



Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate of  
Probation

## An inspection of youth offending services in **Bolton**

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HM Inspectorate of Probation, July 2022



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## The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending service work with adults and children.

We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice and use our data and information to encourage high-quality services. We are independent of government and speak independently.

Please note that throughout the report the names in the practice examples have been changed to protect the individual's identity.

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## Foreword

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This inspection is part of our programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Bolton Youth Justice Service (YJS) across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. Overall, Bolton YJS was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Outstanding'.

We found that Bolton YJS was providing a good service for children. A committed staff team undertook high-quality and timely assessments, leading to appropriate planning to increase desistance, keep children safe and protect victims. A variety of interventions ensured that plans were delivered successfully, and children were engaged effectively in service delivery. Much of the work of the service was complemented by a range of partnership workers, whose own assessments and work provided the YJS with a better understanding of children's needs and facilitated children's swift access into specialist services.

Mature and respectful relationships across the partnership, at strategic and operational levels, have resulted in collaborative working to support children and families. This is particularly important as the partnership tackles a rise in serious youth violence, and action taken by the board includes intervening at the earliest possible point to divert children from carrying and using knives.

We found numerous examples of innovation and good links with local and regional agencies, including the Greater Manchester group of local authorities, the violence reduction partnership and the community safety partnership. These links meant that the service could access funding and support to benefit the children and families of Bolton.

We inspected the way in which the service supports the resettlement of children following custodial sentences, and rated this aspect of work as 'Outstanding'. Close working relationships with Wetherby Young Offender Institution, Barton Moss Secure Children's Home and the Probation Service ensure that children are provided with robust packages of support on release.

The head of service, who had been in post for six months at the time of our inspection (April 2022), has already started to improve the service's access to data and analysis. Although this work is in its early stages, it will help staff at all levels to understand what is working well and where changes might be needed.

We have identified areas of effective practice in this report, which emanate from sound case management and strong partnership work. In order to maintain this, and to meet the youth justice partnerships aim of managing the emerging threats from serious violence, the service will need continued access to support, resources and finances. In this report, we make a number of recommendations that we hope will enable the YJS and the management board to build upon its strong foundations and develop an even better service for children.



**Justin Russell**  
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

## Ratings

**Bolton Youth Justice Service**  
Fieldwork started April 2022

**Score 29/36**

### Overall rating

**Good**



### 1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

**Good**



1.2 Staff

**Good**



1.3 Partnerships and services

**Outstanding**



1.4 Information and facilities

**Good**



### 2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

**Good**



2.2 Planning

**Outstanding**



2.3 Implementation and delivery

**Outstanding**



2.4 Reviewing

**Outstanding**



### 3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

**Good**



3.2 Planning

**Good**



3.3 Implementation and delivery

**Outstanding**



3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

**Good**



### 4. Resettlement

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

**Outstanding**



## Executive summary

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Overall, Bolton Youth Justice Service (YJS) is rated as 'Good'. This rating has been determined by inspecting the YJS in three areas of its work, referred to as 'domains'. We inspect against 12 core 'standards', shared between the domains. The standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.<sup>1</sup> Published scoring rules generate the overall YJS rating.<sup>2</sup> We inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision separately and rated this work as 'Outstanding'. The findings and subsequent ratings in those domains are described below.

### Organisational delivery

We interviewed staff, managers and senior leaders, and considered evidence that the service supplied to us in advance of the inspection.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows:

- Strong, mature and effective partnerships work together, at operational and strategic levels, to meet the assessed needs of children and young people.
- Members of the board and the management team have good links with relevant external boards, including the community safety partnership, the Greater Manchester group of authorities and the violence reduction partnership. As a result, agencies share information, skills and knowledge, and have access to a range of resources. An example is the health and wellbeing board, which enables the YJS to draw on a range of health services for the children who attend. The health offer is impressive.
- A committed, stable staff team delivers the board's vision in a highly personalised way. We found numerous examples of how services were being delivered to meet children's individual needs.
- The board and partners had responded quickly to try to deal with increasing serious youth violence, in order to give children the skills to make appropriate choices and to understand the risks that some children face. Using a sound evidence base, interventions are planned to be extended and delivered with younger children, as a preventative measure to keep children and the public safe.

But:

- There have been significant delays in some crimes coming to court. This posed difficulties for the victims and children waiting to hear the outcomes of their offending. Where the board has been able to exert influence, changes

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<sup>1</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards can be found here:

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

<sup>2</sup> Each of the 12 standards is scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0 to 36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows: 0–6 = 'Inadequate', 7–18 = 'Requires improvement', 19–30 = 'Good', 31–36 = 'Outstanding'.

have been achieved, but there are ongoing issues with delays and children released under investigation.

- Operational line management capacity is stretched, and the current level of management oversight is not sustainable.
- The use of data and analysis is underdeveloped. The recently established data and performance group will help the YJS board and management team to get a better understanding of the effectiveness of the YJS's work with children.
- The YJS needs to develop its understanding of the life experiences of children from minority groups and the effect of discrimination on them, along with developing the confidence of staff to have the necessary conversations with children.

### **Court disposals**

We took a detailed look at eight community sentences and two custodial sentences managed by the YJS. We also interviewed the relevant 10 case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery of services; and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, to keep the child safe and to keep other people safe.

Our key findings about court disposals are as follows:

- We identified strong and proactive work being carried out consistently well; work to manage risk of harm to others, and safety and wellbeing was balanced and given equal priority.
- Detailed and thorough assessments of children's risks and needs, aided by specialist assessments from health and education professionals, led to staff having a depth of understanding regarding children's routes into offending and their factors for achieving desistance.
- Assessments were completed thoroughly and to a consistently high standard, with strong work to identify safety and wellbeing issues.
- Planning, delivery of interventions and reviewing were all strengths. Solid and well-considered work by case managers was supported effectively by the specialist skills of partnership staff.
- Staff and managers put the child at the centre of their work, epitomising the culture set by the board. We found many examples of good and effective practice, enabled by a culture that supported innovation and proactive management oversight.
- Children's access to services to meet desistance and support safety and wellbeing needs was timely and well-coordinated.
- Risk of harm management was good and, where needed, reinforced through processes to manage high-risk cases, including Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

But:

- The experiences of children who have faced discrimination need to be better understood and incorporated into the service's work. Assessments should

include the links between the child's culture, race and heritage, and their identity.

- Reparative and restorative justice work is underdeveloped.
- Case management work needs to include clearer exit planning, to give children the opportunities to achieve well-structured and positive transitions to other agencies or services.

### **Out-of-court disposals**

We inspected 10 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of four youth cautions and six community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in all 10 cases.

We examined the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, to keep the child safe and to keep other people safe. The quality of the work undertaken for each factor needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision to be rated as satisfactory.

We also inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews.

Our key findings about out-of-court disposals are as follows:

- The YJS uses a number of assessment tools to assess the needs of the child. While this occasionally resulted in duplication, in most circumstances it provided a detailed understanding of children's desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm.
- Planning was generally effective in setting out the interventions needed to support desistance and manage risk to others.
- Children on out-of-court disposals have access to the same wide range of services and interventions as children on court disposals. These were delivered effectively, supported children with their desistance, and prevented their escalation further into the youth justice system.

But:

- The YJS decision-making panel does not use data to inform practice or to identify any disproportionality.
- Delays for children and victims between the offence and the decision on the outcome are a concern. The YJS considers that this is improving and that delays are reducing. However, the level of delay and any subsequent impact needs to be monitored and understood better at both strategic and operational levels.
- Planning to keep children safe needs strengthening, to ensure that it is undertaken consistently.

### **Resettlement**

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews. To illustrate that work, we inspected two cases managed by the YJS that had received a custodial sentence.

Our key findings about resettlement work are as follows:

- The YJS makes good use of a range of multi-agency meetings to begin early planning for the sentence and release.
- There is effective information-sharing and collaborative work with partners, to understand and meet children's needs.
- There is excellent scrutiny and oversight of children who are in custody.
- Bolton YJS is providing good and timely support for children who are preparing to be released from custody.
- There are effective links with the two local custodial establishments, which leads to good information-sharing and joint planning.
- In both resettlement cases we assessed, accommodation was identified before the child was released, and there was sufficient time for partners to make plans before the child moved into the community.
- There is good use of strategic multi-agency forums, which are well chaired and hold agencies to account.
- Partner agencies visit children in custody and begin work in preparation for release.
- Children are given the right custody placement to meet their needs.
- There is good ongoing contact with children and parents during the sentence.
- Management oversight of resettlement work is effective.



## Recommendations

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As a result of our inspection findings, we have made three recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of youth offending services in Bolton. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth offending services, and better protect the public.

### **The Bolton Youth Justice Service should:**

1. review and monitor the outcomes and experiences of children from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, to make sure that any disadvantage is identified and mitigated
2. train staff on holding discussions with children about discrimination and what that means for the individual children.

### **Greater Manchester Police should:**

3. continue to reduce unnecessary delays in all cases being referred to the YJS.

## Background

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Youth offending teams (YOTs) work with children aged 10 to 18 who have been sentenced by a court, or who have come to the attention of the police because of their offending behaviour, but have not been charged – instead, they were dealt with out of court. HM Inspectorate of Probation inspects both these aspects of youth offending services.

YOTs are statutory partnerships, and they are multidisciplinary, to deal with the needs of the whole child. They are required to have staff from local authority social care and education services, the police, the Probation Service and local health services.<sup>3</sup> Most YOTs are based within local authorities, although this can vary.

YOT work is governed and shaped by a range of legislation and guidance specific to the youth justice sector (such as the National Standards for Youth Justice) or else applicable across the criminal justice sector (for example, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements guidance). The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales provides some funding to YOTs. It also monitors their performance and issues guidance to them about how things are to be done.

Bolton Youth Justice Service (YJS) is part of children's social care services. In January 2021, following consultation, the complex safeguarding team (EXIT) was brought under the management of the YJS. The intention was to avoid duplication, pool resources and provide a better service for children. There is also a prevention service. Bolton is served by Greater Manchester Police, which has a separate division for Bolton. Bolton Youth Court provision is based at Manchester Magistrates' Court.

Bolton is richly diverse, with over one-fifth of the population from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background. It has a long-established, multi-generational Asian community, with 29 per cent of primary aged children speaking English as an additional language.

Bolton is one of the 20 per cent most deprived areas, with approximately one-third of all children there living in low-income households. At the time of the inspection, 35 per cent of children were on an out-of-court disposal. Girls made up 16 per cent of the caseload, slightly higher than the national average of 13 per cent. Approximately 23 per cent of the YJS caseload was on a child protection or child in need plan at the time of the inspection. One-third of the children were care experienced. Bolton also has a high number of private children's homes, which brings children into the area.

Issues of serious youth violence are increasing, and this is a focus for the board and the town's wider partnership. Use of, and carrying of, weapons are reported issues for children, schools and the community.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a detrimental effect on the town, which was subject to longer-than-average lockdowns and restrictions, and high infection and death rates. Bolton was one of several local authorities where restrictions remained, as other areas were allowed to come out of the most stringent restrictions (September 2020).

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<sup>3</sup> The *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* set out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

The long-term restrictions have affected the economy, with the town centre shopping area suffering from short- and then long-term closures. The YJS kept the office open throughout the pandemic, and children were seen during the period of restrictions. One-to-one appointments were offered to children who were most vulnerable and who posed the greatest risk to others.

## Contextual facts

### Population information<sup>4</sup>

<b>138</b>	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in Bolton <sup>5</sup>
<b>154</b>	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in England and Wales
<b>26.2%</b>	Reoffending rate in Bolton <sup>6</sup>
<b>34.2%</b>	Reoffending rate in England and Wales
<b>288,248</b>	Total population Bolton
<b>29,761</b>	Total youth population (aged 10–17) in Bolton

### Caseload information<sup>7</sup>

Age	10–14 years	15–17 years
<b>Bolton YJS</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>94%</b>
National average	18%	82%

Race/ethnicity <sup>8</sup>	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
<b>Bolton YJS</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>0%</b>
Youth population (aged 10–17) in Bolton	<b>75%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>0%</b>

Gender	Male	Female
<b>Bolton YJS</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>7%</b>
National average	86%	13%

<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics. (2021). *UK population estimates, mid-2020*.

<sup>5</sup> Youth Justice Board. (2022). *First-time entrants, October to September, 2021*.

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Proven reoffending statistics, April to March, 2020*.

<sup>7</sup> Youth Justice Board. (2022). *Youth justice annual statistics: 2020 to 2021*.

<sup>8</sup> Data supplied by the YOS.

**Additional caseload data**<sup>9</sup> All supplied by YOT as standard data.

Snapshot taken from March 2022	
<b>29</b>	Total current caseload: community sentences
<b>2</b>	Total current caseload in custody
<b>3</b>	Total current caseload on licence
<b>27</b>	Total current caseload: youth caution, youth conditional caution, community resolution or another out-of-court-disposal
<b>66%</b>	Proportion of current caseload subject to court disposal
<b>9%</b>	Proportion of current caseload 'Looked After Children' resident in the YOS area
<b>23%</b>	Percentage of current caseload with child protection plan, child in need or child in care plan
<b>81%</b>	Percentage of current caseload aged 16 and under in full-time school
<b>12%</b>	Percentage of children aged 16 and under in a pupil referral unit, alternative education or attending school part-time
<b>17%</b>	Percentage of current caseload aged 17+ not in education, training or employment

**For children subject to court disposals (including resettlement case):**

Offence types <sup>10</sup>	%
Violence against the person	<b>25%</b>
Sexual offence (contact)	<b>8%</b>
Sexual offence (non-contact)	<b>8%</b>
Burglary	<b>17%</b>
Robbery	<b>17%</b>
Arson	<b>8%</b>
Indictable motoring offences	<b>17%</b>

<sup>9</sup> Data supplied by the YOS, reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

<sup>10</sup> Data from the cases assessed during this inspection.

# 1. Organisational delivery

## Strengths

- Relationships between partners who attend the board are well developed and support a culture of challenge, respect and support. This has resulted in the provision of a wide range of effective services.
- The YJS has a clear vision and ambition for children and families, which is coordinated with the local authority's objectives and aspirations for children.
- The staff team is stable and knowledgeable. They understand children's needs and risks well.
- There is a swift and evidence-based response to new and emerging issues, including serious youth violence.
- There are effective links with local and regional partnerships, including the health and wellbeing board, criminal justice partnership, Police and Crime Commissioner and Greater Manchester group of authorities and youth offending services.

## Areas for improvement

- Operational management levels are stretched, with wide spans of control expected for operational managers. The workload is unsustainable.
- The use of data and analysis at board level is underdeveloped.
- A greater focus on disproportionality and the direct effects of discrimination is needed, to enable the board to reduce structural barriers for children.
- Improvements are required in the facilities available to children and staff for face-to-face work.

Organisations that are well led and well managed are more likely to achieve their aims. We inspect against four standards.

### 1.1. Governance and leadership



The governance and leadership of the YOT supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.

Good

### Key data

Total spend in previous financial year	£415,262
Total projected budget current for financial year	£483,000

In making a judgement about governance and leadership, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

**Is there an effective local vision and strategy for the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?**

There is a clear and shared vision for all children in Bolton. This is broken down into a distinct vision for children who come into contact with the YJS and is underpinned by six key areas of priority. Progress against these priorities is reviewed at the quarterly board meetings. The alignment of these priorities allows for some long-term planning, as well as a response to new and emerging issues – for example, the rise in serious youth violence is a key area of work at the present time.

The vision includes preventing offending, engaging victims, protecting the community and encouraging children to make positive life choices. This is translated effectively into strategy and there is a shared culture across the partnership that helps to embed it. Senior leaders understand how their service contributes to the YJS's work and provide resources to enable children to access the services they need.

Our inspection found that there is a widespread understanding of the vision, and staff at all levels understand how their role contributes to achieving it. The results that the service has achieved in its casework demonstrate how consistently work is undertaken, to deliver a high-quality service.

**Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?**

Partnership work is a strength. The arrangements are strong and effective, at both strategic and operational levels.

Partnership work at a strategic level continues outside of the board, as members are often involved in other strategic boards, and there are effective links across the partnership. The relationships between board members keep the YJS's work in focus. The board is able to respond to issues quickly when needed, is innovative and utilises positive collaboration to ensure that children's needs are met.

The partnership gives priority to integrating services for children who are with the YJS. There is a clear understanding of the importance of identifying health and other unmet needs, to prevent children escalating unnecessarily through the criminal justice system, and as a result there is a commitment to ensuring that appropriate services are in place. The strongest example is the health service, which has sustained the post of speech and language therapist (SALT) for over seven years.

The health service's own analysis, both from YJS data and the joint strategic needs assessment, shows that the YJS cohort of children has many unrecognised needs. All children who come into contact with the YJS have a full health assessment and are then signposted to Parallel, the adolescent children's health service. An emotional and mental health worker placed in the YJS is available to children, and pathways into specialist services, including for autistic spectrum disorder, have been developed recently.

The board has challenged the police about delays in investigation and decision-making, and the impact of closing the local custody suite. This is in the context of evidence of poor service to victims.<sup>11</sup> At a local level, the YJS's relationship with the police is good, and it uses its influence to improve services. As a result, the custody

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<sup>11</sup> HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services report published in 2020.

suite is due to be reopened, reducing travel for children and providing quicker access to services.

Risks to the service are known and planned for. This includes the financial risk, as the children's services department has savings of £9.2 million to make. The board is taking opportunities to align services and is continually seeking funding to provide them. The resourcing of the service is considered carefully by the board. The board chair understands that, if improvements in the quality of service and the planned approach to reducing serious youth violence are to be achieved, the funding of the service will need to be maintained. This is a known risk and is monitored.

There is ongoing work to reduce and prevent serious youth violence. As part of this, the violence reduction partnership awarded a grant of £80,000. As part of an ongoing strategy, the YJS commissioned an immersive, interactive prevention programme that explained the risks of possessing weapons, which was delivered through virtual reality headsets. This intervention was delivered to 11 primary schools, nine secondary schools and various youth clubs in Bolton just before the school holidays, and reached 1,031 children. Following on from this, the YJS is considering how they can implement a 12-week violence reduction curriculum (in partnership with the Greater Manchester violence reduction unit), as part of schools' personal, social health and economic curriculum. The grant was also used to fund a Mentors in Violence programme to several schools in Bolton – this is a peer-led leadership and bystander programme which offers excellent opportunities to discuss a range of current social issues within an educational framework where positive relationships, health and wellbeing are key.

While identifying and responding to individual diverse needs are priorities and have resulted in many individual examples of effective practice, work to understand and address systemic disproportionality is underdeveloped. The board has begun to look at the data available about the cohort; however, it has not yet gathered data on wider outcomes, such as equal access to services. There is no coordinated strategy to identify and respond to issues of disproportionality.

### **Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?**

Board members are increasing their collective understanding of how the service works. Once Covid-19 restrictions had eased, the board arranged an all-staff away day, in order to understand better the role of the service and the challenges it faces in helping children to desist from offending. Board members met staff, and developed plans to accompany them on visits to children. This has been modelled by the chair of the board, who has accompanied staff on visits to see children and their families at home.

Most board members have regular and routine contact with their seconded staff in the YJS, and the links between the health and education representatives are strong. This means that issues about barriers to access are escalated if they arise, and enables board members to be aware of day-to-day practice.

The YJS operational management team has provided stable and consistent support and direction for the team. This has been maintained during the pandemic and during recent changes to the head of service position.


The YJS management team is effective in putting the board's vision into practice. All of the people we interviewed understood the priorities for the service and their role in achieving these. Operational managers are good advocates for the service and for



the needs of individual children. They provide challenge and escalate issues when needed.

The head of service, who has been in post for six months, is developing a good understanding of the service's needs. He works well with the chair of the board to highlight areas where improvements would benefit the service. The newly established data improvement groups are an example of this.

New board members receive induction and training, and are encouraged to share observations and challenge the board's thinking.

<b>1.2. Staff</b>	
Staff within the YOT are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.	Good

### Key staffing data<sup>12</sup>

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent (FTE))	20
Total headcount qualified case managers (FTE) <sup>13</sup>	6.8
Vacancy rate (total unfilled posts as percentage of total staff headcount)	0%
Vacancy rate case managers only (total unfilled case manager posts as percentage of total case manager headcount)	0%
Average caseload case managers (FTE equivalent) <sup>14</sup>	10.6
Average annual working days sickness (all staff)	2.7 for the 12 months prior to the inspection
Staff attrition (percentage of all staff leaving in 12-month period)	0%

In making a judgement about staffing, we take into account the answers to the following five questions:

### **Do staffing and workload levels support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?**

Staffing levels are appropriate, although operational management capacity is significantly stretched. The YJS has given priority to maintaining management oversight of assessments and direct work, and this is reflected in the ratings achieved by the service in these areas. However, leaders need to consider how they

<sup>12</sup> Data supplied by YOS and reflecting staffing at the time of the inspection announcement.

<sup>13</sup> Qualified case managers are those with a relevant social work, youth justice or probation qualification.

<sup>14</sup> Data supplied by YOS, based on staffing and workload at the time of the inspection announcement.

will maintain this over time. Operational managers have wide spans of control and will need capacity to develop new areas of responsibility, including complex safeguarding, prevention and diversion. The head of service knows that the frontline managers are working at capacity, and is reviewing the structure. Despite this, managers have maintained the service and supported staff during Covid-19 restrictions. The office remained open throughout the pandemic, and staff provided support for children on intensive supervision and bail support packages.

The service has a stable workforce and has had very few vacancies, and the service benefits from a well-trained and stable case management team who make good use of each other's skills. The professional respect found within the board is replicated at operational level. Communication and joint working are effective.

Staffing levels and workload management have enabled the service to continue face-to-face work during the pandemic. Staff are committed to delivering high-quality services and meeting identified individual needs. We saw numerous examples of this in the casework.

Current caseloads of 12 to 15 cases were higher than the service's previous average of 10. These were made up of both court disposals and out-of-court cases.

Staffing levels are monitored, as are workloads. Arrangements to reallocate work to cover sickness and planned leave are in place. Workloads are managed actively, and case managers are allocated cases according to complexity. Recently, unqualified case managers have been allocated some low- and medium-risk cases, but this new approach requires further development and consideration, to ensure that cases are managed appropriately, and that effective management oversight is in place.

The YJS benefits from a range of specialist workers, including a physical health nurse, an emotional mental health worker, a clinical psychologist, serious youth violence workers, staff located in schools, and a SALT.

### **Do the skills of YOT staff support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?**

The workforce is stable, and so opportunities for succession planning are limited. However, two staff are currently acting up to cover the short-term absence of a manager. They are receiving good support to develop their skills while in this role.

The workforce reflects the make-up of the community to some extent; however, the chair of the board would like the board to reflect Bolton's diverse population better.

The service has both qualified (social worker or other relevant qualification) and unqualified staff. Unqualified staff hold the role of support workers, often delivering interventions on behalf of the case managers. They have a range of other qualifications and can undertake social work training; however, they have to leave the YJS to do this.

We were impressed by the staff we interviewed. They know the children very well, work well with partnership workers and are all very good advocates for the children. The quality of relationships they have developed has enabled the children to access services. Many of these children would not have done this without the encouragement, persistence and persuasion of case managers.

### **Does the oversight of work support high-quality delivery and professional development?**

Staff receive formal and informal supervision. Work is quality assured, and managers have a good line of sight on casework.

The service makes effective use of a wide range of multi-agency panels, operated by the YJS and partnership agencies. These provide opportunities for frequent in-depth discussions about individual children, and allow plans and service delivery to be adapted.

Of note is the provision of a trusted relationship practitioner, who provides clinical supervision and support to staff for more complex case management. Provided on a one-to-one basis or in groups, this supervision helps practitioners to identify any barriers to working with individuals, and the staff member to understand the impact of the child's adverse childhood experiences and trauma. This process helps professionals to understand how they can adapt and change, to enable the child to engage with services. This is an area of good practice.

The SALT provides personalised assessments and guidance to support case management. They give staff precise and individualised plans for working with individual children, so that the children can fully participate and understand contacts and interventions.

Newly appointed staff spoke positively about induction processes, how these have helped shape their work and the support they receive from managers and colleagues.

The chair of the board used the 'fresh eyes' of the new head of service, asking for his initial thoughts and perspectives whilst new to the service. The new head of service has regular meetings with his line manager, who also provides feedback to the chair of the board.

Managers use a performance dashboard to help identify performance issues, alongside their quality assurance and direct observations of staff. Poor performance is identified and addressed.

### **Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?**

Staff can access a wide range of training; they spoke positively about the adverse childhood experience training undertaken about two years ago. The service takes a child-first approach to work and service delivery, but further training on trauma-informed practice may provide benefit. We noted that some children have a high number of workers when they come into contact with the YJS and there were some missed opportunities for children to benefit from a structured ending to relationships.

Specific training for staff in facilitating discussions with children about diversity and their experiences of discrimination would be of benefit. Staff were not always confident in discussing these issues with children.

There is a training plan in place. Training is available through children's services, alongside bespoke training for the YJS. Staff also benefit from ongoing awareness raising sessions and training from specialist workers. Staff were keen to learn and responded well to feedback from case assessment interviews. There is a strong culture of learning across the partnership. Within the YJS, the most recent examples

include reviews of serious youth violence. This has led to some effective interventions in schools.

A number of staff are Assessment Intervention and Moving-on 3 (AIM 3) trained, and co-work cases that have come through criminal justice routes. As a result of workload pressures, they have recently stopped taking work with children who display harmful sexual behaviour but who have not come through the courts. This work is undertaken by social care and health professionals.

### **Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?**

Staff are highly motivated to deliver a high-quality service, in part because of the shared culture of putting children at the heart of services. Staff are re-engaging with managers following a period of change that they found difficult and unsettling. The approach of the current head of service is welcomed by staff, who feel listened to and heard.

Staff wellbeing is a priority. Staff receive support from the trusted relationship practitioner, and emotional and mental health support is provided to all staff. There was a clear understanding of the impact on staff of the two serious incidents that had taken place. Arrangements were made for staff to be seen quickly following the incidents, and ongoing support is being offered to the whole team.

Staff who completed our survey said that, where needed, reasonable adjustments had been made to meet their needs.

Reward and recognition are used well by frontline managers, but less so at board level. On national social worker day, all staff received thank you cards from the council, to recognise the work they are doing.

## **1.3. Partnerships and services**



A comprehensive range of high-quality services is in place, enabling personalised and responsive provision for all children.

Outstanding

### **Caseload characteristics**

Percentage of current caseload with mental health issues	71% (25)
Percentage of current caseload with substance misuse issues	71% (25)
Percentage of current caseload with an education, health and care plan	40% (14)

In making a judgement about partnerships and services, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

### **Is there a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of children, used by the YOT to deliver well-targeted services?**

Partnership work is a strength, resulting in children having access to a range of high-quality provision to meet their desistance, and safety and wellbeing needs. The focus on risk of harm to others is well balanced.

Services are personalised and follow a child-first approach. We saw some excellent relationship-building with children and partners.

Partnerships with a range of statutory and complementary services are longstanding, based on mutual professional and personal trust and respect. As a result, the needs of children managed by the YJS are identified and met. The work of the health and wellbeing board makes a significant contribution to the provision of services.

As Bolton is a small authority, personal relationships play a part in partnership work. We found these to be effective, rather than cosy, providing high levels of both support and challenge. There are effective links between boards, especially the criminal justice partnership, the violence reduction partnership, and the health and wellbeing board. There are a number of examples where crossover from these boards resulted in increased understanding of trends and patterns of crime in the area, specific funding and longer-term service provision.

Deep-dive audits and peer reviews have been used to shape practice and focus improvement activity. The board uses thematic audits to understand the work of the service, and improvements are made as a result.

The partnership is aware that many children who come into the YJS have unrecognised and unmet needs. As a result, it has provided services to assess and respond to need. An example of this is the mentally vulnerable offenders pathway. This is a service that can be utilised at any referral or assessment point in the child's journey within the criminal justice system, from referral by the arresting police officer through to the YJS referral at out-of-court disposal process, court or, if recognised by the liaison and diversion team, within police custody suites. A full multi-agency assessment is completed to identify any mental health/learning disability needs that may require diversion from the criminal justice system, and intervention via alternative means, culminating in a multi-agency decision-making panel chaired by a police inspector. This service was developed as audits had shown that mental health issues for children can be masked by their behaviour when they are in custody.

The board has commissioned work to develop early pre-criminal indicators, to try to provide the earliest possible help to divert children from offending. These indicators include exposure to domestic abuse, offending within families, and childhood abuse and neglect. The aim is eventually to provide holistic interventions at an early point in children's lives, to reduce and prevent trauma.

Specific strategies are in place to try to tackle serious youth violence. There is excellent cooperation within the partnership to carry out this work, which is innovative and delivered with speed to reduce the potential for retaliation or escalation of violence. The appointment of a safer schools officer and a serious violence worker to identify and ensure that an intervention is in place for children at risk of involvement with violence is a new initiative for the area. These workers are flexible in their approach to work. Recently, they worked with football teams when there was an increase in violence and football games were used as a meeting point for groups of children.

More work is needed to understand children's experiences better and see where structural disadvantage is affecting them. Better use of data, and information from the children themselves to show their journey into criminal activity would enable the service to target its work and identify the outcomes for children.

### **Does the YOT partnership provide the volume, range and quality of services and interventions required to meet the needs of all children?**

We found few gaps in provision, and almost no delays in children accessing the right service at the right time. Children can access a wide range of services and support. Interventions are tailored to the child's need and we found evidence of sequencing for best impact.

The new transition process from YOT to probation services is robust and effective. The YJS has managed to secure 0.8 FTE-equivalent probation practitioner provision. This is higher than their original allocation and the projected probation service allocation, but still a cut from the previous 1.0 full-time allocation. The seconded probation practitioner will hold transition cases and use the remaining 0.2 FTE of their role to continue this when they transition into adult probation, providing consistency for children and young people. A team within probation services works with 18–24-year-olds, and individuals from this team will also be used to support transition.

There is a strong health offer. The partnership can offer SALT, and physical and emotional health support to all children. The partnership attributes this to the tenacity of the YJS in pushing to have these needs met and close relationships between partner agencies. Specialist services are used, including mentoring through Bolton Solidarity Community Association, emotional and mental health work, and good joint work with social care and residential providers.

The education worker provides a good link to schools and colleges, and the relationships at operational and strategic levels are good.

Swift and supportive action in response to knife crime has enabled schools to understand, manage and mitigate risks. As a result, children are not automatically excluded if they take a knife into school. The YJS education worker works with the schools to develop risk management plans.

Any child excluded from school is brought to the attention of the Director of Children's Social Care, who holds reintegration meetings. All children out of school are discussed at the board; they are expected to make progress and the board reviews this. Work is under way to support schools to understand better the impact of childhood trauma and adverse experiences. The YJS is actively seeking to improve the awareness of trauma and adverse life experiences within schools, so that placements in schools and reintegration pathways can be trauma informed. It was positive to note that the YJS is involved in developing risk assessments with schools and colleges, to help them to manage and mitigate risks for children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour and those who are suspected of carrying weapons.

Although reparation activities and opportunities are always viewed as a way for children to learn new skills and to make good for their actions, these are currently underdeveloped. This area of work is being reviewed, following changes made during Covid-19.

### **Are arrangements with statutory partners, providers and other agencies established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services?**

Children can continue to be overseen by the YJS, rather than being automatically stepped down or transitioned to other services. The default position of the service is to continue to manage the cases of young people who turn 18 and to offer to

maintain voluntary contact with others. This mainly happens to allow children to finish interventions. During the inspection, there were eight children who were being supported on a voluntary basis once formal contact had finished.

There were well-established arrangements with probation services to manage cases jointly. The probation officer uses the 0.2 FTE-equivalent post on the probation side of their role to hold the cases of young people who are transitioning to adult probation services. We found some good three-way handovers to other probation staff. Children are given time to transition, and the YJS provides a safety net for some. The YJS could consider further the benefits to young adults of a transfer to probation, where they are supported to take responsibility and accountability for compliance with their order.

Not all staff were confident that the services available meet the needs of the YJS cohort. There is a potential for blurring of roles and responsibilities with other services. On occasions, the YJS appears to be taking on the roles of other services. Some staff felt that early help services will not take on cases when the YJS is involved, and there was some confusion about thresholds.

Many of the children in the cases we assessed had a poor history of ending relationships in a positive way. The YJS is in a good position to help support children to end their involvement with one service in a planned and proactive way and then to ensure they have support from another. These opportunities could be planned for in a more transparent way.

Risk management processes are effective. They are used routinely with staff and managers, who have a good understanding of their public protection responsibilities. Participants described the multi-agency risk management (MARM) meetings as a good mechanism for sharing information. These enable agencies to convene and contribute, and accept responsibility for managing risk. There was good use of MAPPA in relevant cases. The MAPPA chair said that the process works well to meet complex and high-risk needs. In one case, the involvement of MAPPA had been instrumental in services identifying and funding a placement at a specialist mental health unit. Cases for MAPPA are identified early and result in all relevant parties attending and contributing to multi-agency planning.

Services for girls are subject to a review across Greater Manchester, with the aim of developing provision. We saw case managers undertake some effective work with girls. One case manager improved her understanding of the culture of a girl from Romania by visiting Romanian food stores with her and watching Romanian language films. This gave the girl the opportunity to discuss her heritage and talk about her experiences, the contrast in cultures and her aspirations.

The chair of the youth magistrates' bench is a recent addition to the board and has been instrumental in challenging the police on delays and the lack of a Bolton custody suite.

### **Involvement of children and their parents or carers**

The views of children and families are considered at both case and operational level. The chair of the board undertakes home visits with YJS staff to speak directly to children and their parents or carers, to identify what they think about the services they receive.

We sent out 11 text surveys to children, young people and their parents or carers and four were returned. Two were partially completed. Of these, two children and one parent rated the service as 10 – our highest rating – and one as 6. A parent said that:

*“...the information and work they [YJS] did really helped my son understand what he did was wrong”.*

One of the children, who had had a long delay between his offence and trial, thought the delay had caused him to miss opportunities to work fully with the service, as he:

*“had grown up and worked out his own mistakes”.*

The children we spoke to were positive about the support they received. One child rated their worker higher than our ratings system allowed, commenting that, although the work scored 10 – the highest level on our scale – it should have been a rating of 1,000.

#### 1.4. Information and facilities



Timely and relevant information is available and appropriate facilities are in place to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children.

Good

In making a judgement about information and facilities, we take into account the answers to the following four questions:

##### **Do the policies and guidance in place enable staff to deliver a high-quality service, meeting the needs of all children?**

A full range of policies and processes underpin the service's work. A key strength is the ability of children to access a wide range of services without delay. Staff at all levels have the skills and knowledge to get the right services for children from partners. In part, this is because of a shared ethos of putting the child at the centre of work.

Information sharing is routine and effective across the partnership. It is underpinned by access to relevant databases and information and communications technology systems, and clear information-sharing agreements. The YJS sets an expectation that all relevant information will be shared and respected. This means that agencies working with the children tell the YJS staff about incidents and the progress that the children are making. This is then used to update assessments and plans, and adapt service delivery. The agencies see that information sharing has a direct benefit to the child and co-working.

Changes in policy or working practices are discussed in supervision and team meetings. Care and consideration are exercised with the staff team, so that the management of change brings about intended improvements in practice.

##### **Does the YOT's delivery environment(s) meet the needs of all children and enable staff to deliver a high-quality service?**

The YJS kept its office open during the pandemic, primarily to support a number of children who were on intensive supervision and support, and bail. Staff were available to meet children at the office base, on a rota system. Children were also seen at home and in the community.

The office is in the town centre and is accessible by public transport. However, it lacks suitable meeting places. Space is limited, to allow for Covid-19 safety and for staff and children to maintain distance. As a result, there are limited confidential places to hold discussions, and there are few toilet facilities for children.



The board and management team are fully aware of the limitations of the building and there are well-established plans to relocate the YJS to a purpose-built children's facility. This is a short walk away from the current office. It will provide co-location with a social care team and have practical facilities for children to use.

Children are also seen in the community. Bolton has retained its youth centres and children's hubs. Staff can see children at schools and colleges and, where appropriate, at home.

### **Do the information and communications technology (ICT) systems enable staff to deliver a high-quality service, meeting the needs of all children?**

Staff and managers have access to suitable ICT facilities to allow office and remote working. They are well supported by the local authority technology support team.

The case management system – Integrated Youth Support Service – was chosen as it can link with data and information held by schools. The system has some limitations for case management. It is being reviewed and alternative systems are being considered, to meet the needs of the service better.

Staff were satisfied with the ICT provision and it worked well for us during the inspection. Staff have access to the social care system, and information-sharing protocols are in place and well used.

Managers use a performance dashboard, which they can customise. They can access information at individual and service performance levels. This is used to ensure that work is carried out within timescales and to help with allocating cases.

### **Are analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement?**

The YJS seeks the views of children and families actively as part of case management, and these are included in assessment and planning. However, this is not as developed at the strategic level. The board has an action plan to increase the view and influence of service users.

Processes are in place to learn from serious incidents, both from within the YJS and from the partnership.

Learning from inspection is embedded and the board reviews thematic and inspection reports from HM Inspectorate of Probation and other inspectorates. It has discussed the findings of our thematic report on black boys in the youth justice system <sup>15</sup> and is planning to assess the YJS against the findings. When we raised issues in relation to discrimination and disproportionality, the service recognised this as an area for development and identified who will be taking this work forward. Challenge is welcomed and facilitated at board level.

The head of service has already identified that the service needs to improve its use of data to evaluate and review provision. The YJS has started to work with the council's data analyst and is devising suites of information that will inform the board and partners. A partnership data group has just been established to facilitate this work and ensure that the YJS makes best use of its information and data.

Quality assurance systems are robust and have been maintained, despite having a considerable impact on the workload of frontline managers. Countersigning and quality assurance processes are active and result in changes and good work. Managers are available and accessible to staff; they give oversight and support, both

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<sup>15</sup> Thematic review: The experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system (November 2021).

formally and informally. Managers offer constructive advice and support to case managers and have good relationships across the partnership in order to facilitate excellent partnership working.

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## Diversity

Throughout our standards, we expect a personalised and responsive approach for all children, which includes taking account of their diversity and protected characteristics. Those factors may influence our judgements in specific standards. Here, we present an overall summary of the approach to diversity that we found in this YOT.

Bolton is an increasingly diverse area. It has a large, well-established, multi-generational Asian population in one area, and there are now large eastern European and African communities. While the Asian community is under-represented within the YJS cohort, young black males are over-represented. There is also a Gypsy/Traveller community, and children from this community were present in our sample of cases.

Data from the Youth Justice Board<sup>16</sup> shows that 41 per cent of the caseload are from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background. This is considerably higher than the average for the North West (16 per cent), and England and Wales (29 per cent).

During the inspection, we identified numerous examples of the ways that staff are meeting the individual needs of children. These are based on good, rounded assessments of need. This was particularly apparent in terms of learning disability, gender, speech and communication needs, and mental and emotional health.

There is a good project responding to the needs of young black African males – Bolton Solidarity Community Association – which can provide mentors and opportunities for boys to have positive role models. This work is focused on preventing children from entering the criminal justice system.

Bolton uses the Greater Manchester Youth Offending Services group policy on working with girls. This is a strengths-based approach that responds to difference related to gender and considers the safety of girls and importance of developing relationships. The number of girls in the cohort is within the national average, but steadily growing.

Approaches to diversity, experience of discrimination, and disproportionality are just developing at a strategic and operational level. Data has been presented and discussed at board meetings, to try to identify trends and patterns. So far, data on outcomes has not been gathered routinely, to ascertain fair access to services. Work to identify outcomes following interventions is just beginning.

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<sup>16</sup> Youth Justice Board. (2022). *Youth justice annual statistics: 2020 to 2021*.

## 2. Court disposals

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We took a detailed look at eight community sentences and two custodial sentences managed by the YOS. We also conducted 10 interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery of services; and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, keep the child safe and keep other people safe.

We saw strong and proactive work being undertaken consistently well. Risk of harm to others, and safety and wellbeing work was balanced and given equal priority.

### Strengths

- Assessments were a strength, with sound work undertaken to identify safety and wellbeing issues.
- Planning, delivery of interventions and reviewing were completed to a very high standard. Solid and well-considered work by case managers was supported effectively by the specialist skills of partnership staff. As a result, children's individual needs and risks were identified well, shared and responded to quickly.
- Staff and managers put the child at the centre of their work, epitomising the culture set by the board. We found many examples of good and effective practice, enabled by a culture that supported innovation and proactive management oversight.
- Children's access to services and interventions to meet desistance, and safety and wellbeing needs was timely and well-coordinated, and the partnership provided good support for children.
- Risk of harm management was good and, where needed, reinforced through processes to manage high-risk cases, including MAPPA.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessments should include the links between the child's culture, race and heritage, and their identity.
- The experiences of children who have faced discrimination need to be better understood and incorporated into the service's work.
- Reparative and restorative justice work is underdeveloped.
- Case management needs to include clearer exit planning, to give children the chance to have well-structured, positive transitions to other agencies.

Work with children sentenced by the courts will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

## 2.1. Assessment



Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Good

Our rating<sup>17</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	<b>70%</b>
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	90%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	80%

### Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?

In all 10 cases, we found detailed assessments to understand what the child might need to desist from further offending. The case manager asked the child and their parents or carers for their views and it was evident that these were incorporated into assessments.

Assessments were carried out using the youth justice tool, AssetPlus. Case managers used additional assessments undertaken by partner agencies and ensured that these were incorporated into their analysis. The detailed input by the health service gave timely and accurate information on the child's ability to understand and communicate, and highlighted any substance misuse or physical health needs that they had. The YJS had an emotional and mental health worker, who was able to share information about previous contact and advise on specific needs.

We were impressed with the way in which case managers used health information to provide insight into children's needs. The work of the SALT was integral to assessments. The YJS had a number of children for whom English was a second or third language. Case managers carried out assessments in all of the child's languages, so that they could be confident about the child's level of understanding.

Information held by the education and training worker was also used well and included the child's educational history and needs. This informed the assessments and subsequent planning.

The quality of management oversight of assessments was very good. Managers had prioritised and maintained this aspect of work, despite capacity issues. When oversight identified areas for improvement, staff considered and then applied them.

In one case, the inspector noted the case manager's efforts to identify strengths that could be built on to support desistance:

*"This is a complex case with presenting mental health concerns, substance use, and speech, language and communication needs, and factors linked to desistance are*

<sup>17</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

*also linked to risk of harm. Assessing to support desistance was informed by other agencies, including psychiatric assessments and children's services, and the family/young person were involved. Although there are significant factors linked to desistance, the practitioner has worked hard to identify and build upon strengths”.*

For a few children, the link between culture and identity was not explored. This was evident for children from the Traveller community and for some who had fled countries where they had been affected by war. In these circumstances, there was a need for staff to have difficult but open conversations, to understand children's culture and experiences of discrimination. When we spoke to them, staff said that they would welcome training in this area.

### **Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?**

Information from a range of agencies was used to understand whether children had any safety and wellbeing needs. In half of the cases we looked at, the child was, or had been, subject to child protection or safeguarding planning. Information from social care and specific social workers was obtained quickly, with case managers making sure that they understood exactly what the risks were. Judgements about the child's level of vulnerability were defensible and well thought through. Staff had considered a wide range of risks, including those that came from within the family and those linked to criminal and sexual exploitation.

We found that case managers understood and analysed the effect of negative childhood experiences, such as witnessing domestic violence, neglect and abuse.

Risks of self-harm and suicide were identified particularly well and accurately, alongside mental and emotional health issues. This resulted in case managers liaising with specialist and social workers to identify when risks would be greatest and actions that could reduce or minimise these.

### **Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?**

The risk of harm that the child presented to others was identified and analysed in eight of the 10 cases. A good range of information was sought and used to inform assessments, including the views of the child, their parents or carers, and a range of services that knew the child.

Of note was the ability of case managers to assess and record the interplay between the risk that the child posed to others and their own vulnerability. This was evident in cases where the child was involved in risk-taking behaviours, including carrying weapons, theft and driving cars. When patterns of particular behaviours emerged, case managers took action to protect children in the community and to try to prevent reoccurrences of significant incidents.

Early identification of cases that were eligible for oversight by MAPPA led to timely discussions and helped partner agencies to focus on the cases that required critical attention.

The YJS's internal risk management forum, the MARM meeting, also provided oversight. The forum gave case managers the opportunity to alert managers to new and changing risks, so that assessments could be changed and adapted.

Decisions about risk of harm classifications were consistent and defensible, and case managers carefully assessed relevant factors.

## 2.2. Planning



Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>18</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	<b>80%</b>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	<b>80%</b>

### Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?

Planning supported children's desistance and was proportionate to the sentence. Interventions were very well sequenced. Case managers took the time to discuss and agree with children the content of plans and how they would be delivered. The case managers had a good understanding of the child's situation, which helped with these conversations.

Plans usually included activities that built on the child's strengths or encouraged them to try different things. Some of these activities focused on building the relationship with the child, so that they would engage with staff to undertake offence-focused work.

The plans we reviewed focused on achieving priority outcomes and were informed by the detailed work of partners, including using the written guidance from the health workers.

Not all of the plans focused specifically on the needs and wishes of victims. We found that this had happened in five of the eight cases we reviewed.

### Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Collaborative planning to keep children safe was in place in a number of the cases we reviewed. This included specific actions for other agencies, including tasks for the fire and rescue service when a child and their family were at risk of arson attacks.

Some children had a number of workers involved, and the YJS worked well in coordinating a wide range of people. However, it was not always clear how the child would have understood who was involved and why. This went against the ethos of the service, of putting the child at the centre of the work.

Not all plans contained clear contingency arrangements; however, we found that these were discussed and agreed in other ways, including the use of MAPPA and MARM meetings.

<sup>18</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

All the plans we saw made sufficient arrangements to keep children safe, including direct action for agencies to take, and work to build the child's understanding of risks and their resilience.


Where children's services were involved, there were good links between the YJS case manager and allocated social workers. Actions for each agency were well defined, complementary and avoided duplication. There was evidence of discussions between the different agencies to decide the sequencing of activities, and, where there were disagreements, these were dealt with directly or escalated to managers for help in resolving issues. In either case, a resolution was found that was in the best interests of the child.

### **Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?**

Detailed planning was undertaken to manage a range of risks in the short, medium and long term. Where there was harmful sexual behaviour, safety planning was adapted to meet specific needs. In one case, this involved ensuring that specialist interventions could be adapted to ensure that they supported a child with autism. Other planning happened at MARM meetings and by completing a child safety plan, which was embedded within child protection plans.

Proposed interventions were appropriate to the offence, and staff had access to a wide range of interventions and services.

We saw good use of licence conditions and restrictive interventions, including curfew and electronic monitoring, exclusion zones and prohibited contacts, to protect victims and minimise the chances of further offending.

<b>2.3. Implementation and delivery</b>	
High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.	Outstanding

Our rating<sup>19</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?	90%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	100%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	<b>80%</b>

### **Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?**

In nine of the 10 cases, services to support desistance were well sequenced and delivered within appropriate timescales.

<sup>19</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

We saw sustained efforts to establish and then maintain excellent engagement with children.

In a number of cases, work was tailored to meet children's communication needs. Examples we saw included flexibility for a child where memory and timekeeping were a particular concern. Key messages and learning were reinforced regularly, to help embed them.

Children's strengths and ambitions were recognised and built upon. For one child, this included support to become a college ambassador.

Helping children see themselves as capable of achieving good outcomes and living crime-free lives was a strong aspect of the work we saw. Case managers capitalised on children's interests, including encouraging them to take part in music programmes or involving them in gym and sporting activities to promote self-esteem. One child who attended a gym with a worker was supported to apply for an apprenticeship and appointed through open competition. This was a key point in their desistance.

Contact levels were appropriate. They were changed to meet needs, when necessary, and provided in a variety of ways, including face-to-face and virtual methods of contact.

Relationship building was central to the work undertaken. Case managers were open and honest with children, and consistent in their approach.

Children could access a wide range of interventions without delay. These were delivered both in groups and individually. They included AIM3, weapons awareness, car crime and victim awareness work.

### **Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?**

In every case, work to keep the child safe and promote wellbeing was undertaken. We saw excellent support from all aspects of the health service, including mainstream services provided through the adolescent health service, Parallel, targeted mental health services and child and adolescent mental health services, access to GPs and, in one case, a direct referral to a specialist consultant.

Work to meet the safety and wellbeing needs of children in custody was effective. The YJS advocated for children and secured provision for them. This work included having discussion with YOIs about which units children should be placed in, and lived experience peer navigators speaking to children before their release to identify emotional and mental health needs.

Where children had self-harmed or attempted suicide, swift action was taken to share information with all relevant parties, and the child was given immediate access to specialist support.

Caseworkers also worked with children and their families to develop emotional wellbeing.

Close collaboration with social workers supported effective work to keep children safe. The YJS and children's services complemented and reinforced different aspects of this support.

### **Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?**



The YJS gathered information about ongoing risk to other people and used this to adapt its approaches. This included information from schools, community safety partnership and the police.

The use of the MARM meeting helped the service to manage risks. This included the use of information from the electronic monitoring service to check children's compliance with curfews.

Interventions to reduce risks were adapted to meet specific needs, including altering the delivery of AIM3 work for children with learning disabilities and autism.

Case managers used victim impact statements and victim awareness packages well to help children to understand the effects of their offending, and we saw some good use of restorative approaches.

Given the serious nature of some offending, Behind the Blade, an intervention to reduce risk of knife crime, was used often and the learning was reinforced with children.

The MAPPA process was used effectively. The YJS had a sound understanding of this and the benefits of sharing the risks across agencies. The use of MAPPA also served to highlight the significance of risk that needed to be managed. In two cases, this had led to the sourcing of specialist accommodation for children.

## 2.4. Reviewing



Reviewing of progress is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>20</sup> for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	90%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>80%</b>
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	<b>80%</b>

### Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

Reviewing was used as a proactive part of case management. Formal and informal reviewing was valued and used to ensure the progression of work.

Case managers carried out reviews to set timescales, and routinely consulted children and their parents or carers to identify progress, changes in thinking and behaviour, what was working and what needed to change.

Where cases were stuck or lacked momentum, the case manager discussed this with the trusted relationship practitioner. This was an opportunity for the team working with the child to have a structured review of how they were working and to identify what

<sup>20</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

they could do differently to increase the chances of work with the child having the intended impact. This was really valued by staff, and an example of good practice.

### **Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?**

There was clear evidence that the YJS used a range of meetings to review safety and wellbeing. These included the MARM meeting, child exploitation and missing meetings, and child protection planning processes. We saw good attendance at these meetings, and the YJS being an active part of decision-making.

The reviewing we saw ensured that actions did not get lost, particularly when children had complex needs. Partners were held to account, to make sure that the right actions took place to meet new and emerging safeguarding needs.

Reviews took into consideration the children's changing safety and wellbeing needs, and led to actions to either reduce or increase protective actions. Children were supported to manage emotions, and parents were supported to give their best help to their child. This included parenting support work, with early help and advice on when and how to report children who were missing.

It was positive to see that case managers had helpful and constructive discussions with their line managers when they were considering changing safety and wellbeing classifications.

### **Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?**

Information from the police was sought actively, to help to review the risks to the public and to specific victims. This was sourced through the YJS police officer, who had daily contact with other police units. Information was shared daily and used to good effect to decide on actions that needed to be taken quickly. Information was also shared that contributed to an understanding of wider trends, tensions, and new and emerging threats.

In one case, we saw an ongoing discussion with a child's social worker about when and how to reintroduce the child's access to the internet. This was not without difficulty, as the child's offence had involved the use of the internet. The social worker and YJS officer discussed how to give the child the opportunity to show that he could use the internet safely before the order ended, so that further work could be undertaken if needed. This careful deliberation included taking the issue to the MARM meeting, so that control measures could be identified and decisions about risk shared.

In another case example, the inspector noted:

*“Reviewing activities to keep people safe have been robust and ongoing and have been achieved by child protection conferences, MAPPA meetings, and by reflective discussions between the practitioner and their line manager, management oversight and quality assurance activities. It is recognised that the young person has been persistent in his harmful sexual behaviour and that measures and therapeutic work have not always been effective in managing his risk due to his compliance and mental health. Recall action has been taken when risk has become unmanageable. Transition to adult work has been particularly effective in this case, with the YJS jointly managing the case with probation to ensure effective handover arrangements”.*

It was recognised that an effective outcome in this case was preventing the child's harmful sexual behaviour escalating to more serious sexual offending.

The trusting and mature nature of professional relationships aided this aspect of work, allowing open and honest professional concerns to be raised and discussed.

### 3. Out-of-court disposals

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We inspected 10 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of four youth cautions and six community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in 10 cases.

We examined the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, work to keep the child safe and work to keep other people safe. The quality of the work undertaken for each factor needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision to be rated as satisfactory.

We also inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews.

We rated the assessment and planning of out-of-court disposal work as 'Good', and delivery and implementation as 'Outstanding'.

#### Strengths

- The YJS used a number of assessment tools to assess the needs of the child. Sometimes this resulted in duplication, but it provided a satisfactory understanding of children's desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm overall.
- Planning was generally effective in setting out the interventions and support needed to support desistance and manage risk to others.
- Children on out-of-court disposals have access to the same wide range of services and interventions as children on court disposals. These were delivered effectively, with the same level of speed and sequencing, to prevent children from getting into further trouble with the police.

#### Areas for improvement

- The panel does not use data to inform practice or to identify any disproportionality in decision-making or outcomes. We became aware of some delays for children and victims between the offence and the decision on the outcome, although the YJS thinks that this is improving and that delays are reducing. This needs to be monitored and understood at both strategic and operational levels.
- Planning to keep children safe needs some strengthening, to ensure that it is consistent.

Work with children receiving out-of-court disposals will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

### 3.1. Assessment



Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Good

Our rating<sup>21</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	<b>70%</b>
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	80%

#### **Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?**

In all 10 cases, there was an accurate assessment of the child's individual diversity needs, their strengths and protective factors, and their life at the time of the offence.

The views of children and their parents or carers were clearly explored and contributed to the assessments. Any suggestions that they made to help children stop unwanted behaviour were considered and incorporated into the assessments, alongside the case manager's view.

The assessments comprised either a screening assessment and a recommendation report to the panel, or an AssetPlus assessment. AssetPlus was used for cases where there was an added level of complexity.

In our view, the quality of assessment was good, regardless of the tool used. Assessments demonstrated good levels of professional curiosity and made effective use of information held by other agencies, including schools and social care.

Assessments were analytical and tailored to the age and maturity of the child.

#### **Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?**

In seven of the 10 cases, we judged the assessment of safety and wellbeing to be good enough. However, in four cases we noted that the assessments lacked a wider analysis of needs and did not identify or clearly analyse any risks to the child's safety and wellbeing. Three cases should have included information already held by other services that affected the child's safety and wellbeing.

While staff were skilled in assessment, these skills needed to be applied more consistently. However, classifications of children's level of safety and wellbeing were appropriate and defensible in all but one case, and we saw good use of information from children's social care services about previous contacts and current involvement.

<sup>21</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Indicators of sexual and criminal exploitation were assessed well. Where available, existing psychological formulations were incorporated into assessments. In Bolton, these are undertaken through 'share the load'. This is a meeting between professionals, chaired by a psychologist, that aims to look at the approaches taken to working with the child. The psychologist then makes suggestions about how the work can be changed and adapted to achieve better impact or engagement from the child.

In most cases, the effects of school exclusions on mental health and wellbeing were considered well.

### **Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?**

Assessment sufficiently analysed how to keep other people safe in eight of the 10 cases. It was positive to see that, in these cases, the rationale for classification was accurate and that information from other agencies was used to inform assessments.

In one case, there was no evidence of risk. Of the other nine, seven included all relevant risk factors and two included some but not all. In one of the two remaining cases, the assessment was for high risk of harm, but no clear rationale was given; in the second, the omission was around the racist element of the assault.

Risk assessments often tried to identify triggers to behaviour and whether the offence was an isolated incident or part of a repeated pattern of behaviour. This was used to good effect to increase the level of risk of one child, who had repeatedly taken his relative's car and driven it. In this assessment, the issue was clearly and accurately outlined as the potential risk of causing harm, rather than fast or reckless driving.

## **3.2. Planning**



Planning is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Good

Our rating<sup>22</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	90%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>60%</b>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	80%

### **Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?**

Overall planning for children's desistance needs was effective. All but one case included the correct range of interventions and met the diversity needs of the child. Of the cases that needed planning to keep the victim safe, all but one did this satisfactorily.

<sup>22</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Some children had a number of objectives, including from the YJS and other agencies. In a few cases, there was the potential to overwhelm the child and their family. However, we saw actions taken to clarify what was expected.

In one case, the inspector recorded:

*“There were a number of planning documents and it was sometimes unclear regarding the role of each of these documents. However, there was a clear structured session after the YJS officer had completed the assessment with the child, his gran and his mother where a plan was shared and agreed. The family wanted input around knife crime education on the plan and this was included”.*

Again, a strong element of planning for desistance was the inclusion of the interventions the child and family thought were appropriate. This gave a clear signal to families that the YJS was listening to and working with them.

### **Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?**

This was the area of work where we assessed that further consistency and consideration was needed. We assessed that planning promoted the child’s safety and wellbeing sufficiently in five of the relevant nine cases, with a need to involve other agencies to a greater degree in three of these. We applied professional discretion to rate this area of work to “Good”.

In three of the cases, contingency planning was insufficient to meet the child’s needs, however there were systems in place that meant that agencies worked well together to keep children safe once issues were identified. These included swift referrals to children’s social care and close working relationships with social workers. Other partnership agencies also responded quickly to help reduce and manage safeguarding issues. This work could be strengthened with more in-depth contingency planning, that anticipated the realistic chances of change rather than reacting once they occurred.

In our view, planning did not cover all of the issues that the child faced. Exit planning to manage these issues needed to be stronger, to reflect the voluntary nature of the interventions, the shorter timescale for out-of-court disposals and the fact that the YJS had no legal power to apply sanctions.

### **Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?**

We found strong work in planning to keep other people safe, including joint planning with social workers where they were involved. The good joint planning also applied to schools, to manage and plan for risk reduction. The YJS education, training and employment worker was involved actively in planning with the schools to reintegrate children who faced temporary exclusion or who were found to have brought weapons onto school premises.

In the limited cases where a child was assessed as high risk, or was on the cusp of medium to high risk, the case was referred to the MARM panel. Case managers could then air their views and planning was developed in a multi-agency way.

In most cases, sessions on the consequences of offending were included in plans, as was victim awareness work.

### 3.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>23</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	<b>80%</b>
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	90%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	<b>80%</b>

#### **Does service delivery focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?**

Overall, service delivery focused on the child's desistance in eight of the 10 cases.

Relationship building formed the foundation of the work undertaken with children, and sessions were planned to allow for relationships to develop and embed. In a few cases, we thought that work on direct offence-focused interventions could have started earlier.

Case managers and partnership workers were creative in their approach to delivering work. They tailored it so that it was meaningful and relevant to children, as the following example shows:

#### **Good practice example**

This was a real strength in the case, the case manager adapting her approach to better meet the child's needs and engage her. Interpreters were used to keep Mum fully informed, and the case manager explored diversity issues and the child's sense of isolation by exploring Romanian norms and introducing her to English cultural norms. The case manager showed the child where she could buy Romanian foodstuffs and found a Romanian café. She would discuss Romanian films with her to encourage engagement and worked on her self-identity. She referred her to Bolton Solidarity for a mentor (mentors who support black and minority ethnic people, those who are isolated and people whose first language is not English) and encouraged her to access education.

It was really positive to note that children were referred to services before the panel meeting. When case managers identified needs, these prompted referrals to partner agencies immediately and were responded to quickly. This included access to the excellent range of health services, and to schools.

<sup>23</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.



In seven of the 10 cases, the case manager had adapted work to meet the child's diverse needs. We saw some very good examples of this, as in the following case:

#### **Good practice example**

Interventions were bespoke and tailored to the child's particular needs. The YJS worker has undertaken cartooning, story-based offence work, mentoring to promote pro-social positive activities, and family engagement – including with key individuals. The YJS SALT assessment has been used to understand how sessions should be structured, and this had been shared with other professionals

In one case, there was insufficient focus on the child's experience of discrimination, and this was a trigger to his offence. In the other, the child had very limited education. He was in a children's home and seemed to lack the structure of education. He was eventually provided with two two-hour sessions of education a week, but this seemed to be insufficient to provide structure and activity to occupy him during the day.

#### **Does service delivery focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?**

Work to keep children safe was considered well and undertaken consistently.

A number of children were known to children's social care services, and case managers worked closely with social workers to keep them safe. Children felt safe enough to make disclosures to YJS staff; examples included a child who had been assaulted by her partner and children who were at risk of exploitation. One parent disclosed their child's increased drug misuse. In all of these cases, appropriate action was taken, with the YJS taking an active and appropriate role with partners. In one case, the YJS was instrumental in supporting a parent to work with early help services when neglect became apparent. The YJS and social worker undertook joint home visits, to develop relationships and to provide a consistent message to the parent about what was expected.

When needed, we saw escalation of work from child in need to child protection, in part as a result of very good communication and information sharing between the YJS and social care services.

Management oversight in this area of work was effective, and we saw good use of multi-agency meetings to help keep children safe.

The work of partner agencies to provide health services was strong. Agencies became involved quickly when needed, either directly or in supporting the YJS or social worker to provide interventions to the child.

#### **Does service delivery focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?**

Service delivery supported the safety of others effectively in seven of the eight cases. Sufficient attention was given to the protection of victims in all of the eight cases where this was needed.

Interventions delivered included the Behind the Blade knife crime programme, work to prevent car crime, anger management and victim awareness work. Staff could access a wide range of services as needs arose. We saw examples of robust exit planning with the substance misuse services, and clear signposting to services that children could access once their involvement with the YJS was finished.



### 3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision



There is a high-quality, evidence-based out-of-court disposal service in place that promotes diversion and supports sustainable desistance.

Good

In making a judgement about out-of-court disposal policy and provision, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

#### **Is there a policy in place for out-of-court provision that promotes appropriate diversion and supports sustainable desistance?**

There was a clear out-of-court disposal policy and procedure in place, based on the Greater Manchester Police process. The process was administered well by the YJS, and at the local level the YJS police officer was well engaged with the scheme. Assessments undertaken by the service were considered carefully. Proposed outcomes and interventions were reviewed by the panel.

There had been some delays in cases coming to the panel. In cases in our sample, we saw delays running into months. The panel felt that delays were reducing, and a snapshot analysis of the last 15 cases showed this to be the case, with two-thirds of cases being referred to the YJS within a month.

The process set out the criteria for the scheme. There was an escalation route, but the YJS had not needed to use it. The process covered the whole of Greater Manchester, but Bolton had adapted it to meet the needs of the local area.

Screening tools and extensive quality assurance processes were in place, and AssetPlus was used for more complex cases. Screening was undertaken before the panel, to aid joint decision-making.

Timescales for assessments were clear and the panel followed them, to reduce delays for children. Plans for interventions were discussed at the panel and adapted if the panel felt that this added value.

Diversion from the criminal justice system when there was a potential mental health need was in place. The mentally vulnerable offender pathway panel considered emotional and mental health, cognitive and developmental level, the context of vulnerability, and current and historical safeguarding concerns. This led to sound decision-making about the most appropriate course of action. This was over and above liaison and diversion schemes in police custody, as analysis had shown that children's needs were often disguised or missed.

Work to divert children away from crime was an area of growth within the service. It was targeted specifically at knife crime and serious youth violence. Two serious youth violence workers had been recruited. They worked alongside children who were at high risk of becoming involved in serious youth violence. This could be identified at the out-of-court disposal panel, and referrals could be made on a preventative basis for the siblings of those who were already involved. Contact with children was voluntary. It was aimed at fostering relationships and then supporting access to a range of diversionary activities and interventions. Boxing and sports-based activities were available, with the YJS police officer running a boxing programme.

### **Does out-of-court disposal provision promote diversion and support sustainable desistance?**

In nine of the 10 cases inspected, we judged that the decision had been made jointly between the YJS and the police. These decisions were appropriate and proportionate to the individual needs of children and victims.

There was no standing representation from social care or early help services on the panel, although if a social worker was already involved with the child or their family, they were invited to the panel. We saw referrals to suitable support services.

Children subject to out-of-court disposals had access to the same range of services as those on court orders, including the range of health services.

Leaflets for children and their parents or carers, explaining the implications of accepting an out-of-court disposal, were reviewed by the previous SALT, although there were plans to review them again for children with neurodiversity.

There were arrangements for a police inspector to review and authorise decisions that fell outside of gravity matrix criteria, which specified the types of outcome, in cases where the panel felt that an out-of-court disposal was warranted for a higher-gravity offence.

Interventions were available and used well, and children were able to remain in contact with the YJS as long as they wished, beyond the three-month contact period.

### **Are the out-of-court disposal policy and provision regularly assessed and updated to ensure effectiveness and maintain alignment with the evidence base?**

The YJS did not use data to assess the effectiveness of the out-of-court disposal scheme at a local level. The board and service were not able to analyse which outcomes were proving most effective or to identify any disproportionality resulting from decision-making.

Cases from the YJS were subject to the Greater Manchester scrutiny panel, and feedback had been positive. The manager with responsibility for chairing the panel was part of the Greater Manchester out-of-court disposal scheme group, and issues arising from practice and inspection were discussed as part of this forum. However, greater scrutiny of outcomes for children was needed at operational and strategic levels.

## 4. Resettlement

### 4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



There is a high-quality, evidence-based resettlement service for children leaving custody.

Outstanding

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews. To illustrate that work, we inspected two cases managed by the YJS that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

#### Strengths

- The YJS made good use of a range of multi-agency meetings to begin early planning for the sentence and release.
- There was effective information sharing and collaborative work with partners, to understand and meet children's needs.
- There was excellent scrutiny and oversight of children in custody.
- Bolton YJS was providing good and timely support for children who were preparing to be released from custody.
- There were effective links with the two local custodial establishments, which led to good information sharing and joint planning.
- In both resettlement cases we assessed, accommodation was identified before the child was released, and there was sufficient time for partners to make plans for the community follow-up.
- There was good use of multi-agency forums, which were well chaired and held agencies to account.
- Partner agencies visited children in custody and began work in preparation for release.
- Children were given the right custody placement to meet their needs.
- There was good ongoing contact with children and their parents or carers during the sentence.
- Management oversight of resettlement work was effective.

We gathered evidence for this standard from documents and meetings, and inspected two cases to allow us to illustrate the qualitative standards. We do not provide a separate rating for the quality of work in resettlement cases inspected under this standard. In making a judgement about resettlement policy and provision, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

**Is there a resettlement policy in place that promotes a high-quality, constructive and personalised resettlement service for all children?**

The resettlement policy was based on practice that had developed over time. Bolton's custody rate had increased recently, following a rise in serious youth violence; before this, it had been reducing.

We assessed two cases and scored both positively. Bolton had excellent relationships with both local youth custodial establishments. The Greater Manchester youth offending team part-funded a social worker post at Wetherby, so they had ready access to a member of staff who could advocate for the children.

There were also good operational links with Barton Moss Secure Children's Home. Staff at the children's home gave us numerous examples of how Bolton YJS worked in collaboration with them. In a recent case, when a child was attending a long trial, the YJS worker emailed Barton Moss each day, to share information about how the child was coping. This allowed the children's home to provide additional support and implement safeguarding measures. This has now been incorporated into the practice at the home, which now requests daily updates from all YOTs.

The YJS made effective use of multi-agency forums, including MAPPA, to plan for, and meet, children's needs. The MAPPA chair stated that this forum was used for cases that had additional complexities, not just high risks, and that this had been instrumental in securing multi-agency funding for specialist residential placements, which were identified in sufficient time before release.

The current resettlement policy was implemented in June 2020, updated in August 2021 and formally agreed by the board. This policy formalised previous practice. All custody cases were subject to management oversight, and progress was monitored at board level. The Director of Children's Services had a working knowledge of each custody case and held board members to account for their service's contribution.

The staff we interviewed had a good knowledge of resettlement work and felt well supported by partners and managers.

The resettlement policy covered all key areas, but practice went beyond the policy. Each child benefited from bespoke arrangements during custody and in preparation for release. Developing and maintaining meaningful relationships remained at the core of work, and the YJS held partners to account, to contribute to planning and to provide the necessary services.

Information-sharing protocols were in place and resettlement meetings in the community were used effectively to explore options for children. Staff at the right levels of seniority attended custody meetings, which allowed for timely decision-making and escalation of issues when they arose. We were given an example of this, where accommodation had not been identified for a child in care on release. The YJS operational manager had escalated this to the responsible service manager immediately and a suitable placement had been identified.

Practice was adapted during Covid-19 restrictions to maintain contact as much as possible by telephone, and face-to-face visits were re-established as soon as it was allowed.

The influence that case managers had across other agencies was a key strength in resettlement practice. Examples included influence on accommodation providers, probation services, MAPPA and social care services.

### **Does resettlement provision promote a high-quality, constructive and personalised resettlement service for all children?**

Planning for release began promptly, with effective information sharing with the placement. Specialist assessments continued as YJS staff visited the child in custody.

If a child was due to transition to probation services, the seconded probation worker became involved at an early stage, to develop a relationship with the child. Where necessary, adult services were invited to attend planning meetings in custody and in the community. Lead agency arrangements were clear, with the YJS facilitating effective co-working.

Discussions about accommodation after release started early, sometimes at the pre-sentence report stage, and children's services were fully involved in identifying the children's needs. We saw the use of stringent licence conditions and the use of approved premises to manage risks to others. Licence conditions were discussed early on in planning for release and included the use of exclusion and no-contact conditions, electronic monitoring and curfew.

Remedi, which is contracted to provide services to victims, was part of planning and advocated for the victim if contact had been taken up. It also made a positive contribution to victim safety planning, working with case managers to make sure that suitable licence conditions were in place.

The YJS advocated for the child's education and training while they were in custody and, where possible, encouraged and motivated children to undertake purposeful activities.

**Are resettlement policy and provision regularly assessed and updated to ensure effectiveness and maintain alignment with the evidence base?**

Suitability of provision was assessed on a routine case-by-case basis. This included advocating for one child to be moved from the main estate at Wetherby to the specialist Keppel Unit.

The management oversight of custody cases lay with an operational manager, who chaired community multi-agency meetings. This manager had built up skills and knowledge, and had credibility with other services.

In one case, the child had a history of not complying with the restrictions that services had placed on him; however, continual attempts were made to engage him.

Both cases were affected by Covid-19 restrictions, which reduced face-to-face contact and allowed limited opportunities for release on temporary licence.

The use of the positive health pathway for children preparing for release was an area of good practice. Inspectors were told that:

**Good practice example**

In order to meet individual emotional and mental health needs, Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust has developed a Positive Health Pathway, designed specifically for children in custody. The service uses peer navigators, who have lived experience of youth custody. They visit children in custody and through discussion with the child they identify a range of emotional and mental health needs and produce health action plans as a result. This project is a direct result of a review of mental health provision across the Greater Manchester YOTs.

The resettlement evidence base was reviewed at local level and as part of the Greater Manchester resettlement forum. Greater Manchester also had a resettlement consortium, and Bolton YJS played an active role in both. This supported the review of resettlement provision and practice in the region.

## Annexe 1: Methodology

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### HM Inspectorate of Probation standards

The standards against which we inspect youth offending services are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. These standards are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.<sup>24</sup>

The inspection methodology is summarised below, linked to the three domains in our standards framework. We focused on obtaining evidence against the standards, key questions and prompts in our inspection framework.

#### Domain one: organisational delivery

The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance and the Chief Executive delivered a presentation covering the following areas:

How do organisational delivery arrangements in this area make sure that the work of your YOS is as effective as it can be, and that the life chances of children who have offended are improved?

What are your priorities for further improving these arrangements?

During the main fieldwork phase, we conducted 20 interviews with case managers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. We held various meetings, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and information. In total, we conducted 15 meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.<sup>25</sup>

#### Domain two: court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Fifty per cent of the cases selected were those of children who had received court disposals six to nine months earlier, enabling us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and reviewing. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

We examined 10 court disposals. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of 5), and we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

#### Domain three: out-of-court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Fifty per cent of the cases selected were those of children who had received out-of-court disposals three to five months earlier. This

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<sup>24</sup> HM Inspectorate's standards are available here:  
<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>.

enabled us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, and implementation and delivery. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

We examined 10 out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set based on the proportion of out-of-court disposal cases in the YOT.

### **Resettlement**

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining two case files and interviewing case managers, in cases where children had received custodial sentences or been released from custodial sentences four to 12 months earlier. This enabled us to gather information to illustrate the impact of resettlement policy and provision on service delivery. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

In some areas of this report, data may have been split into smaller sub-samples – for example, male/female cases. Where this is the case, the margin of error for the sub-sample findings may be higher than five.

## Annexe 2: Inspection data

In this inspection, we conducted a detailed examination of a sample of 10 court disposals and 10 out-of-court disposals. In each of those cases, we inspect against standards regarding assessment, planning and implementation/delivery. For court disposals, we also look at reviewing. For each standard, inspectors answer a number of key questions about different aspects of quality, including whether there was sufficient analysis of the factors related to offending; the extent to which young offenders were involved in assessment and planning; and whether enough was done to assess the level of risk of harm posed, and to manage that risk. We reviewed a further two cases to obtain data to illustrate our findings about resettlement policy and provision.

To score an 'Outstanding' rating for the sections on court disposals or out-of-court disposals, 80 per cent or more of the cases we analyse have to be assessed as sufficient. If between 65 per cent and 79 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then the rating is 'Good' and if between 50 per cent and 64 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then a rating of 'Requires improvement' is applied. Finally, if less than 50 per cent are sufficient, then we rate this as 'Inadequate'. Resettlement cases are not separately rated; the data is for illustrative purposes only.

The rating for each standard is aligned to the banding at the key question level where the lowest proportion of cases were judged to be sufficient, as we believe that each key question is an integral part of the standard. Therefore, if we rate three key questions as 'Good' and one as 'Inadequate', the overall rating for that standard is 'Inadequate'.

Lowest banding (proportion of cases judged to be sufficient key question level)	Rating (standard)
Minority: <50%	Inadequate
Too few: 50-64%	Requires improvement
Reasonable majority: 65-79%	Good
Large majority: 80%+	Outstanding ☆

Additional scoring rules are used to generate the overall YOT rating. Each of the 12 standards are scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; and 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0 to 36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows:

- 0–6 = Inadequate
- 7–18 = Requires improvement
- 19–30 = Good
- 31–36 = Outstanding.

Domain one standards, the qualitative standard in domain three (standard 3.4) and the resettlement standard (standard 4.1) are judged using predominantly qualitative evidence.



The resettlement standard is rated separately, and does not influence the overall YOT rating. We apply a limiting judgement, whereby any YOT that receives an 'Inadequate' rating for the resettlement standard is unable to receive an overall 'Outstanding' rating, regardless of how they are rated against the core standards. Where there are no relevant resettlement cases, we do not apply a rating to resettlement work.

**Data from inspected cases:<sup>26</sup>**

<b>2.1. Assessment (court disposals)</b>	
<b>Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?</b>	
a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	100%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	90%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	100%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	100%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	70%
g) Is enough attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and their likelihood of engaging with the court disposal?	90%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	50%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	100%
<b>Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?</b>	
a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	90%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	90%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	70%

<sup>26</sup> Some questions do not apply in all cases.

<b>Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?</b>	
a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	80%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	90%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	70%

## 2.2. Planning (court disposals)

<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?</b>	
a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	80%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	80%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	100%
e) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	80%
f) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims?	50%
g) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	80%
<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?</b>	
a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	100%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	90%
c) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	70%
d) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	70%

<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>	
a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	90%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	100%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	80%
d) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	60%
e) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	70%

### 2.3. Implementation and delivery (court disposals)

<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?</b>	
a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	90%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	80%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	100%
d) Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	100%
e) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	80%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to services post-supervision?	100%
g) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	90%
h) Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	60%
<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?</b>	
a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	100%
b) Is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?	100%

<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?</b>	
a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	90%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	80%
c) Is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	80%

## **2. 4. Reviewing (court disposals)**

<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?</b>	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors linked to desistance?	90%
b) Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	80%
c) Does reviewing include analysis of, and respond to, diversity factors?	80%
d) Does reviewing consider the personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	80%
d) Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	70%
e) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	90%
f) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to support desistance?	60%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?</b>	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing?	70%
b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?	70%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	50%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to risk of harm?	60%

b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	70%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan all of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	50%

### 3.1. Assessment (out-of-court disposals)

#### Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?

a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's acknowledgement of responsibility for, attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	90%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	100%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	100%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	100%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	80%
g) Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	100%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	70%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	100%

#### Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	60%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	70%

#### Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	70%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including any other assessments that have been completed, and other evidence of behaviour by the child?	90%

### 3.2. Planning (out-of-court disposals)

#### Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?

a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	90%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	90%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	90%
e) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	90%
f) Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?	80%
g) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims?	70%
h) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	89%

#### Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	50%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	60%
c) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	60%

#### Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	50%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	67%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	70%
d) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	50%

### 3.3. Implementation and delivery (out-of-court disposals)

#### Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?

a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	90%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	70%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	90%
d) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	89%
e) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	100%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	80%

#### Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?

a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	70%
b) Is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	80%

#### Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?

a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	60%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	70%