



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in

Coventry

HM Inspectorate of Probation, February 2023



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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

HM 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

This inspection is part of our programme of youth justice service (YJS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Coventry 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, Coventry YJS was rated as 'Outstanding'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Good'.

The organisation of the youth offending team was exemplary in many ways. We found a strongly committed and energetic management board, supported by an able and passionate group of managers and staff. The importance of the guiding presence of the head of service cannot be underestimated in the delivery of high-quality services to children in this challenging city environment. There is an excellent workforce development strategy and a genuine commitment to develop and support staff.

The voice of children and their parents or carers is routinely gathered and features extensively in case work. A children's 'shadow' board (Through our Eyes) has been developed and the influence of this is evident in the work of the board.

In post-court work, we found good levels of service to the children, based on consistently well-considered assessment work. Where cases were managed well, there was substantial evidence of the involvement of key partners from health, children's social care, exploitation prevention, substance misuse, police and education services.

The YJS approach to out-of-court work was based on a comprehensive analysis of the evidence-base, both national and local, in order to build a way of working which is integral to the city's long-term success in improving outcomes for children and protecting the public. There is a very clear vision and strategy in place.

In delivery, the out-of-court disposal work was consistently of high quality, achieving a rating of 'Outstanding' for each of the four standards. Based on a comprehensive assessment in each case, we saw carefully developed plans which translated into high quality services being delivered to the children and their families. There was a strong, and well-resourced, multi-agency approach to the delivery of the work with children.

We were particularly impressed by the work with the voluntary sector addressing issues associated with discrimination and disproportionality through matching of mentors to the children by shared, lived experience or through heritage.

We have provided a number of recommendations which, we hope, will assist Coventry YJS in its quest to improve further.



Justin Russell

HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Coventry Youth Justice Service
Fieldwork started November 2022

Score 32/36

Overall rating

Outstanding



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

Outstanding



1.2 Staff

Outstanding



1.3 Partnerships and services

Good



1.4 Information and facilities

Outstanding



2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

Outstanding



2.2 Planning

Good



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Good



2.4 Reviewing

Good



3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

Outstanding



3.2 Planning

Outstanding



3.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding



3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

Outstanding



4. Resettlement¹

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

Good



¹ The rating for Resettlement does not influence the overall YOS rating.

Recommendations

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

The Coventry Youth Justice Service should:

1. complete work on developing performance dashboards, particularly regarding aggregated data for education, training, and employment, in order to make sure that children are engaged and achieving appropriate outcomes
2. carry out work to make the staff and management group more accurately representative of the demographic make-up of the city
3. explore all options to resolve the issue of withdrawal of the probation secondee
4. develop clear measures for identifying the impact on disproportionality of the out of court 'Diversion Project'
5. develop case management oversight arrangements designed specifically to support children in all cases where a high risk to wellbeing and of harm to others is identified.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Coventry Youth Justice Service (CYJS) over a period of a week, beginning 21 November 2022. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began between 22 November 2021 and 16 September 2022; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 22 November 2021 and 16 September; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between 22 November 2021 and 16 September 2022. We also conducted 30 interviews with case managers.

Coventry is a city with relatively high levels of deprivation with 14.4 per cent of neighbourhoods among the 10 per cent most deprived in the country.² The city has become increasingly ethnically diverse, with just over half of its school-aged population from an ethnic minority background in 2021,² up from around one-third of the population in the 2011 census. Looking at the last 12 months, children from a black and mixed heritage background continue to be over-represented in the YJS caseload, particularly for children in custody. At the time of inspection, the caseload was made up of 42 per cent court orders and 58 per cent out-of-court disposal work. Within the caseload, 13.6 per cent were girls and 53 per cent were from black, Asian or minority ethnic heritage.²

Based on a strong commitment to partnership working, there is an improving picture in the delivery of youth justice services, including:

- a reduction in the use of custody
- no children from Coventry currently in the children's secure estate
- a decline in first-time entrant rates, with a historic low of 38 children in 2021/2022
- stable reoffending rates

The YJS is managed within Coventry City Council's Children's Services Help and Protection area. The YJS team shares an office with the local Exploitation Team (Horizon), supporting strong multi-agency working to tackle issues around serious youth violence and exploitation. The office site is in the heart of the city centre and is co-located with the children's services senior management team, children in care service, and the multi-agency safeguarding hub. The head of service has the YJS as a single portfolio and is line-managed by the strategic lead (assistant director) for 'Help and Protection' services. The YJS benefits from other delivery sites through the city's '8 Family Hubs' and access to other safe spaces in the community.

Key areas of concern for the partnership include serious youth violence and the numbers of children, historically, receiving long custodial sentences. As part of tackling these issues, there have been two successful multi-agency funding bids with NHS England (led by the integrated care board) and the Youth Endowment Fund (led by West Midlands Police). These initiatives will support system adoption of trauma-informed approaches and the earlier identification of children at risk of entering the youth justice system. The YJS has developed effective relationships with the community sector, developing a pathway to mentoring which is intended to address children's diversity needs, particularly the over-representation of black and mixed heritage boys.

² CYJS supplied figures.

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 12 meetings, including with staff, volunteers, managers, board members, and partnership staff and their managers.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows.

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.

Outstanding

- The board is chaired by an energetic and knowledgeable Director of Children's Services. There is a dynamism that flows through and around the partnership.
- There are strong links between YJS board members and other strategic bodies in Coventry.
- There is a child-first, trauma-informed approach to working with the children and this translates into substantial partnership investment in the services being delivered.
- The board has a committed membership, representing its host organisations at an appropriate level of seniority.
- The YJS, through vision and strategy, shares a 'collective moral purpose' with the wider city strategy for children. There is a shared and zealously promoted aspiration and mission.
- There is a prioritised programme of evidence-based service development. This is actively supported by lead board members through securing resources for the work with children engaged with the YJS.
- All partnership staff work within documented service level agreements or shared protocols.
- There is a comprehensive programme of work seeking to improve the YJS's ability to work with the diverse needs of the children.
- The voice of the child and their parents or carers is strongly evident in the board's business, with extensive capturing of views and a developed children's 'shadow board'.
- There is substantial evidence of board members' understanding the needs of children working with the YJS and representing these within their own organisations.
- There are strong working arrangements between the board and operational managers in the development and delivery of improvement work.
- Strategy is well communicated through team presentations.
- The YJS communicates well with the magistrates' youth court panel.
- Through case inspection, we identified clear links between what is intended strategically and what is delivered.
- Risks to the service are identified, monitored and reviewed regularly.

1.2. Staff



Staff within the YOT are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.

Outstanding

Strengths:

- The operational group is a mix of experienced and newer staff, all of whom share a common vision and dynamic sense of purpose through their work with children and their parents or carers.
- Although there are current case manager vacancies, staff report that the workload is manageable.
- The number of cases held is between six and 12. We view this as a workload which would allow high-quality services to be delivered.
- Most staff perceive themselves to be sufficiently experienced and qualified to manage their work.
- Work allocation processes are clear, transparent, and supported by an internal transfer arrangement.
- Practitioners play a key role as 'champions' across specific areas of practice (for example, restorative justice, child sexual abuse, social media, disproportionality, working with the police).
- There is an excellent workforce development strategy aimed at developing a high-quality workforce by supporting and promoting continuing professional development and opportunities for practitioners.
- Senior practitioners have been appointed to improve the connection between strategic priorities and operational delivery.
- Coventry YJS is seeking to pilot the development of the Youth Justice Degree Apprenticeship scheme, which will aim to widen employment opportunities for individuals from a black, Asian and minority ethnic heritage, care leavers, or ex-YJS children.
- There is a clear approach to staff supervision and appraisal, and this is well deployed within the YJS.
- In the inspection, we found that management oversight of the work was to a high standard in most cases.
- Induction for new members of staff and new seconded staff is to a detailed plan and recent staff experience attests to the high quality of this process.

Areas for improvement:

- More should be done to make the staff group representative of the demographic make-up of the city, perhaps by encouraging equitable access to promotion opportunities.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Good

Strengths:

- There is an impressive and analytical approach to understanding factors which influence desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others.
- Within this approach, there is a clear focus on identifying and mitigating any disproportionate representation of children in respect of protected characteristics within equality legislation. Analysis is driving service delivery.
- There is sustained progress in relation to reducing the number of children in the youth justice system, reoffending by these children, and the use of custody for children.
- There is a developing approach to understanding and responding to the voices of children and their parents or carers, which is translating into tangible differences in the way the service is delivered.
- There is an impressive range of services available to all children working with the YJS. This includes: a comprehensive health offer, supporting both physical and mental wellbeing; a substance misuse intervention; speech and language assessment and therapy; success-oriented education, training, and employment with all children; extensive support to parents of children engaged with the YJS; victim and reparation work delivered to externally validated standards; and a consortium of voluntary sector providers of mentoring and peer mentoring, enabling support for all of the children's diverse needs.
- Through the implementation of the regional (West Midlands) strategy, and in conjunction with a voluntary sector provider, CYJS has developed a gender-informed approach to working with girls on the caseload.
- There is comprehensive collection, analysis, and service development in the light of data concerning the protected characteristics of children working with the YJS. Furthermore, there is strong incorporation of the voice of the child, their parents or carers, and other stakeholders into the development of work.
- In practice, we found that these services delivered high-quality work with the children.
- Co-location of the YJS team with seconded staff and key partner organisations fosters a shared commitment to child-first and trauma-informed methods of work.
- We found good evidence of close working arrangements with children's social care through our case inspection. Concern with safety and wellbeing, and the safety of others is central to the intention of all partnership working.

Areas for improvement:

- The management board should continue to explore options to resolve the issue of the withdrawal of the probation secondees.
- Clear measures should be developed for identifying the impact of the revised diversion offer (Diversion Project) on disproportionality.

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.

Outstanding

Strengths:

- There is a clear guide to policies and procedures available to all staff working in the partnership.
- Working practices – for example, school liaison – operate in a reliable and consistent way. This leads to practitioners quickly being able to establish any school-related issues and develop appropriate interventions or support, where necessary.
- Processes around education provision support high levels of children in mainstream schools and low levels of post-school-aged children who are not in employment, training, or education. Most staff know how to access relevant services from partners and providers.
- There is a reliable set of information technology resources available to staff. Management information is well developed and includes all appropriate diversity information. There is strong evidence that quality assurance of the work drives performance.
- Disproportionality, diversity, and responsivity are at the centre of the YJS's concerns. There is an extensive and well-documented approach to supporting the diverse needs of children and developing services that address disproportionate use of the range of options available to children.
- Where referral is required, these processes are well documented. A good example of the working arrangements in place was seen in the access to education for school-aged children. Case managers are clear about who they need to contact in every school (all of which are academies), and the flow of information about the child's school performance is readily available for the purposes of assessment and ongoing work.
- Community safety and public protection incident reviews are carefully monitored, and remedial action plans are developed where necessary. This activity is reported to the management board.
- There is a systematic approach to implementing learning from HM Inspectorate of Probation thematic reports – for example, the report on the experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system.

Areas for improvement:

- The YJS should build on the learning provided by the Vibe room development, to develop suitably supportive working environments in all contact centres used.
- Work on developing performance dashboards should be progressed, concluded, and fully utilised, particularly regarding aggregated data for education, training, and employment.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The YJS has a comprehensive, resourced plan to maintain and develop work in eliciting and understanding the 'voice of the child'. The approach includes numerous routes to explore co-creation and participation with children and their parents or carers. The children's 'shadow board', Through Our Eyes, is led by a local charity and the local youth commissioner and is supported by the Coventry children's participation team. At the end of the period of engagement with the child, children and their parents or carers are invited to facilitated feedback sessions, which go beyond the routine AssetPlus self-assessment.

On our behalf, the YJS contacted children who had open cases at the time of the inspection, to gain their consent for a text survey. We delivered the survey independently to the 20 children who consented, and nine children replied. Two further interviews were conducted with children during fieldwork and one parent was involved in a presentation to the inspector.

What the children told us:

The responses to our general satisfaction survey were almost wholly positive. We asked the children to rate the service and tell us why they thought this, and how the YJS worked with them. Responses included:

"Because it helped me see things differently and realise more that only you control yourself ... Because it showed me the consequences and got me to think twice about doing certain things."

"Caring, take their time to do well"

"Everyone I met was understanding and helped me improve myself, instead of berating me ... They showed how the victim likely felt, the consequences of knife crime, and explained where I went wrong, therefore helping me feel empathy."

"They were just very supportive and open to help me, no matter what, in any area of things and supplied me with different courses to take part in or activities and they give you someone to talk to."

"The people I met were very open minded, easy to talk to and helpful ... They helped me understand where I went wrong, how the victim of what I did could've felt and helped me improve myself, all without making it seem like I was being punished. I feel like I can empathise with the victim now."

Diversity

The YJS has a well-developed approach to supporting children's diversity and reducing the disproportionate use of criminal justice options in dealing with offending behaviour. A detailed data comparison exercise was undertaken in April 2022 regarding ethnicity type and the disposal children received. This yielded an authoritative view of differences in the use of youth conditional cautions and decisions to charge to court between children of different heritages.

The CYJS approach to addressing disproportionality includes:

- procurement of community mentoring to increase the diversity offer to children
- incorporation of the regional girls' mission statement into standards for gender-informed work
- referral of over 40 families to the Kitchen Table Talks project (a parental support group)
- Levelling the Playing Field mentoring rolled out with two city providers
- tackling racial disparity in the criminal justice system – the Diversion Project continues building on the recommendations in the HM Inspectorate of Probation thematic report on the experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system
- a consortium arrangement for mentoring provision across youth justice and exploitation services
- LGBT/non-binary training across the team.

We saw considerable evidence of these approaches being implemented in the inspected cases and the discussions conducted with the staff and partnership groups.

In almost all the children's cases we inspected, the child's diversity issues were addressed satisfactorily. The range of scores were 69 per cent (review of post-court work) to 94 per cent (implementation and delivery of out-of-court disposals).

The operational staff group is 84 per cent female and 22 per cent of the staff are from black, Asian and minority ethnic heritage. There is a significant difference between the staff group and the demographic make-up of the city of Coventry.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 16 community sentences.

2.1. Assessment



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

Outstanding

Our rating³ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	94%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	88%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	88%

The quality of assessment work in the YJS was particularly strong.

In almost all cases, the issues concerning the child's prospects of desistance were considered and analysed sufficiently. We found sufficient analysis of individual diversity issues with most of the children. In one child's case, we noted that:

"the importance of culture to him, and experiences of discrimination, are woven throughout assessment activity".

There was a clear focus on the child's strengths, with high levels of involvement of the child and their parents or carers in the assessment process. Assessment was characterised by the effective use of a wide range of sources, including police, social care, education, health, and criminal exploitation information.

Safety and wellbeing was assessed sufficiently in most of the children's cases we inspected. There were often complex issues in the child's lives, including traumatic experiences in relation to neglect, separation, exploitation, and negative peer influences. Frequently, the children had neurodivergent conditions or disabilities which impacted on their ability to function well. These issues were identified and analysed appropriately, with carefully assembled information leading to insightful appraisal of the child's circumstances.

In terms of risk of harm to others, we found identification and analysis of risk to a good standard in most cases. In almost all cases, the inspector deemed the risk of harm classification to be reasonable. We saw assessments which balanced protective factors that could influence future behaviour carefully, with clear appreciation of the child's capacity for further damaging behaviour.

³ 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. A more detailed explanation is available [on our website](#).

2.2. Planning



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

Good

Our rating⁴ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	94%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	81%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	69%

Planning focused positively on supporting the child's desistance, with particular regard to setting out services that were sequenced and delivered within appropriate timescales. Almost all work considered the diversity issues of the child, with reference to the individual's heritage or other protected characteristic forming part of the planned approach to the work. These issues were being identified and planned for, with matching of staff and team input to the gender, heritage, learning style, and other individual circumstances of the child.

We found good evidence of attention to the child's safety and wellbeing in most plans inspected. There was a strong and purposeful partnership approach to this area of work, with YJS case managers playing an active role in multi-agency strategy and planning meetings. Considerable thought was applied to what should happen if the child's vulnerability were to increase, and we found sufficiently contingency plans pertinent to the identified safety and wellbeing concerns of the individual children.

Although most plans focused effectively on keeping other people safe, we were concerned that in a small number of cases this work was insufficient. In particular, the contingency plans concerning risk escalation – what should happen if the child appears to present a current or increasing risk of causing harm to other people – were not well developed enough to manage the risk that the child may pose. In this small number of cases, joint planning with other agencies was weaker than we would expect it to be.

In some cases, in terms of the potential risk of causing harm to others, the individual circumstances of the child were not sufficiently considered. Key factors, such as the prospect of violence towards immediate members of the family, or to members of staff, had not been adequately planned for. In these cases, the balance between supporting the child's needs and risk of causing harm to others had not been well-maintained.

⁴ 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. A more detailed explanation is available [on our website](#).

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating⁵ 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?	81%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	81%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	69%

The focus on desistance was appropriate in the majority of cases, with almost all case managers taking care to establish and maintain effective working relationships with the children and their parents or carers. There was a clear 'team around the child' approach in many of the cases and this included, where possible, referral to the mentoring scheme and access to small, charitable options such as the Hooves of Harmony (equine facilitated learning).

In the main, we found good work in respect of supporting the safety of the child. Based on regular liaison and information sharing, we found high levels of appropriate support provided to the children in a planned way. Where it was necessary, we found that the use of the National Referral Mechanism (in relation to child criminal exploitation) supported efforts to keep the child safe.

Most children's cases inspected retained sufficient focus on keeping other people safe. In a small number of cases, we identified that work to support the safety of other people was insufficient. For these cases, there was a range of factors which, while untypical of the way things were generally managed, reflected some shortfalls in individual children's cases. In one case – where the risk to the child's safety and wellbeing, and the risk of harm to others were both rated as 'very high' – we considered that the management and oversight had been disjointed and consequent actions were not sufficient for the identified risks of the case. In two further cases, we were concerned that interventions had not taken place which related directly to the child's risk of causing harm to others.

⁵ 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. A more detailed explanation is available [on our website](#).

2.4. Reviewing



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

Good

Our rating⁶ for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	81%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	88%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	69%

We saw clear adjustments to the work with children as a result of reviews. Additional interventions were included or adjusted as the case manager understood the child's needs better. For example, we saw increased use of training and education opportunities being provided when this was appropriate to the child's aspirations. In other instances, we saw adjustment to the method of delivering services in the light of new information about the child's neurodiversity, or better understood learning needs. There was a clear and positive focus on the progress that the child was making.

In most cases, the focus on keeping the child safe was maintained throughout the period of intervention by frequent review. Good information exchange and links to key partner agencies were routinely in place, allowing the case worker to provide support or direction to the child when life events rendered this necessary.

In a small number of children's cases, we deemed the reviewing activity to be insufficient to maintain a focus on keeping other people safe.

In one case, the deficits in reviewing may have contributed to delays in securing an appropriate placement for a child for whom there were concerns of imminent serious risk to the safety of himself and others.

In another case, we were concerned that reviews did not accurately reflect the actual risk to others posed by the child. The child had attained the age of 18 and was, consequently, transferred to the probation service without an accurate assessment of the risk of causing harm to others.

⁶ 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. A more detailed explanation is available [on our website](#).

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 16 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of five youth conditional cautions, seven community resolutions and four other disposals. We interviewed the case manager in 12 cases.

3.1. Assessment



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁷ 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?	88%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	94%

The YJS uses the AssetPlus tool for all cases within the out-of-court disposal scheme, and assessment work was sufficient in almost all aspects in almost all cases.

In a typical case, the inspector noted that:

"... the case manager understands the child's lived experiences, taking account of barriers to accessing education, the involvement of children's social care, his gang associations and prominence, family dynamics, and his heritage. The case manager spoke, with conviction, of her own experiences and how she took account of this based on what she knew of the boy and what he told her". Furthermore, "the assessment highlights racism, sexism, and gender identity issues from the child's view and this is linked to anti-social and poor emotionally controlled behaviours".

Assessment work linked well with other agencies concerned with the child's safety and wellbeing, drawing sufficiently on other agency information in almost all cases.

There was clear evidence that the joint decision-making panel was guided by the assessment of risk of causing harm to others in formulating the best disposal for the child's circumstances. In almost every child's case, the risk of serious harm classification was reasonable. There was consistent application of a 5Ps approach to assessment (considering the Presenting problem, Predisposing factors, Precipitating factors, Perpetuating factors, Protective factors). This is a well-grounded, research-based approach to case formulation.

⁷ 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. A more detailed explanation is available [on our website](#).

3.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁸ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	100%

Characteristics of good planning included the involvement of the child, and in many cases it was evident that children were involved in every step of the planning process. Where it was necessary, the plan for the child included extended engagement with services beyond the time within which the disposal was delivered and there was considered flexibility about what was right for each individual child. It was clear that the entire range of interventions at the YJS's disposal was made available to children entering the service through the out-of-court disposal route. Many other agencies were involved in the planned interventions, which included emotional health work, substance misuse intervention, education and training intervention, and access to mentoring suited to the child's heritage.

There was a positive multi-agency approach to keeping children safe, with strong and effective links to children's social care. Actions, such as responding to incidents where the child had gone missing, were incorporated into the YJS's plan. When it was identified that children were at risk of exploitation, the joint working arrangements with Horizon (the team focused on child criminal exploitation) meant that clear responsibility – who does what – was in place for the child's safety plan.

The multi-agency approach extended to keeping other people safe. In all of the children's cases, we found that the plans promoted the safety of other people, where this was required. Where there were specific concerns about actual and potential victims, these were addressed well in the plans. In most cases, we found that contingency arrangements – for when circumstances changed to increase the risk that the child presented to others – were of good quality.

⁸ 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. A more detailed explanation is available [on our website](#).

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁹ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	100%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	100%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	94%

Services to children were delivered well in every case. We found consistent, high-quality work, involving a range of agencies and specialist providers. In many cases, a great deal was being done within a short timescale. Supervision was flexible, adjusted in the light of understanding neurodivergent or learning needs, and responsive to changes in the child's circumstances. In almost all cases, we considered that service delivery accounted for the diversity issues of the child. There was evidence that case managers were linking the children into support networks provided through mentoring services which aimed to assist exploration of the child's heritage.

The complexity of the children's lives was reflected in the levels of risk to their safety and wellbeing. Of the sample of children's cases we inspected, only one was assessed as having low-risk status. Multi-agency delivery arrangements served to support the child's safety and wellbeing, and in all cases the child's parents or carers were appropriately involved in the work.

Again, the complexity of the children's lives was reflected in the fact that only one-quarter of the children were assessed as presenting a low risk of causing serious harm to others. In terms of reducing the risk children presented to others, we found considerable multi-agency work overseeing and delivering elements of the service to protect others. In all but one of the children's cases, sufficient attention was given to actual or potential victims and we saw examples of victim awareness sessions, letters of apology or explanation, and community restorative justice work undertaken by the child.

⁹ 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. A more detailed explanation is available [on our website](#).

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.

Outstanding

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 were as follows:

Strengths:

- There was a clear vision and strategy for out-of-court disposal work.
- The strategy appraised the research and evidence base and set out an approach which was 'child-first', with the overarching aim of reducing the stigma of involvement in the criminal justice system.
- Having identified an overrepresentation of children receiving court disposals from a minority ethnic background, CYJS developed a 'Diversion Project' both to reduce the disproportionate use of court disposals and to make sure that interventions resource was made available to children to support desistance
- Furthermore, in adopting a 'whole family' approach, CYJS offers voluntary parenting support to all children and families working with the service
- The CYJS assistant court officer checks every case appearing before court to make sure all out-of-court pathways have been explored.
- There was a strong analytical approach to investigating potential disproportionate use of these disposals.
- The YJS had, as part of the review of the strategy, consulted with parents and families, children, and victims of crime through end of intervention reviews.
- There was a multi-agency joint decision panel which reflected all elements of the partnership.
- Where a disposal other than community resolution was considered, all cases led to a comprehensive AssetPlus assessment.
- In almost all cases inspected, diversity considerations were identified and planned for appropriately, and managed well.
- The offer of support to children and their parents or carers – including for community resolutions – was broad and addressed issues of building on strengths to support desistance, while maintaining focus on wellbeing and risk of harm to others.
- There was external scrutiny of the process by the Coventry out-of-court disposal panel.
- The deployment of the policy and attendant processes had yielded outstanding results in our inspected sample of cases. In our case inspection, we found that the work met our standards in every aspect with almost every child.

Area for Improvement

- Specific arrangements should be developed to evaluate the impact of 'Diversion Project' on the disproportionate use of court-based options for children.

4.1. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Good

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 three cases managed by the YJS that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

Strengths:

- It had been almost two years since a Coventry child was sent to custody.
- There was an up-to-date resettlement policy, and this had been reviewed thoroughly in 2021.
- Satisfactory contact was maintained with the child during the custodial part of the sentence, and this included extensive liaison with custody staff.
- All three of the cases inspected were released to suitable and satisfactory accommodation following appropriate and effective planning prior to release.
- In each case, suitable education, training, and employment arrangements were in place for the child's release.
- There was clear evidence of continuity of healthcare from custody to release in each case.
- For each child released, specific arrangements were made to support the child in relation to their individual heritage or other individual needs.
- Future sentences would fall within the Youth One Day One Conversation multi-agency arrangement to oversee cases where there was a risk to the child's safety and wellbeing, or where the child presented a risk of harm to others.

Areas for improvement:

- The resettlement policy should adopt a clearer position regarding the diverse needs of the children and outline how any potentially disproportionate use of custody will be addressed.

Further information

The following can be found on our website:

- [inspection data, including methodology and contextual facts about the YJS](#)
- [a glossary of terms used in this report](#).