



Paul Hamlyn  
Foundation

Youth Strategic Investment Fund  
Partnership Summary 2017–22

# Just for Kids Law

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# Contents



## **Interactive document**

You can navigate through the document via the buttons above and below.

# 1 Fund overview

The Youth Strategic Investment Fund is a high value programme that supports the development, sustainability and impact of youth-focused organisations with a track record of working with young people to achieve positive change.

The Youth Strategic Investment Fund (YSIF) targets a small number of organisations each year that align with Paul Hamlyn Foundation's priorities and are currently funded through the Youth Fund.

It is designed as a strategic investment that will:

- a. enhance the organisation's impact in working with young people
- b. strengthen the organisation's position within a specified field of practice
- c. secure its longer-term future through a focus on organisational development.

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**We hope that by sharing our collective reflections on the Youth Strategic Investment Fund we can improve our own practice, amplify the learning from this partnership and contribute to conversations about the role of funders in strengthening organisations that ensure young people can thrive.**  
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Moira Sinclair, Chief Executive, Paul Hamlyn Foundation

# 1 Fund overview

The Foundation provides a five-year, fixed-term investment to the organisation through a package of financial and expert support that typically includes:

- **A core grant in the range of £100,000 per annum (up to £500,000 over five years)** to support senior leadership and/or specific developmental posts that create the capacity for the organisation to evaluate, implement and embed strategic development.
- **A restricted annual budget of £30,000 (up to £150,000 over five years) to spend on development priorities** that are agreed with the Foundation, for example: short-term commissioning of consultants, skilled developers and researchers.
- **The appointment of an independent consultant as a 'Critical Friend'** to the Chief Executive as they navigate strategic development. The Critical Friend can also support other organisational leaders and trustees.
- **Access to a learning community of senior colleagues** from across the YSIF portfolio, providing networking opportunities between senior staff and convening activities to address common strategic development themes.
- **A relationship manager for the Foundation** who works with the partner organisation from invitation to the Fund through to exit and evaluation, and who meets regularly with the CEO to co-ordinate the full package of support and monitor the organisation's strategic development journey.

The investment targets strategic development for the organisation in at least two of the following areas:

## 1. Quality:

strengthening their services and consolidating their position as a leading organisation within their field of practice

## 2. Reach:

enabling greater engagement for young people in an established service through the development of projects, methods or technologies

## 3. Scale:

replicating a project or service through, for example, geographical expansion, social franchising or digital technologies

## 4. Influence:

in terms of shaping sector-wide practice, advocating for systems change and/or enhancing policy approaches in work with young people.



## 2 Fund approach

Four principles guide the Foundation's relationship with funded partners:

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The approach taken has allowed the challenges and issues arising for the organisation to be discussed in real time.  
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Just for Kids Law

### 1. Ownership

The Fund works alongside an organisation's own plans, goals and ambitions to grow its impact in work with young people. It seeks to support these plans through providing financial resources, commissioning expert advice and offering guidance that will strengthen the organisation to achieve its expressed mission and purpose.

### 2. Partnership

The Fund adopts a collaborative approach, working closely with funded partners to identify priorities for strategic development throughout the funding period. This requires regular engagement between the organisation's senior staff and the Foundation. It seeks to build relationships of trust that, while remaining fundamentally supportive, can withstand critical challenge in pursuit of a shared vision for working with young people to achieve positive change.

### 3. Flexibility

The Fund is tailored to support the complexities of organisational development and the organisation's ambitions to achieve growth in impact. A bespoke package supports the leadership of each organisation in a responsive, timely and flexible way, focusing on strategic development, and acknowledging that things change during the lifetime of the investment.

### 4. Dialogue

The focus for engagement, monitoring and feedback is conversation and dialogue. The regular cycle of face to face meetings, within and across the portfolio, enables responsive decision making to support each organisation's needs. This allows for learning to be actioned and applied in the 'here and now' rather than waiting for any formal reporting points.

### 3 Why Just for Kids Law were invited to join the Fund

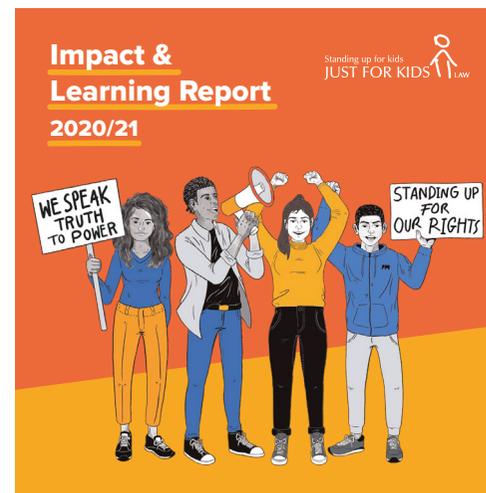
Paul Hamlyn Foundation had been funding Just for Kids Law since 2014, supporting their campaigning with and on behalf of young people to have their legal rights and entitlements respected and promoted, and their voices heard and valued. In particular, the Foundation had funded a youth-led campaign (Let Us Learn) to develop a movement around migrants' rights and access to higher education for young migrants in England and Wales.

Just for Kids Law had also demonstrated a track record of supporting young people with very complex needs through crisis to stability, centring each young person, their voice and agency and providing wrap-around support and representation.

On invitation to the Youth Strategic Investment Fund in 2016, Just for Kids Law presented a strong vision for their work and their values aligned well with those of the Foundation.

They were clearly ambitious for young people, committed to long-term support and the staff were well respected within the legal and professional law sectors. They had been on an accelerated journey of expansion since being established in 2006 and were seeking to consolidate this growth to extend their impact in the next stage of their organisational journey, making them a good fit for a longer-term strategic investment in organisational development.

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#### Organisational and strategic development needs

Just for Kids Law outlined that capacity, infrastructure and an ability to meet increasing demand were their biggest challenges when invited to join the Fund. They presented thoughtful and realistic plans for consolidating growth. The team and board appreciated that any future growth would need to be managed rather than opportunistic - the YSIF would support a leadership transition and office move, as well as realising strategic plans. Finally they needed to improve the use of new technology to support growth in service delivery.

#### Anticipated impact

Just for Kids Law planned to grow impact through a combination of:

1. Quality: through strengthening its organisational structure to secure longer-term sustainability
2. Reach: through steady growth in frontline services
3. Influence: through policy campaigns and strategic litigation

Just for Kids Law anticipated the investment would support them to meet the needs of many more young people in a wider range of areas, including mental health, education, housing and in their interactions with the police and criminal justice system. It would do this while prioritising that young voices are heard in legal cases and that strategic litigation cases would protect young people's rights. It aimed to grow its programme capacity by 20% and help an additional 1000 young people by 2020.

These ambitions would be captured in a strategic review process supported by the YSIF that was published in 2018 with subsequent annual impact reports, detailing achievements throughout the duration of the investment.

## 4 Achievements

Just for Kids Law has matured from a young organisation driven by the founders' vision during a period of accelerated growth, to a more stable platform for securing longer-term organisational impact and sustainability. The investment has supported growth in impact across the range of services offered and through strengthening its core infrastructure.

### A selection of headline achievements over the Youth Strategic Investment Fund

Starts offering independent legal services, becoming the first UK charity to be awarded a criminal legal aid contract

Awarded Organisation of the Year at the Howard League for Penal Reform Community Awards

Moves into new fit-for-purpose offices

Successfully lobbies the Department for Education to secure new protections for care leavers and children excluded during the pandemic

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

Wins a landmark Supreme Court judgement on the disclosure of youth criminal records, which is put into effect in legislation in 2020

Launched the School Exclusion Hub, sharing resources for professionals and organisations supporting children facing exclusion

We Belong launches as a stand-alone charity, building on the success of the Let Us Learn campaign

Successfully lobbies the Ministry of Justice to remove children from the Custody Time Limits Coronavirus Regulations

Wins an Appeal Court ruling on the overnight detention of tens of thousands of children in police cells despite clear guidance that they are inappropriate for children

## 4 Achievements

Just for Kids Law grew its capacity through doubling income streams over the five years from £1.2 million in 2017 to £2.5 million in 2021. This provided the much needed capacity to secure core staff roles, build a healthy reserve fund and improve infrastructure.

During this time it further developed its model of working with individual children and young people to secure their rights through case work (exceeding 1200 cases in 2021), whilst also working to achieve change in policy, practice and legislation through strategic litigation, and supporting children and young people to use the power of their own experiences to campaign for change.

### Campaigning success

One stand-out campaign has been the evolution and success of the Let Us Learn project, giving voice to young migrants to campaign for their right to access higher education. With the help of Let Us Learn activists, Just for Kids Law compiled evidence of people who were blocked from university because of student finance restrictions which was submitted as a strategic intervention in the case *R (Tigere) v Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills*.

The project continues to advise young migrants on their eligibility for student finance support and campaign for migrants' rights, in particular relating to the impact of rising Home Office fees.

In September 2019, with the support of Just for Kids Law, the project spun out as an independent organisation called **We Belong** – one of the first young-migrant-led organisations of its kind in the UK.



Throughout the investment Just for Kids Law has committed to embedding learning and development. Having persevered through Covid-19 restrictions, it has emerged stronger and more focused in its new strategic vision for future impact in championing children and young people's rights.

“  
**With the help of Let Us Learn activists, Just for Kids Law compiled evidence of people who were blocked from university because of student finance restrictions...**  
 ”

## 5 Adapting during Covid-19

The investment in Just for Kids Law included a period of profound societal level challenge with the onset of a global pandemic in early 2020.

As with many charities, the prolonged lockdown and wider Covid-19 restrictions placed a great strain on Just for Kids Law and its clients. Its casework model was built on relationships of trust with young people, established through personal support and face-to-face contact. While this was not possible, advocacy teams worked through phone and video calls to support their clients. For some staff this meant working with young people going through crisis and traumatic experiences from their own homes.

Just for Kids Law put in place support systems and reflective practice arrangements to support staff with processing the demands of working in isolation and to manage the stress of constantly changing expectations.

The legal team continued its work as usual, adapting to court closures and online hearings as necessary. It continued to take on new criminal, immigration, public law, housing and social care cases and represented young clients in proceedings. It also succeeded in achieving a 'good' assessment of the quality of its legal aid work.

The charity's policy and influencing work had to react to a raft of Government policy in response to the pandemic. They succeeded in preventing the extension of time limits for children and young people in custody or on remand; influenced the publication of guidance on care leavers and school exclusions; and contributed to shaping guidance to schools on planning for the return of children to school after the first lockdown.

One practical adjustment was the move to running events online for the launch of reports, briefings and guides, which enabled a larger audience to be reached.

School closures led to a pause in direct work on school exclusions (having launched the [School Exclusions Hub](#) in 2019), but as schools returned, Just for Kids Law experienced greater demand for legal advice. It was apparent that more children were at risk of exclusion, and the associated risk of exploitation, as a result of inappropriate school responses to behavioural issues that were often a result of a long period of difficult experiences that some children had during lockdown.

The Hub has resumed its offer with support for children facing exclusion on their return to schooling. The emergence of this project is a further example of Just for Kids Law's strategic development of holistic delivery while capitalising on the Fund's investment.

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**For some staff this meant working with young people going through crisis and traumatic experiences from their own homes.**  
”

## 6 Spotlight on strategic development

During the course of the investment, Just for Kids Law and the Foundation had an ongoing discussion about what was meant by ‘holistic’ when describing their work. It was evident that this was both a value for the organisation in the way it works with young people and an ambition for the way teams worked together internally to increase impact.

Learning from this discussion can be seen more clearly through the integrated, joined-up approach, bringing all Just for Kids Law teams together around particular problems facing children and young people, which is now at the heart of its 2022 Strategic Plan. An example of how Just for Kids Law has learnt and developed its holistic approach is illustrated here through the development of work on school exclusion:

### **Challenging School Exclusion: The School Exclusions Hub**

Just for Kids Law identifies school exclusion as a child rights issue which is often linked to other areas of their case work as an example of disproportionate treatment of children from Black and minoritised backgrounds and as a factor in child criminal exploitation. This intersectional issue has acted as a platform for holistic working across teams and has grown from the vision of one worker.

A trainee solicitor working for Just for Kids Law, with experience of supporting children and their families through challenges to school exclusions, had the vision for a project to create a School Exclusions Hub: an online resource to help professionals and parents navigate the processes to challenge a school exclusion and to enable Just for Kids Law to support a much wider group than limitations on casework capacity would allow.

The trainee solicitor was supported to work across teams and develop a pilot project with a law firm to support the firm’s lawyers with training to enable them to take on school exclusion casework pro-bono under Just for Kids Law’s supervision and with support through the online Hub. With the role split between the legal and policy teams, the trainee solicitor worked with colleagues to develop policy responses that could influence Government as it reviewed behaviour and exclusions guidance to schools.

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## Spotlight on strategic development

After the pandemic put the project on hold, the work was revived in 2021. Learning from the pilot, and the challenges of navigating multiple roles in developing this work, Just for Kids Law invested in recruiting an education lawyer and dedicated policy officer to maximise the amount of direct casework that could be undertaken. The appointments provided a wider opportunity to interact with the Government's consultation on school exclusion guidance.

In a concerted effort to address the problem of school exclusions, Just for Kids Law brought together and supported a group of youth campaigners with experience of school exclusion. These young people co-designed a campaign to achieve change for the benefit of other children facing school exclusion. Supported by the policy team, they also made representations to Government and were the only group with experience of school exclusion that Government spoke to during the consultation.



The group also worked with the media to highlight the consequences of exclusion and made presentations to children currently excluded from school at a pupil referral unit.

Building on the pilot, a new partnership with a law firm has developed with training provided by Just for Kids Law's education lawyer and insight from the lived experience of youth campaigners. This new partnership will boost casework capacity and expand the reach of Just for Kids Law.

The strength of the holistic model and the resource of a School Exclusions Hub has been recognised by Mission 44, a new charity aiming to support children from underserved backgrounds to succeed in education. Mission 44 have joined with Just for Kids Law as partners in this work and made a three-year grant to fund the continuing delivery of the school exclusion work.

## 7 Future strategic priorities for Just for Kids Law

Just for Kids Law used the final year of YSIF support to refresh and renew its strategic plan, which is focused on fully integrating all the elements of the Just for Kids offer to maximise its impact in working with and on behalf of young people. It aims to consolidate and focus its services on children and young people most at risk of having their rights and entitlements denied.

The new strategic priorities reflect work where they have already achieved impact and where they can offer something unique to fill gaps in provision or complement the work of others. It is an ambitious plan that plays to their particular strengths in recognising the interplay between the different areas of legal and social policy that present challenges for so many young people. The charity has also set itself ambitious targets for equality, diversity and inclusion so that it is as strong internally as it is in its external work on tackling racism and injustice.

Just for Kids Law's strategic priorities for 2022–25 are:

- **Creating a youth justice system fit for children**

Carrying out expert legal casework to achieve good outcomes for individual children and young people; providing a youth justice advice line to support children, families and professionals; training youth justice professionals to promote and embed child-focused practice; and policy influencing and strategic litigation for wider system change.

- **Ensuring children and young people experiencing criminal exploitation are recognised as victims and supported**

Providing trauma-informed legal casework to avoid criminalisation; advocacy to support children and young people to understand their rights and entitlements; and policy and influencing activity making the link between school exclusion and child criminal exploitation.

- **Preventing school exclusion and its harmful consequences**

Undertaking legal casework; developing capacity through pro bono clinics; outreach to community groups; training lawyers; supporting youth campaigners; and engaging with Government and policy-makers on guidance and its impact.

- **Supporting care experienced children and young people to secure their housing and care**

Providing integrated housing and community care casework; advocacy to support children and young people to understand their rights; emergency support to prevent homelessness; supporting youth campaigners to achieve change; and building capacity among small grassroots organisations to support young people at risk of homelessness.

- **Enabling children and young people to achieve secure immigration status and thrive in the UK**

Growing capacity to provide expert legal advice and representation; working with Government and others as an expert stakeholder; providing advocacy support to address other issues faced by children and young people.

- **Protecting and promoting children's rights using human rights mechanisms**

Working with the UK Government and civil society to provide expertise on children's rights; monitoring compliance with human rights and holding the Government to account on its child rights obligations through UN human rights mechanisms; and co-ordinating and drafting civil society submission and State of Children's Rights reports.

## 8 Key learning

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The provision of a ‘critical friend’ has been invaluable.  
”

Just for Kids Law

Just for Kids Law have reflected on their journey through the Youth Strategic Investment Fund to support Paul Hamlyn Foundation to learn what impact this funding approach has on organisations and what the Foundation can do to ensure support is tailored effectively. The Foundation wants to understand whether the requirements of the Youth Strategic Investment Fund are proportionate to the role that it plays alongside other funders, agencies and individuals that support any given organisation.

### What Just for Kids Law valued through the Youth Strategic Investment Fund

#### 1. Dialogue

The flexible support and ongoing dialogue with Paul Hamlyn Foundation during the strategic investment programme was described as ‘a real bonus’. Just for Kids Law said: ‘the approach taken has allowed the challenges and issues arising for the organisation to be discussed in real time’, in what they described as a marked contrast with the usual ‘after the event’ reporting that often comes with grant funding. These conversations, and the trust and relationships that developed as a result, were attributed to ensuring support could be tailored and targeted to where it was needed the most.

#### 2. A Critical Friend

The provision of a Critical Friend was also described as ‘invaluable’. Just for Kids Law commented: ‘it has been great to work with someone at arms-length from the day-to-day operations of the organisation to support us to reflect on challenges and strategy’. They observed how this support provided the insight to develop a more detailed and accurate theory of change and how the Critical Friend was valued in engaging staff with the development of the strategic plan.

#### 3. Engagement

The engagement with the cohort of YSIF partners was a further bonus. Just for Kids Law said ‘sharing experiences and learning from each other has been very helpful as similar charities often face similar challenges’ and it allowed them to tap into the collective wisdom of the group.

## 8 Key learning

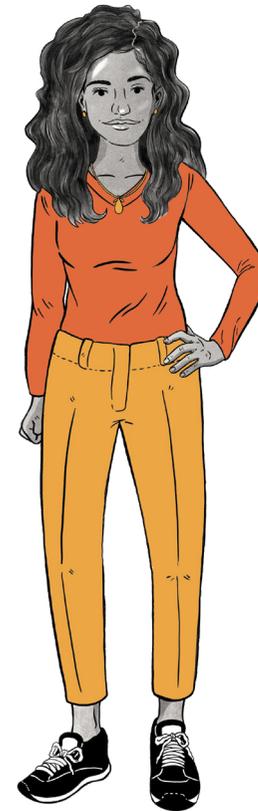
“  
A great example of relationship-based support.  
”

Just for Kids Law

### What changes the investment contributed to

- The annual development budget was described as ‘incredibly valuable’ and this enabled investment in leadership and development at Just for Kids Law throughout the five years. For example, most recently, it provided the newly appointed CEO with a budget for personal coaching on equality and diversity to enable them to navigate challenging issues as a white leader of an organisation working largely with children and young people from Black and minoritised backgrounds.

- A further tangible example of change is the capacity and confidence the Fund provided for Just for Kids Law to move from cramped and unsuitable office accommodation into a new, airy and well-furnished professional environment with tailored IT equipment and systems. This has provided a legacy of high quality facilities and technology that supports staff recruitment, retention and delivery.
- Just for Kids Law noted how the responsive funding through a post-lockdown ‘wellbeing grant’, is changing the way the organisation approaches staff engagement, developing new participatory approaches to problem solving in the organisation.



### What could have been done differently?

Just for Kids Law commented ‘it is hard to think of ways it could have been done differently’. They reflected that ‘the difference between the YSIF approach and other funding programmes was notable’ and, when seeking to address long-term strategic development the Fund was ‘a great example of relationship-based support for our relationship-based ways of working’.

## 9 Funder reflections on supporting strategic development

Just for Kids Law are one of three organisations to complete the Youth Strategic Investment Fund in 2022 after five years of investment. The Foundation was clear when launching this Fund that it would be committed to listening, learning and changing the way it works in order to provide targeted organisational development that leads to a growth in impact with and for young people.

### The Fund was designed and informed by research that highlighted the need for:

#### 1. Long-term core funding that secures the central operating costs of an organisation.

Recognising that charity leaders often carry a heavy burden of operational and strategic leadership, with the former too frequently limiting the time for the latter. The Fund intends to create more capacity for senior leaders to focus on strategic development.

#### 2. Targeted funding and expertise that supports organisational development.

Recognising that for organisational development to succeed it requires funding and expertise that will leverage the kind of change needed in an organisation to maximise its impact.

#### 3. Independent and external support, coaching and advice for charity leaders.

Recognising that charity leadership can often be a lonely experience with limited access to independent and expert support that supports good decision making.

#### 4. Peer-based learning for charities on similar journeys of strategic development.

Recognising that charity leaders have expertise from lived experience that is valuable to others and that convening charity leaders amplifies learning and builds new peer support networks.

#### 5. More collaborative relationships between funders and funded organisations.

Recognising that charities welcome funders who will partner with them to achieve and refine their expressed mission, drawing on shared-expertise, networks and resources.

### Key observation

It is notable that none of these factors relate directly to a charity's frontline delivery. The focus of the Fund has been on strategic development that, in turn, is expected to lead to growth in impact for young people. The size and scale of impact should be 'owned' by the charity itself of which they remain accountable to their board and beneficiaries.

## 9

## Funder reflections on supporting strategic development



### The first five years have taught us:

- The Fund rationale, design and investment model have withstood the test of time. Each element has merit in its own right but has proven most effective when blended to form a package of support that can flex and respond to the changing needs of an organisation over time. This focused but flexible approach has been well received by funded partners and provides the tools for a sustainable focus on organisational development.
- There is high value in a long-term but fixed-period of support for strategic development. It takes time for an organisation to fully assess its needs, identify the best use of available resources and implement change. It also takes time to build trust between the organisation and the funder. Conversely, it needs an 'end point' to focus attention on using the Fund effectively in a given period of time, currently five years, which will continue to be evaluated.
- That strategic development isn't always about 'growth'. A common assumption is that strategic development is about growing the size of an organisation at the expense of clarifying strategic position and impact. The Fund was, initially, called 'The Growth Fund' and – although it placed the focus on growth in impact – it was clear that this created a pressure to get bigger. The Fund was renamed the Youth Strategic Investment Fund in 2020 which better reflects the Fund's purpose in securing strategic impact. In addition, we are clearer in identifying and valuing types of strategic pathways that contribute to sustainable development. These allow for strategic journeys that may focus on consolidation, renewal and/or scaling activities.
- The importance of building a healthy and regular working relationship between the funder, the organisation and the Critical Friend cannot be underestimated. The Foundation committed to meeting in-person on a regular basis and providing independent support through a Critical Friend. This provides the basis for continuous feedback with support that is both proactive and responsive to ensure the full investment is used effectively. The Critical Friend provides valuable insight to the Foundation and partner organisation. As described by one Critical Friend, 'the independence of this role allows for the full story to be told to each stakeholder in the partnership and to support informed decision making'.

## 10 Final remarks

Paul Hamlyn Foundation has been pleased to work with Just for Kids Law throughout the five-year investment in their organisational development. As one of the first partners invited to join the Youth Strategic Investment Fund, they have been trailblazers in helping us to shape the programme and to develop better funding relationships.

The Foundation's aim for the Youth Strategic Investment Fund is that, on exit, the funded partner has good evidence of its impact in working with young people, is strategically placed within its field of practice and has strengthened its organisational sustainability. Just for Kids Law has achieved progress across all of these aims and it is the Foundation's view that it is now a stronger and even more purposeful organisation.

In its 2022 Strategic Plan, Just for Kids Law has set out its mission to support children and young people to access justice, have their needs and rights met and fulfil their potential. They are clear on how they do this: by providing legal representation and advice, direct advocacy and support, and through strategic litigation, campaigning and equipping others to work for children's rights.

In its [2021 Impact report](#) Just for Kids Law share some of the stories of the 785 children and young people they supported across 1,297 individual cases. Support was offered most often in cases involving crime (37%), education (21%), housing (13%), care (10%) and immigration (4%). Their client survey indicates 90% felt that their situation had improved since being supported by Just for Kids Law; 93% felt more confident about facing problems since having help; and, 87% reported knowing more about their rights and entitlements since working with them.

“  
**In recognition of what  
 Just for Kids Law have  
 achieved we encourage  
 like minded funders and  
 partners to support their  
 future ambitions.**  
 ”

However, like many charitable organisations with a mission to address social injustices, they will require the continuing support of foundations, agencies and individuals who share in their mission for a more just and fair society. Their success will require collective support from those that share in the vision for all children and young people in the UK to have their legal rights and entitlements respected and promoted, and their voices heard and valued.

In recognition of what Just for Kids Law have achieved we encourage like-minded funders and partners to support their future ambitions.

We hope our investment has provided a foundation for confidence in how funding will be used to achieve the most effective outcomes for children and young people, and we are grateful to the team at Just for Kids Law for partnering with us in this Fund over the past five years.

**The Youth Strategic Investment Fund**  
 Paul Hamlyn Foundation  
 September 2022



# Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Just for Kids Law  
Unit 2, Crystal Wharf  
36 Graham Street  
London N1 8GJ

Tel 020 3174 2279

[contact@justforkidslaw.org](mailto:contact@justforkidslaw.org)  
[justforkidslaw.org](http://justforkidslaw.org)  
[@Justforkidslaw](https://www.instagram.com/Justforkidslaw)

A company limited by guarantee registered  
in England and Wales (number 05815338)  
and a registered charity (number 1121638)

Paul Hamlyn Foundation  
5-11 Leeke Street  
London WC1X 9HY

Tel 020 7812 3300

[information@phf.org.uk](mailto:information@phf.org.uk)  
[phf.org.uk](http://phf.org.uk)  
[@phf\\_uk](https://www.twitter.com/phf_uk)  
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