

22nd September 2026

Jake Richards MP

Minister for Sentencing, Human Rights and Technology

Ministry of Justice

Via email

Dear Jake Richards MP,

We are writing to you from a range of organisations involved in youth justice regarding your commitment to reform the childhood criminal record regime.

Through our work we see too many people unable to access employment, education and other opportunities because of crimes they committed as children. We therefore welcomed the intention in the Youth Justice White Paper earlier this year to publish detailed proposals for a more proportionate childhood criminal records regime.

As alluded to in the former Lord Chancellor's statement to "simplify the criminal records regime...particularly in relation to childhood offences" the current system is incredibly complex and punitive. Many childhood offences which received non custodial sanctions must be disclosed for life, the number of childhood offences disclosed through standard and enhanced DBS checks are soaring with a 63% increase since 2021/22, and there are a total of 770 separate offences on the specified offences list which require different disclosure rules.

Building on proposals made in the White Paper, FairChecks have produced detailed proposals (attached) which cover youth conditional cautions, all sentences for childhood offences, rehabilitation periods and specified offences.

These proposed changes, whilst maintaining safeguarding and public confidence, would help tens of thousands of children and adults move on from childhood convictions each year. Increasing access to opportunities would reduce youth unemployment and the benefits bill, allowing people to contribute their skills to society. Reform of childhood criminal records would also support all those victims of criminal exploitation who acquired records as a result of coercion. Currently they must apply individually to the CCRC and undergo a retraumatising legal process in order to get their records expunged.

As set out in the White Paper's introduction, this represents a once-in-a-generation reform of youth justice. We hope that you will use this opportunity to consider these fair, proportionate proposals which would help many move on from childhood convictions.

Yours sincerely,

Penelope Gibbs, Director at Transform Justice

Paula Harriott, Chief Executive at Unlock

Gemma Abbott, Legal Director at the Howard League

Gess Aird, Chief Executive Officer at Kinetic Youth

Dr Summer Alston-Smith, CEO at Clinks

Chris Bath, Chief Executive at the National Appropriate Adult Network (NAAN)

Dez Brown, CEO at Spark2Life

Hannah Bussicott, CEO at Children's Legal Centre Wales

Heather Carroll, Secretary at Intermediaries for Justice

Leah Connolly, Chair at the Youth Practitioners Association (YPA)

Bami Jolaoso, Interim Head of Criminal Justice Practice at the Centre for Justice Innovation

Andy Keen-Downs CBE, CEO at Pact (Prison Advice and Care Trust)

Louise King, Co-Lead at Just for Kids Law, including the Children's Rights Alliance for England

Dr Hannah King, Associate Professor Criminology at Durham University

Caroline Liggins, Partner and Head of the Youth Team at Hodge Jones & Allen solicitors

Gloria Morrison, co-founder of JENGbA

Jess Mullen, Chief Executive at the Alliance for Youth Justice (AYJ)

Lena Patel, Deputy CEO at the Responsible Business Initiative for Justice

Lucie Russell, CEO at User Voice

Pia Sinha, Chief Executive at the Prison Reform Trust

Khatuna Tsintsadze, Co-Director at the Zahid Mubarek Trust

Dr Alexandra Wigzell, Chair of the Board of Trustees at the National Association for Youth Justice (NAYJ)