance and refusal to cooperate with teachers. The same research team also used language skills assessment data from 52 children in the YJS with probable SLCN to identify that most of their sample especially struggled with expressive language skills, which are used to communicate needs and wants and to explain behaviours to others. The researchers note that children with these expressive language difficulties may become frustrated with their inability to communicate their needs to education staff, resulting in aggressive behaviour (Hopkins, Clegg & Stackhouse, 2018).

In a 2017 literature review of neurodevelopmental disorders and youth custody in England and Wales, researchers found evidence in the clinical psychology literature that the limited executive function (a set of cognitive skills that includes planning and self-management) associated with ADHD may lead to weak behavioural inhibition and more risk-taking behaviours in school (Hughes, Williams & Chitsabesan, 2017). The researchers also found that low levels of cognitive empathy (the ability to take the perspective of others) among children with ASD can lead to harmful behaviours against peers due to the inability to fully understand the impact of their actions (Hughes, Williams & Chitsabesan, 2017). Interviewing nine Youth Offending Services staff, Games, Curran & Porter (2012) also reported a tendency to underestimate the presence of SLCN in children who displayed behavioural difficulties.

When SEND does lead to challenging behaviour, literature and interviews point to a trend of education staff exclusively treating this behaviour using school disciplinary procedures rather than as a potential symptom of an unidentified SEND. Drawing on 124 semi-structured interviews with practitioners, managers and experts directly involved in the youth justice process, Baldry et al. (2017) report that many children had their behaviours treated as the outcome of conscious deliberation to act defiantly or disruptively rather than as an involuntary consequence of their SEND-related needs being unmet. Zumu, Imafidon & Bellio (2016) conducted five focus groups across

London with young people who had contact with the YJS and reported finding that many of these young people had been treated like bad kids so routinely by teachers that they had internalised this idea and did not seek out support opportunities for extra help from education staff.

Two of our advisory group interviewees with expertise in local authority SEND processes and race in education, respectively, noted that there could be a racial element to this treatment of challenging behaviour in schools, with boys from Black ethnic backgrounds being more likely to have disruptive behaviours treated as deliberate defiance rather than the involuntary consequence of unmet needs. This aligns with research published by HM Inspectorate of Probations on how Black boys' behaviours can often be adultified in this way, leading to circumstances which make them more vulnerable to lower levels of child protection and support within public services (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons [HMIP], 2022).

As a result of this approach to understanding behaviour, it is possible that children with an undiagnosed SEND who present with challenging behaviours in schools might not be put forward for EHCP assessment. As described in Section 4.3 of this report, many children who go on to offend often only have their SEND (especially SLCN) identified once they come into contact with the YJS. We may, therefore, view this presentation of challenging behaviours from children with SEND as a plausible cause of later EHCP awarding for children who offend.

Children involved in or vulnerable to violence are less present in school, reducing the number of touchpoints with educational services where they may be put forward for EHCP assessment

The Department for Education's (2023) detailed secondary data analysis of the educational characteristics of all children in England cautioned or sentenced for a serious violence offence found that after controlling for a range of other factors, the children who offend are more likely than those who don't offend to have been suspended multiple times in years 7 to 10. The same model found that children who are permanently excluded during the same secondary school years are twice as likely to offend, with the highest risk for children excluded in year 7. The model similarly found an association between not being registered or on the roll of a school and offending. Clarke (2019) conducted a similar secondary data analysis using screening data from children's entry into the YJS and the National Pupil Database to find that children associated with gangs are more likely to be persistently absent from school.

Interviewees with expertise in the EHCP assessment process told us that schools are the primary feeders of referrals for EHCP assessments to local authorities, suggesting that if a child is less present in school, they are less likely to have their needs recognised and be put forward for EHCP assessment. As a result, children at risk of or involved in violence may receive EHCPs later as a consequence of their typical lack of presence in school.

Further secondary data analysis in the reviewed literature shows that children vulnerable to or involved in violence or associated with gangs are also more likely to have experienced disruptive moves through the education system. For example, Clarke (2019) found that gang-associated children are 55% more likely to have experienced a midyear school move than peers who are not gang associated. The Department for Education's (2023) analysis similarly found that children cautioned or sentenced for a

serious violence offence are more likely to have moved to a school in a different local authority during secondary school and to have been moved to an alternative provision in the middle of a school year. One position paper in particular noted that this issue of midyear moving especially affects Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children, who are also massively overrepresented in the YJS, making up 7% of youth offenders despite making up 0.3% of the number of children in England (HMIP, 2023).

Interviewees drew on their expertise and professional experience to also report that midyear movement around the education system was also often associated with aspects of social deprivation – for example, children living in temporary accommodation, experiencing homelessness or fleeing domestic abuse. Interviewees also highlighted that this movement around the education system often meant a loss of long-term trusted relationships between families and education and health services. It was noted by interviewees that this might result in markers and symptoms that might prompt referral for EHCP assessment being less likely to be picked up on by staff working with children who have moved around.

It was also noted briefly by interviewees that the length of the EHCP process (six weeks for a local authority to determine whether an assessment is needed and 20 weeks for an assessment to be conducted) may mean that children who are at risk of or involved in violence who move areas may move during their EHCP certification, resulting in disruption to the process and an EHCP then not being awarded. It is, therefore, plausible that movement around the education system may lead to children at risk of or involved in violence receiving EHCPs later than their peers.

Children involved in or vulnerable to violence are part of demographic groups that generally experience challenges in accessing and navigating systems within public services

We reviewed evidence strongly suggesting that later EHCP awarding for children sentenced or cautioned for violence may be a consequence of these children and their families having general issues accessing educational and other public services. Lee et al.'s (2024) cohort study of 2,738 children found that regardless of whether a child has a probable neurodisability, they are less likely to have an EHCP if they live in an area that is in the top decile for multiple deprivations. This was especially the case in some regions, such as Yorkshire and the Humber, the West Midlands and London. This suggests that poverty, a common barrier to accessing public services (Lee et al., 2024) and a risk factor for violence (The Department for Education, 2023) may also serve as a barrier to receiving an EHCP.

One process by which poverty may act as a barrier to EHCP access is through the role of parent advocacy in EHCP awarding. Interviewees told us that children with a suspected SEND often require at least one parent to act as a strong advocate to their child's school and local authority SEND services to initiate the EHCP assessment process. Interviewees working as SEND leads in schools and with experience working in local authorities noted that parents of children living in poverty were often less able to play this parent advocate role due to working multiple jobs or having lower levels of education and experience in navigating the bureaucracy of public sector bodies. As a result, the children of these parents may not receive an EHCP until later than their peers who do have strong parent advocacy.

While we did not see any strong evidence of intergenerational disability in the literature or interviews, one piece of literature based on interviews with leaders from 18 YOTs

(Taylor et al., 2016) reported that several leaders said that children presenting with SLCN often had parents who appeared to have similar SLCN. While speculative, it may be possible that children with SLCN, who are highly overrepresented in the YJS in England and Wales, may have parents with language needs that mean they struggle to access and pursue the EHCP awarding process.

By contrast, we found wider support in interviews for the issue that some communities associated their children being awarded EHCPs and, therefore, having SEND with social stigma. Interviewees told us that GRT families often did not want their children to be considered SEND, as it might be thought of as a weakness that might make their child more vulnerable to bullying by peers. Similarly, GRT families were reported as having concerns that their children receiving an EHCP might increase their contact with public services, such as the police and health services, of which they have negative experiences. Interviewees also told us that this was similar for families of Black ethnic backgrounds. The existence of these stigmas among certain ethnic groups is supported by other literature on the higher rate of negative attitudes towards mental illness among ethnic minorities (Eylem et al., 2020). All these barriers of attitude may lead to parents of children from ethnicities overrepresented in the YJS not supporting the EHCP awarding process, potentially leading to later awarding of these plans.

4.3 What are the current challenges in the SEND system and the ALN system preventing support for children at risk of violence or already involved in the justice system?

Staff across the YJS and youth offending services often lack awareness and understanding of how to accommodate children with SEND

We reviewed a wide range of literature indicating that there is a lack of training and consequent awareness of SEND among professionals who come into contact with children at risk of or involved in violence.

Some of this evidence pertained to teachers in schools. In particular, the Welsh Parliament's (2023) inquiry into SLCN draws on expert witness testimony to conclude that secondary school teachers often have poor awareness of SLCN, therefore failing to spot markers of it and accommodate it within their teaching. Similarly, Hopkins, Clegg and Stackhouse (2018) discuss a lack of awareness of SLCN among teachers in schools as a possible explanation for the number of children entering youth offending services without any prior SLCN diagnosis.

Children with SEND's first contact with the YJS is often through the police. We reviewed four pieces of literature that concluded that there is a lack of awareness of SEND among police, which may lead to poor accommodation of police processes to the needs of children with SEND but may also lead to escalations that can further criminalise a child. Baldry et al. (2017) conducted 124 semi-structured interviews with practitioners, managers and other professionals involved in the YJS and found multiple reports that police are often not sufficiently trained to interact appropriately with children with SEND. Baldry et al. (2017) also quote a survey of 294 police officers conducted in 2016 that found that only 42% of police officers were satisfied with how they managed

interactions with individuals with ASD. Hopkins, Clegg and Stackhouse (2016) also found in their semi-structured interviews with leads from youth offending services across England that this poor accommodation of children with SEND by the police can interact with those children's prior negative attitudes towards the police in ways that can lead to aggressive behaviour towards police, potentially leading to escalations that may require the use of restraint.

Similar findings on a lack of SEND training among the police were found by the Centre for Justice Innovation (2024). From interviews with 22 practitioners and 12 young people involved in youth diversion programmes,³ the researchers found that police often did not consider SEND in their approaches to communicating with children. Day (2022) conducted interviews with 19 neurodivergent children in youth custody or recently released and found that this lack of accommodation sometimes led to children with SEND becoming frustrated and presenting with challenging behaviours that led to escalations with the police that made the children more likely to be pushed into the criminal justice system rather than towards a youth diversion programme. The Centre for Justice Innovation (2024) also found that the use of physical restraint by police during these escalations could also be especially traumatic for children with some SEND, such as ASD.

More broadly, some literature identified a lack of awareness within wider YJS in relation to SEND. Redgate, Dyer and Smith (2022) conducted 22 interviews with YJS staff and found a low level of awareness among staff about SLCN and its impact on children. This sometimes led, in practice, to YJS staff being unaware of available resources, practices or experts that could be used to support children with SLCN. In a 2011 evaluation of an intervention with 72 children with SLCN to improve their speech and language skills, from interviews with YJS practitioners, Gregory and Bryan (2011) found that a superficial understanding of SLCN was common, but a more thorough understanding of the extent of the impact these needs could have on children's experiences of the YJS was often lacking.

In interviews with seven educational psychologists from across England, Cosma and Mulcare (2022) found that where there was better awareness of SEND among youth justice practitioners, youth offending and youth justice staff often lacked the training to effectively identify SEND. For example, the researchers note that staff who were trained to use the AssetPlus tool to screen children entering the YJS for SLCN and other needs often lacked the training to properly apply the tool, especially its more technical aspects. In practice, this led to the under-identification of SENDs and a consequent lack of accommodation of the needs of children with SENDs.

³ Youth diversion programmes are an alternative pathway for children who have offended that does not involve them going to court or entering the YJS.

There is often a lack of adaptation of education and youth justice services to the needs of children with SEND

Several of our expert interviewees reported that schools are often failing to accommodate the needs of children with SEND in a way that puts them at higher risk of involvement in violence. One interviewee reported that children with SEND often feel socially excluded and lack a sense of belonging, sometimes making them vulnerable to being drawn to finding a sense of belonging in gangs. Another interviewee argued that children with SEND are often not being taught by teachers in schools and are instead often taught by teaching assistants. The interviewee noted that when these teaching assistants are poorly trained, this may lead to children with SEND receiving lower-quality teaching than their peers, resulting in them falling further behind academically and, therefore, becoming school refusers. This would mean children spending less time in school, increasing their risk of involvement in violence.

Another interviewee with extensive expertise in campaigning for the rights of children with SEND reported that while schools had become better at adapting teaching and learning to the needs of children with SEND, they were often much weaker at doing the same for extracurricular activities. As a consequence, children with SEND are often unable to participate in activities beyond the school day, potentially putting them at greater risk of coming into contact with opportunities for recruitment into gangs or becoming vulnerable to violence.

The literature we reviewed broadly focused on inadequacies within youth offending and youth justice services in accommodating the needs of children with SEND. This lack of adaptation starts as early as when young people are arrested or enter custody. Parsons and Sherwood (2016) conducted 26 interviews with youth custody personnel, barristers and YOT managers, finding that children with SEND are often not offered explanations of their rights, entitlements and the implications of their arrest that they can understand. This lack of understanding could result in failure to comply with instructions from youth custody staff, leading to escalations and incidents that could be traumatic and stressful for the child. Similarly, in interviews with 19 neurodivergent children in custody or recently released, Day (2022) found that children with foetal alcohol spectrum disorders, SLCN and other SENDs face difficulties in giving narrative accounts during police or youth justice services interviews due to expressive language difficulties. Day (2022) found that the children with SEND in their sample did not believe these language needs had been accommodated during their time in youth custody.

In a literature review covering the experiences in the YJS of children with SLCN, Sowerbutts et al. (2021) found that children with SLCN often struggle to understand the abstract concepts and unfamiliar terminology they encounter within the youth justice process, as well as struggling to communicate socially appropriate emotions during interactions with youth custody staff. Relatedly, children with SLCN often do not receive the support required to properly understand the terms of the youth justice process, court procedures, sentencing and conditions of court orders (Sowerbutts et al., 2021).

'Society should ensure that all children and young people make a fulfilling transition to adulthood'

Our literature review highlighted that children with SEND experience further challenges if they end up entering a YOI. Hughes and O’Byrne (2016) report in their expert position paper that interventions delivered in YOIs to reduce recidivism are often generic and are not adapted to the language and cognitive competencies of children with SEND. Ofsted’s (2024) review of education provision in YOIs concludes that support for SEND is typically poor. Ofsted found that teachers and support staff in YOIs often fail to draw effectively on the information they have about children with SEND’s learning needs. These challenges are presented as a consequence of high staff turnover, with teachers with expertise working with children with SEND often leaving working in YOIs and challenges recruiting new staff with the same expertise. Ofsted also highlighted cultural issues within YOIs, where teaching staff who have been in post for a long time are reluctant to change or adapt practices in light of new training (Ofsted, 2024).

Two of our interviewees also echoed the issue of staffing challenges in the youth offending and justice services as the cause of failures to accommodate children with SEND. One interviewee with strong expertise in youth justice provision argued that speech and language therapists (SALTs) and educational psychologists were often difficult to recruit to support in youth justice settings, as they are viewed as undesirable places to work. Similarly, an interviewee with expertise in local authority SEND provision argued that hiring SALTs and educational psychologists to provide support in YOTs was often a challenge, as such services often lack the resources for recruitment.

A lack of early identification of SEND in children at risk of or involved in violence leads to a lack of early intervention to support them with their needs

We reviewed five pieces of literature that set out the case for the earlier identification of SEND for children at risk of or involved in violence. Holland, Hutchinson and Peacock (2022) conducted secondary data analysis of 1,052 SLCN screening results from children across England entering police custody between 2019 and 2020 and found that while 23% of children entering police custody during this period of time had SLCN, only 16% had a prior SLCN diagnosis. Winstanley, Webb and Conti-Ramsden (2019) used a more comprehensive psycholinguistic assessment battery than the screening tool used by Holland, Hutchinson and Peacock (2022) with 145 children in YOIs. The researchers found that although 80% of the participants had SLCN, only two children had any previous contact with a SALT. In the same study, it was also found that while 36 children who appeared to have SLCN from the assessment battery had an EHCP, none of these children’s EHCPs mentioned SLCN. Both studies note that SLCN can be easily and readily identified earlier and that this earlier identification can help with providing children with SLCN the support they need when making their way through the YJS.

In a comparable study, Bryan et al. (2015) conducted language assessments on 118 children in secure children’s homes (with 40% of the sample admitted to the homes for reasons related to violence) and found that 30% of the sample appeared to have scores suggestive of SLCN despite only two participants having previously had any SLCN diagnosis. Bryan et al. use this point to argue that SLCN is often identified too late for

children at risk of involvement in violence when earlier intervention could support children in moving away from entering the YJS entirely (Bryan et al., 2015).

Two position papers we reviewed also made the case for earlier identification. Heritage, Virag and McCuaig (2011) draw on their experiences working within the youth justice and youth offending services in Derbyshire to argue that earlier identification could prevent children with SEND from entering the YJS, which is typically not well set up to support them. The Children's Commissioner (2020) also argues that poor support for children with SEND and mental health needs within youth custody and YOIs places an imperative on earlier identification and intervention to ensure children with SEND can be supported in pursuing pathways that lead them away from offending.

There are frequent challenges with information sharing and coordination across the multiple agencies working with children with SEND

Five pieces of literature in our evidence review pointed to multi-agency working as a challenge in supporting children with SEND who are at risk of or involved in violence.

Gyateng et al. (2012) conducted interviews with 42 secure estate staff and found that providing appropriate SEND support within the estate was often hampered by the slow process of receiving information on a child's needs from services that had previous contact with the child. When information was received, it was frequently lacking key details. Hughes et al. (2012) drew on a literature review, an expert advisory group and interviews with YOI staff to conclude that children with SEND moving from the community into custody sites within the YJS were often vulnerable to having records and care plans lost in transition. More recently, Ofsted (2024) found that education staff in YOIs often work hard to build an accurate picture of a child's SEND and corresponding support needs, but this requires a lot of individual effort in chasing other services to share this information.

This issue of information sharing extends to when children leave the youth justice process. Ravenscroft and Hobbs (2016) conducted informal interviews with a small number of practitioners involved in the resettlement of children upon their release from the YJS. The researchers found that education or training providers often do not receive key information on the SEND of children recently released from the YJS. This makes it harder for the providers to properly support the child. This lack of accommodation is sometimes related to children with SEND's lack of engagement with their resettlement programme (Ravenscroft & Hobbes, 2016).

More broadly, Taylor et al. (2016) conducted interviews and focus groups with YOTs across Wales and found that the multi-agency system often results in poor efficiencies. For example, SALTs based in a separate clinical team can be costly for YOTs to procure, and their location in a separate sector can lead to longer waiting times for assessment. This issue extends to clinical and educational psychology services as well (Taylor et al., 2016).

4.4 How can we improve the identification of SEND and support given to children with SEND across England and Wales, specifically for those children at risk of serious violence and those already involved in the YJS?

Co-location of practitioners, such as SALTs and educational psychologists, in youth justice and youth offending services improves the ability of these services to identify and support children with SEND

We reviewed a large amount of evidence that pointed to the effectiveness of the co-location of specialist support services for children with SEND in youth justice and youth offending settings. Co-location typically involves physically situating a practitioner, such as a SALT or educational psychologist, in a setting where they come into contact with children who are at risk of or involved in violence. For example, charities working across the UK told a Welsh government inquiry that SALTs work in custody suites in police stations in some parts of England. These SALTs support SLCN diagnosis and the tailoring of the youth custody processes to the needs of children with SLCN (Welsh Parliament, 2023).

Three primary benefits of co-location were highlighted in the evidence we reviewed: facilitating more rapid and seamless assessment of SEND, training other youth offending and youth justice staff, and directly supporting the differentiation of the youth justice process.

Several pieces of literature cite the increased speed and perceived effectiveness of SEND screening as a benefit of co-locating experts. Haines et al. (2012) conducted a mixed methods evaluation of the Youth Justice Liaison and Diversion (YJLD) programme, which situated health teams within the justice system where they would come into contact with children to conduct assessments for SENDs and health problems. The evaluation concluded that the co-location of health teams had improved the ability of YJS to screen for SEND, supporting better onward referral to specialist services (Haines et al., 2012). One of the benefits associated with this streamlined referral process was better mental health outcomes for children who had come into contact with the YJLD programme, with pre and post-surveying results showing a statistically significant decrease in the participating children's levels of depression and self-harm.

In relation to SALTs, Redgate, Dyer and Smith (2022) conducted 15 interviews with YOT staff working with embedded SALTs and heard from all interviewees that the presence of a SALT within the team had reduced waiting times for SLCN diagnoses by weeks. The researchers also found that embedded SALTs were particularly helpful in supporting YOT staff in using AssetPlus, the generic screening tool used to assess children for SLCN, often improving the accuracy of the assessments (Redgate, Dyer and Smith, 2022). In their mixed methods review of 50 YOTs across England and Wales, Frank et al. (2018) similarly found that co-located SALTs improved the speed, efficiency and perceived effectiveness of the use of AssetPlus in YOTs.

In a similar vein, in their interviews with representatives from the 18 YOTs in Wales, Taylor et al. (2016) found that having an embedded SALT who was a continuous point of contact with more specialised speech and language services also reduced waiting times for referrals to those services. In their position paper, the British Psychological Society (2015) similarly reported that embedding psychologists within YOTs also

removed the challenge of multi-agency information sharing, often expediting assessments, referrals and the planning of interventions for children with SEND. More broadly, we reviewed evidence showing that co-located specialists are vital in supporting the day-to-day adaptation of youth offending and youth justice services to the needs of children with SEND. Redgate, Dyer and Smith (2016) found that embedded SALTs were able to develop 'word buster cards', which explain technical terms and concepts involved in the youth justice process in simple terms for children with SLCN. These cards were reported to work well with children with SLCN but also to act as a further prompt to YOT staff to consider how they could adapt their own language to better support children with these needs. Bryan and Gregory (2012) surveyed 21 youth justice staff working as part of a programme that involved co-located and close working of SALTs with children in the YJS, finding that SALTs supported staff in adapting worksheets and re-writing information so that children with SLCN were better able to access them.

Co-location of services also had other benefits discussed in the literature and by interviewees. In their interviews with YOT staff, Redgate, Dyer and Smith (2022) found that working alongside SALTs, psychologists and healthcare professionals created an engaging team mix that made the job more attractive and may have supported better team retention. In their review of 50 YOTs from across England and Wales, Frank et al. (2018) found that the mix of professionals from different disciplines also created the conditions for new coordinated activity. For example, they discuss the Margate Task Force, which includes co-located specialists from the police, welfare services, health, drug intervention agencies and psychological services. The combination of team expertise has allowed the team to conduct a mapping of areas to identify hot spots of particular need for intervention, such as areas of high safeguarding, violence or criminal exploitation risks for children with SEND, to support targeted preventative or early intervention activity in those spots.

Despite these benefits, co-location is not without its challenges. In their review of SLCN support in the YJS, the Welsh Parliament (2023) found that several services in Wales had to cut their embedded SALT due to short-term funding challenges. In a position paper, the Association of Directors for Children's Services (2021) also reflect on funding challenges and the lack of routes of progression for professionals embedded in YOTs. Heritage, Virag and McCuaig (2011) found in their mixed methods review of SALT services in YOTs in Derbyshire that where funding is limited, some settings overcome the issue of funding for SALTs by training up communications champions within YOTs. They provide support across the team in identifying SLCNs, adapting services and referring to external SALTs. However, the researchers note that this approach does not achieve the key benefits to the same extent as SALT co-location (Heritage, Virage & McCuaig, 2011).

Early identification of SEND can support high-quality early interventions for children at risk of or involved in violence

A large amount of literature and many interview responses we received called for early intervention for SEND as a crucial way to help children at risk of or involved in violence. The British Psychological Society (2015) states that SEND screening should happen to a child upon receipt of their second fixed-term exclusion and that this can be supported by training school staff to use SLCN screening tools (such as the relevant elements within AssetPlus). Several studies reported that children who entered the YJS were only receiving a diagnosis for SENDs, such as SLCN, upon entry into the system (Hopkins,

Clegg & Stackhouse, 2016; Winstanley, Webb & Conti-Ramsden, 2019; Holland, Hutchinson & Peacock, 2020). Stavroola et al. (2016) conducted an international literature review on the relationship between SLCN and young offending and concluded that SENDs, such as SLCN, can be identified early in the lives of children who are at risk of violence, and appropriate therapy and interventions can reduce the scale of these needs.

Relatedly, two reports from the Children’s Commissioner have stated that early identification and intervention are essential for supporting children with SEND who are at risk of violence. A 2020 position paper concludes that identifying SEND in the early years phase could ensure consistent preventative measures that stop at-risk children from falling out of education and participating in violence (Children’s Commissioner, 2020). A 2019 report that draws on a literature review and consultations with parents and young people concludes that the government’s Serious Violence Strategy should set out a national plan for improving SEND identification in the early years as a way of reducing the number of children who have unidentified and unsupported SENDs that may lead to them being at greater risk of violence (Children’s Commissioner, 2019).

In terms of what a systematic approach to early SEND identification may look like, Wood et al. (2024) make the case that statutory school entry assessments could be used as a touchpoint for SEND assessment. The school readiness assessment is conducted across England for all children during the reception year and assesses whether a child has reached a good level of development and is school-ready. Wood et al. (2024) conducted secondary data analysis of 53,000 children in the ‘Born in Bradford’ cohort study with entries into the National Pupil Database between 2013 and 2020. Drawing on a logistic regression model, Wood et al. conclude that children’s scores on school readiness assessments are associated with whether they receive a later SEND diagnosis. As a consequence, the researchers conclude that school readiness assessments can be used as a tool for supporting early SEND diagnosis, including acting as a prompt for more formal referral to educational psychologists for comprehensive assessment.

Our expert interviewees held mixed views towards this approach to universal early screening for SEND. There was broad support for the approach among a majority of our interviewees, with one interviewee noting that early screening should be accompanied by a SEND ‘passport’ detailing the child’s needs, which could be easily accessed by other public services that come into contact with the child, especially police and youth justice services. There was also a general emphasis on the fact that early screening would only be valuable if it was accompanied by investment in support and services to meet the needs of children identified as having SEND. However, some interviewees were concerned that early screening may lead to the labelling of children too early, causing them to experience otherwise avoidable stigma from teachers and peers. Two interviewees also discussed how it was more important to create an education system which is more inclusive, reducing the need for more direct SEND identification and intervention.

There are some differentiations of processes and programmes in the YJS, which are effectively supporting children with SEND

We reviewed a small amount of literature that provided examples of how practice within the youth justice service has already been adapted to make it more accessible to children with SEND. Hughes and O’Byrne (2016), in their position paper on children with

neurodisabilities in the YJS, describe how the Good Way programme for children who have committed sexual offences has been adapted to children with learning disabilities that prevent them from applying abstract concepts. Parsons and Sherwood (2016) conducted 26 interviews with youth custody personnel after a pilot to trial a new, more accessible version of the rights and entitlements notices that children see in youth custody. The researchers concluded that the more accessible version improved the communication of detainees' rights and entitlements for children with SEND, with particular credit given to the use of simple, Clipart-style images for each entitlement (Parsons & Sherwood, 2016). The Centre for Justice Innovation (2023) found, across their interviews with 22 youth justice practitioners and 12 young people with SEND, that some diversion interventions have been adapted successfully for children with SEND. These adaptations include flexibility around the timing of sessions, as well as their location and content.

4.5 Is there evidence of racial inequality in SEND and ALN identification and support across England and Wales? Is there evidence of other inequalities in access to SEND support, especially for groups that may be at higher risk of involvement in violence?

Boys in England who are from certain ethnic groups or are growing up in poverty are more likely to have an identified SEND

We reviewed three major pieces of secondary data analysis that converge on the general finding that children who are boys in England who are from certain ethnic groups (especially Black or GRT) and are growing up in socioeconomic disadvantage are more likely to have a diagnosed SEND. Our literature review did not identify any analysis for ALN in Wales. However, it is plausible that overall social, economic and demographic similarities between the two countries suggest that the identified patterns may extend from England to Wales.

Roman-Urrestarazu et al. (2022) analysed data for just over seven million children in the National Pupil Database who had records on the platform between 2014 and 2017. They found that the incidence of ASD is nearly four times higher in boys than girls but also that the incidence is higher for children of Black and Mixed ethnic backgrounds. The researchers similarly found that the incidence of ASD is lowest among children who are Asian or Chinese. Pupils who are on free school meals (FSM) or do not have English as an additional language were also found to be more likely to receive an ASD diagnosis across England.

Roman-Urrestarazu et al. (2022) also identified geographic disparities in the identification of ASD, with the highest rates of diagnosis being in relatively affluent areas. Areas such as Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire and the Cotswolds have the highest ASD diagnosis rates between 2015 and 2017, while the lowest rates of diagnosis were in the Forest of Dean in the same time period. As Tewkesbury has one of the lower indexes for deprivation, the researchers hypothesise that relatively small class sizes in the area (children make up less than 11% of the overall population) may make SEND markers easier for teachers to spot. Interviewees reported that relatively affluent areas, such as Tewkesbury, may also benefit from better-educated parents with more social and economic latitude to act as advocates for their children's EHCP awarding. However,

this characterisation sits at odds with the wider findings of Roman-Urrestarazu et al. (2022) regarding children on FSM being more likely to receive an ASD diagnosis.

In a similar secondary data analysis across all types of SEND, Strand and Lindoff (2021) analysed data entries in the National Pupil Database for 550,000 children aged between five and 11 and identified similar racial disparities as Roman-Urrestarazu et al. (2022). Of children of Black Caribbean and Pakistani backgrounds, 8.8% of pupils have moderate learning difficulties identified, while this is only the case for 6.6% of White British pupils. A similar pattern holds for SEMH, a SEND associated with difficulties managing behaviours and emotions. While 4.8% of White British pupils are marked as having SEMH, this is the case for 10.6% of pupils of Black Caribbean ethnicity. SEMH is one of the most common SEND diagnoses for children cautioned or sentenced for a serious violence offence (Department for Education, 2023).

Strand and Lindoff (2021) build on these initial findings through a more complex regression model that accounts for other pupil demographics, such as FSM and whether a child lives in a deprived area. The researchers found that pupils on FSM and living in a deprived area are 2.24 times more likely to be identified with any SEND than those who do not experience such socioeconomic disadvantage. Relatedly, Strand and Lindoff (2021) found that at the primary school level, poverty typically plays a greater role in SEND diagnoses than ethnicity. When FSM and area deprivation are accounted for, the researchers found that most ethnic groups are underrepresented in SEND diagnoses compared to White British pupils. The only exception to this pattern is SEMH, where even after controlling for socioeconomic variables, boys of Black Caribbean backgrounds are still significantly overrepresented in having an SEMH diagnosis.

The third major secondary data analysis we reviewed focused on SLCN. Lindsay and Stran (2016) reviewed Department for Education data from 2005 to 2011 and found significant variation in the prevalence of SLCN by ethnicity. While 1.5% of White British pupils were found to have SLCN, this figure is higher for almost every other ethnic group (being the highest for GRT and Black African pupils). The researchers also found a relationship between poverty and SLCN, with pupils on FSM living in a deprived area being 2.3 times more likely to be identified with SLCN than peers not living in socioeconomic disadvantage. SLCN is a common SEND among children who offend, with some estimates suggesting as many as 23% of children in the YJS have this SEND (Holland, Hutchinson and Peacock, 2022) and some of the evidence we reviewed examining how SLCN can lead to participation in violence (Hughes, Williams & Chitsabesan, 2017).

It is, therefore, clear that there is a common pattern across the data we reviewed – there are ethnic and socioeconomic disparities in SEND identification that align with the risk factors for participation in violence. In particular, children who are boys who are from certain ethnic groups (in particular, Black or GRT) and are growing up in poverty are more likely to be identified with a SEND as well as to be cautioned or sentenced for a serious violence offence (Department for Education, 2023).

There is a lack of robust evidence on the causes of racial and other demographic disparities in SEND identification

While there is robust literature evidence on the existence of disparities in SEND identification, our review mostly found explanations for these disparities to be openly speculative. While we draw on the strong professional expertise of our interviewees to

'Society should ensure that all children and young people make a fulfilling transition to adulthood'

discuss the causes of these racial disparities, it is clear that there is a need for further research into the mechanisms which lead to demographic disparities in the SEND system.

Tomlinson (2016) conducted a literature review of the historical and sociological literature on race, education and SEND and concludes that there is a historical grounding to current racial disparities in SEND identification in England. Tomlinson argues that the scientific racism used by Britain to justify the social structure in its imperial territories, where non-White racial groups were treated as inferior, resulted in a common (though likely unconscious) attitude among individuals working in education in the latter half of the 20th century that non-White children were cognitively inferior to White children.

Tomlinson asserts that these racist attitudes continue to shape SEND identification today in a way that aligns with general patterns of implicit and systemic racism across the UK. This assertion aligned with comments from some of our interviewees about unconscious biases within the education system, which may lead to some ethnic groups being viewed as more likely to be diagnosed with a SEND.

A small amount of evidence we reviewed suggested that the life experiences of individuals from certain ethnic groups may lead to them presenting with behaviours that may lead to them being diagnosed with a SEND. A position paper by the Traveller Movement (2022) notes that GRT children often experience racist bullying in schools, which goes unchallenged by teachers, making them avoid school. This, in turn, could lead to GRT children having underdeveloped language skills, which then might be later identified as SLCN upon entry into the YJS.

Strand and Lindoff (2021) also note in their discussion of their secondary data analysis findings that children of Black Caribbean backgrounds are often third-generation UK-born, meaning that they often come from backgrounds that have experienced intergenerational poverty and racism. Two of our advisory board interviewees with expertise in race and experience working with Black boys noted that the trauma of this experience may make Black Caribbean boys present aggression in school settings, potentially explaining the high rate at which they are identified with SEMH. Strand and Lindoff (2021) note that this experience of intergenerational racism is different to children of Black African, Indian and Pakistani backgrounds whose families have often arrived in the country much more recently. Interviewees noted that more recent migrants to the country might benefit from the immigrant effect in terms of a strong belief in the English educational system, making their children work hard at school in a way that might mask underlying SENDs.

At a more fundamental level, one interviewee told us that children from certain ethnic backgrounds who are growing up in poverty are from communities that the current education systems in England and Wales are not designed to accommodate. The interviewee told us that this lack of accommodation extended from the content of the curriculum to social norms around acceptable behaviours in schools. As a consequence, disparities in SEND identification may reflect a lack of social and community accommodation by schools.

5 Insights for practice

Drawing on our findings on the range of challenges in the SEND system and opportunities for its improvement, our insights for practice are split into three categories:

- Improving support in the education system to prevent children with SEND from participating in violence
- Improving support for children with SEND in the YJS to improve pathways away from offending and reoffending
- Reconsidering how education, justice and social services can grow to become universally inclusive to all children, including those with SEND at risk of youth violence

We summarise insights for practice in Table 5 before describing them in detail in the rest of this section.

Table 5 – Insights for practice overview

Area	Insights for practice
Improving support in the education system to prevent children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) from participating in violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government should fund a pilot programme of co-locating services in mainstream schools in areas with a high incidence of violence. • Ofsted should update its area-level SEND inspection framework to drive improved information sharing within and between areas about children with SEND at risk of or involved in violence. • The government should improve support for speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in schools by investing in early intervention and scaffolding teaching that accommodates SLCN. • The Department for Education should collaborate with schools, the youth sector and SEND experts to develop guidance on how to support children with SEND so that they feel a stronger sense of belonging at school. • Official bodies should collaborate on an inquiry into racial disparities in SEND diagnoses and issue recommendations on reducing any identified systemic bias. • The government should create a register of children who are not in school and support local councils in using this new system to support SEND identification for children who are less present in school.
Improving support for children with SEND in the youth justice services to improve pathways away from reoffending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons and Ofsted should produce a joint strategy for improving the experiences and outcomes of children with SEND in the youth justice services. • Professional bodies for police officers, solicitors and magistrates should update standards and expand training to improve support for children with SEND during custody, court and legal procedures.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Home Office should collaborate with the Department for Education to fund and deliver the creation of a specialist SEND intermediary role to work within young offender institutions (YOIs). • The government should reform its YOI rules to remove barriers to accessing education for children with SEND who are in custody. • The government should invest in understanding and overcoming the barriers to the more widespread use of specialist co-location within youth offending teams.
Reconsidering how education, justice and social services can grow to become universally inclusive to all children, including those with SEND at risk of youth violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of a longer-term vision, the government should further investigate and invest in increasing the universal accessibility of public services, including making school curricula and assessment more inclusive, overcoming systemic racism in public services and delivering an ambitious strategy for eliminating poverty.

Improving support in the education system to prevent children with SEND from participating in youth violence

While there are significant issues over general capacity, capability and funding for SEND support within schools (National Audit Office, 2024), which are important to tackle, we suggest that the following more local changes to the system could be a more tractable and rapid way of supporting children with SEND at risk of violence.

Table 6 – Education system insights for practice

The government should fund a pilot programme of co-locating services in mainstream schools in areas with a high incidence rate of violence.	
Rationale	Specification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings from the evidence show some positive associations between the co-location of expert services in the youth justice system and improved practice and outcomes for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). • The evidence also highlights a need for earlier expert intervention for children with SEND before they enter alternative provision or youth justice services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-located specialists should include speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, youth workers and substance misuse workers employed directly by the host school. • Specialists should support the school in redesigning its educational, extra-curricular and pastoral offer to better support children with SEND and work to identify, assess and provide targeted support, especially to at-risk children. • Pilot co-location 'hub schools' should draw on networks and learnings from local family hubs, youth hubs and the alternative provision specialist task force pilot programme and experiment with embedding co-location across multi-academy trusts and other school clusters.

Ofsted should update its area-level SEND inspection framework to drive improved information sharing within and between areas about children with SEND at risk of or involved in violence.

Rationale

- There are multiple identified challenges with how local area SEND partnerships share information with youth justice services.
- There are challenges around the sharing of information between local SEND partnerships when a child moves to a new area, including when being placed in custody.

Specification

- Ofsted should consider updating its framework to hold SEND partnerships accountable for the speed and quality of their information sharing with youth justice services. There should also be greater scrutiny of how information is shared between different area partnerships to support children who move to ensure their Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) and any other SEND information travels with them. This should include information sharing on a child’s SEND from youth justice services to education and employment providers as part of resettlement.
- The updated framework should also set out best practices for how local SEND partnerships can work with local justice services to support earlier identification and intervention for children with SEND who are at risk of violence.

The government should improve support for speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in schools by investing in early intervention and supporting teaching that accommodates SLCN.

Rationale

- SLCN are prevalent among children who offend, with evidence that these needs make them more at risk of worse outcomes in their contact with police, courts and programmes to reduce reoffending.
- SLCN can be reduced through effective early identification and intervention.

Specification

- As part of its current oracy agenda, the government should invest in introducing or scaling up the delivery of evidence-based Nuffield Early Language Intervention in areas with high rates of violence (Education Endowment Foundation, 2020). The government should also commission longitudinal research to monitor the impact of this early language intervention on outcomes such as involvement in violence.
- The Department for Education should introduce new standards and support into the Early Career Framework for secondary school teachers to help them better identify children with SLCN, adapt their teaching to those children and recognise how SLCN may lead to challenging behaviours in school.

The Department for Education should collaborate with schools, the youth sector and SEND experts to develop guidance on how to support children with SEND so that they feel a stronger sense of belonging at school.	
<p style="text-align: center;">Rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with SEND experience bullying, social isolation and a lack of a sense of belonging that contributes to their vulnerability to violence 	<p style="text-align: center;">Specification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department for Education and the Welsh government should convene an expert consultation, drawing on a wide range of relevant expertise to gather insights on how schools are creating a sense of belonging for children with SEND (for example, how they adapt extra-curricular activities to make them accessible). • The Department for Education should issue non-statutory guidance for schools to use, focusing messaging around the new guidance in areas with a high prevalence of SEND or violence.
Official bodies should collaborate on an inquiry into racial disparities in SEND diagnoses and issue recommendations on reducing any identified systemic bias.	
<p style="text-align: center;">Rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reasons for racial disparities in SEND diagnoses remain unclear, with some evidence suggesting the different diagnosis rates may reflect systemic racism. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Specification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the representative body for educational psychologists who conduct EHCP assessments, the British Psychological Society should lead an inquiry with the support of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and NHS England into whether there is any racial bias in the EHCP assessment process. • The inquiry should directly issue official recommendations to the Department for Education, Department for Health and Social Care and Welsh government on how to close the racial gap in SEND diagnosis.
The government should create a register of children who are not in school and support local councils in using this new system to support SEND identification for children outside of education.	
<p style="text-align: center;">Rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children cautioned or sentenced for a serious violence offence often receive a SEND diagnosis later than their non-offending peers, as well as often having low levels of presence in mainstream education. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Specification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government should deliver its commitment to local registers of children who are not in school managed by the local authorities. • The government's new legislation to support local registers should also include requirements for local councils to target and prioritise opportunities for EHCP assessment for children on the new not-in-school registers.

Improving support for children with SEND in the YJS to improve pathways away from reoffending

Table 7 – YJS insights for practice

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons and Ofsted should produce a joint strategy for improving the experiences and outcomes of children with SEND in the youth justice services.	
<p style="text-align: center;">Rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) experience disproportionate and considerable difficulties throughout their journey through the justice system. • Strategic reforms could lead to better support for children with SEND and potentially lower reoffending rates. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Specification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Probation and Ofsted should conduct a joint consultation of the sector to set out an approach for improving outcomes for children with SEND. • Key considerations for the strategy should include improving how police officers interact with and support children with SEND, support for children with SEND as part of court and judicial procedures, as well as an overall approach to improving education for children with SEND who are in custody.
Professional bodies for police officers, solicitors and magistrates should create standards and training to improve support for children with SEND during custody, court and legal procedures.	
<p style="text-align: center;">Rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with SEND are often poorly supported by police officers, leading to further criminalisation, escalation and the damaging use of restraint. • Children with SEND often do not receive appropriate support or guidance from solicitors or magistrates, which may contribute to worse sentences. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Specification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Police Chief's Council should deliver specialised training around SEND to youth justice services police officers and basic SEND training to all officers. This training should include techniques for de-escalation and the use of physical restraint that is appropriate when working with children with SEND. • The Solicitors Regulatory Authority should draw on SEND expertise in the education sector to provide training for solicitors on supporting and providing guidance to children with SEND. • The Magistrate's Association should ensure that awareness of SEND and accommodation for it is part of the training for all magistrates who will preside over cases involving young people.

The Home Office should collaborate with the Department for Education to fund and deliver the creation of a specialist SEND intermediary role to work within young offender institutions (YOIs).	
<p style="text-align: center;">Rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current adaptations of education and programmes to reduce recidivism for children with SEND within YOIs are often inadequate. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Specification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Home Office and the Department for Education should co-fund and support the creation of a SEND expert role within YOIs. The SEND expert will act as an intermediary between YOIs and SEND practice and expertise in the local area, using a discretionary budget to create opportunities for the sharing of SEND best practices with YOI educational and programme delivery staff. • As an alternative, the government should consider investing in specialised SEND training for education staff in YOIs, which draws on locally available SEND expertise (such as in alternative provisions).
The government should reform its YOI rules to remove barriers to accessing education for children with SEND who are in custody.	
<p style="text-align: center;">Rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of current rules create institutional barriers to accessing education as part of their journey through the justice system for children with SEND. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Specification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In consultation with the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, the government should consider the removal of separation rules for children in custody that can limit access to education for children with SEND. Similarly, the government should update rules to ensure that children on remand receive support with their SEND needs as part of their education.
The government should invest in understanding and overcoming the barriers to more widespread use of specialist co-location within youth offending teams (YOTs).	
<p style="text-align: center;">Rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many YOTs across England and Wales already use some co-location, which has benefits for children with SEND. • However, this co-location practice is not universal and has challenges (such as staff recruitment and retention). 	<p style="text-align: center;">Specification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government should initiate a review of how YOTs are implementing co-location, the challenges they face and how these challenges are overcome by high-performing teams. • The government should follow this review with a robust evaluation of the impact of co-location approaches on outcomes for children who come into contact with YOTs, ensuring there is a subgroup analysis for children with SEND. • The government should commit to investment in the recommendations of this investigation to spread and scale up the use of expert co-location to more YOTs.

Reconsidering how education, justice and social services can grow to become universally inclusive to all children, including those with SEND at risk of youth violence

Cutting across our discussion with advisory board members was a concern that the present education system and adjacent public services are not designed with a foundational commitment to universalism. In practice, this means that these services may not be designed to ensure that they are accessible to all children – particularly children with SEND, children growing up in poverty and children from ethnic minority backgrounds. As a consequence, children with these characteristics are often failed by the public sector and end up experiencing poor outcomes across education, health and employment – all of which add to their vulnerability to violence.

Overcoming this fundamental challenge goes far beyond the scope of this report; however, we highlight three areas that our advisory board believes need further interrogation and action by government in order to make public services more universal in their orientation.

First, some board members discussed a need for the curriculum in schools to include the voices and experiences of the disabled community, as well as reform to systems for examination and assessment to better accommodate children with SEND. Second, some board members noted the pervasive role of institutional racism across public services, requiring deep scrutiny of why ethnic minority children, especially Black boys, are so vulnerable to worse educational and social outcomes. Third, some board members felt that dealing with many of the fundamental issues for children with SEND at risk of or already involved in violence are grounded in poverty and that an ambitious and expansive strategy for dealing with poverty would be necessary to deal with the root causes of children with SEND becoming involved in violence.

6 References

- Baldry, E., Briggs, D. B., Goldson, B., & Russell, S. (2017). 'Cruel and unusual punishment': an inter-jurisdictional study of the criminalisation of young people with complex support needs. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 21(5), 636–652.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2017.1406072>
- Bryan, K., & Gregory, J. (2013). Perceptions of staff on embedding speech and language therapy within a youth offending team. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, 29(3), 359–371. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265659013482930>
- Bryan, K., Garvani, G., Gregory, J., & Kilner, K. (2015). Language difficulties and criminal justice: the need for earlier identification. *International Journal of Language Communication Disorders*, 50(6), 763–75.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1460-6984.12183>
- Campbell, S., & Abbott, S. (2013). Same old...the experiences of young offenders with mental health needs. *Young Minds*. <https://t2a.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/YoungMinds-Same-Old...-2013-low-res.pdf>
- Centre for Justice Innovation. (2024). How is youth diversion working for children with special educational needs and disabilities?
https://justiceinnovation.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2024/send_youth_diversion.pdf
- Children's Commissioner. (2011). 'I think I must have been born bad': emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people in the youth justice system.
<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2017/07/I think I must have been born bad - full report.pdf>
- Children's Commissioner. (2019). Keeping kids safe: improving safeguarding responses to gang violence and criminal exploitation.
<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2019/02/CCO-Gangs.pdf>
- Children's Commissioner. (2019). Trends in childhood vulnerability.
<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2019/07/cco-vulnerability-2019-tech-report-1.pdf>
- Children's Commissioner. (2020). Injustice or in justice.
<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2020/12/cco-injustice-or-in-justice.pdf>
- Clarke, T. (2019). The characteristics of gang-associated children and young people. Children's Commissioner's Office.

<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2019/02/CCO-Characteristics-of-Gang-Associated-Children-and-Young-People1.1.pdf>

Cosma, P., & Mulcare, R. (2022). EHCPs: a help or a hinderance to the inclusion of young people who have offended? An exploration of EP's perceptions of the facilitating factors and barriers of EHCPs and the SEN processes involved in youth justice. *Educational & Child Psychology*, 39(2), 42–55

<https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsecp.2022.39.2.42>

Day, A. (2022). Disabling and criminalising systems? Understanding the experiences and challenges facing incarcerated, neurodivergent children in the education and youth justice systems in England. *Forensic Science International: Mind and Law*, 3. 100102. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fsimpl.2022.100102>

Department for Education. (2015). Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7dcb85ed915d2ac884d995/SEND Code of Practice January 2015.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7dcb85ed915d2ac884d995/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf)

Department for Education. (2023). Education, children's social care and offending: multi-level modelling.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64b67bfb71749c001389ed72/Education childrens social care and offending multi-level modelling.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64b67bfb71749c001389ed72/Education_childrens_social_care_and_offending_multi-level_modelling.pdf)

Eylem, O., de Wit, L., van Straten, A., Steubl, L., Melissourgaki, G. T. D., de Vries, R., Kerkhod, A. J. F. M., Bhui, K., & Cuijpers, P. (2020). Stigma for common mental disorders in racial minorities and majorities: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMC Public Health*, 20(879).

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-08964-3>

Frank, M., Sutton, P., Hick, P., & Smithson, H. (2018). Securing better outcomes for children and young people with special education needs and disabilities in the youth justice system. <https://aym.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/SEND-Project-Report1.pdf>

Games, F., Curran, A., & Porter, S. (2012). A small-scale pilot study into language difficulties in children who offend. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 28(2), 127–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2012.665355>

Gray, E. (2013). What happens to persistent and serious young offenders when they grow up, a follow-up study of the first recipients of intensive supervision and surveillance. Youth Justice Board.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7edc8f40f0b62305b83a59/issp-follow-up-report.pdf>

Gregory, J., & Bryan, K. (2011), Speech and language therapy intervention with a group of persistent and prolific young offenders in a non-custodial setting with previously undiagnosed speech, language and communication difficulties. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, 46, 202–215. <https://doi.org/10.3109/13682822.2010.490573>

Gyatend, T., Moretti, A., May, T., & Turnbull, P.J. (2013). Young people and the secure estate: needs and interventions. Institute for Criminal Policy Research. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/158352176.pdf>

Haines, A., Goldson, B., Haycox, A., Houten, R., Lane, S., McGuire, J., Nathan, T., Perkins, E., Richards, S., & Whittington, R. (2012). Evaluation of the Youth Justice Liaison and Diversion (YJLD) pilot scheme. University of Liverpool. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a74ee9040f0b65f61323688/dh_133007.pdf

Hales, H., Warner, L., Smith, J. G., & Bartlett, A. (2022). Primary neurodevelopmental disorders in detained adolescents: point prevalence and patterns of care. *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, 33(3), 354–370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14789949.2022.2069587>

Hart, D., & Lavalley, I. (2021). Secure children’s homes: placing welfare and justice children together. Government Social Research. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6092c4c58fa8f51b8e2fa076/Secure_children_s_homes_placement_review_report.pdf

Heritage, M., Virag, G., & McCuaig, L. (2011). Exploring the impact of speech and language therapy in youth offending teams in Derbyshire 2010-2011. Derbyshire Community Health Services. <https://www.choiceforum.org/docs/bof.pdf>

Holland, C., Hutchinson, P., & Peacock, D. (2023). The importance of screening for speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in police custody. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 62, 295–312. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hojo.12514>

Hopkins, T., Clegg, J., & Stackhouse, J. (2018). Examining the association between language, expository discourse and offending behaviour: an investigation of direction, strength and independence. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 53(1), 113–129. doi: 10.1111/1460-6984.12330.

Hopkins, T. K., Clegg, J., & Stackhouse, J. (2016). Young offenders’ perspectives on their literacy and communication skills. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 51(1), 95–109.

Hughes, N. (2015). Neurodisability in the youth justice system: recognising and responding to the criminalisation of neurodevelopmental impairment. The Howard League for Penal Reform. https://howardleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/HLWP_17_2015.pdf

Hughes, N., & Peirse-O'Byrne, K. (2016). Disabled inside: neurodevelopmental impairments among young people in custody. Prison Service Journal. <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/PSJ%2026%20July%202016.pdf>

Hughes, N., Chitsabesan, P., Bryan, K., Borschmann, R., Swain, N., Lennox, C., & Shaw, J. (2017). Language impairment and comorbid vulnerabilities among young people in custody. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 58(10), 1106–1113. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12791>

Hughes, N., Williams, H., & Chitsabesan, P. (2017). The influence of neurodevelopmental impairment on youth crime. In S. Bailey, P. Tarbuck, & P. Chitsabesan (Eds.), Forensic Child and Adolescent Mental Health: Meeting the Needs of Young Offenders (pp. 68–82). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hughes, N., Williams, H., Chitsabesan, P., Davies, R., & Mounce, L. (2012). Nobody made the connection: the prevalence of neurodisability in young people who offend. Children's Commissioner. <https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2017/07/Nobody-made-the-connection.pdf>

Huw Williams, W., Cordan, G., Mewse, A. J., Tonks, J., & Burgess, C. N. W. (2010). Self-reported traumatic brain injury in male young offenders: a risk factor for re-offending, poor mental health and violence? Neuropsychological Rehabilitation, 20(6), 801–812. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09602011.2010.519613>

Jacobson, J., Bhardwa, B., Gyateng, T., Hunter, G., & Hough, M. (2010). Punishing disadvantage: a profile of children in custody. The Prison Reform Trust. https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/old_files/Documents/PunishingDisadvantage.pdf

Lee, I. O., Wolstencroft, J., Housby, H., van den Bree, M. B. M., Chawner, S. J. R. A., Hall, J., IMAGINE ID Consortium, & Skuse, D. H. (2024). The inequity of education, health and care plan provision for children and young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 68, 1167–1183. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.13139>.

Lindsay, G., & Strand, S. (2016). Children with language impairment: prevalence, associated difficulties, and ethnic disproportionality in an English population. Frontiers in Education.

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/education/articles/10.3389/feduc.2016.00002>

Ministry of Justice, & Department for Education. (2016). Understanding the educational background of young offenders – joint experimental statistical report from the Ministry of Justice and Department for Education.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a81513740f0b62302696a70/understanding-educational-background-of-young-offenders-full-report.pdf>

Mitchell, P., Smedley, K., Kenning, C., McKee, A., Woods, D., Rennie, C. E., Bell, R. V., Aryamanesh, M., & Dolan, M. (2011). Cognitive behaviour therapy for adolescent offenders with mental health problems in custody. *Journal of Adolescence*, 34(3), 433–43.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2010.06.009>.

National Audit Office. (2024). Support for children and young people with special educational needs. Department for Education.

<https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/support-for-children-and-young-people-with-special-educational-needs/>

Ofsted. (2024). A decade of declining quality of education in young offender institutions: the systemic shortcomings that fail children. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thematic-review-of-the-quality-of-education-in-young-offender-institutions-yois/a-decade-of-declining-quality-of-education-in-young-offender-institutions-the-systemic-shortcomings-that-fail-children>

Parsons, S., & Sherwood, G. (2016). Vulnerability in custody: perceptions and practices of police officers and criminal justice professionals in meeting the communication needs of offenders with learning disabilities and learning difficulties. *Disability & Society*, 31(4), 553–572.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2016.1181538>

Ravenscroft, S., & Hobbs, A. (2016). Education of young people leaving custody. Houses of Parliament, POSTbrief, Number 23.

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PB-0023/POST-PB-0023.pdf>

Redgate, S., Dyer, W., & Smith, M. A. (2022). Using a realist approach in understanding youth offending service delivery requirements for young people who offend with speech, language and communication needs in England. *Discover Social Science and Health*, 2(21). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44155-022-00024-y>

Rocket Science. (2022). Neurodiversity and violence – evidence review for West Yorkshire Combined Authority Violence Reduction Unit. <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/8513/report-neurodiversity-and-violence.pdf>

Roman-Urrestarazu, A., Yang, J. C., van Kessel, R., Warriar, V., Dumas, G., Jongsma, H., Gatica-Bahamonde, G., Allison, C., Matthews, F. E., Baron-Cohen, S., & Brayne, C. (2022). Autism incidence and spatial analysis in more than 7 million pupils in English schools: a retrospective, longitudinal, school registry study. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 6(12), 857–868.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642\(22\)00247-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(22)00247-4)

Sowerbutts, A., Eaton-Rosen, E., Bryan, K., & Beeke, S. (2021). Supporting young offenders to communicate in the youth justice system: a scoping review. *Speech, Language and Hearing*, 24(2), 87–104.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/2050571X.2021.1899571>

Stavroola, A. S., Hawes, D., David, J., & Snow, P. C. (2016). Language impairments among youth offenders: a systematic review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 65(C), 195–203.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.04.004>

Strand, S., & Lindorff, A. (2021). Ethnic disproportionality in the identification of high-incidence special educational needs: a national longitudinal study ages 5 to 11. *Exceptional Children*, 87(3), 344–368.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0014402921990895>

Talbot, J. (2010). Seen and heard: supporting vulnerable children in the youth justice system. Prison Reform Trust. https://prisonreformtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/old_files/Documents/SeenandHeardFinal%20.pdf

Tan, A. G. P., Ware, J., & Norwich, B. (2017). Pedagogy for ethnic minority pupils with special educational needs in England: common yet different? *Oxford Review of Education*, 43(4), 447–461.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2017.1331845>

Taylor, R., Evans, J., Stuart-Hamilton, I., Roderique-Davies, G., Pierpoint, H., & Gibbon, H. (2016). A review of the speech, language and communication needs of young people from Wales in the youth justice system. Ministry of Justice.
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Gareth_Roderique-Davies/publication/308329194_A_Review_of_the_Speech_Language_and_Communication_Needs_of_Young_People_from_Wales_in_the_Youth_Justice_System/links/57e0f3f808ae3f2d793f55e8/A-Review-of-the-Speech-Language-and-Communication-Needs-of-Young-People-from-Wales-in-the-Youth-Justice-System.pdf

The Association of Directors of Children's Services. (2021). A youth justice system that works for children. https://www.adcs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/ADCS_AYM_LGA_A_Youth_Justice_System_that_Works_for_Children_FINALx.pdf

The British Psychological Society. (2015). Children and young people with neuro-disabilities in the criminal justice system. [https://orchidadvocacy.org/uploads/3/4/6/2/34624943/british_psychological_society -- children_young_people_with_neuro-disabilities_in_the_criminal_justice_system.pdf](https://orchidadvocacy.org/uploads/3/4/6/2/34624943/british_psychological_society_-_children_young_people_with_neuro-disabilities_in_the_criminal_justice_system.pdf)

The Early Intervention Foundation. (2015). Preventing gang and youth violence – a review of risk and protective factors. Cordis Bright Consulting. <https://www.eif.org.uk/files/pdf/preventing-gang-and-youth-violence-risk-protective-factors.pdf>

The Traveller Movement. (2022). Disrupting the school to prison pipeline: exploring why Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children experience the school to prison pipeline and how it can be interrupted. <https://wp-main.travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Disrupting-the-School-to-Prison-Pipeline-Exec-Summary.pdf>

Thompson, N. (2019). 'It's a no-win scenario, either the police or the gang will get you': young people and organised crime – vulnerable or criminal? Youth Justice, 19(2), 102–119. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473225419843353>

Tomlinson, S. (2016). Special education and minority ethnic young people in England: continuing issues. Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 37(4), 513–528. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2015.1073013>

Tucker, G. (2023). Special educational needs and youth justice: how effective is the code of practice at supporting the resettlement population? A conceptual review. International Journal of Educational Development, 103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2023.102907>

Welsh Parliament. (2023). 60% – giving them a voice – speech, language and communication needs in the youth justice system. Equality and Social Justice Committee. <https://senedd.wales/media/excbag12/cr-ld15786-e.pdf>

Williams, A., & Finlay, F. (2018). County lines: how gang crime is affecting our young people. Archives of Disease in Childhood. <https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2018-315909>

Winstanley, M., Webb, R. T., & Conti-Ramsden, G. (2019), Psycholinguistic and socioemotional characteristics of young offenders: do language abilities and

gender matter? *Legal & Criminological Psychology*, 24, 195–214.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/lcrp.12150>

Wood, M. L., Gunning, L., Relins, S., Sohal, K., Wright, J., Mon-Williams, M., & Atkinson, A. L. (2024). Potential for England's statutory school entry assessment to identify special educational needs and reveal structural inequalities: a population-based study. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 109(1), 52.

<https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2023-325590>

Youth Justice Board, & Ministry of Justice. (2017). Key characteristics of admissions to youth custody April 2014 to March 2016.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7f231940f0b62305b854d3/key-characteristics-of-admissions-april-2014-to-march-2016.pdf>

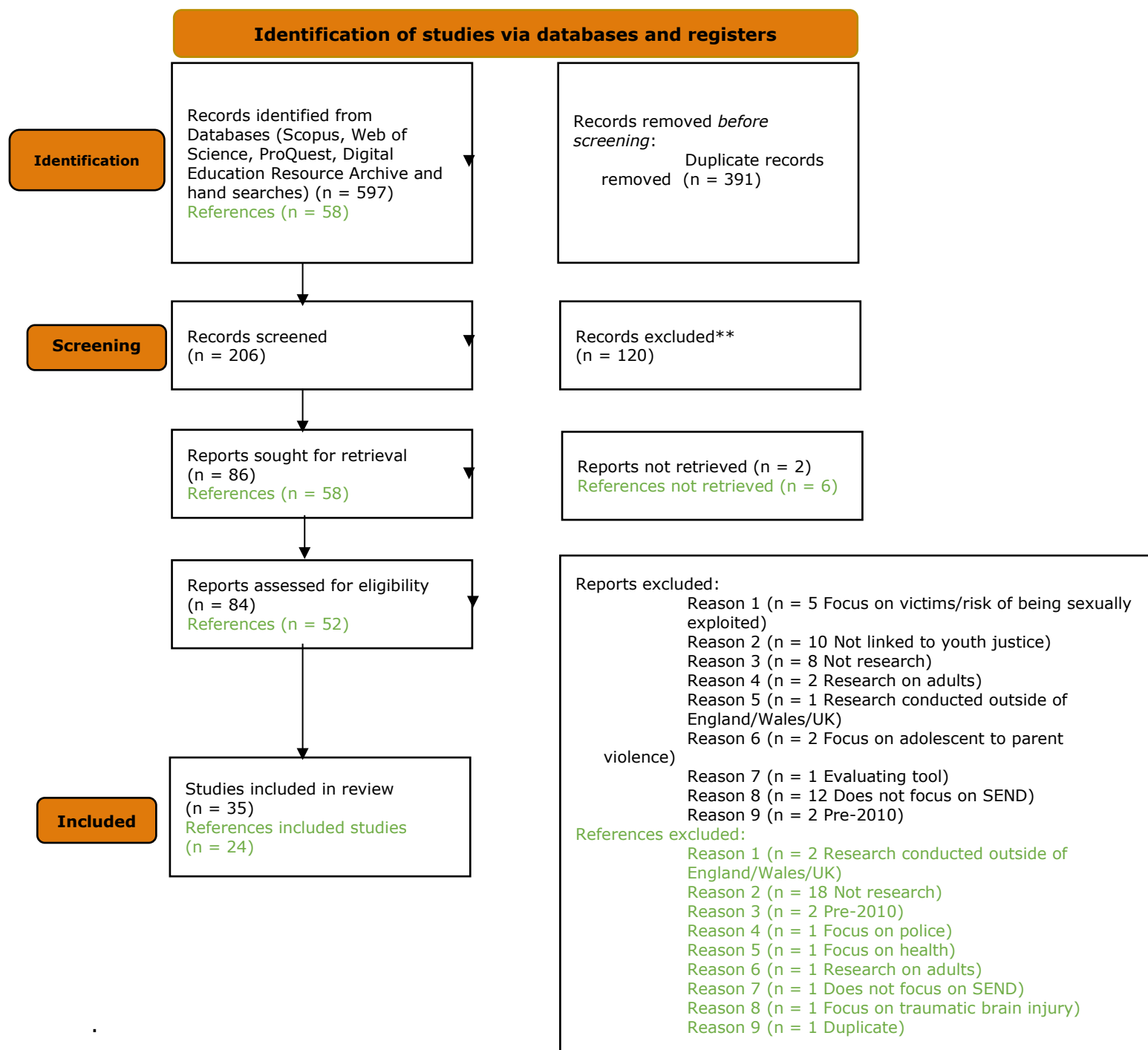
Youth Justice Board. (2021). Assessing the needs of sentenced children in the youth justice system 2019/20.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/604a3ee28fa8f540179c6ab7/experimental-statistics-assessing-needs-sentenced-children-youth-justice-system-2019-20.pdf>

Zumu, B., Imafidon, K., & Bellio, L. (2016). Just health: an enquiry into the emotional health and wellbeing of young people in the youth justice system.

Clearview Research. <https://www.peerpower.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Just%20Health%20Report%20%28for%20Web%29.pdf>

Appendix 1 – Prisma Diagram for Rapid Literature Review



Appendix 2 – Literature catalogue

Paper	Document type	Methodology	Study population
Baldry, E., Briggs, D. B., Goldson, B., & Russell, S. (2017). 'Cruel and unusual punishment': an inter-jurisdictional study of the criminalisation of young people with complex support needs. <i>Journal of Youth Studies</i> , 21(5), 636–652.	Journal Article	Qualitative - semi-structured interviews	Practitioners and managers in Youth Justice Services
Bryan, K., & Gregory, J. (2013). Perceptions of staff on embedding speech and language therapy within a youth offending team. <i>Child Language Teaching and Therapy</i> , 29(3), 359-371.	Journal Article	Mixed methods – surveys and interviews	Practitioners and managers in Youth Justice services
Bryan, K., Garvani, G., Gregory, J. & Kilner, K. (2015). Language difficulties and criminal justice: the need for earlier identification. <i>International Journal of Language Communication Disorders</i> , 50(6), 763-75. doi: 10.1111/1460-6984.12183.	Journal Article	Quantitative – SLCN assessment battery	Children in secure children's homes
Campbell, S. & Abbott, S. (2013). Same old...the experiences of young offenders with mental health needs. <i>Young Minds</i> .	Report	Qualitative – semi-structured interviews, focus groups	Children with a history of offending, practitioners in Youth Justice services
Centre for Justice Innovation. (2024). How is youth diversion working for children with special educational needs and disabilities.	Report	Qualitative – semi-structured interviews	Children with SEND who have participated in youth diversion programmes and staff involved in their delivery
Children's Commissioner. (2011). 'I think I must have been bord bad': Emotional wellbeing and	Report	Qualitative – focus groups and semi-	Young offenders with mental health challenges

mental health of children and young people in the youth justice system.		structured observations	
Children's Commissioner. (2019). Keeping kids safe: Improving safeguarding responses to gang violence and criminal exploitation.	Report	Mixed methods – secondary data analysis and interviews	Children involved in or vulnerable to gang violence
Children's Commissioner. (2019). Trends in childhood vulnerability.	Report	Quantitative – secondary data analysis	Children involved in or vulnerable to gang violence
Children's Commissioner. (2020). Injustice or In Justice.	Report	Literature review	Children involved in the youth justice services
Clarke, T. (2019). The characteristics of gang-associated children and young people. Children's Commissioner's Office.	Report	Quantitative – secondary data analysis	Children recorded by the police as being members of a gang
Cosma, P., & Mulcare, R. (2022). EHCPs: A Help or a Hinderance to the Inclusion of Young People Who Have Offended? An Exploration of EP's Perceptions of the Facilitating Factors and Barriers of EHCPs and the SEN Processes Involved in Youth Justice. Educational & Child Psychology, 39(2), 42-55	Journal Article	Qualitative – semi-structured interviews	Educational psychologists working with children at risk of or involved in violence
Day, A. (2022). Disabling and criminalising systems? Understanding the experiences and challenges facing incarcerated, neurodivergent children in the education and youth justice systems in England. Forensic Science International: Mind and Law, 3. 100102.	Journal Article	Qualitative – semi-structured interviews	Children with SEND in custody or recently released

Department for Education. (2023). Education, children's social care and offending: multi-level modelling.	Report	Quantitative – secondary data analysis	Children with a conviction or caution for a serious violence offence
Eylem, O., de Wit, L., van Straten, A., Steubl, L., Melissourgaki, G.T.D., de Vries, R., Kerkhod, A.J.F.M., Bhui, K., & Cuijpers, P. (2020). Stigma for common mental disorders in racial minorities and majorities a systematic review and meta-analysis. BMC Public Health, 20(879).	Journal Article	Literature review	Adults from racial minority backgrounds
Frank, M., Sutton, P., Hick, P., & Smithson, H. (2018). Securing better outcomes for children and young people with special education needs and disabilities in the Youth Justice System	Report	Qualitative – interviews, focus groups and semi-structured observations	Youth Justice Services across England
Games, F., Curran, A., & Porter, S. (2012). A small-scale pilot study into language difficulties in children who offend. Educational Psychology in Practice, 28(2), 127–140.	Journal Article	Mixed methods – assessment battery and interviews	Children in Young Offender Institutions and YOI staff
Gray, E. (2013). What Happens to Persistent and Serious Young Offenders When They Grow Up, A Follow-Up Study of the First Recipients of Intensive Supervision and Surveillance. Youth Justice Board.	Report	Mixed methods – secondary data analysis and interviews	Children who participated in the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance programme
Gregory, J. and Bryan, K. (2011), Speech and language therapy intervention with a group of persistent and prolific young offenders in a non-custodial setting with previously undiagnosed speech, language and communication difficulties.	Journal Article	Mixed methods – pre and post-intervention surveys and interviews	Young offenders participating in the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance programme

International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders, 46, 202-215.			
Gyateng, T., Moretti, A., May, T., & Turnbull, P.J. (2013). Young people and the secure estate: needs and interventions. Institute for Criminal Policy Research.	Report	Mixed methods – surveys and interviews	Children at the end of their custodial sentence and secure estate staff
Haines, A., Goldson, B., Haycox, A., Houten, R., Lane, S., McGuire, J., Nathan, T., Perkins, E., Richards, S., & Whittington, R. (2012). Evaluation of the Youth Justice Liaison and Diversion (YJLD) Pilot Scheme. University of Liverpool.	Report	Mixed methods – secondary data analysis, interviews, focus groups	Children with a conviction believed to have an SEND
Hales, H., Warner, L., Smith, J. G., & Bartlett, A. (2022). Primary neurodevelopmental disorders in detained adolescents: point prevalence and patterns of care. The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology, 33(3), 354–370.	Journal Article	Quantitative – survey	Children in secure establishments
Hart, D. & Lavalley, I. (2021). Secure children’s homes: placing welfare and justice children together. Government social research.	Report	Mixed methods – secondary data analysis and interviews	Children and staff in Secure Children’s Homes
Heritage, M., Virag, G., & McCuaig, L. (2011). Exploring the impact of Speech and language therapy in Youth offending teams in Derbyshire 2010-2011. Derbyshire Community Health Services.	Report	Literature review	Youth Offending Team staff in Derbyshire
Holland, C., Hutchinson, P. & Peacock, D. (2023) The importance of screening for speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in police	Journal Article	Quantitative – secondary data analysis	Young offenders with SLCN

custody. The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice, 62, 295–312.			
Hopkins, T.K., Clegg, J. & Stackhouse, J. (2016). Young offenders’ perspectives on their literacy and communication skills. International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders, 51(1), 95–109.	Journal Article	Qualitative – interviews and focus groups	Children with a history of offending
Hughes, N. (2015). Neurodisability in the youth justice system: recognising and responding to the criminalisation of neurodevelopmental impairment. The Howard League for Penal Reform.	Report	Literature review	Children with SEND in the Youth Justice System
Hughes, N., & Peirse-O’Byrne, K. (2016). Disabled Inside: Neurodevelopmental impairments among young people in custody. Prison Service Journal.	Journal Article	Literature review	Children with SEND in custody
Hughes, N., Chitsabesan, P., Bryan, K., Borschmann, R., Swain, N., Lennox, C. & Shaw, J. (2017). Language impairment and comorbid vulnerabilities among young people in custody. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 58(10), 1106-1113.	Journal Article	Literature review	Children with SLCN in custody
Hughes, N., Williams, H., & Chitsabesan, P. (2017). The Influence of Neurodevelopmental Impairment on Youth Crime. In S. Bailey, P. Tarbuck, & P. Chitsabesan (Eds.), Forensic Child and Adolescent Mental Health: Meeting the Needs of Young Offenders (pp. 68–82). chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.	Journal Article	Literature review	Children with SEND involved in or at risk of involvement in offending

Hughes, N., Williams, H., Chitsabesan, P., Davies, R., & Mounce, L. (2012). Nobody made the connection: the prevalence of neurodisability in young people who offend. Children's Commissioner.	Report	Mixed methods – literature review, interviews, focus groups	Children and staff in Young Offender Institutes
Huw Williams, W., Cordan, G., Mewse, A. J., Tonks, J., & Burgess, C. N. W. (2010). Self-reported traumatic brain injury in male young offenders: A risk factor for re-offending, poor mental health and violence? Neuropsychological Rehabilitation, 20(6), 801–812.	Journal Article	Quantitative - surveys	Children with Traumatic Brain Injuries from Young Offender Institutes or working with Youth Offending Teams
Jacobson, J., Bhardwa, B., Gyateng, T., Hunter, G. & Hough, M. (2010). Punishing Disadvantage: a profile of children in custody. The Prison Reform Trust.	Report	Quantitative - surveys	Children who have previously received a custodial sentence
Lee, I. O., Wolstencroft, J., Housby, H., van den Bree, M. B. M., Chawner, S. J. R. A., Hall, J., IMAGINE ID Consortium, and Skuse, D. H. (2024). The inequity of education, health and care plan provision for children and young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 68, 1167–1183.	Journal Article	Quantitative – secondary data analysis	Children with intellectual and developmental disabilities
Lindsay, G., & Strand, S. (2016). Children with Language Impairment: Prevalence, Associated Difficulties, and Ethnic Disproportionality in an English Population. Frontiers in Education, 1.	Journal Article	Quantitative – secondary data analysis	Children with SLCN
Ministry of Justice & Department for Education. (2016). Understanding the educational background of young offenders - Joint	Report	Quantitative – secondary data analysis	Children who have recently offended

experimental statistical report from the Ministry of Justice and Department for Education.			
Mitchell, P., Smedley, K., Kenning, C., McKee, A., Woods, D., Rennie, C.E., Bell, R.V., Aryamanesh, M. & Dolan, M. (2011). Cognitive behaviour therapy for adolescent offenders with mental health problems in custody. <i>Journal of Adolescence</i> , 34(3), 433-43.	Journal Article	Quantitative – pre and post-intervention survey	Children with suspected mental health disorders in custody
Ofsted. (2024). A decade of declining quality of education in young offender institutions: the systemic shortcomings that fail children. His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons	Report	Qualitative – semi-structured interviews and observations	Children with SEND in Young Offender Institutions in England
Parsons, S., & Sherwood, G. (2016). Vulnerability in custody: perceptions and practices of police officers and criminal justice professionals in meeting the communication needs of offenders with learning disabilities and learning difficulties. <i>Disability & Society</i> , 31(4), 553–572.	Journal Article	Qualitative – semi-structured interviews	Professionals working within the Criminal Justice System
Ravenscroft, S, & Hobbs, A. (2016). Education of Young People Leaving Custody. Houses of Parliament, POSTbrief, Number 23.	Report	Literature review	Children leaving custody
Redgate, S., Dyer, W. & Smith, M.A. (2022). Using a realist approach in understanding youth offending service delivery requirements for young people who offend with speech, language and communication needs in England. <i>Discover Social Science and Health</i> , 2(21).	Journal Article	Qualitative - semi-structured interviews	Youth Offending Services staff working with Speech and Language Therapists

Rocket Science. (2022). Neurodiversity and Violence - Evidence Review for West Yorkshire Combined Authority Violence Reduction Unit.	Report	Mixed methods – literature review and focus groups	Children with SEND
Roman-Urrestarazu, A., Yang, J. C., van Kessel, R., Warriar, V., Dumas, G., Jongsma, H., Gatica-Bahamonde, G., Allison, C., Matthews, F. E., Baron-Cohen, S., & Brayne, C. (2022). Autism incidence and spatial analysis in more than 7 million pupils in English schools: A retrospective, longitudinal, school registry study. <i>The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health</i> , 6(12), 857–868.	Journal Article	Quantitative – secondary data analysis	Children with autism
Sowerbutts, A., Eaton-Rosen, E., Bryan, K., & Beeke, S. (2021). Supporting Young Offenders to Communicate in the Youth Justice System: A Scoping Review. <i>Speech, Language and Hearing</i> , 24(2), 87–104.	Journal Article	Literature review	Children with SLCN who have offended
Stavroola, A.S., Hawes, D., David, J. & Snow, P.C. (2016). Language impairments among youth offenders: A systematic review. <i>Children and Youth Services Review</i> , 65(C), 195-203.	Journal Article	Literature review	Children with SLCN who have offended
Strand, S., & Lindorff, A. (2021). Ethnic Disproportionality in the Identification of High-Incidence Special Educational Needs: A National Longitudinal Study Ages 5 to 11. <i>Exceptional Children</i> , 87(3), 344-368.	Journal Article	Quantitative – secondary data analysis	Children with diagnosed SLCN
Talbot, J. (2010). <i>Seen and Heard: supporting vulnerable children in the youth justice system.</i> Prison Reform Trust.	Report	Quantitative - surveys	Youth Offending Team staff

Tan, A. G. P., Ware, J., & Norwich, B. (2017). Pedagogy for ethnic minority pupils with special educational needs in England: common yet different? <i>Oxford Review of Education</i> , 43(4), 447–461.	Journal Article	Qualitative – semi-structured interviews and semi-structured observations	Children with SEND
Taylor, R., Evans, J., Stuart-Hamilton, I., Roderique-Davies, G., Pierpoint, H., & Gibbon, H. (2016). A Review of the Speech, Language and Communication Needs of Young People from Wales in the Youth Justice System. Ministry of Justice.	Report	Qualitative – semi-structured interviews and focus groups	Youth Offending Team staff
The Association of Directors of Children’s Services. (2021). A Youth Justice System that Works for Children.	Position paper	Literature review	Children in the Youth Justice system
The British Psychological Society. (2015). Children and Young People with Neuro-Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System.	Position paper	Literature review	Children with SEND in the Criminal Justice system
The Early Intervention Foundation. (2015). Preventing gang and youth violence – a review of risk and protective factors. Cordis Bright Consulting.	Report	Literature review	Children at risk of or involved in gang-related violence
The Traveller Movement. (2022). Disrupting the School to Prison Pipeline Exploring why Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children experience the school to prison pipeline and how it can be interrupted.	Position paper	Literature review	Children from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller backgrounds in the Youth Justice system
Thompson, N. (2019). ‘It’s a No-Win Scenario, either the Police or the Gang Will Get You’: Young People and Organised Crime – Vulnerable or Criminal? <i>Youth Justice</i> , 19(2), 102-119.	Journal Article	Qualitative – semi-structured interviews	Children at risk of or involved in gang-related violence

Tomlinson, S. (2016). Special education and minority ethnic young people in England: continuing issues. <i>Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education</i> , 37(4), 513–528.	Journal Article	Literature review	Children from ethnic minority backgrounds
Tucker, G. (2023). Special educational needs and youth justice: How effective is the code of practice at supporting the resettlement population? A conceptual review. <i>International Journal of Educational Development</i> , 103.	Journal Article	Qualitative – thematic analysis of written text	Children with SEND leaving custody
Welsh Parliament. (2023). 60% - Giving them a voice – Speech, language and communication needs in the youth justice system. Equality and social justice committee.	Report	Qualitative – interviews and focus groups	Children with SLCN in the Youth Justice system
Williams, A. & Finlay, F. (2018). County lines: How gang crime is affecting our young people. <i>Archives of Disease in Childhood</i> . 104.	Journal Article	Literature review	Children at risk of or involved in county lines
Winstanley, M., Webb, R.T. & Conti-Ramsden, G. (2019), Psycholinguistic and socioemotional characteristics of young offenders: Do language abilities and gender matter?. <i>Legal & Criminological Psychology</i> , 24, 195-214.	Journal Article	Quantitative – psycholinguistic assessment battery	Children in Young Offender Institutions
Wood, M. L., Gunning, L., Relins, S., Sohal, K., Wright, J., Mon-Williams, M., & Atkinson, A. L. (2024). Potential for England’s statutory school entry assessment to identify special educational needs and reveal structural inequalities: A	Journal Article	Quantitative - secondary data analysis	Children with SEND

population-based study. Archives of Disease in Childhood, 109(1), 52.			
Youth Justice Board & Ministry of Justice. (2017). Key Characteristics of Admissions to Youth Custody April 2014 to March 2016.	Report	Quantitative – secondary data analysis	Children admitted to youth custody
Youth Justice Board. (2021). Assessing the needs of sentenced children in the Youth Justice System 2019/20.	Report	Quantitative – secondary data analysis	Children with a sentence in the Youth Justice system
Zumu, B., Imafidon, K., & Bellio, L. (2016). Just Health: An enquiry into the emotional health and wellbeing of young people in the youth justice system. Clearview research.	Report	Qualitative – focus groups	Children with a recent history of offending

'Society should ensure that all children and young people make a fulfilling transition to adulthood'