

2024 2025 IMPACT REPORT

TALK TO US

OFF
THE RECORD

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A Message From Our CEO

Off the Record is a passionate, high-energy and optimistic community mental health charity serving the needs of children and young people in Croydon, Merton, and Sutton.

**Geoff Jones
Chief Executive Officer**



I became CEO in September 2024 after 23 years as Assistant Director. It is a huge privilege to build upon the legacy of our founder and previous CEO, Karen Stott. I remain determined that Off the Record continues to impact the mental health of the children and young people we support—through talking therapies, outreach, online services, our loud and proud mental health messaging, and our innovative, inclusive group work.

We marked our thirtieth year by opening our new London Road building in Croydon and running 'My Community, My Mental Health' events across our three boroughs. Our work is rooted in our diverse local communities and driven by young people's voices, alongside the NHS data that informs our strategic decisions. Behind every spreadsheet is a young person reaching out for change.

We are committed to continuous improvement and were delighted to receive funding for suicide prevention work in 2024/2025. We continue to strengthen our clinical governance as a proud BACP-accredited service. As a humanistic charity, we also believe building a relationship is the gateway to trust, rapport, and potential transformation.

I am proud and humbled to lead Off the Record at a time when many young people, and our wider community, are struggling. Thank you to all our staff, volunteers, trustees and funders - but also to the young people who trust us to support their mental health when they might be feeling vulnerable. Our challenge is to show up each day and remind them: you are not alone.

Youth Ambassadors

My journey with Off the Record began in 2021. I took part in a workshop to destress before exam season. When the opportunity to give back was presented, I took it. Now, here we are four years strong as a Youth Ambassador.

My journey with wellbeing has shown me that we all experience similar transitions in life - such as moving from secondary school to sixth form - which can often feel challenging. However, talking to people who have already been through these changes can make a huge difference and greatly support positive wellbeing.

To other young people, mental health is as important as physical health, so if there are any low moments, seek support from a trusted friend, family member and/or professionals.

Riah Says...



Abdullahi Says...

I became a Youth Ambassador to gain experience and knowledge in mental health and to meet new people. Off the Record were doing a lot of great things for the community, and that drew me to them, to give my support and help as well.

I have learned new skills and techniques in mental health and in helping others in need. I have a passion for mental health, as I have seen people struggle in school, including myself, so I wanted to make a big change and put mental health on the map.

My journey of wellbeing has improved since I became a Youth Ambassador, as the team and group are so supportive.

To other young people, please don't be afraid to ask for help and support - there are so many people ready to help you through anything, big or small.



Youth Voice

“I love Off the Record! My life has improved so much. I just love everything they do.”

“I had a few therapy sessions here and it honestly helped me so much. My therapist gave me really helpful advice and worksheets to help me manage my symptoms.”

“I really feel the care I received here saved my life. I have benefitted and grown so much in my time here, thanks to my counsellor.”

“From age sixteen to twenty-three you saved my life. Thank you.”

“The support I received was outstanding and was by far the best counselling I have received. The staff were very friendly, caring and professional.”

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Our Vision



Passionate, fearlessly innovative and **life-changing** mental health support for all. We do this by 'showing up' every day for young people's mental health in Croydon, Merton, and Sutton.

We continue to challenge the stigma often attached to mental health by mitigating this with vibrant, contemporary, and uplifting social media and community development work that confronts mental health inequalities and a compassionate, energetic workforce who relentlessly reach out to young people daily, providing counselling and mental health support.

Our humanistic model means that we see every young person as unique, capable, and deserving of our understanding, commitment, and respect.

We are fearlessly innovative; we keep evolving, co-designing new ways to support mental health that are creative, playful, inclusive, and informed by young people's voices. Our vision and values of courage, compassion, innovation, boldness and audacity, clinical excellence, and youth voice guide us as we champion a world where every child and young person's mental health is valued and celebrated.

We say: "We are here with you, weathering the storm in these hard times, staying buoyant, and riding the waves with you. We are here for your mental health - **we are here for you.**"



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Our Values



COURAGE

It takes **courage** for young people and their families to reach out to us and ask for help. Courage runs through everything that we do - we 'bring the heart' into our day-to-day work with young people, their families, and local communities. Our courage guides us to champion a world in which every young person's mental health is celebrated.



COMPASSION

Compassion, kindness, and empathy are non-negotiables.



INNOVATION

Innovation means daring to think adventurously and bring excitement, creativity, and playfulness into our thinking. We are not afraid of change. We are driven to make sure that we remain at the cutting edge of young people's mental health services.



BOLDNESS & AUDACITY

We believe in being **bold, audacious, and clear** in projecting strong and inclusive mental health messages throughout our local communities - relaying what we have learned through our strategic networking, partnerships, the forums that we attend, and what young people and their families believe is important.



CLINICAL EXCELLENCE

Our mental health work sits within NICE guidelines. We are a **BACP-accredited charity**. Our bespoke clinical case management system submits data into the NHS on a monthly basis. We also attend quarterly monitoring meetings to ensure that we are meeting key performance targets.



YOUTH VOICE

We are fully engaged with **young people's voices** through a variety of different mediums including surveys, CHI evaluation forms, engagement boards in waiting rooms, case studies, and our fortnightly Youth Ambassadors group. Our Youth Ambassadors have recently begun meeting with our CEO to discuss the different parts of our services. Their goal is to ensure that we are working as one and that change is always driven by our young people.

Our Services

Croydon Services

- Free Counselling From Ages 14-25
- In-person & Online Counselling
- Support Line
- Mental Health Support Team
- Community Team
- First Contact Team
- Young Refugee Service
- Young Carers Service
- CHRIS - Youth Violence Support



Merton Services

- Free Counselling From Ages 11-25
- In-person & Online Counselling
- Mental Health Support Team
- Community Team



Sutton Services

- Free Counselling From Ages 11-25
- In-person & Online Counselling
- Support Line
- Community Team
- First Contact Team



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Services Spotlight

Young Refugees

The journey a young person has as a refugee, asylum seeker, or forced migrant can be very difficult, and can impact life on a day-to-day basis. We work with a wide range of issues, including trauma, loss, self-harm, suicide, anxiety, isolation, and sleep problems.

Our refugee service provides confidential support to refugees, asylum seekers, and forced migrants in Croydon aged 11-25.

CHRIS

The CHRIS team offers free, confidential support to young people in Croydon aged 14-25 affected by serious youth violence.

They talk to young people on the phone or meet them in the community at a space that feels safe and confidential to them.

Mental Health Support Teams

Schools provide an important role in supporting the wellbeing of children and young people at a time when there are lots of physical, emotional, and social changes. The Mental Health Support Team (MHST) work within schools to provide an additional source of support to young people, their families, and the schools they go to.

Our MHST are working with schools in Croydon and Merton to offer support in several ways including a confidential and non-judgemental space for young people to explore difficulties, 1:2:1 sessions and workshops for parents, and support for staff in keeping well-being and emotional health at the heart of school life.

Young Carers

If you are a young person who is caring within your family, you might not realise that you are a young carer. If a young person provides their family with emotional support or practical support including shopping, cooking or money, it can have an impact on their health, social life or education.

The Young Carers Service is a free and friendly service, offering support to young people who are caring for a family member.

If a young person is aged 5-25, lives in Croydon, and is caring for someone with a physical disability, mental health issue, long-term illness, learning difficulty or substance dependency, then our service is here to support them.

My Community

18,533

1-2-1 SESSIONS HAVE BEEN BOOKED IN
2024/25, THATS OVER

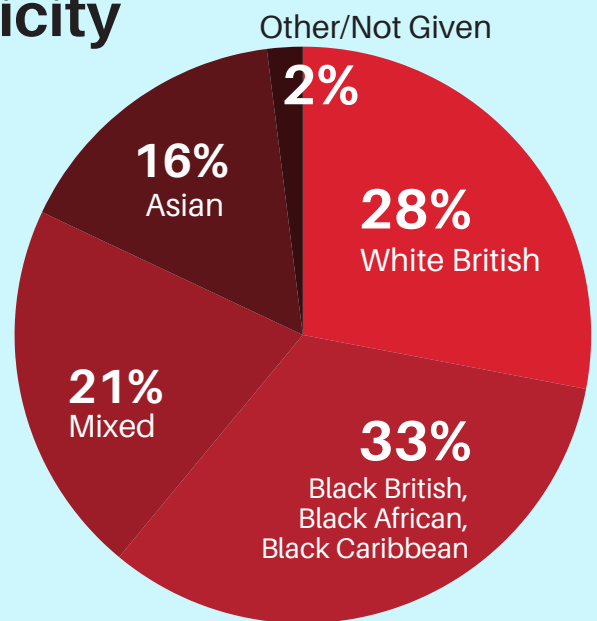
300
EACH
WEEK



**Beloved community
is formed not by the
eradication of
difference but by its
affirmation.”**

bell hooks (Author and Activist)

Ethnicity



**SINCE APRIL 2024
WE HAVE HAD**

**OVER 4,300+
YOUNG PEOPLE BE REFERRED TO US
THAT'S ABOUT 90 A WEEK**

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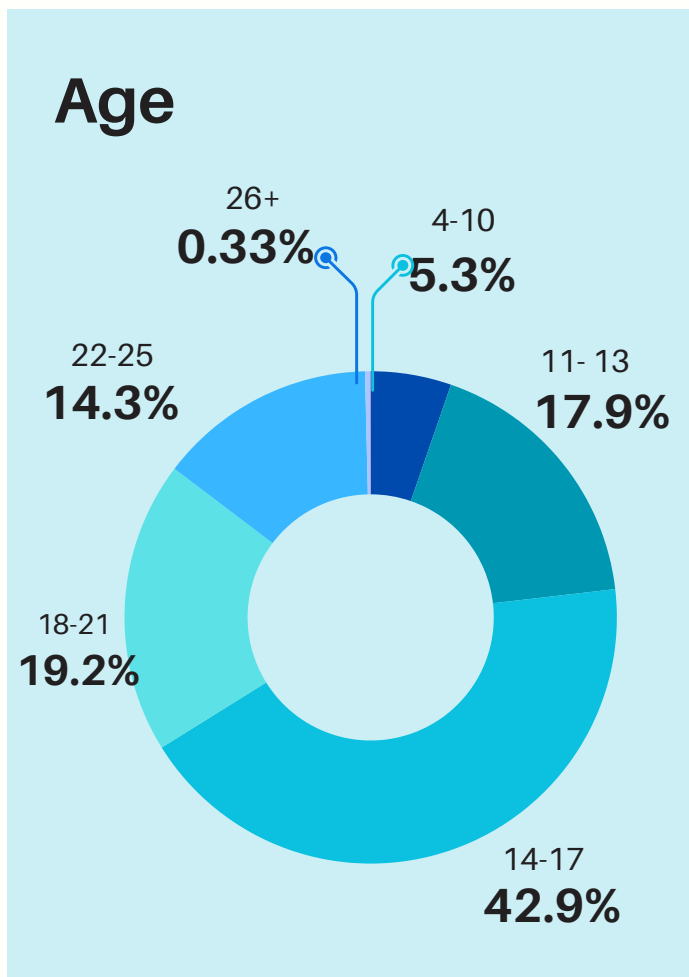
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What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candour, and more unashamed conversation.”

Glenn Close (Actor)

3,500 PEOPLE HAVE ATTENDED
A GROUP OR WORKSHOP IN 2024/25
ACROSS 537
GROUP SESSIONS



1,000+
REGISTERED
YOUNG CARERS
FROM **187**
DIFFERENT
SCHOOLS,
COLLEGES,
OR
UNIVERSITIES

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My Mental Health

When **Ali*** first came to Off the Record, he described his life as **"locked in and sheltered."** Timid and fearful, he struggled to express who he was or how he wanted to be. His peers bullied him - something he linked to his parents' overprotective and controlling behaviour.

Ali spoke about feeling caught between his anxiety and his aggression. He didn't feel **"manly"** and believed that showing vulnerability was a sign of weakness. To prove his strength, he turned to cage fighting, trying to live up to others' ideas of masculinity. In his relationships, he often faced gaslighting, manipulation, and betrayal, which deepened his feelings of self-blame and confusion.

Through his sessions with an Off the Record practitioner, Ali began to explore what it meant to have a voice and how to use it safely, where he felt he could **"establish boundaries without appearing forceful"**. Together, they worked on setting healthy boundaries and redefining masculinity in a way that felt authentic to him. The breakthrough came when Ali realised that vulnerability could be a form of strength.

As Ali's confidence grew, he began keeping a diary of his positive qualities and daily interactions, helping him build self-esteem and recognise his worth. He learned that self-respect invites respect from others, and that compassion for himself, even in moments of rejection or failure, is key to growth.

By the end of his sessions, Ali had started to integrate all parts of himself. He told his practitioner, "I am worth more than I originally believed."

**Name changed to protect the privacy of the young person.*



"I am worth more than I originally believed"

“Understanding the feelings behind behaviour can transform a child’s ability to cope, connect, and grow”

The teachers of nine-year-old **Jay*** were struggling to understand his behaviour. In class, he often became highly dysregulated, hitting his head on the table or trying to harm his finger. At first, this was seen as defiance. But our practitioner helped staff to look closer. It became clear these actions came from **deep emotional distress**, not naughtiness.

At home, life was unstable. Jay’s family faced eviction, and one of his parents was living with a chronic illness. With no support network and limited ways to express his emotions, Jay felt **overwhelmed and unsafe**.

Through weekly, play-based counselling sessions at school, he began to explore and name his feelings, learning new ways to cope with anxiety and frustration. Together, he and the practitioner developed calming strategies and talked about why self-harm wasn’t a safe or helpful way to manage distress. The practitioner also supported the class teacher to take a trauma-informed approach - seeing the child’s behaviour as communication rather than defiance.

Over eight sessions, Jay grew in **emotional awareness and confidence**. His teacher noticed fewer incidents and saw him asking for help when upset, a huge shift from before.

A year later, Jay wrote a letter to his Off the Record practitioner to say how much counselling had helped. Though his home life remained challenging, he now felt more **able to manage his emotions and face uncertainty**, especially as he prepared for the transition to secondary school.

This story demonstrates the vital work of our Mental Health Support Team, and shows the power of early, compassionate support - how understanding the feelings behind behaviour can transform a child’s ability to cope, connect, and grow.

**Name changed to protect the privacy of the young person.*



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My Community, My Mental Health

We hosted three 'My Community, My Mental Health' events across our three boroughs – each one has been an inspiring opportunity to bring together our partners, supporters, peers, staff, and wider community to explore how we can work collectively to support young people's mental health.

These events offered a space for dialogue, collaboration, and shared learning, with some of our attendees including local councillors, partner organisations, and fellow mental health charities.

Reaffirming our role as a trusted voice in the local mental health landscape in Croydon, Merton, and Sutton.



**Together, we showcased
the innovative and
community-driven work
that centres young
people's mental health
and defines
Off the Record.**



Each event featured thought-provoking discussions, youth-centred case studies, and personal testimonies that highlighted the real impact of our services and the importance of partnership in sustaining meaningful change.

Our Staff

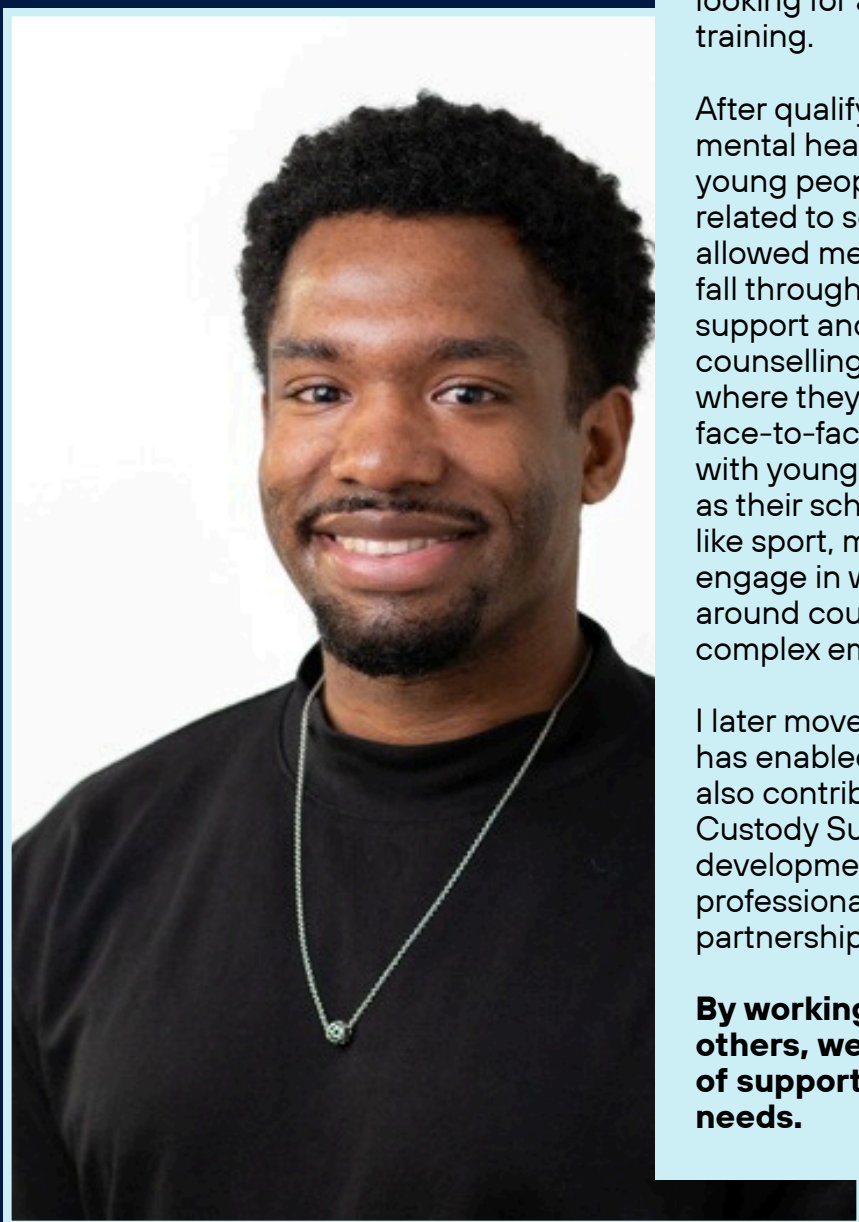
Tane's Story

I was drawn to Off the Record (OTR) because I wanted to support young people's mental health and work directly within a community. So I started as a volunteer towards the end of 2022 while looking for a counselling placement during my training.

After qualifying as a counsellor, I was employed as a mental health practitioner in a service supporting young people who have been arrested for offences related to serious youth violence. This role has allowed me to work with young people who often fall through gaps in traditional mental health support and who typically do not engage with counselling. We want to meet the young people where they're at. We offer flexible, tailored sessions: face-to-face, by phone, or on Zoom. I often meet with young people in places they feel safest, such as their schools, parks, or coffee shops. I use tools like sport, music and other activities to help them engage in ways that feel accessible, reduce stigma around counselling, and support them through complex emotional and social challenges.

I later moved into a senior practitioner role, which has enabled me to continue therapeutic work while also contributing to the development of our Custody Suite Service. This includes project development, outreach to organisations and professionals across Croydon, and building partnerships that strengthen the service's reach.

By working collaboratively and learning from others, we're building a more holistic network of support that meets young people's varied needs.



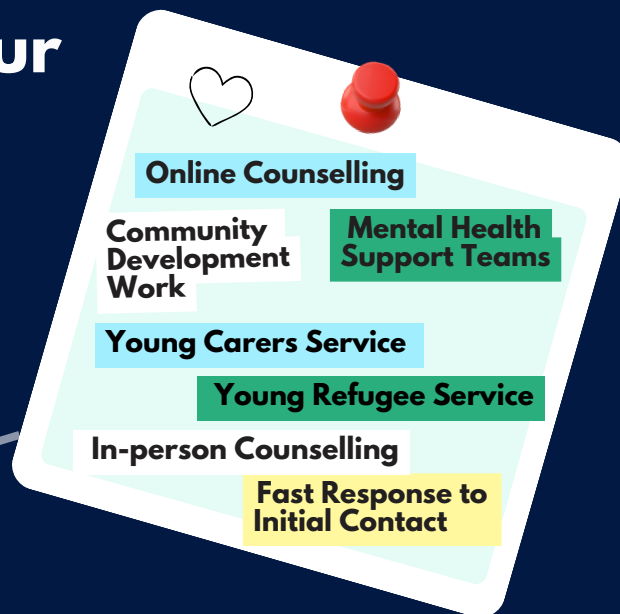
Tane Caubo
Senior Practitioner

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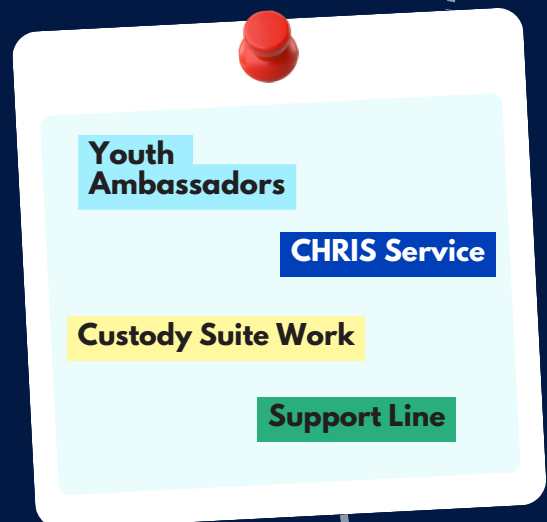
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Where We Are Going

At the heart of our services are...



... and this year we focused on...



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...in 2025/26 we will
be focusing on...

**Neurodivergent
Specific Support**

Youth Voice

Saturday Services

Volunteers

**Bereavement,
Grief & Loss**

Isolation & Loneliness

**Developing Our
Breathe Platform**

Maintenance & Recovery

**Making Data
Driven Decisions**

**Supporting the
Queer Community**

**Training for
Professionals**

**Our New Mental
Health Bus**

A Message From Our Chair of Trustees

Clement Amankwah
Chair of the Trustees



As we close this year's impact report, I want to begin by recognising the bravery of the young people who engage with Off the Record. Reaching out for support is not easy, and their willingness to do so drives everything we do. I would also like to thank our staff, volunteers, and partners across Croydon, Merton, and Sutton whose commitment ensures that young people are met with compassion, skill, and consistency. We are equally grateful to our funders and supporters, without whom this year's achievements would not have been possible.

This has been a significant year for us. We marked our thirtieth anniversary with events across our three boroughs and opened our new building on London Road. Most importantly, we supported thousands of young people through our wide range of services.

We also recognise the growing pressures faced by young people, families, and communities, alongside the wider challenges in our sector. We continue to respond with adaptability, innovation, and a firm commitment to accessibility and high-quality support.

Looking ahead, our priorities remain clear: strengthening youth voice, investing in creative and community-based projects - including our new outreach van, and continuing to evolve our services.

On behalf of the board, I remain confident in our direction and am deeply proud of the work our teams deliver every day. Our commitment to young people and their mental health remains unwavering.

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Thank you

We receive invaluable support from:





You can access our financial information via the Charity Commission, Register of Charities.

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Registered Company No. 2987817