

**YJLC**

Youth Justice Legal Centre  
[www.yjlc.uk](http://www.yjlc.uk)

03 February 2025  
King's College, London



**YJLC**  
**Summit**  
**2025**

**Collaborating with Children**  
Applying Child First Principles in Practice

# YJLC Summit 2025

## Introduction

The YJLC Summit 2025 has been put together with a team of young people for youth justice professionals. Our organising committee have looked at whether a system designed without the children at its heart can ever really work.

They have delved into what Child First, Collaboration and Participation are all about and have chosen the speakers they think will best examine the issues.

14:00-15:00 - Panel 1

### Professionals on collaborating with children: what does it mean and what does 'good' look like?

Collaborating with children is central to taking a Child First approach but are we getting it right? In reality, many of the professionals dealing with children in the legal system – such as lawyers and police – are unaware of what Child First really means and children are not collaborating meaningfully in many parts of the process. Research shows that while 90% of youth justice services are using participatory approaches, implementation is poor.

Join us to get to grips with what 'collaboration' means in practice, why it is so important, and what it looks like when it is successfully implemented.



Anne-Marie Douglas  
CEO, Peer Power



Professor Hannah Smithson,  
Manchester Metropolitan University



Thomas Lang  
Head of Service, Manchester YJS



Clive Ellington, Chair of Trustees,  
Raheem Sterling Foundation



Chair:  
Sharando Aldis

15:00-15:45 - Panel 2

### People with experience of the legal system speak

An intimate conversation with people who had their teenage years spoiled and ambitions blocked by being forced into contact with the law for being perceived as 'illegal' and the shame and stigma associated with that. They discuss how hard it is to talk to anyone and how professionals with power might struggle to empathise with why people might be hiding. Speakers include:



Chrisann Jarrett MBE  
CEO, We Belong



Ijeoma Moore



Keshon Smith



Chair:  
Jasmine Mattis

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15:45-16:15  
**Break**

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16:15-17:15 - Panel 3

## Forgotten collaborators – families & carers

The value of collaborating with children is recognised but what about their families? Currently, their role is limited and it is frequently assumed that those within the criminal legal system are the experts. At the same time, parents, families and carers lack legal understanding which can make situations difficult. But what if we actively worked with families, carers and other professionals as collaborators?

In this panel, we examine the ability and rights of families and carers to participate in the criminal legal system. Our speakers include:



Monique G. Lee-Coleman, MSW, PhD,  
Social Justice Scholar



Sabrina Dennis, CEO,  
First Class Foundation



Carolyne Willow,  
Children's Rights Advocate



Alan Webster, Deputy Director for Youth  
Justice Policy, Ministry of Justice



Michelle Simon,  
Young People's Activist



Chairs: Aleya Kramer  
and Theo Corbett

The YJLC Summit brings together those who work tirelessly in this undervalued sector and celebrates our community and collective work. Our speakers are leading experts from across the globe and who share their ideas and tools for ensuring the better treatment and representation of children in the criminal legal system. Thank you for joining us as we come together to share knowledge, circulate innovation, and develop best practice.

17:15-17:30

## Bob Schwartz Memorial

17:30-18:30

## Drinks reception

### In memory

We honour YJLC Advisory Board member Bob Schwartz who passed away in October 2024.

Bob co-founded the Juvenile Law Center Pennsylvania in 1975 and was its executive director from 1982 to 2015. He was an internationally acclaimed advocate for children's rights and, as a long-time friend and advisor of YJLC, he will be missed greatly.



### Sponsors

The YJLC Summit has been able to take place due to the extraordinary generosity of our sponsors.



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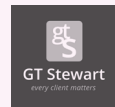
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# YJLC Summit 2025

# Speakers

## Clive Ellington

Chair of Trustees, Raheem Sterling Foundation

Clive Ellington is the Chair of trustees for the Raheem Sterling's Foundation, a charity that envisions a world where young people will always have the support, they need in the pursuit of improving their opportunities, their future careers, and their quality of life.

Prior to giving the foundation part of his time, Clive worked full-time as the operations director and scheme manager for two semi-independent providers, assisting over 30 young people as they make their transition into adulthood and independence. Before transitioning into the semi-independent sector, Clive worked as an assistant manager for a fostering agency for 9 years, and as the mentor coordinator for 8 years previous, mentoring males from difficult backgrounds. He met and mentored a young Raheem Sterling while serving as the mentor coordinator for the Boyz2Men mentorship programme, and the two have remained in touch ever since.

## Sabrina Dennis

CEO, First Class

Sabrina Dennis is CEO of multi award winning charity First Class Foundation, she is also the Owner and Senior Consultant at Legacy Consultants. She also empowers businesswomen, families, and young people through community engagement and public speaking with a passion for supporting families, children, and young people, Sabrina Dennis has made a name for herself as a specialist in community engagement with over 15 years' of experience. Her

skills in project management, business management, event planning, and teaching cementing her position as an expert. As the author of "A Piece of the Pie," Sabrina provides a practical toolkit for busy parents who, like herself, strive to maintain a work-life balance.

Through her work and experience, Sabrina is committed to helping young people live their lives with purpose, making her a valuable resource for any family or community looking to make a positive impact.

Sabrina is the founder of Kitchen Table Talks, a service recognised by the Youth Justice Board as 'Best Practice' due to her expertise in stakeholder engagement. Kitchen Table Talks empowers and supports families and young people who are often deemed hard to reach. Sabrina is also an advisory panel to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner in the West Midlands

Beyond her community work, Sabrina is a talented public speaker who has presented at various conferences and events, including the Youth Justice Convention, the NHS Diversion & Liaison conference and was a host for Black Inclusion Week, empowering our black youth.

Together with her husband, Nathan, Sabrina wants to showcase what it is to be a modern, British, Black family. They are passionate about family. Serious about business.

## Anne-Marie Douglas

CEO, Peer Power

Anne-Marie's belief in the transformational power of empathy and personal experience led her to found the charity Peer Power Youth. She is a champion for lived and learned experience, and the role of participation, love and empathy in the transformation of support services for those most excluded. Anne-Marie has worked in youth voice and engagement

locally and nationally across statutory and voluntary youth sectors for twenty-five years and is a Churchill Fellow, researching empathy internationally.

## **Monique G. Lee-Coleman**

MSW, PhD, Social Justice Scholar

Monique Lee-Coleman is a native New Orleanian and U.S. Army Veteran who is the sister of Ryan Matthews, the 115th exoneree from death row. Monique relocated to Denton, Texas following Hurricane Katrina to support and facilitate her brother Ryan's reintegration. Monique's decision to remain in Texas is a direct result of recognizing the hardships, harassment, and discrimination her brother would face following his exoneration. Inspired by her family's trauma, in 2014, Monique earned her B.S. in Criminal Justice. Later she would earn a Masters of Social Work from the University of Texas at Arlington under the mentorship of Dr. Cecile Guin, the social worker who advocated on her brother's behalf. Monique returned to Texas Woman's University and earned her PhD in Family Studies in 2024. Her doctoral research focused on the resilience of the family unit during wrongful incarcerations and the reintegration process. Currently, Monique serves on the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.

## **Michele Simon**

Young People's Activist

My name is Michele Simon, and I am the mother of a Just For Kids Law service user. I bring over 32 years of experience caring for my own children and extensive professional experience in various child and youth support roles. I have worked as a foster carer, youth advocate, children's residential care worker, Peripatetic 16+ support worker, youth housing officer, and a support and progression officer for youth homelessness.

Throughout my career, I have worked with young people aged 4 to 25 across multiple settings, including my own home, the education system, youth clubs, outreach projects, after-school clubs, children's homes, and youth hostels. I've also served as an appropriate adult when young people are taken into custody and navigated the youth justice system with my own son. These diverse experiences have provided me with a comprehensive understanding of the challenges young people face and the cascading impact these challenges have on those around them.

## **Thomas Lang**

Head of Service, Manchester YJS

Thomas leads a forward-thinking, relationship-focused service which supports victims and protects the public. He has taken the lead in developing a trauma-responsive workforce to respond to tackling child criminal exploitation and serious violence. Collaboration with the Manchester Centre for Youth Studies on research projects, including Serious Violence and its relationship with ACEs, has led to Participatory Youth Practice research being embedded both strategically and operationally across Greater Manchester.

## **Carolyne Willow**

Children's Rights Advocate

Carolyne Willow started her career as a child protection social worker and has spent the past 30+ years campaigning for children's rights. Between 2000 and 2012, she was head of the Children's Rights Alliance for England, during which time she led the charity's successful fight for transparency in restraint techniques and initiated legal action to try and force the government to notify former child prisoners that they were unlawfully restrained. Carolyne was the founding director of Article 39, a small, independent charity fighting for children's rights in England, and is now undertaking a

6-month pupillage at The Barrister Group. She was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Nottingham in 2024 in recognition of her work in children and young people's services and she is the author of *Children Behind Bars. Why the Abuse of Child Imprisonment Must End*, of which the late Benjamin Zephaniah said in the foreword: "This book tells our truth".

## **Chrisann Jarrett MBE**

CEO, We Belong

Chrisann Jarrett MBE is a changemaker and strategist with a strong focus on systems efficiency and change. She is a Law graduate from the London School of Economics (LSE) and is the co-founder and CEO of the UK charity, We Belong (est.2019) which focuses on improving outcomes for young people and advocating for systemic changes to the UK's immigration system. We Belong has successfully campaigned for changes to primary legislation enabling 330,000 children and young people to have an accelerated path to settlement in the UK. This charity builds upon the success of Let Us Learn, an award-winning project Chrisann founded in 2014 at the age of 19 which formed part of the charity Just for Kids Law. After facing personal barriers Chrisann launched the project to advocate for equal access to higher education for young migrants and submitted evidence to the UK Supreme Court *R v Tigere* leading to a national change in the student finance rules benefitting over 2,000 young people annually.

As a former Policy Advisor to the Deputy Mayor of London for Social Integration she has spoken at the United Nations Headquarters in New York about how to include youth in global migration governance. In 2019, she became a Trustee for the Queens Commonwealth Trust. She is currently a Trustee for the Global Law Firm Allen & Overy Shearman Foundation, Advisor to the UCL Policy Lab and member of The Ordinary Hope Project.

## **Hannah Smithson**

Professor, Manchester Metropolitan University

Hannah Smithson has worked within the field of criminology for over 20 years and specialises in the field of youth justice. Hannah is the co-convenor of the award-winning Greater Manchester Youth Justice Partnership - a partnership between Manchester Metropolitan University and each of the 10 Greater Manchester youth justice services. The partnership has created a transformative new framework: Participatory Youth Practice (PYP). PYP is the first framework to be co-created with justice-involved children based on their lived experiences. PYP has had an impact on youth justice practice, on national and international youth justice strategies, and, most importantly, on justice-involved children themselves.

## **Ijeoma Moore**

Having been featured in many news articles and TV programmes, as well as speaking in front of 6,000 people to share her story, Ijeoma has always been passionate about helping to voice the rights of young people. Ijeoma has been involved with We Belong, a young migrant-led NGO, since its inception and has worked with multiple organisations including Citizens UK, Coram, and Just for Kids Law. As a graduate of BSc Psychology, she hopes to go on and inspire more young people.

## **Alan Webster**

Deputy Director Youth Justice policy, Ministry of Justice

Alan is the Deputy Director for Youth Justice Policy in the Ministry of Justice, responsible for shaping and delivering the Government's policy and strategy in relation to the youth justice system - from early intervention and diversionary activity through courts, sentencing, custody and resettlement policy. Before

joining the MoJ to take up this role, he worked in the No10 Delivery Unit advising the Prime Minister on crime and justice delivery issues and held various other policy and strategy roles in the Home Office and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

## Organising committee

We are very grateful to the organising committee for their work putting the YJLC Summit 2025 together.



Jasmine Mattis



Aleya Kramer



Sharando Aldis



Keshon Smith



Theo Corbett

## Thank you!

A huge thank you for coming from all of us at [YJLC](#).



**Laura Cooper**  
Director



**Katya Moran**  
Director



**Aika Stephenson**  
Director



**Shauneen Lambe**  
Director



**Ruth McGregor Hamann**  
Youth Justice Lawyer



**Claire Coulton**  
Operations Lead

