

AN EVALUATION OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER REMAND PILOT

Alternatives to Secure Remand for Children
April 2026

Executive Summary

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Acknowledgments

The research team at the Centre for Crime and Youth Justice Research at Manchester Metropolitan University would like to thank Manchester City Council, the MoJ and the YEF for commissioning this evaluation. We are indebted to Tom Lang, Andrew Rogers, Georgia Bamford and Urooj Shah for their assistance and support. Particular thanks to all the professionals who took part in the evaluation, especially the Greater Manchester Youth Justice Service leads, who have supported the project massively as it progressed. Most importantly, to the children and young people who told us their stories, we are truly grateful.

Executive Summary

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Purpose of the Pilot

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) commissioned Greater Manchester (GM) as a test site to investigate whether a regional pooled-funding model could drive:

- **Better alternatives to secure remand**
- **More consistency of remand**
- **Better outcomes for children**
- **Better use of public money**

The Pilot's Theory of Change

The Theory of Change focuses on three pillars:

- **Consistent regional practice**
- **Enhanced community alternatives**
- **Reinforced multi-agency responsibility/partnership working**

Evaluation of the Pilot

A research team from the Centre for Crime and Youth justice Research (CCYJR) at Manchester Metropolitan University were commissioned from April 2024-April 2026 to undertake an evaluation of the Greater Manchester pilot. The evaluation:

- Developed a comprehensive and co-produced understanding of the aims of the remand pilot
 - Mapped current practice and explored an understanding of the barriers and enablers to the delivery of the pilot
 - Identified and articulated examples of good practice that can be used to inspire and inform partners, across Greater Manchester
 - Generated findings about perceived changes in outcomes directly attributed to the pilot
 - Identified what data, existing or additional, would be required to undertake an outcome evaluation of the pilot
 - Refined the existing Theory of Change (ToC) to reflect the findings of the process evaluation
 - Produced a road map that partners can use to support their practice.
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Key Findings

- The pilot has contributed to a reduction in custodial remand.
- Pooling of the GM remand budgets and the increased use of Remand to Local Authority (RiLA) as an alternative to custodial remands has resulted in over £3million of savings.
- RiLA and the Greater Manchester Branch Accommodation, have improved outcomes for children by maintaining stability, access to services, and family connections.
- The pilot has resulted in increased use of bail services.
- Children on remand were found to have high levels of vulnerability, including social care involvement, educational exclusion, and complex needs.
- From 2025, the Greater Manchester Branch Accommodation has had an 89% occupancy rate and saved £117,956 in custodial remand costs.
- Children on remand in Secure Children's Homes reported better experiences than those in Youth Offending Institutes.
- An Education Employment and Training Steering Group has ensured that the pilot has developed and secured a clear pathway to increase children's access to ETE.

Challenges

Despite progress, several challenges remain. These include limited availability of suitable accommodation as an alternative to custody, time pressures in court settings to make decisions about placements for children, inconsistent buy-in across local authorities, and data quality limitations. Addressing these barriers is critical to sustaining and scaling the pilot's impact.

Policy Implications

The findings demonstrate that a regional, pooled funding model can support more effective and equitable youth justice practice. The pilot has already informed national policy, including commitments to longer-term funding and investment in community alternatives. Scaling this approach will require continued alignment between local practice and national policy frameworks, alongside sustained investment in infrastructure and services.

Recommendations

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For Manchester City Council and Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

- GMCA should retain a Steering Group, including all GM YJS Heads of Service, to take **leadership of the pilot's sustained activities**
 - Continue to **fund oversight of the remand project**, which includes a dedicated team to ensure the work is sustained and the recommendations are met
 - Develop and produce a **GM communication strategy** to support the continued buy-in from strategic partners and front-line staff.
 - Develop a **standardised court practice across GM** to support the consistent use of RiLA and bail across GM.
 - Continue to produce and analyse **GM remand data monthly** and share with YJ teams and relevant colleagues in GMCA.
 - Continue to **monitor and analyse the costs of custodial remand** across GM to be able to compare with the savings made by the continued use of alternatives to custody.
 - Identify YJ team staff to act as **alternative to remand champions**, including 'educating' colleagues about the use of RiLA in bail and court processes for referrals to supported accommodation.
 - Identify **participation champions within YJ teams** to support the understanding and embedding of PYP to ensure that children's experiences and past trauma (such as looked after status and CIN) are recognised and responded to in decision-making about remand and bail packages.
 - Advocate for GM to **stop remanding children to YOIs.**
 - Develop a separate plan and process for the **remand of girls and young women.**
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- The Education Sub-group should be retained to **ensure that ETE remains a priority** when making decisions about children's remand and bail packages.
 - Identify **YJ team staff to provide dedicated links to ETE providers** supporting the progress made by the education sub-group.
 - Develop and produce a tool that can **record and measure short and long-term impacts**, including children's increased access to and engagement with suitable ETE opportunities and children's increased access to, and engagement with, appropriate support services (these services need to be defined)
 - GM YJ teams and GMCA should explore the potential of retaining the current property and **partnership with their GM Accommodation Branch (SAHA)**.
 - A short needs assessment and financial projection should be conducted and used to decide whether **an expansion of accommodation across GM** is practically and financially feasible.
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For the Ministry of Justice

- **Close the Remaining YOIs**
 - Work with the YCS to **improve the accuracy and frequency of the remand data** recorded by the YCS's common platform.
 - Work with HMCTS and legal professionals to **develop a training package about alternatives to remand** for the judiciary.
 - Building on the Hancock Review, develop a national strategy for alternative to custodial remand placements **for girls and young women**.
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Recommendations from Children for Youth Justice and Legal Professionals

(in their own words)

- **Reduce the time** it takes for a case to come to court and go to trial.
 - Don't use **big words** and **technical language** in court
 - Use custodial remand as a **last resort**.
 - Don't send children to **custody**.
 - **SCHs are a better option** for children than YOIs, please use them.
 - Provide better support for children and their families if **English isn't their first language** (particularly in court).
 - **Better explain** the conditions attached to community outcomes such as bail.
 - **Train the police** in how to work with children and stop them from being aggressive.
 - **Stop using police custody**.
 - Support children with **neurodiversity**.
 - Provide **therapy and rehabilitation** for children.
 - Provide children with one **trusted adult** to prevent them from having to repeat their stories to different people.
 - Provide **more services** for children and young people to help them with education and jobs.
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