

CROYDON CONTEXTUAL
YOUTH WORK & SAFEGUARDING
CHILDREN'S CONFERENCE



**THE VOICE
OF THE CHILD**

BACKED BY DATA



**13.OCT.2026
9AM - 4:30PM**

**REGISTER
TODAY**



phf Paul Hamlyn
Foundation

**BOXPARK
CROYDON**

AGENDA

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION 9:30 AM

ONE YEAR LATER
REACHING HIGHER YOUTH BOARD 9:40 AM

TRANSITIONAL SAFEGUARDING
DEZ HOLMES 9:50 AM

BREAK 10:45 AM

PARADIGM SHIFT
CRAIG PINKNEY 10:55 AM

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS
KATE BOND 11:35 AM

USING TECH FOR GOOD
JO WIMBLE-GROVES 11:55 AM

LUNCH 12:15 PM



13.OCT.2026
9AM - 4:30PM

WORKSHOPS

• PRACTICE – ENHANCED BY
YOUTH VOICE OR
PARTICIPATION. 1:15 PM

COLIN & RACHEL – RESONANT
COLLABORATION

• EXPLORING ADULTIFICATION
MARCIA RICE

• CROYDON SCHOOLS HEALTH
AND WELLBEING SURVEY
CLAIRE MUNDLE & P4YE

BEYOND CAPTURE
JOEL DUNN 2:00 PM

BREAK 2:30PM

YOUTH VOICE
PROJECT 4 YOUTH EMPOWERMENT 2:40 PM

EMERGING TRENDS
KEITH MAKIN 3:00 PM

Q&A PANEL - HOSTED BY DAVID
FIANKO-WILLIAMS 3:15 PM

CLOSING - DR RISTHARDH HARE
NETWORKING 3:50 PM
4:30PM



SHAPING THE FUTURE OF **CONTEXTUAL** **YOUTH WORK IN** CROYDON

JOIN US FOR OUR SECOND RESEARCH LAUNCH

2 NOV 2026

4:30 -7PM

UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH

REGISTER HERE



FREE TRAINING

**Mental Health First Aid &
Trauma Informed Training**

ENQUIRE HERE



THE VOICE OF THE CHILD

CONFERENCE SPEAKER BIOS



CONFERENCE MEMBERS



DEZ
HOLMES



CRAIG
PINKNEY



JO
WIMBLE-
GROVES



JOEL
DUNN



KATE
BOND



MARCIA
RICE



KEITH
MAKIN



COLIN
MICHEL



RACHEL
ALLEN-
RINGHAM



RH
YOUTH
BOARD



PROJECT 4 YOUTH
EMPOWERMENT

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CONFERENCE SPEAKER BIOS



CONFERENCE MEMBERS



**KARLYS
SIMONE**



**JORDAN
IGNATIUS**



**DONNA
SWIRSKI**



**SHAUN
POLLEY**



**ALECIA
BLACKFORD**



**DAVID
FIANKO-
WILLIAMS**

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DEZ HOLMES

DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE
NATIONAL CHILDREN'S BUREAU

Dez is the Deputy Chief Executive at National Children's Bureau, and is also Director of Research in Practice, a not-for-profit organisation that since 1996 has been supporting those who work with children, families and adults to use evidence in their practice and leadership.

Her practice experience is largely within youth offending services and early help. She is particularly interested in adolescence, transitions, risk and participatory practice.

Dez has led Research in Practice's work on adolescent and Transitional Safeguarding, and has recently published two books in this area.

Until recently, Dez was Programme Director for the Tackling Child Exploitation programme (TCE); she also chairs the Contextual Safeguarding UK Advisory Group and is a Visiting Fellow at University of East Anglia.

Dez chairs the Advisory Group for The Staff College, which develops leadership capacity across local authority children's services, and sits on a number of Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) policy committees and research advisory boards.

Dez was a member of the Evidence Group, supporting the Review of Children's Social Care, and is also a trustee of Family Action, a large charity providing practical, emotional and financial support to families who are experiencing poverty, disadvantage and social isolation.

In 2024, Dez was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by University of Sussex.

In 2025, Dez was awarded a MBE for services to social care.

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CRAIG PINKNEY

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
SOLVE GLOBAL LTD**

I am a criminologist, urban youth specialist, and Chief Executive Officer of SOLVE, a group of organisations delivering care, training, consultancy, and research focused on serious youth violence and community safety.

With over two decades of experience, I operate at both frontline and strategic levels, leading national and international work across the UK, Europe, the Caribbean, and Australia.

My work spans direct intervention, large-scale programme delivery, consultancy, and policy influence, supporting governments, national organisations, and frontline practitioners to respond effectively to exploitation, gangs, trauma, and violence.

I am widely recognised as one of the UK's leading experts on serious youth violence, with specialist expertise in social media and conflict, masculinity, and the lived experiences of Black boys and men.

I regularly advise senior leaders and institutions, while also maintaining direct engagement with young people and communities.

Alongside my executive leadership, I am completing a PhD in Social Sciences exploring the relationship between online conflict and real-world violence, positioning my work at the intersection of research, policy, and practice.

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JO WIMBLE

GLOBAL AWARD-WINNING TECH ENTREPRENEUR, STEM
AMBASSADOR, BUSINESS DIRECTOR AND AUTHOR
COMMITTED TO INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

Jo is a tech entrepreneur, author and speaker who is passionate about helping young people believe in themselves and feel confident about their future. She is the co-owner of Active Digital, an award-winning technology company she operates with her brother. They both started the business as teenagers when Richard was 20 and Jo was just 16.

In 2025, Richard and Jo co-founded Active Digital AI, supporting UK organisations to understand and use artificial intelligence responsibly. A key focus of Jo's work is the future of work, including AI and robotics. After a recent visit to The National Robotarium in Edinburgh, Jo brings real-world examples of cutting-edge robotics and supporting UK businesses on their AI journey.

Jo works closely with schools to inspire young people to recognise their strengths, build confidence and explore future career possibilities, particularly in science, technology and emerging industries. Her talks are practical, engaging and age-appropriate, helping students understand that success is not just about grades, it's about mindset, resilience and self-belief. Alongside her speaking work, Jo has been a contributor for publications such as The Guardian, The Telegraph, Grazia, BBC World Service and Sky News.

In October 2021, Jo published her first book with DK. Rise of the Girl: Seven Empowering Conversations to Have with Your Daughter, which continues to feature in the Top 100 parenting audiobooks. The book is a parenting guide designed to help parents and caregivers to build resilience in girls. It addresses seven key areas, such as fear of failure and social media pressure, providing conversation starters and advice to help daughters navigate modern challenges. The success of Jo's book led her to be asked to deliver a TEDx talk in November 2022 on the importance of being brave and raising your hand.

LINKS

Rise of the Girl: Seven Empowering Conversations
to Have with Your Daughter
<https://amzn.eu/d/0a7GIQQ>

[Active Digital - www.activedigital.co.uk](http://www.activedigital.co.uk)

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JOEL DUNN

**FOUNDER & CEO
PARADIGM PROJECT**

Joel Dunn is the founder and CEO of Paradigm Project, an organisation working at the intersection of research, practice and lived experience to build upstream, preventative approaches for children and young people most marginalised by the education system.

He is a doctoral researcher at the University of Cambridge, where his PhD builds on his MPhil to examine upstream safeguarding and school exclusion, using creative and participatory research methods that centre the voices of marginalised students, parents and educators.

His own journey, including time spent in prison where he first began mentoring within the education department, shapes his commitment to relational, community-led approaches to change.

Through Paradigm Project, Joel developed the Intersectional Safeguarding Framework, and he also works as a strategic lived experience consultant, helping organisations move beyond tokenistic engagement towards genuine co-production.

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KATE BOND

**HEAD OF SERVICE
NEW HORIZON YOUTH CENTRE**

Kate has spent the last 25 years working with children and young people impacted by, and involved with, the criminal justice system.

During this time, Kate has worked with young people in prison, across the secure estate, and in community settings. Since 2012, Kate has worked at New Horizon Youth Centre, a charity supporting young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

In her current role as Head of Service for the Youth Justice team, she leads work to improve housing options for young people impacted by exploitation and community violence.

Her work is rooted in both direct support and wider systems change, challenging the barriers that prevent young people from being safe, recovering from harm, and moving forward with their lives.

Before joining New Horizon Youth Centre, Kate spent over a decade working across three London local authorities across roles in Children's Social Care and Youth Justice.

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MARCIA RICE

BA(HONS), MSC, MPHIL, (CANTAB) CQSW

Marcia Rice is a forensic criminologist and mental health consultant who originally trained as a psychiatric social worker, researcher and therapeutic practitioner. She specialises on impact of unresolved and inter-generational traumas on life events on young people and adult behaviour.

She has over 30 years' international experience working in Britain, Europe and North America in teaching, research and academic institutions.

She has worked on academic research at Cambridge University, University of London, and Rutgers University Specialist topics including, mental health, historical and inter-generational traumas, strengthening families in crisis, Domestic Violence, adultification bias, female offenders, serious youth and gang violence, Black and Global majority offenders.

Marcia has served on several Government enquiries and expert evidence to several statutory bodies on good practise requirements including implementing mental health provisions, psychopathic disorders among offenders and anti-racist practice within criminal justice.

Marcia designs and delivers safeguarding training programmes to a range of health and social care, education, criminal justice agencies and multidisciplinary professionals. She also designs and facilitates training for Elected members, Executives, Senior Managers and frontline staff.

Her training courses are based on trauma informed practise and is focused on an action learning approach to applying knowledge and critical analytical skills to improve cultural competence and professional curiosity.

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KEITH MAKIN

**INDEPENDENT SCRUTINEER FOR
CROYDON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
PARTNERSHIP**

Keith Makin currently acts as the Independent Scrutineer for two London Boroughs and has been in that role and Chair of safeguarding boards in several other London Boroughs and places outside London.

Keith is a qualified social worker and has held the position of Director of Social Services, Chief Executive of a Government improvement agency and Chief Executive of an independent childcare organisation.

He is also the author of the recent report into serious failings in safeguarding in the Church of England.

Keith is passionate about making sure that we all hear the voices of children in everything we plan and do and that is what keeps driving him on!

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COLIN MICHEL

**FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR
RESONANT COLLABORATION**

Colin Michel is Co-Founder of Resonant Collaboration and a part-time ESRC-funded doctoral researcher at the University of Sussex.

He began in youth and community work and went on to strategic leadership in the public sector, including as Interim Director of Children and Young People's Partnerships in Birmingham.

His PhD studies youth and community workers in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. He led and co-authored the Slough Child Safeguarding Practice Review.

With Rachel, he is working with Reaching Higher on a practice and impact project, developing a framework for the Contextual Youth Work model.

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RACHEL ALLEN-RINGHAM

**FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR
RESONANT COLLABORATION**

Rachel Allen-Ringham is Co-Founder of Resonant Collaboration, with over 25 years' experience as a safeguarding leader and consultant.

Her work centres on child exploitation, extra-familial harm and multi-agency adolescent safeguarding.

As Head of Service for Child Exploitation and Children Harmed Through Violence at Tower Hamlets, she led strategy across community safety, youth justice and children's social care.

As a consultant she has led an adolescent safeguarding review for Bristol City Council and co-authored a Child Safeguarding Practice Review for Stockport.

She leads Resonant Collaboration's Harm Outside the Home consultancy and works with Colin on the Reaching Higher project.

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RH YOUTH BOARD

REACHING HIGHER

Reaching Higher's Youth Board is made up of young people between the ages of 13-19.

The Youth Board assist to identify outcomes that are relevant to young people's needs, enhance existing youth engagement initiatives, and give young people the opportunity to directly support programmes, procedures and outcomes.

The RH Youth Board are also first in line for opportunities to represent in local and central government, along with being involved in research and group activities. They also have fun along the way!

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PROJECT 4 YOUTH EMPOWERMENT (P4YE)

Youth Voice is a Croydon-wide initiative delivered by P4YE on behalf of Croydon Council.

We work alongside young people, schools, community organisations and decision-makers to ensure that young people's voices, experiences and ideas are heard and help shape the services, opportunities and policies that affect their lives.

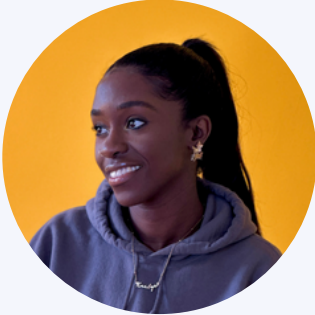
We are committed to ensuring that young people are not only heard but also see their voices making a meaningful difference.

Our mission is simple: Listen. Act. Feedback.

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KARLYS SIMONE

HEAD OF CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING REACHING HIGHER

Karlys is a dynamic youth worker with a background in therapeutic intervention. She is trained as an Integrative Counsellor and Psychotherapist and is a member of the BACP.

Karlys has worked therapeutically with adults through agency work and in both primary and secondary mainstream schools.

Karlys is the Head of Contextual Safeguarding at Reaching Higher and is trained to deliver AMBIT through the Anna Freud Centre and serves as the charity's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

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JORDAN IGNATIUS

CEO
REACHING HIGHER

I'm an experienced Early Years and Youth Work professional, entrepreneur, community leader, and positive disruptor with over 15 years' experience across these sectors.

I'm passionate about improving the lives of children and young people, with a track record in leading strategy, building value-driven teams, developing homegrown leaders, and fostering meaningful community relationships.

As CEO of Reaching Higher, I lead initiatives that champion and empower young people.

I'm the founder of Sowing & Growing Nursery and Preschool, a business committed to high-quality early years education.

I am an Acumen Academy Fellow & Global Foundry Member, a global leadership Alumni for social change-makers.

I serve as a Trustee at Crystal Palace Park Trust, focusing on commercial development and community engagement.

Outside of work, I cherish time with loved ones, enjoy discovering new food spots, going on long walks, and keeping up with sport.

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DONNA SWIRSKI

**PARTNERSHIP MANAGER
CROYDON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
PARTNERSHIP**

Donna Swirski is the Business Manager for Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership, she is a senior safeguarding professional with extensive experience in partnership working, quality assurance, and workforce development.

She is committed to strengthening multi-agency practice, promoting continuous learning, and driving improvements that enhance outcomes for children, young people, and families.

Donna works closely with partners across education, health, social care, police, and the voluntary sector to support effective safeguarding arrangements and foster a culture of learning and collaboration.

She is passionate about professional development, system improvement, and ensuring that learning from practice informs positive change across the safeguarding partnership.

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SHAUN POLLEY

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER CROYDON DROP IN

Shaun Polley is the Chief Executive of Croydon Drop In. For two decades he has worked across the voluntary and statutory sectors with young people in education, disability, mental health and safeguarding. Shaun's career highlights include piloting charity-led responses within police missing investigations, launching a nationally available support service for young people at risk of criminal exploitation, and delivering training internationally to law enforcement, social care and NGOs.

Today, Shaun's work is focused on transforming mental health services for children and young people and shaping national policy on Youth Hubs. He is committed to youth voice in both individual care and system design, championing radical yet practical solutions that remove barriers and help young people achieve the best possible outcomes. Colleagues know him for a collaborative style, clear thinking under pressure, and a consistent focus on what works for young people.

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ALECIA BLACKFORD

**HEAD OF CONTEXTUAL YOUTH WORK
(COMMUNITY)
REACHING HIGHER**

Alecia has over a decade of experience working with children and young people, with a journey shaped by her upbringings and involvement in sport.

Over the past 10+ years, Alecia has been dedicated to enriching the lives of children and young people. Which has included influencing funding decisions for community groups to strengthen support for young people, championing safeguarding initiatives, and ensuring the voices and wellbeing of young people remain central to service delivery.

At the heart of Alecia's work is a genuine desire to create positive, life-changing experiences for young people and communities that reduce harm. Alecia currently oversees the community delivery for Reaching Higher, has sat on the advisory board for BBC Children In Need and most recently been appointed as a trustee for Track Academy.

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DAVID FIANKO- WILLIAMS

**YOUTH VOICE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
(INTERN)
REACHING HIGHER**

David Fianko-Williams a Youth Voice Development Officer at Reaching Higher, passionate about how we can centralise the voices of young people in all that we do in Reaching Higher and also with our community.

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