

10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE MEETING WITH JUDGES IN THE FAMILY COURT

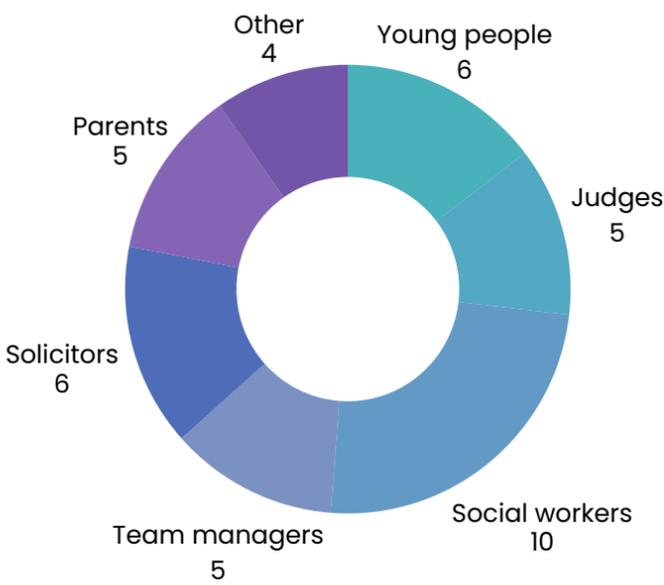
In 2024, the family court decided to try something different. They gave young people going through care proceedings the chance to meet regularly with the judge responsible for deciding what would happen to them.

This project – the Young People’s Participation Pathway (YPPP) – gave young people (YP) a voice in decisions about who they would live with and where they would spend time.

We explored who took part and how, and to understand their experiences of this new way of doing things.

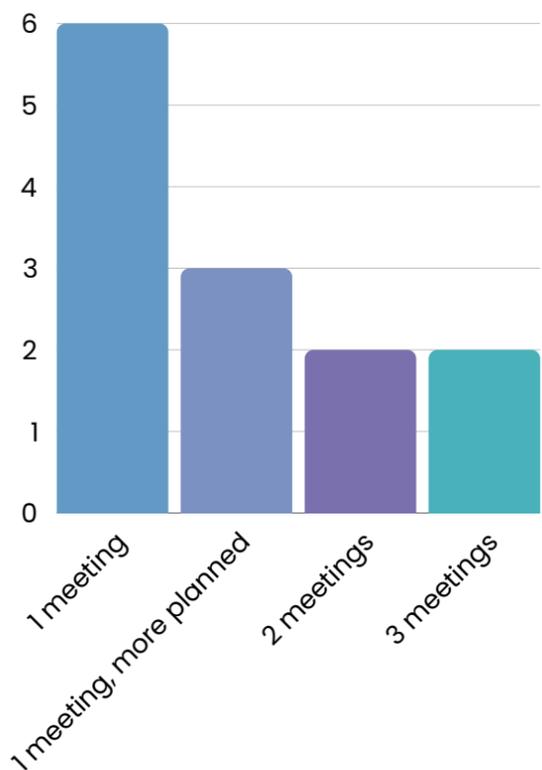
WHAT WE DID

We interviewed 41 people from six local authorities:



Four Local Authorities set up meetings between 24 young people and judges

How many times did YP meet a judge?



Average age of YP who met a judge **14**

Age range of YP who met a judge **10-17**

WHAT WE FOUND

- Most young people had a positive experience meeting the judge and felt heard 
- Meetings helped young people understand the court process better and feel less anxious 
- Some young people felt they could accept decisions more easily because they felt the process was fair 
- Some small but important changes happened after meetings- like seeing pets 
- Social workers found the YPPP easy to set up and not very time consuming 
- Social workers said any extra work was worth it to help young people feel included in decisions 
- Some judges felt underprepared and wanted more training and guidance 
- The MyPlan (used to prepare for meetings) had mixed reviews- some found it helpful, others didn't remember it 
- Judges reported meeting young people more often even those who were not included in the pilot 
- Parents supported the idea and wanted young people to have the chance to meet judges more often 

"I wasn't frightened of the outcome anymore. I felt I could put all my trust in [the judge] because I knew she'd do something good for me." (Young person)

"If [young people] haven't got their Xbox or their musical instrument or they're missing the family dog, [these things are] massively more impactful more than we realise [and...] show [...] what the child is worried about." (Judge)

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- Training for judges** - so they feel confident and prepared to meet with young people
- Co-design tools** - tools need to be designed with young people so they work better
- Build this into what we already do** - so it becomes a routine option for young people



Based on: Jones, R., et al. (2026). *Young people meeting judges: What can we learn from a pilot with young people in care proceedings?* Report. Nuffield Family Justice Observatory.
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