



## Children on short-term remand

A thematic review by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

May 2026



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# Introduction

Custodial remand is an essential part of any justice system. When used effectively it prevents those accused of serious crimes from absconding, offending again or intimidating witnesses. However, two out of every five children held in custody are now on remand, and well over a half do not go on to receive a custodial sentence.

Nearly 100 children every year are remanded to custody only to be bailed or moved to local authority accommodation less than two weeks later. This report reveals that in most cases custodial remand might have been avoided if youth justice services (YJS) were informed earlier, if community services were better coordinated, and if there was more clarity between the courts and YJS about the key components of a robust bail package.

The impact on children who are remanded to custody is significant. They are often placed in volatile institutions with little or nothing achieved before they are released back into the community. In the worst cases these children are subject to intimidation and violence during their short periods on remand.

Short-term remand also affects outcomes for the other children held in youth custody, destabilising establishments and consuming resource that would be better directed towards children held long enough to receive some education, health care or offending behaviour work.

The substantial financial cost of short remands offers little benefit to society, disrupting a child's life in the community and frequently leaving them confused and angry when they return.

This is the latest in a series of reports since 2022 that have outlined the problems facing children remanded to custody, and in that time little has changed. There is, however, some cause for optimism. The professionals to whom we spoke – in local authorities, custodial institutions and courts – agreed that short-term remands were often avoidable and many had ideas about how the current system could be improved. If sustainable progress is to be made, the Ministry of Justice should listen to and support this enthusiasm for change.

**Charlie Taylor**

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

April 2026

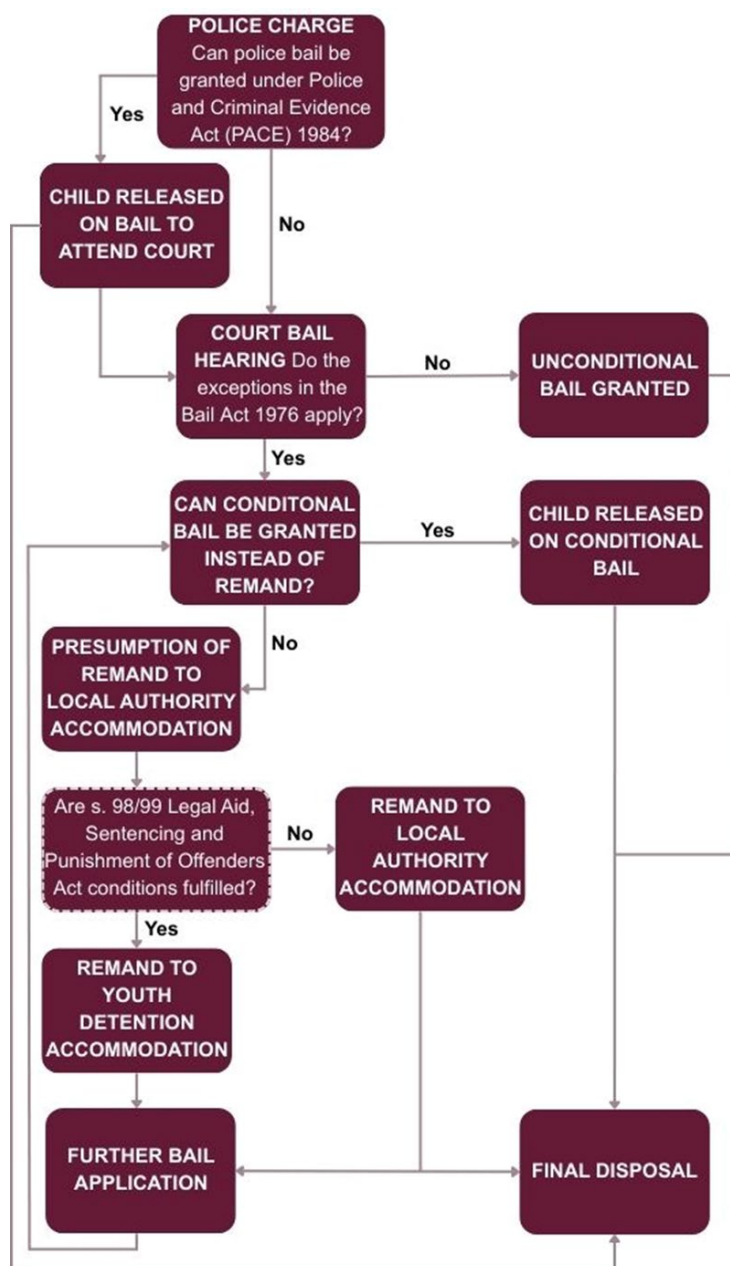
## Concerns

1. **Many children with no prior experience of custody were held on remand for under two weeks, only to then be released on bail or to local authority care.** This caused disruption to their life, destabilised youth custody establishments, and diverted resource from other children in custody.
2. **Bail and release to local authority care were often arranged too late to avoid short-term remand.** Youth justice services were frequently not informed when a child was first detained or remanded and were not always available to provide a package that managed a child's best interests and risks.
3. **A lack of effective communication between youth justice service and the judiciary, inconsistency between decisions in different local authority areas, and challenges in finding suitable accommodation meant alternatives to custody were not always used.**
4. **Short-term custodial remand offered too little time to provide children with constructive support.** Children did not always know why they had been taken into custody and too often did not receive entitlements such as telephone calls.
5. **In some areas, low numbers of remanded children meant youth justice services lacked the necessary skills and experience to manage these children in the community and were ill-suited to engaging with the national courts and tribunal service.** There was often not enough financial incentive for them to advocate for an alternative to custody.

## Section 1 Background

- 1.1 The threshold to remand a child is set out in the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO). In principle, there is a presumption of bail as a starting point for children, and remanding them to custody should be a last resort. However, exceptions in the Bail Act 1976<sup>1</sup> specify that bail may not be granted to a child if there are substantial grounds for believing that if released on bail he or she would fail to surrender to custody, commit a further offence, interfere with witnesses or obstruct the course of justice.

Figure 1: The process for remanding a child to custody or releasing them on bail.



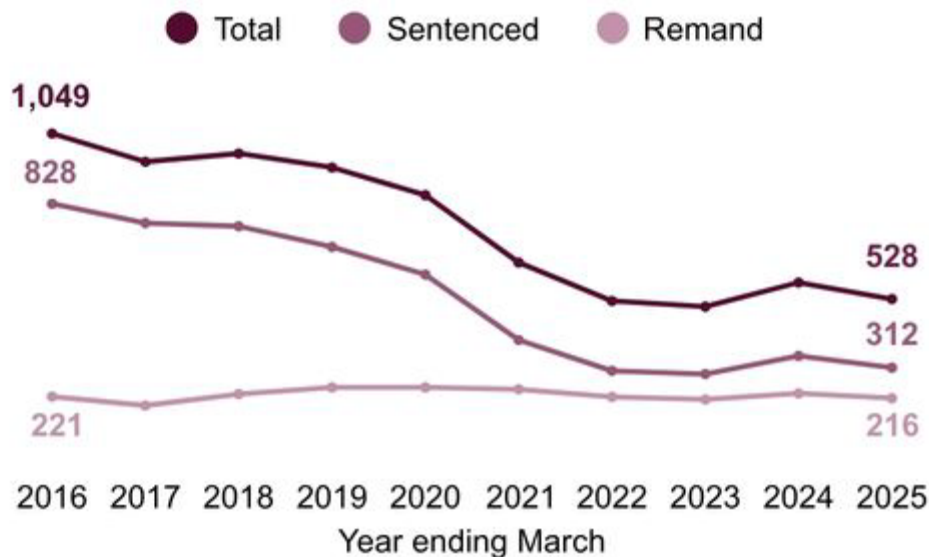
<sup>1</sup> UK Parliament (1976)

## The number of children on remand

- 1.2 In 2022 the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) published a review of custodial remand for children.<sup>2</sup> The review found that despite a drop in the number of children in custody, the number held on remand had not followed the same trajectory.
- 1.3 Since the review, the custodial remand population has remained much the same. In the year ending March 2025, children on remand made up 41% of those in young offender institutions (YOIs) and the secure training centre (STC), compared with just 21% in 2016. The proportion held on remand in these establishments is now much higher than in adult prisons.

**Figure 2: The number of children on remand has remained stable while the number sentenced has fallen over time.**

YOIs and STCs in England and Wales, includes 18-year-olds.



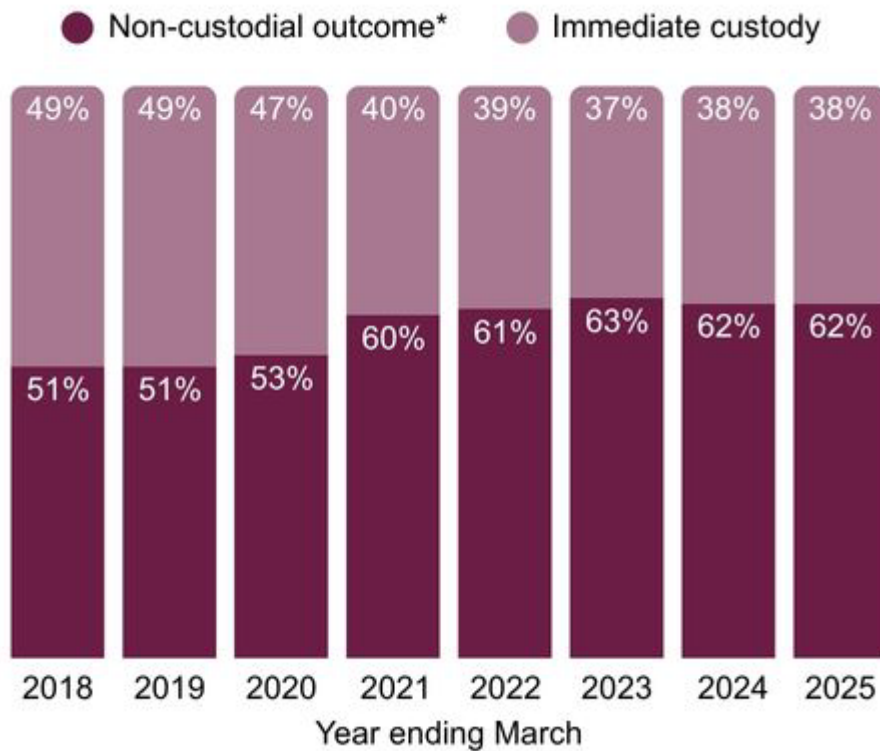
Source: Youth Custody Report, Youth Custody Service, 2026

- 1.4 The MoJ review highlighted that about a fifth of the remand episodes were short-term, lasting seven days or less, and attributed this to delays in the creation of bail packages and sourcing suitable local authority accommodation. It also found that a large proportion of children on custodial remand were either acquitted or did not receive a custodial sentence. In the year ending March 2025, 62% of children remanded to youth detention accommodation did not receive a custodial sentence: 15% were acquitted, or their cases dismissed or not proceeded against, and 46% received a non-custodial sentence.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Justice (2022)

**Figure 3: A higher proportion of remanded children receive a non-custodial outcome than sentenced to immediate custody.**

All children remanded in England and Wales, includes 18-year-olds.



\* Non-custodial outcome includes cases which were acquitted, dismissed or not proceeded against, or where a non-custodial sentence was given.

Source: Youth Justice Statistics, Youth Justice Board, 2026

## Remand budgets

- 1.5 Local authorities receive an annual payment allocation from the MoJ to help cover the cost of custodial remands and are charged a 'sector price' per night for each remanded child they place in a custodial setting. As the budget is pre-determined, and local authorities must cover any additional costs themselves, this should incentivise councils, particularly children's social care, to find alternatives to custodial accommodation.
- 1.6 However, for those local authorities where only one child, or even no children, are remanded in a year, the financial incentive to avoid custodial remand can be small. In contrast, some local authorities may have to manage several children from the local area on remand, putting substantial pressure on limited local authority budgets.
- 1.7 A pilot scheme in Greater Manchester has attempted to address these problems. Remand budgets across nine local authorities in the area have been pooled, enabling the councils to share financial risk and commission more effective support to help keep children out of custody.

- 1.8 They have also been able to engage more effectively with the courts, developing a better understanding about what the courts view as a robust bail package, while providing judges with information about the support and supervision available in the community.
- 1.9 The work in Greater Manchester is still in its infancy, but we were shown data that indicate it is having some early success in reducing the number of children remanded to custody.

## The impact of remand

- 1.10 The number of short-term remands in custody has increased pressure on the youth justice estate as more children move in and out of custody. During our inspections of YOIs and Oakhill STC (inspected jointly with Ofsted), we frequently find poor outcomes for children. Between April 2025 and March 2026 only Parc YOI was judged to have good outcomes for children in our healthy establishment tests of safety and purposeful activity.

**Table 1: Inspection scores for YOIs inspected between April 2025 and March 2026.**

2025–26	Safety	Care	Purposeful activity	Resettlement
Feltham	1	3	1	3
Parc*	4	4	4	4
Werrington	2	2	1	3
Wetherby	2	3	2	4

\* Report not yet published

- 1.11 In 2023 HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMI Prisons) undertook a joint thematic inspection of work with children subject to remand in youth detention with HM Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted.<sup>3</sup> It examined community remands (remand to local authority accommodation, intensive supervision and surveillance bail and other bail programmes) as well as placements to the secure estate, including secure children’s homes, STCs and YOIs.
- 1.12 The inspection found that outcomes for children placed in the secure estate, especially STCs or YOIs, were worse than for those in the community. There were weaknesses in care planning, children in custody did not always receive their specific entitlements (such as allocated pocket money to pay for phone calls to their family or social worker) and, unlike sentenced children, families of children on remand did not get help with travel costs. It also found that these children had limited access to education in custody, and uncertainty about the duration of their time on remand meant they could not access the full breadth of programmes available in YOIs.

<sup>3</sup> HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted (2023)

- 1.13 Given the known negative impact, this review sought to understand why so many children are remanded to custody, only to be released a few days later.

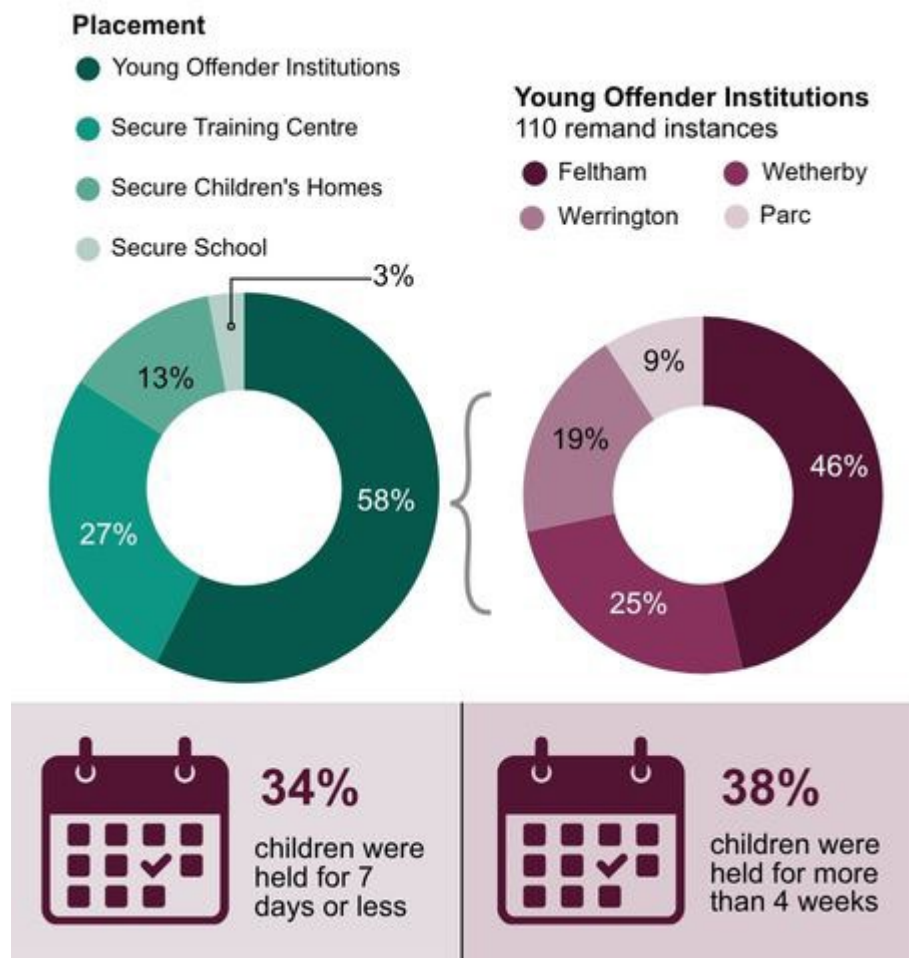
## Section 2 Who are the children on short-term remand?

2.1 To help conduct this review, the Youth Custody Service (YCS) provided HMI Prisons with case-level details on remands released to the community for the 12 months between 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025. During this period there were 190 instances where children on remand were subsequently bailed.

2.2 Of these instances, 91 (48%) involved periods in custody of two weeks or less, and 65 (34%) were for seven days or less.

**Figure 4: Overview of where children on remand were held, and length of remand periods (out of 190 remand instances).**

All children remanded to the youth secure estate in England and Wales between 1 August 2024 and 31 July 2025. Children may have turned 18 by the end of the remand period.



Source: Data provided to HMI Prisons by the Youth Custody Service, 2025

2.3 Using a case study approach, we selected a sample group of 25 children who had been remanded for seven days or less. As well as carrying out a detailed case file review, we conducted interviews with

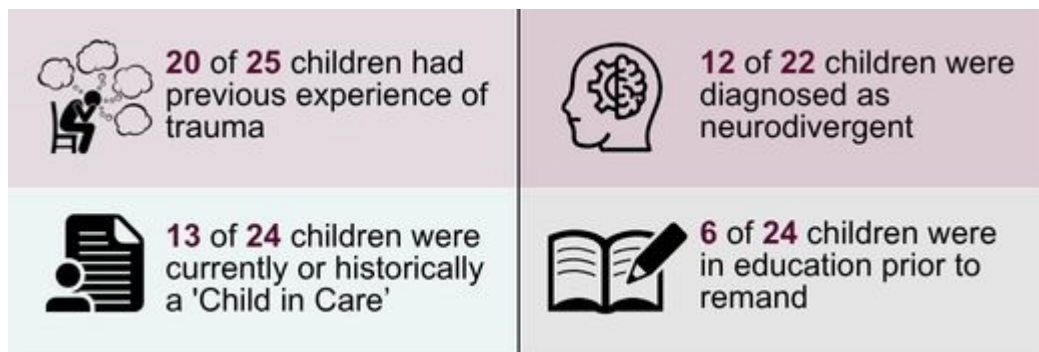
YJS workers, resettlement practitioners in custodial settings, and the children themselves, although it was not always possible to carry out all of the interviews for each child.

- 2.4 We also met with stakeholders to gather their views and visited some of the new initiatives established to support children in contact with the youth justice service. Further information about our methodology is included at Appendix I.

## Complexity and vulnerability of the children

- 2.5 It was clear that the children in our sample were often vulnerable and had many complex needs. Just over half had a neurodivergent condition, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which can affect communication and emotional regulation.

Figure 5: The children included in our case sample had many complex needs.

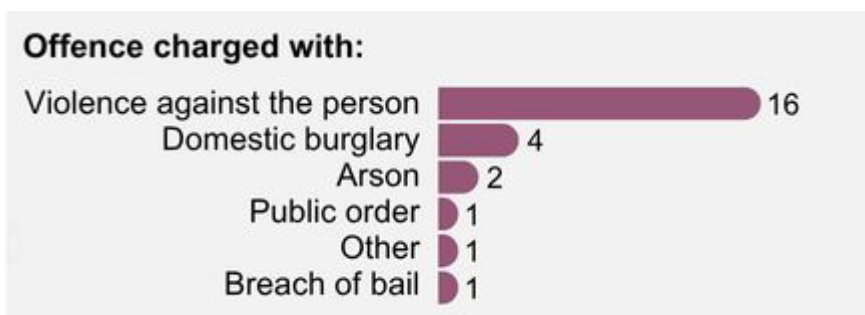


Source: HMI Prisons case study sample

## Offences committed by children

- 2.6 Sixteen of 24 children had experienced contact with the criminal justice system prior to the offence for which they were remanded (the index offence), with some already on bail at the time. Many of them had a dedicated YJS worker, who knew them well.
- 2.7 The children were mostly charged with violent crimes such as grievous bodily harm, actual bodily harm and wounding, often linked to possession of knives or other offensive weapons. Drugs and property-related offences were also common, including burglary, aggravated burglary and robbery. A smaller number of cases involved arson, criminal damage and motoring offences.

**Figure 6: Violence against the person was the primary charge for most children whose case we reviewed.**



Source: HMI Prisons case study sample

2.8 Most of the children were arrested on the day the offence was committed or shortly after and held overnight at a police station.

**Figure 7: Many children were held in police custody overnight.**



Source: HMI Prisons case study sample

2.9 The YJS workers to whom we spoke reported significant gaps in communication at the point of arrest. In many cases, they were not informed when a child was first detained or remanded into police custody, which meant they were unable to intervene early or offer timely assistance. They often only became aware of a child’s involvement in the criminal justice process once the child was listed for a court appearance. This delay meant that the YJS had limited time to understand and assess the current offence and the factors leading to it, so that they could compile a suitable bail package to manage a child’s risk in the community. This was even more relevant for children who were arrested out of area or were previously unknown to the YJS.

2.10 Unlike the national prison and court services, local authority YJS use their own regional information systems, which limited their ability to access information about children from out of area. This had caused frustration in several of the cases we reviewed. To mitigate this, YJS workers needed to be proactive in making sure they could access the information needed before the first court appearance. In one case, a YJS worker described how a lack of shared information had contributed directly to a child being placed on remand.

“Sometimes the court gets annoyed... they struggle to understand that although we’re [name of borough] and the young person is from [name of borough], they think, you’re still the youth justice service so you should have access.”

YJS worker

## Section 3 Rationale for remand

- 3.1 Many of the children in our review met the statutory thresholds for being placed on remand under LASPO due to the seriousness of the alleged offences. Courts also cited other reasons for authorising remand, including public protection and an inability to manage a child's risks in the community.

### Case example 1

Child A was arrested for 'grievous bodily harm with intent' and attempting to 'intimidate a witness', while they had a history of offending, including driving offences and one violent incident. The new offences demonstrated an escalation from previous offending behaviour. At the time of the offences the child was already subject to a Youth Rehabilitation Order and on police bail.

In deciding to remand the child, the judge highlighted that the child was charged with an offence that would carry a sentence of more than 14 years if committed by an adult. The court concluded that no community-based option, either on bail or through the local authority, could safely manage the risks posed by the child. The court determined that the risk of further imprisonable offences could not be managed in the community and that remand was the only option.

- 3.2 We also found a number of cases where the use of remand seemed predominantly about a child's welfare, given the lack of alternatives with which the court was presented.

### Case example 2

Child B was arrested for 'public order' and 'assaulting an emergency worker' and had many previous convictions for similar offences. The child had a learning delay which affected their level of understanding. They did not attend the court room, and the case was heard in their absence due to their presentation and the fact that they were being restrained by court staff.

While the documentation for their remand clearly stated that they were charged with an imprisonable offence which was likely to warrant a custodial sentence, and outlined their history of committing offences on bail, the main concern appeared to be the child's welfare. The written remand warrant said:

'My main concern is your welfare. Never have I had a child in my court unable to come up from the cells because [the child has] had to be put in leg restraints and is out of control without those restraints. It is not safe for you to be released from court onto the streets. I am worried about what will happen to you. I need to keep you safe.'

The child was remanded for six days. At the time of the review almost a year later the charge was still an outstanding matter with the court.

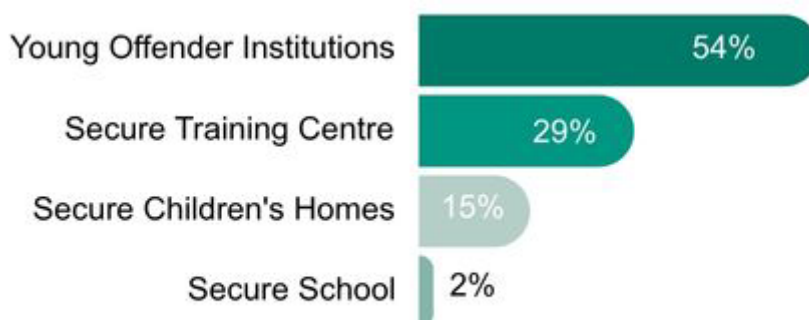
- 3.3 While initial remand decisions met legal requirements at the time of the first hearings, the fact that all 25 children were released within seven days raises questions about whether custody was necessary if credible, alternative community-based options could have been arranged at the first hearing.
- 3.4 Judges and magistrates spoke of the difficulties they faced when they were presented with a high-risk child who was accused of a serious offence without a robust bail package. The lack of a community alternative, which would usually include intensive supervision and appropriate accommodation, meant that they felt they had little option but to remand a child to custody until these measures were put in place.
- 3.5 Community professionals told us that remand to local authority accommodation was not used as frequently as it could be, and that more use by the courts could reduce the number of children sent to custody. However, judges and magistrates told us that local authority accommodation was often not provided quickly enough to avoid remanding a child to custody. This difference of view, while understandable given their different roles, demonstrates the need for greater communication between YJS and the courts. It is notable that for children under the age of 12, remand to local authority accommodation is the only option available to the court, regardless of the offence and circumstances.

## Section 4 Where are children held?

- 4.1 Children aged 12–17 who are remanded or sentenced to custody are placed within the youth secure estate, overseen by the Youth Custody Service (YCS). Provision includes YOIs for boys aged 15–18, STCs and secure children’s homes. A new secure school opened in May 2024, and held a small number of remanded children, but was temporarily closed for a period during this review.
- 4.2 Remanded children are not spread out evenly across the system. In the 65 instances of children placed on remand and bailed within seven days or less (see paragraph 2.2), most children were placed in a YOI. Most of the remaining children were placed in the STC, while very small numbers were accommodated in SCHs or the secure school.

**Figure 8: The largest proportion of remands which lasted seven days or less were to a YOI (out of 65 remand instances).**

Youth secure estate in England and Wales, 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025, children may have turned 18 by the end of the remand period.



Source: Data provided to HMI Prisons by the Youth Custody Service, 2025

- 4.3 Even within establishment types there were notable differences. The high number of children entering the system from London and the south-east meant Feltham had held many more children on remand than other YOIs over the previous 12 months. Feltham’s population was more transient and unstable as a result, and its ability to deliver education and other services to meet the needs of the children held there was under pressure. Our most recent inspection of Feltham, where we found high levels of violence and an inadequate education provision, emphasised the impact of this instability.

**Table 2: Feltham YOI had the highest proportion of remanded children in the YOIs.**

Establishment	Average remand population	Average total population	% remand population
Feltham	56	99	57%
Parc	8	28	28%
Werrington	27	83	33%
Wetherby	38	115	33%

Source: Data provided to HMI Prisons by the Youth Custody Service, 2025

## Children’s experience of custody

- 4.4 The majority of children in our sample did not have previous experience of custody. Only four of the 25 had been in custody before.
- 4.5 Children did not always understand why they had been remanded. While a few said they had been given clear information, others created their own rationale, such as already being on tag, or being a ‘danger to society’. Others were unsure and described feeling confused, low and scared.
- 4.6 Children described witnessing various incidents in custody, including violence, the use of weapons and other poor behaviour. In some cases, the children themselves were either a perpetrator or victim of violence.

“I was scared, there was a lot of shouting and noise, and the next morning there were lots of people (referring to other children) at my door, asking me questions in an intimidating way if you know what I mean.”

- 4.7 One child said he had watched through his window as another child was stabbed, and said that he ‘found that scary’, knowing he was going to be moving off the induction unit and would then have to mix with these children.
- 4.8 These findings align with survey findings from our routine inspections of YOIs and STCs. For example, in 2024–25, 57% of children surveyed told us they experienced verbal abuse from other young people and 30% told us they experienced physical abuse from other young people.<sup>4</sup> Short-term custodial remand therefore has the potential to expose children to distressing experiences.
- 4.9 Contact with family and friends could be challenging in the first few days for the children in our sample. While staff usually made sure that a child had a phone call on arrival, further contact could take several days, largely because all contacts needed to be approved by the YJS. One child was unable to make a call during the seven days he was in custody. Some children experienced prolonged periods with no

<sup>4</sup> HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2025)

meaningful contact, leaving them isolated and anxious when reassurance and support was most needed.

## Understanding children's needs

- 4.10 Children described meeting multiple professionals, including from the prison, health care and mental health teams during their first few days. One child described numerous 'processes', with many staff trying to understand their needs and plan for their period in custody and beyond. However, other than asking lots of questions, there was not enough time for meaningful interventions or to address underlying issues or concerns.
- 4.11 Resettlement practitioners (RPs) should support a child through a period of remand or a sentence by coordinating support for health, education, and well-being, as well as preparing a child for release and reintegration into the community. Every child is allocated an RP on arrival who will typically make contact shortly afterwards, and liaise with the YJS, social worker and family. While contact for some children was prompt, we found others who had not met with their RP before they were bailed.

### Case example 3

Child C entered custody and was on remand for six days. During this time they were only seen by their RP at the point of their release. No remand planning meeting took place and the YJS had no contact either in person or over the phone with them.

- 4.12 The RPs to whom we spoke described the work after a child first arrived as intensive. During this time they needed to make sure they had as much information as possible about a child, start to build a relationship with them, and establish contact with family and professionals in the community. This could be very time consuming, and one RP said: "It's not unheard of just to be told their age and that's about it. We often have to ask the next of kin for information or we can spend lots of time searching for the right professional to get information from". Many also said the work felt 'pointless' when children were bailed so soon after arriving, and felt their time could have been better spent with other children in their care.

"There is no time to build up relationships with the young person, as well as other professionals. Completion of risk assessments are difficult as by [the] time you have requested the information they have gone. Also, short stays are very stressful for the young person."

Resettlement practitioner

- 4.13 Many YJS practitioners in the community spoke of the challenges of trying to see a child in such a short period of time.

“... arranging video contact with the institution can be administratively slow, and the short remand meant the planned first meeting did not materialise before release.”

YJS worker

- 4.14 About three-quarters of the children in our sample were not in education or work before entering custody, but for some, the only work undertaken was an initial education assessment, with no time to further motivate or engage children.
- 4.15 Most of the children spent all of their time living on the induction unit, where they predominantly experienced long periods locked behind their doors with very little to keep them occupied. One child described almost never coming out of his cell on the induction unit and ‘just watching TV’.
- 4.16 One child said that the first he had heard about custody was at court, and “next thing I know I am on the bus”. He described his time in the YOI as, “weird, I wasn’t used to it, I was mostly in my cell, and I didn’t really get an induction”. The child also told us he did not have a phone in his cell and was only able to speak to a family member once during his stay. When he was granted release by video link, he was confused and said he was “told different stuff by the staff”. He described the whole experience as “pointless getting locked up for the weekend”.
- 4.17 Short stays in custody offered little opportunity for constructive, purposeful work. At the same time, they caused significant disruption to a child’s life, interrupting routines and relationships while creating stress and confusion. Other than the initial assessments completed on arrival, our review found that all 25 children were simply held and assessed during their short time in custody, with no evidence of anything more productive.

## Section 5 Release to the community

- 5.1 In the cases we reviewed, the lack of suitable accommodation, safeguarding concerns, and the need for more robust management plans were among the factors preventing bail being granted at the first hearing. Judges often required additional levels of supervision or restrictions to be put in place before granting release.
- 5.2 As a result, most children who were later bailed had support packages with restrictions such as electronic monitoring, curfews, exclusion zones, and non-contact orders. These packages were frequently underpinned by multi-agency planning involving YJS, children's social care, and other specialist services.
- 5.3 This pattern suggests that some initial remand decisions may have been driven by the absence of a timely bail package rather than an unwillingness to grant bail. Once these barriers were resolved and suitable supervision or restrictions were in place, courts appeared to be more confident in approving bail, indicating that better coordination earlier in the process could avoid the use of custodial remand.
- 5.4 Across the cases we reviewed, three key elements consistently prevented a YJS from providing a suitable bail package: insufficient time, accommodation challenges, and problems with communication and consistency with relevant agencies (Police, Crown Prosecution Service and defence council).

### Time

- 5.5 There was often limited time for the YJS to prepare a bail package prior to an initial hearing, frequently because they had not been notified when a child was remanded at the police station. This reduced the time available for some YJS to prepare the bail package. It was further compounded by when the court appearance took place: just under half of children in our sample were remanded on a Saturday or a Monday, and the weekend made it more difficult for a YJS to be able to coordinate with other agencies. As a result, the judiciary regularly had to make decisions based on incomplete information about a child's circumstances, support network or immediate risks.
- 5.6 YJS workers consistently told us they would have been better able to arrange a robust bail package if they were informed when a child was initially remanded to police custody. When this information was not shared, it meant workers could not present a realistic package of support at court.

#### Case example 4

Child D was remanded on Good Friday for possession of a knife, criminal damage and a section 18 offence.

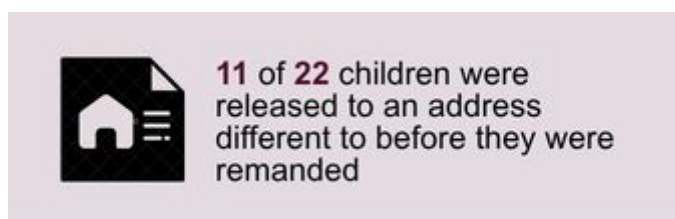
The child remained at the police station until Easter Monday before being remanded into custody. In court the child was provided with a duty youth worker from another London borough, given it was a bank holiday. The child remained in custody for seven days until their next hearing, when they were granted bail to an out-of-area placement to help disrupt peer groups and break connections to county lines. The YJS worker believed that had it not been a bank holiday, the remand could have been avoided.

- 5.7 In the cases we reviewed, it was clear that the YJS used the period of remand to prepare alternative bail packages before the next hearing. Where practice was strongest, this work was underpinned by effective multi-agency input, often through a professionals' meeting convened to agree risk management measures, secure suitable accommodation, and coordinate support plans. These meetings typically involved YJS workers, social care and other relevant agencies. The collaborative approach made sure that all aspects of a child's needs were considered, including safeguarding, engagement in education or training and strategies to reduce the risk of further offending.
- 5.8 Packages developed during the remand period incorporated conditions such as electronic monitoring, curfews, exclusion zones, and structured daily activities. In some cases, bespoke interventions, such as mentoring or targeted programmes addressing specific behaviours, were added to strengthen the proposal, but often these were only small changes, for example an additional two contacts with a YJS worker a week.

## Accommodation

- 5.9 Accommodation challenges appeared to be one of the key factors in deciding whether to remand children. In our sample, only half of the children were released to the address at which they were living when they committed the offence.

**Figure 10: Children who were released to a different address than before they were remanded.**



Source: HMI Prisons case study sample

- 5.10 For those released to another address, this was either because they had been remanded to a local authority as part of a bail package, or because they had secured an out-of-area placement. Being released to another address often happened when children were looked after by the local authority, when there were significant risks presented by domestic issues in the home, when the address was not deemed suitable, or when there were issues within the home area, including

exploitation of the child or links to negative influences through peers or relatives.

### **Case example 5**

Child E was arrested on Friday for possession of an offensive weapon and possession of drugs. The child remained in police custody until Monday, when they appeared at court and were remanded into custody. A multi-agency risk management meeting was held with a social worker and YJS worker to discuss risk and options, as there were concerns about the child's home area. Two days later the child appeared back at court and was bailed to the local authority and housed in a out-of-area placement. The child engaged well with the placement and was later sentenced to a youth rehabilitation order (YRO). The YJS worker told us that if accommodation had been arranged on the day of the hearing, remand would not have been needed.

### **Case example 6**

Child F was arrested and charged with affray and possession of an offensive weapon; the offence itself required the child to be hospitalised. The child, who had been in local authority care, was deemed a high risk to himself and others.

The court remanded the child due to the nature of the offence and a lack of accommodation, stating on the remand warrant that: 'The court is remanding into youth detention accommodation because no placement available to consider RLAA [remand to local authority accommodation] or bail.'

At the next hearing seven days later, the proposed plan included a temporary out-of-area placement until a suitable children's home became available. This was accepted by the court, and the child was remanded to local authority care.

- 5.11 To make sure there are suitable placements for children on remand through the local authority, a clear and coordinated approach is needed that addresses capacity and accessibility. The London Accommodation Pathfinder (LAP) was an initiative designed to provide an alternative to youth detention for children at risk of custodial remand. Aiming to reduce the use of custodial remand and improve outcomes for vulnerable children, the project was partially funded by the Youth Justice Board and was delivered in partnership with multiple London councils, charities and health partners, with Camden Council the lead authority.
- 5.12 The LAP operated from specialist supported accommodation that offered places primarily for boys aged 16–17, with capacity delivered through registered supported settings run by experienced providers such as St Christopher's Fellowship. These units offered structured

support, stability, and personalised interventions that helped children move away from offending.

- 5.13 There were, however, some challenges in establishing this accommodation, and professionals working on the project were open about the time it took to undertake risk assessments. This meant that in its current form, the LAP was not a solution to short periods of remand. The project had also experienced challenges in getting referrals due to an initial lack of confidence from both YJS and courts. This highlighted the need for good communication between community accommodation projects and the judiciary.

## Communication and consistency

- 5.14 In February 2025 the Ministry of Justice published the Youth Remand Concordat.<sup>5</sup> The Concordat was intended as a shared commitment by partners to follow a joint approach throughout the remand process, working together in the best interest of the child. Its primary aim was to support all partners in the remand process to understand their statutory responsibilities and good practice.
- 5.15 The findings from this review suggest that these aims have not yet been achieved. A lack of communication between the judiciary and the YJS during the initial hearing process appeared to be a key factor in children being remanded for short periods. In some cases, a YJS worker who knew the child was not present, either due to the child being out of area or the YJS worker being unavailable. This meant that the professional with the most knowledge of the child could not speak to or for the child at court and present information to the judge. We found one case where there was no representative from the YJS at all.

### Case example 7

Child G was charged and appeared at court for section 18 grievous bodily harm and possession of an offensive weapon. The child was not known to youth justice services.

The initial hearing was on a Saturday and an out-of-borough standby officer was covering it, but there was no consultation with the borough the child came from, making it difficult for the court to obtain information or a bail package from the home YJS or social care. This was compounded by a lack of shared systems. The child was remanded for five days.

- 5.16 In many cases YJS workers expressed their frustration with the courts and how inconsistencies between areas and judges made the provision of bail packages more challenging.

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<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Justice (2025)

“Certain courts work differently. So maybe if he was in [named court], he could have had the opportunity of being bailed and then brought back on a youth day to be considered again.”

YJS worker

- 5.17 In many of the cases we reviewed, YJS practitioners believed that the plans in place for a child were adequate. The plans typically included supervision, access to targeted services, and some restrictive measures such as curfews, which were intended to reduce opportunities to reoffend. Practitioners told us that, based on their professional assessments, the packages were proportionate and appropriate for the child.

“To prepare for court we [YJS] thought we had a robust package, not an ISS [intensive supervision and surveillance] package but we thought that was sufficient to manage [child]. We were surprised when he was remanded.”

YJS worker

- 5.18 This hearing resulted in the child being remanded to custody, which suggests that the judiciary did not share these views. Some YJS workers felt that if there was more dialogue at court, steps could be taken to develop proposals that the court would find suitable, and that this would reduce the likelihood that the child would be remanded.

### **Case example 8**

Child H had been charged with offences of burglary and aggravated burglary. The YJS worker had been working with the child prior to this offence and had a good knowledge of the child and their personal circumstances.

At the first hearing the bail package comprised five contacts a week with the YJS and electronic monitoring, as well as other restrictive measures such as exclusion zones. This was not assessed as suitable and the child was remanded at the initial hearing. The second hearing, held at a different court with a different judge, proposed seven contacts a week with electronic monitoring and similarly restrictive measures. This resulted in the child receiving bail.

The YJS worker expressed frustration at this case: “There should be steps taken before being remanded and that children are given a chance rather than going from nothing to everything. Feels as though a good dialogue with the judge would help as we could have arrived at an alternative at the first hearing.”

The case was still outstanding at the time of this thematic, but the YJS said the child was engaging well with the structures in place.

- 5.19 YJS workers typically possess detailed knowledge of the child, their vulnerabilities, and available community-based interventions. However, this information is not always presented clearly at the first hearing so that the judiciary can confidently consider alternatives to custody.
- 5.20 In one London borough (Haringey) the YJS had adapted the way they presented pre-sentence reports to the court, outlining the assessment of the child and their circumstances first, and detailing the offence after, so that courts could understand the child and their history before the crime. The aim was to inform better judicial decision making by including welfare, trauma and vulnerability where it was relevant to risk and harm.
- 5.21 The professionals to whom we spoke felt that a lack of collaboration at court created missed opportunities to address concerns at the first hearing. This sometimes resulted in short custodial remands which seemed unnecessary and which exposed children to the significant harm associated with even brief periods in custody.

# Appendix I Methodology

## Case studies

The Youth Custody Service provided HMI Prisons with case-level details on remanded children released to the community in the 12 months between 1 August 2024 and 31 July 2025.

We selected a sample of 25 children who were remanded for seven days or less. For the most part, children whose remand period had ended most recently were selected, but to ensure diversity within the sample, we included some children whose remand period had ended longer ago. The sample covered as many geographical regions as possible, as well as all of the YOIs and Oakhill STC. The sample was not weighted to be representative to the remand populations of these establishments.

The age, gender and ethnicity of children was also considered during the sampling process to increase diversity, but were also not weighted to be representative of overall remand population.

Region	Number of children
Eastern	2
London	15
West Midlands	2
North East and Cumbria	1
North West	1
South East and South Central	1
South West	2
Wales	1
Yorkshire and Humberside	0

Establishment	Number of children
Feltham	9
Parc	2
Werrington	2
Wetherby	3
Oakhill STC	9

Gender	Number of children
Male	23
Female	2

Ethnicity	Number of children
White	8
Ethnic minority	16
Unknown	1

Age (when remand ended)	Number of children
15	4
16	8
17	13

As well as a case file review for each child, we also carried out the following interviews, although it was not possible to undertake all of them for each child:

- interview with the YJS Worker (22)
- interview with the resettlement practitioner at the establishment to which the child was remanded (17)
- interview with the child (13).

### **Case file reviews**

Data was gathered from the Youth Justice Application Framework (YJAF) and supplemented with information from other sources. The review covered the following areas:

- background information about the children, including demographic information, previous contact with the criminal justice system and other risk factors
- information about the offence for which the child was remanded and the circumstances of their remand
- the period of custodial remand, including any adverse incidents, interventions or support
- the circumstances and details of the child's release on bail.

### **Interviews with YJS workers**

With the support of HM Inspectorate of Probation, the YJS workers for all sampled children were contacted and invited to participate in an interview with an HMI Prisons inspector. The interviews with YJS workers provided information about their contact and work with the sampled child before, during and after the episode of remand. Specific focus was paid to the preparation of bail packages for the child. These interviews predominantly took place via video call.

### **Interviews with resettlement practitioners**

Contact was made with children's resettlement practitioners at the establishments to which they were remanded. The interviews focused on children's transition into custody, including any information shared by the YJS,

as well as children's experiences in custody. These interviews predominantly took place via video call.

### **Interviews with the children**

Through the YJS worker each child was contacted and invited to an interview with an inspector. Children were asked when and where they would like the interview to take place – as some had subsequently been returned to custody, some interviews took place in custodial settings, while others took place in courts and YJS offices. The interviews covered their experiences of being remanded to custody, including their understanding of why they were remanded. Their time in custody was also explored in depth, as well as their contact with any professionals during this period. The granting of bail and release from custody was also discussed.

A semi-structured methodology enabled staff and children to describe their experiences while focusing on the topics that were of most importance of them. Interviewers were also able to ask follow-up questions to obtain more detail about specific experiences and concerns.

Interviews were summarised to facilitate thematic analysis, and direct quotations were also included in the summaries.

### **Analysis**

A thematic analysis was undertaken to identify key themes from both the interactions with children and staff, and the key lines of enquiry. For the interviews there was a focus on retaining the voices of the participants throughout the process of analysis. Verbatim quotes and case studies have also been used to illustrate themes and provide more detailed information on the specific experiences of children.

The review was conducted in line with HMI Prisons' ethical principles for research activities: [Ethical principles for research – HM Inspectorate of Prisons](#)

Inspectors paid particular attention to the well-being of the children, reporting any safeguarding concerns to appropriate staff, and adhered to the Inspectorate's safeguarding protocol for children, available at: <https://hmiprisons.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/how-we-inspect/>

### **Other meetings**

In addition to our case review fieldwork we met with other interested parties, including the judiciary, Magistrates Association, London Accommodation Pathfinder and the voluntary sector to gather views on the current circumstances relating to the use of short-term remand for children.

## Appendix II References

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## Appendix III Glossary

### **Bail package**

A set of support measures and conditions designed to help children remain in the community while awaiting court outcomes. It may include curfews, reporting requirements, mentoring, education-related support, or placement with family or carers to reduce the risks of reoffending or absconding.

### **Intensive supervisions and surveillance (ISS)**

A high intensity community-based intervention used as an alternative to custody for children. It typically includes daily contact, structured activities, education, electronic monitoring, and targeted behaviour work. It is one of the most intensive community sentences available.

### **Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders' Act 2012 (LASPO Act)**

Legislation that introduced changes to the youth justice and criminal justice systems, including reforms to remand, youth sentencing, and legal aid. For children, LASPO created the current remand framework, including remand to local authority accommodation and remand to youth detention accommodation (see below).

### **Placement**

A general term referring to the accommodation or setting where a young person is placed under a court order or remand decision. Placements may include foster care, children's homes, secure children's homes, youth detention settings, or specialist provision.

### **Remand to local authority accommodation (RLAA)**

A type of remand where a court directs that a child be placed under the care of the local authority rather than being held in custody. The local authority decides the type of accommodation, which may include family, foster care, children's homes, or other regulated placements.

### **Remand to youth detention accommodation (RYDA)**

A custodial remand for children where the court determines that the risk or seriousness of the alleged offence requires secure detention. Young people on RYDA may be placed in a secure children's home, a secure training centre, or a young offender institution (see below).

### **Resettlement practitioner**

A practitioner based in custody who is responsible for planning and supporting a young person's transition from custody back into the community. This includes coordinating services, preparing resettlement plans, addressing risk, and ensuring continuity of education, health and support.

### **Secure children's home (SCH)**

A highly regulated, welfare-focused secure setting providing care, education, and support for vulnerable children. SCHs have high staff-to-child ratios and are

used for both welfare placements and youth justice remand/sentenced placements.

**Secure school**

A new model of secure youth justice provision run along educational principles rather than as a traditional custodial environment.

**Secure training centre (STC)**

A secure custodial establishment for children aged 12 to 18.

**Young offender institution (YOI)**

A custodial establishment for young people, generally aged 15 to 21, with separate regimes for under 18s.

**Youth custody service (YCS)**

A specialist division of HM Prison and Probation Service responsible for overseeing the secure youth estate, including SCHs, STCs, and YOIs. The YCS manages placements, safety, operational standards and workforce development within youth custody.

**Youth rehabilitation order**

A community-based sentence for children. These orders can include a combination of requirements such as supervision, unpaid work, curfews, ISS, reparation, education requirements, or activity programmes. They are designed to address offending behaviour while keeping young people in the community.