



Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

2021 Annual Report: inspections of youth offending services

Thursday 17 March 2022

Youth Annual Report - Overview

- The Covid-19 pandemic has had huge impact on the youth justice system and the services it works, with both in terms of caseloads, ways of working and impacts on staff and managers
- In spite of the pandemic our inspection ratings were better in 2021 than in previous year – a great tribute to the resilience and commitment of YOS services everywhere. No 'inadequate' ratings and improved ratings for a number of our organisational delivery standards
- An increasing per cent of all YOS caseloads are being dealt with out of court with a noticeable increase in the use of Outcome 22 processes for children unwilling to admit responsibility. The gap between the quality of out of court and post court supervision has narrowed, but for both, risk of harm remains the weakest area
- A majority of YOS teams are now firmly embedded within children's services directorates – alongside other adolescent and early help services. But they continue to retain a separate identity

Youth Justice in 2021:

Contextual facts



Arrests in 2020/2021 were at their lowest level since time series began – down **19 per cent** year on year.



Just **8,800 first time entrants** to the youth justice system across England and Wales.



'Sentencing occasions' at court were down **28 per cent**.



Youth custodial population fell to its lowest level since records began – **560** in March 2021, down from **2,000** in 2011.



As a result the volume of children supervised by YOS fell by **28 per cent** on the previous year.



Key findings from our youth inspections: Falling but more challenging caseloads

- High levels of need in both court and out of court caseloads. For example, **25 per cent** of the children subject to a court order had been placed in the care of the local authority at some point during their sentence. High proportions of YOS caseloads are NEET or in PRUs or very part time education
- For children who are still entering the formal justice system, a higher concentration of children entering have committed a violent offence – these children made up **49 per cent** of the court cases of the 33 services we inspected in the last year
- Nearly **80 per cent** of children sentenced to a court order were assessed as presenting some form of risk to others, and **29 per cent** were considered to present a high or very high risk of harm.
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Our youth inspections 2020/2021

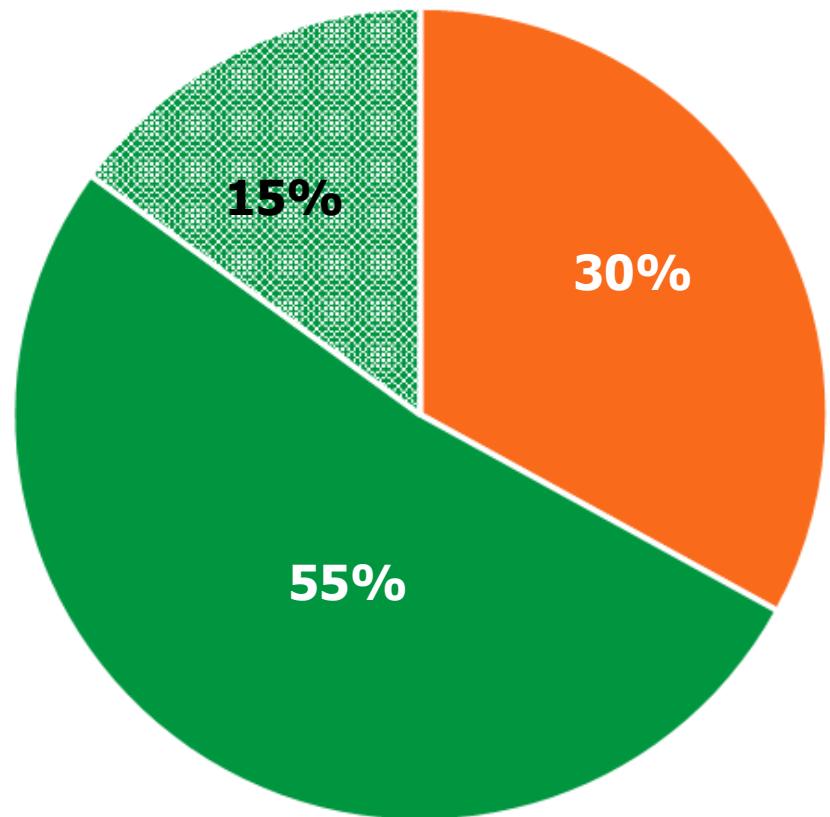
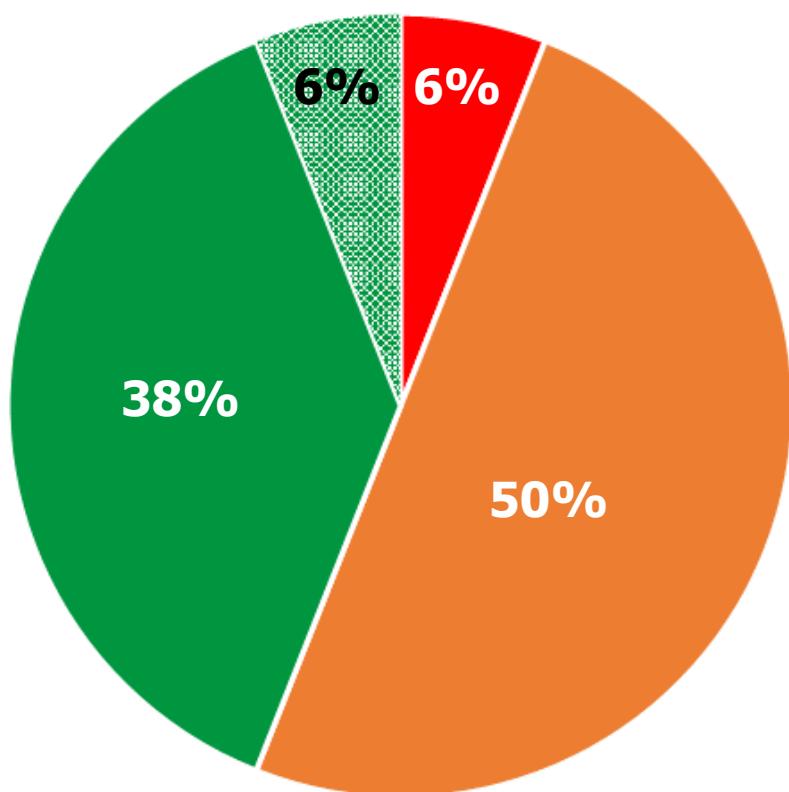
- We inspected **33 youth offending services** (YOS) between November 2020 and February 2022.
- We made **changes to our standards** in July 2021, which led to a **split in data** between inspections carried out **before and after** this.
- New standards on:
resettlement after custody and
quality of out of court policy and practice
were introduced in summer 2021.





Our 2020/2021 ratings: Despite challenges our overall ratings have improved

Distribution of overall ratings in 2019/2020 (left) and 2020/2021 (right)



■ Inadequate ■ Requires improvement ■ Good ■ Outstanding



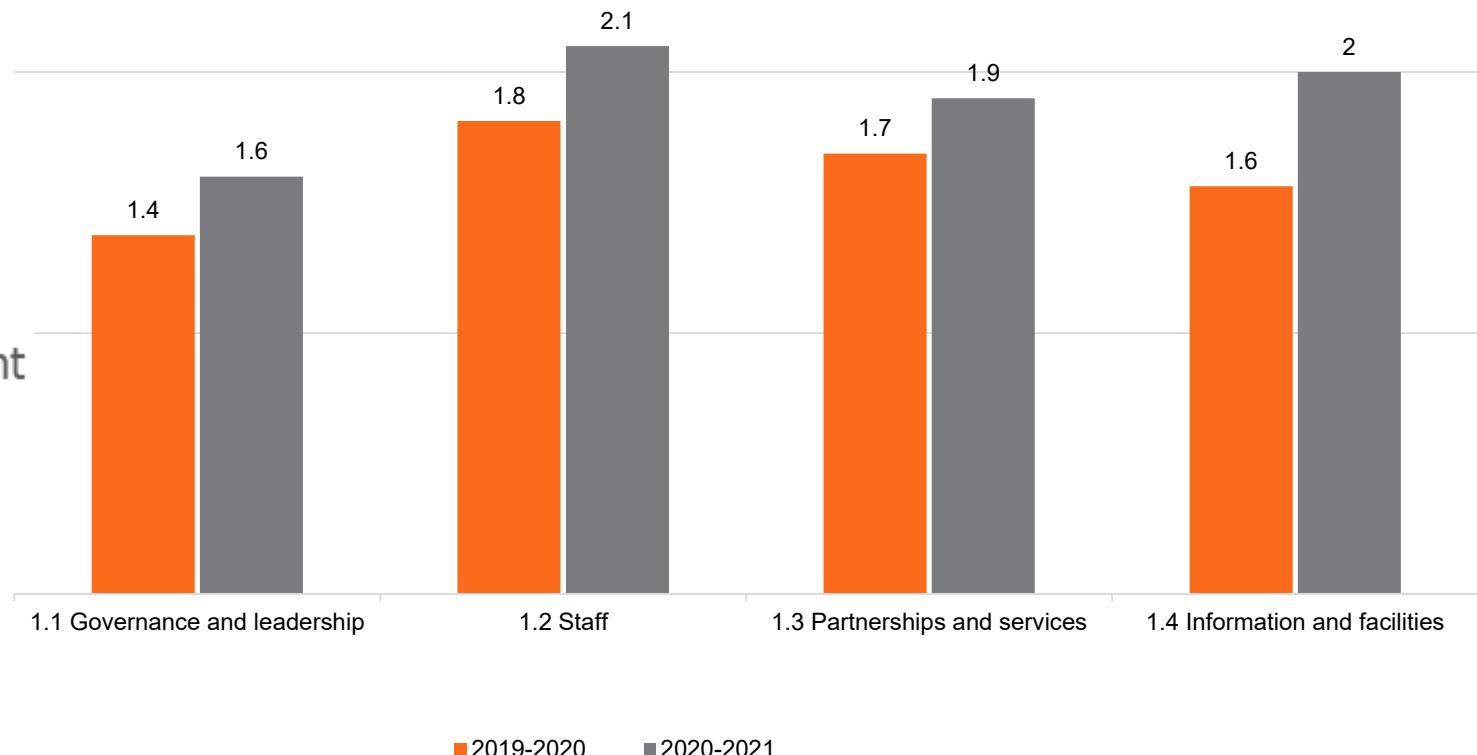
Our 2020/2021 ratings: Organisation and delivery of YOS

■ Outstanding

■ Good

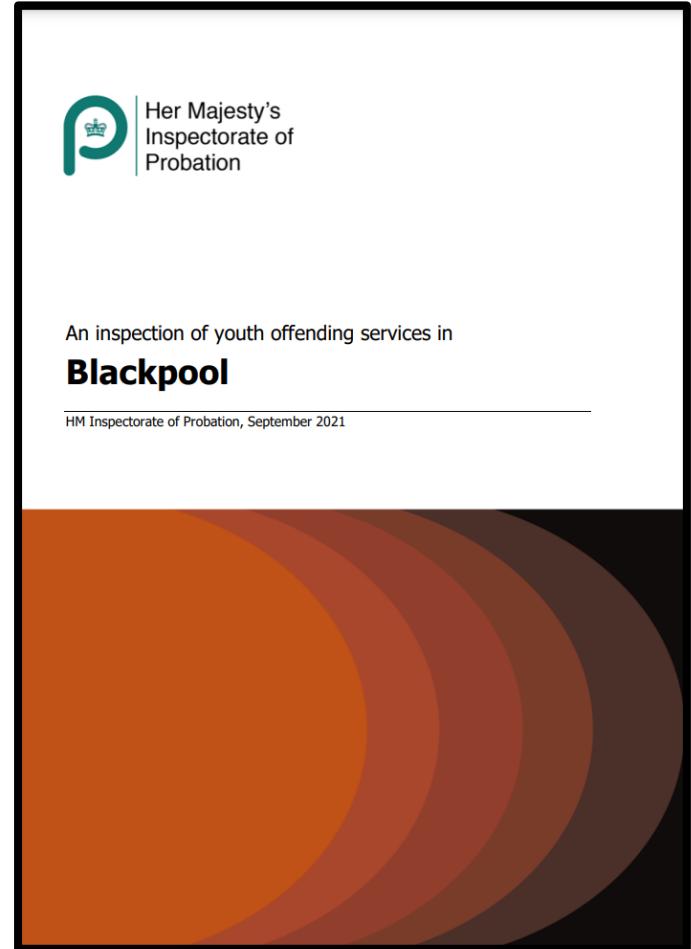
■ Requires improvement

■ Inadequate



Case study: Blackpool YJS

- We rated Blackpool Youth Justice Service (YJS) as **'Inadequate' in 2018**.
- **Less than three years later**, the service was reinspected (with our partners from policing, health, social care and education) and **rated as 'Good'**.
- The service had seen **substantial reorganisation** – it was now well-organised, with effective scrutiny and clear direction.
- Extensive change in key areas, such as **relationships with staff, children under supervision and parents/carers**.
- **Reaffirmed partnerships** – police and mental health services.



Key findings from our youth inspections:

The continuing challenge of Covid-19



YOS were committed – working flexibly to respond to the impact of Covid-19



effectively managed the balance between responding to the risks and needs of children and families and keeping staff safe



as the situation changed, operating models were reviewed and adapted quickly



initial business continuity planning was effective, assisted by being designed to meet local needs and coordinated with local authority planning and command structures



despite some variation in the services, YOS quickly moved to adapted models of delivery, carrying out work differently



partnerships were sustained at a strategic and operational level



staff and managers rose to the challenge, working with dedication and commitment to keep their very vulnerable children as safe as possible.



Key findings from our youth inspections: What YOS staff told us about Covid-19

Governance and leadership

"Attendance [at management boards] is very good. We have the courts, community safety teams – all the statutory partners, and the head of one of the local pupil referral units as well as the voluntary service." - Andrew Kaiser, Head of Specialist Services for Derby Youth Offending Team

Support for staff

"I am fortunate to have a very good forensic psychologist on staff, who is also the health representative. [They] completed work on compassion sessions for staff – which helped in keeping staff well-supported and motivated." - Lise Bird, Head of Somerset Youth Offending Service

Partnerships and services

"We essentially made sure that we saw everybody face-to-face, although reduced. We'd still maintain weekly contact, but we might see them face-to-face once a month... We did lots of garden appointments, drive-by appointments, walking appointments. Anything which made it safe. Our Covid measures have worked really effectively, it hasn't prevented us seeing people." - Dave Wraight, YOS Manager for West Berkshire



Key findings from our youth inspections: Education, training and employment

- **Good ETE provision** is particularly crucial to the life chances of children under YOS supervision. However, this is consistently identified as **one of the top three factors that need to be addressed** by our inspectors.
- We found that **common characteristics** (for example low levels of numeracy and literacy, speech and language issues and cognitive disabilities) of children supervised by YOS and **adverse childhood experiences/trauma** (which impact their ability to engage) often **drive the problems with ETE**.
- The Covid-19 **pandemic caused** all children's **education to be disrupted**. However, this was **more severe for** children from **poorer households** due to **digital exclusion**.



Key findings from our youth inspections: Resettlement after custody

- **Children sentenced to custody are some of the most vulnerable children** in our communities, as well as presenting a risk of harm to others. Their needs are often complex and providing effective services to meet these needs can be challenging.
- In July 2021 **we introduced a new standard** in our local inspections **focussing on resettlement work**. This includes whether accommodation, healthcare, education and family support and more have been considered as part of their release from custody.
- **This applied to eight of the YOS inspections** covered in our annual report and seven of these were rated. They were rated as:
 - three 'Good'
 - four 'Requires improvement'.
- **Mixed picture** in terms of policy development.
- The introduction of this standard has **spotlighted resettlement**, with many YOS reviewing and introducing resettlement policies.

Key findings from our youth inspections: Quality of court and out-of-court case supervision

Since the last report, we have inspected
362 court cases and **315 out-of-court cases.**

Key themes

Many of the themes identified are familiar from previous annual reports.

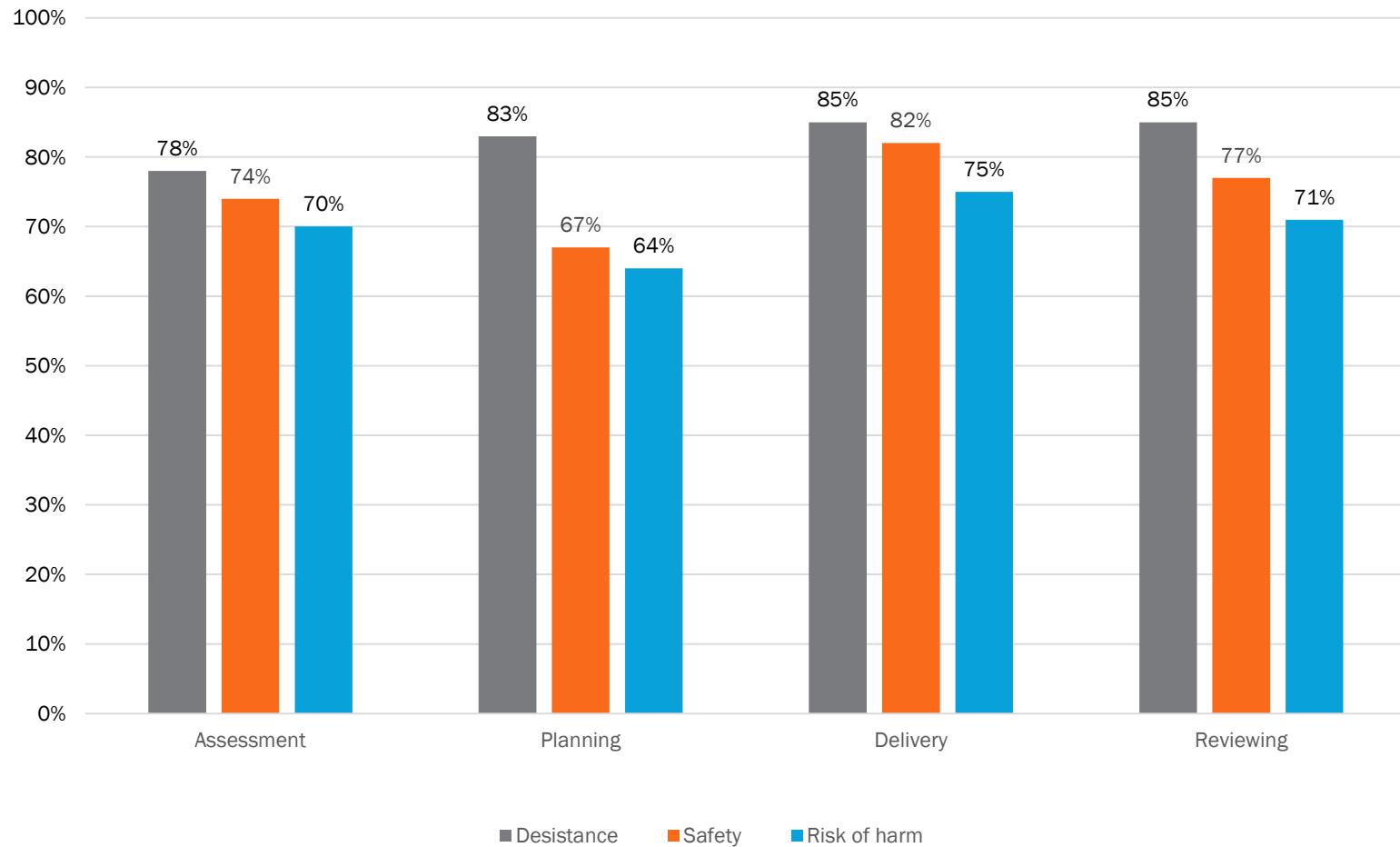
- The quality of work undertaken to identify the factors driving young people's offending and their underlying needs remains strong: **78 per cent or more** of the cases we inspected were satisfactory against our four court case quality standards in relation to 'desistance'.
- Scores for the quality of work on children's safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others were lower.
- Concerns around the drive for minimal interventions and the impact of this on the child and wider community.



Key findings from our youth inspections:

Quality of work with court cases is generally positive

Percentage of court disposal cases where the over-arching standards questions were assessed as positive, broken down by desistance, safety and risk of harm (based on 24 pre-July 2021 YOS inspections).





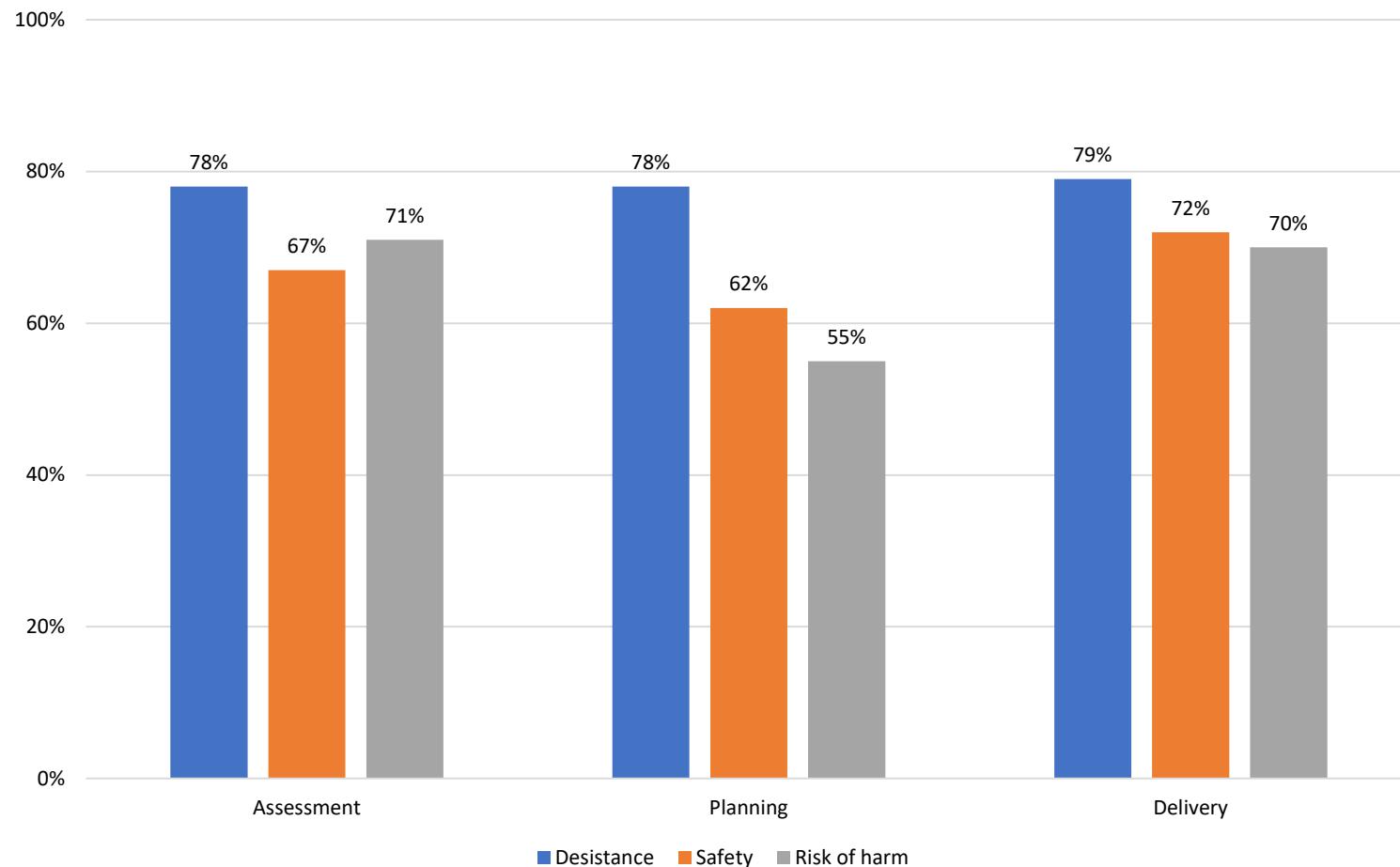
Key findings from our youth inspections: Risk management

Strong risk management findings	Weaker risk management findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Case managers drew together evidence on both current and historical issues and behaviour. <p>Also, they drew upon information from other sources, including: the police, social care, health and education.</p> <p>This informed their strength-based assessments and plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Important to pay sufficient attention to needs and wishes of victims and opportunities for restorative justice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Case managers didn't draw of a wide range of information and failed to consider patterns of behaviour.Often under-assessed and misclassified risks.During inspections, services often did not make it clear who the victims were, meaning the plans to keep them safe were ineffective.Contingency planning for changes in a child's circumstances was particularly weak. <p>More than a quarter of reports in 2021 included a recommendation to improve contingency planning.</p>



Key findings from our youth inspections: Scores for OOCD have improved

Percentage of out-of-court disposal cases where the over-arching standards questions were assessed as positive, by desistance, safety and risk of harm (pre-July 2021 – based on 24 YOS inspections).

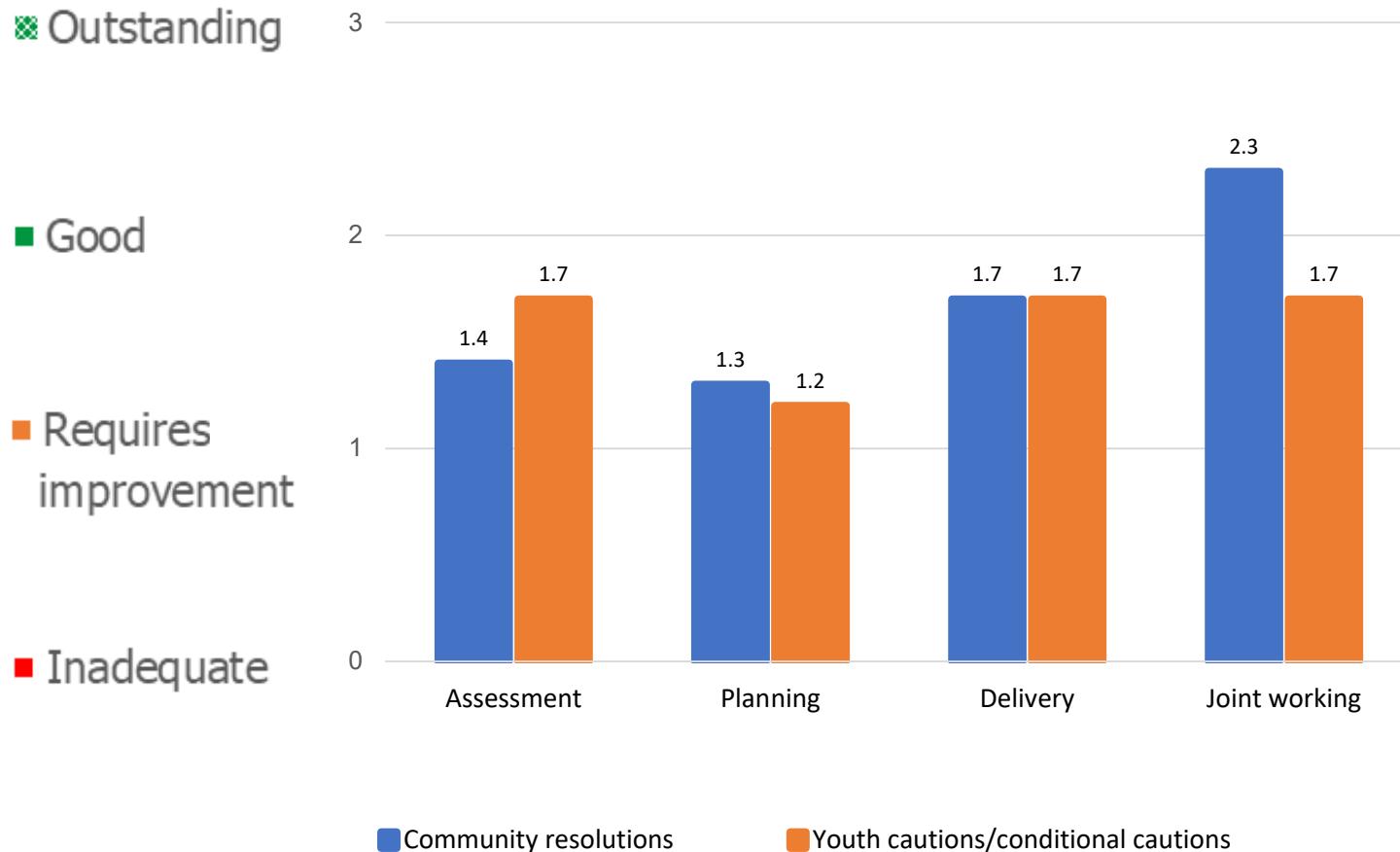




Key findings from our youth inspections:

Gap between community resolutions and statutory cautions has closed

**Average YOS ratings for out-of-court disposal standards
2020/2021 (based on 24 pre-July 2021 inspections).**



Key findings from our youth inspections: Out-of-court disposals

The Inspectorate introduced a new standard in July 2021 to assess the quality of out-of-court disposal policy and provision. Of the **eight** inspections published including this new standard, we rated:

- **two areas** as 'Good'
- **five areas** as 'Requires improvement'
- **one area** as 'Inadequate'.

Strong out-of-court disposal supervision	Weaker out-of-court disposal supervision
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertook thorough assessments of the child, involved the child (and their family/carers) and considered victim issues.• Assessments contribute to high-quality decision-making at the multi-agency out-of-court disposal panels and led to appropriate interventions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children not assessed.• Child and the family/carers were not involved.• Key information of known risks of harm and vulnerabilities were not made available to the panel.



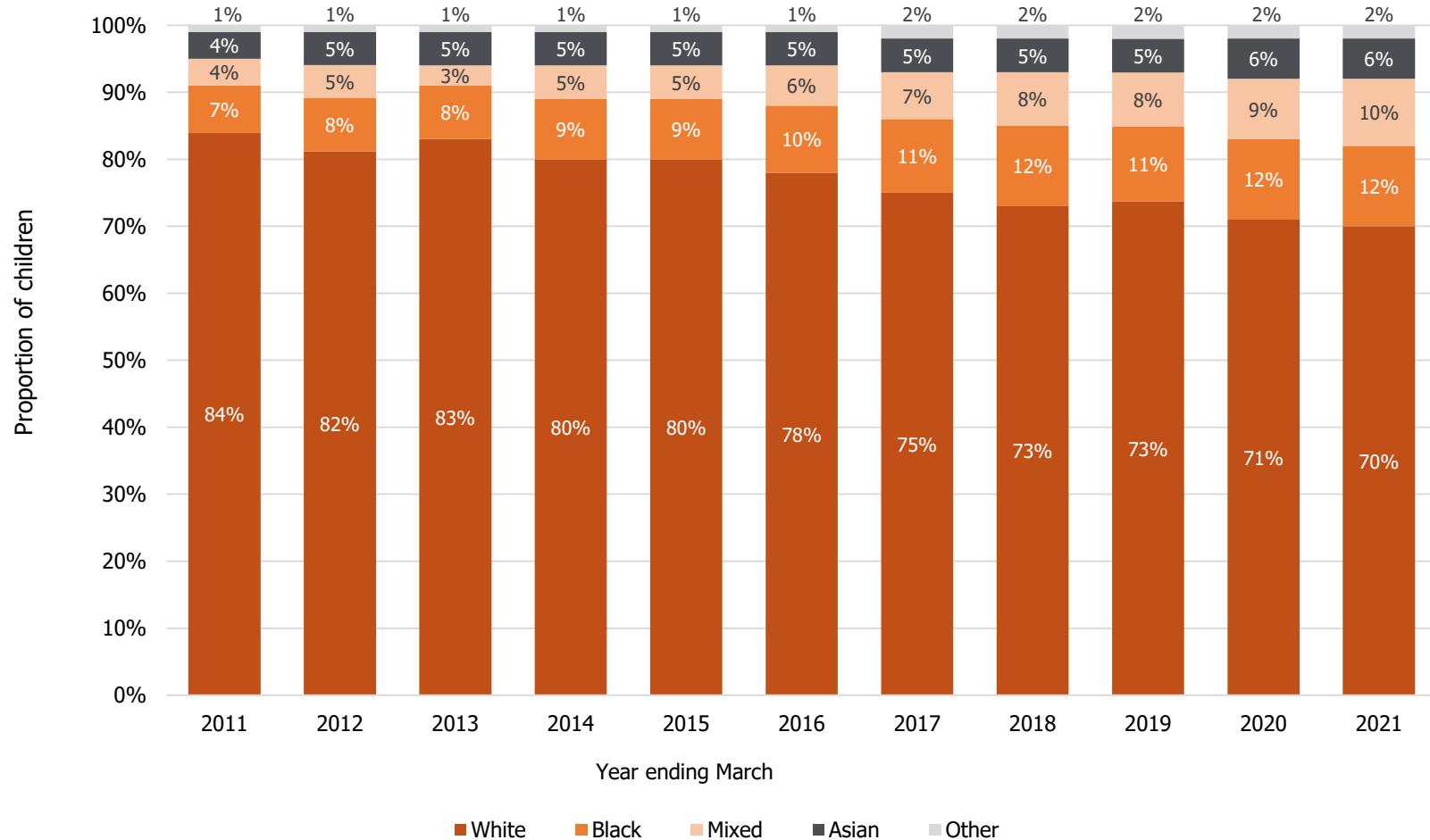
Quality of work with specific groups of children: Children looked after by the local authority

Of the cases we inspected over the past year:

- **25 per cent** of the children subject to a court order had been placed in the care of the local authority at some point during their sentence (this ranged from zero to 67 per cent).
- For children given out-of-court disposals, the proportion is lower, at **13 per cent** (this ranged from zero to 36 per cent).
This is a similar proportion to that found in previous years.
- Overall we found **little difference** in the quality of casework between looked after children and others.
- Work to support desistance and the child's safety was satisfactory in around **four fifths** of cases we inspected before July 2021.
- Management of risk of harm was **poorer**.



Quality of work with specific groups of children: Black and mixed heritage children

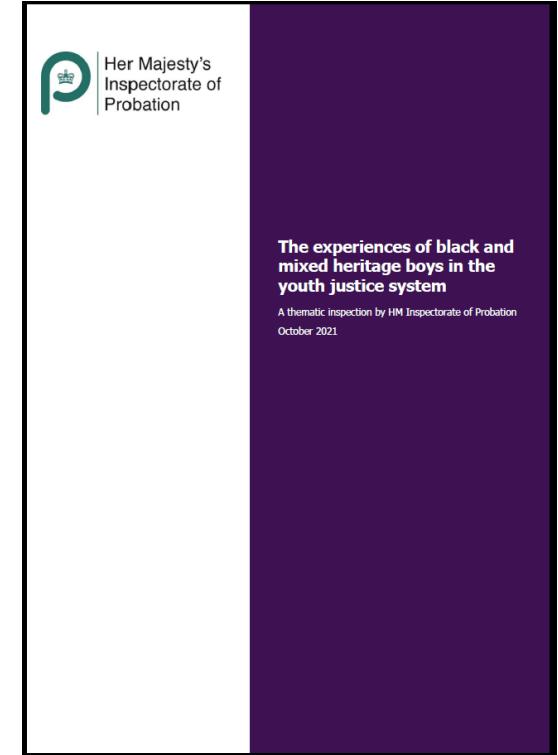




Quality of work with specific groups of children:

Thematic inspection of the experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system

- Found that the majority of black and mixed heritage boys in the YJS had experienced **multiple adverse childhood** experiences and had a high level of needs.
- Worked with User Voice, who spoke to 38 boys across the nine inspection areas. They spoke at length about the **challenges they faced growing up**, their peer associations (due to locality and shared experience) and being subject to stop and search and racial profiling.
- Almost all the boys described a positive relationship with their YOS worker, whatever their workers ethnicity. However, not always clear about the role of service, the support they could offer and **felt they weren't challenged by YOS about causes of offending**.
- Overall, **less than half** of the cases we inspected were **sufficient in terms of casework**.





Quality of work with specific groups of children: Ethnicity on inspection caseloads in 2020/2021

Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	%
Yes	71%
No	29%
Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	%
Yes	70%
No	30%
Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	%
Yes	86%
No	14%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	%
Yes	76%
No, and should have done	20%
Reviewing of the child's strengths or protective factors was not required	4%



Quality of work with specific groups of children:

Recommendations to address disproportionality and ensure the needs of black, Asian and ethnic minority children are met



have in place a recruitment process that **proactively seeks to encourage a diverse team**, that reflects the local population.



have processes in place to **support and maintain staff from diverse backgrounds** to ensure their needs are met and progression opportunities are available.



have training packages available to **equip staff in identifying and understanding diversity needs**; staff need to be confident and capable of having discussions with children and families about ethnicity, heritage etc. and use this to understand and analyse their experiences.



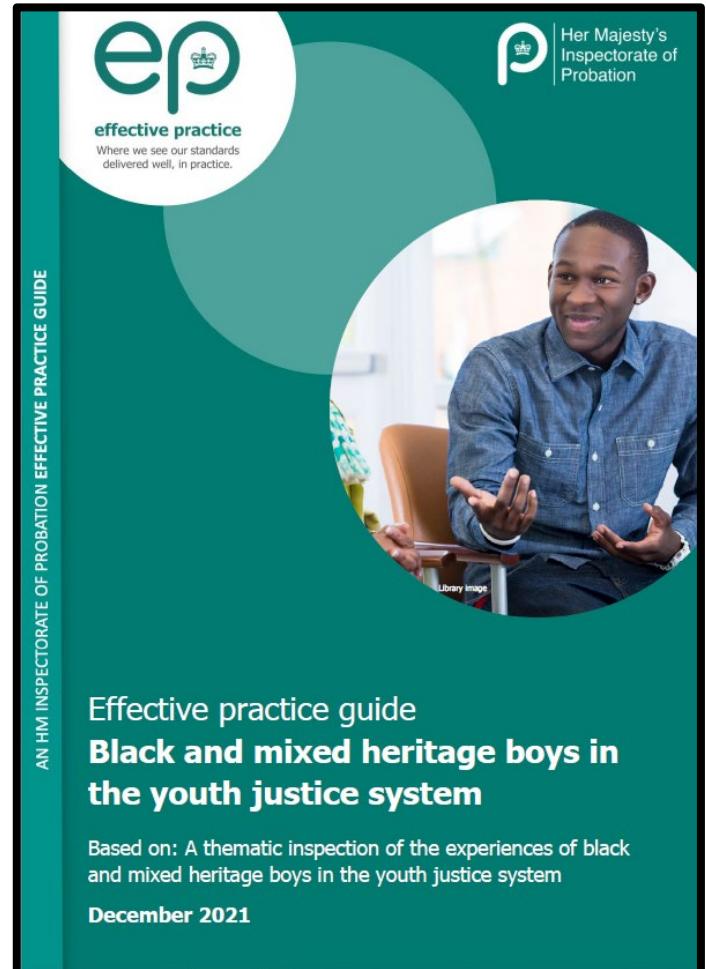
consistently and regularly **use tools to understand the profile of children and families accessing their service**. Data analysis needs to identify individual ethnicities and recognising disproportionality at micro level.



be proactive in interrogating data where disproportionality has been identified to understand why there is overrepresentation. Services need to work with children and families to understand experiences and give context to the data.

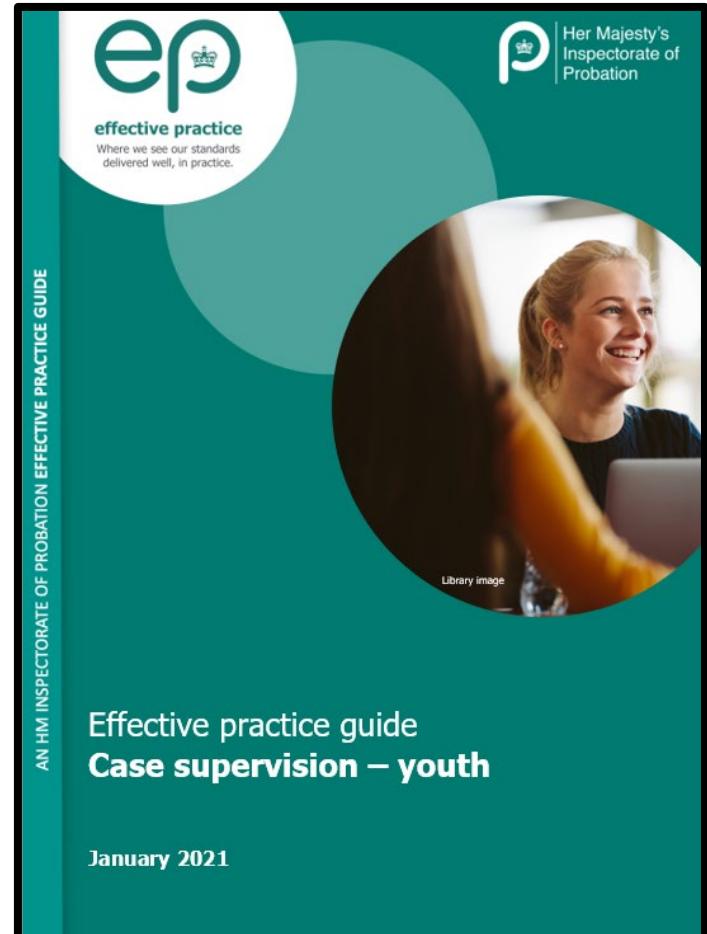
- We explore effective work in this area through our learning from black and mixed heritage boys and examples from frontline workers.
- We identified takeaways in areas including:
 - **Leadership** – a coordinated leadership and a clear strategy to address disproportionality in the work of the YOS and partner agencies is required.
 - **Management, assessing and planning.**
 - **Support and intervention** – services should provide specialist provisions for black and mixed heritage boys, via in-house delivery or commissioning from appropriate organisations.

Effective practice guidance: Black and mixed heritage boys



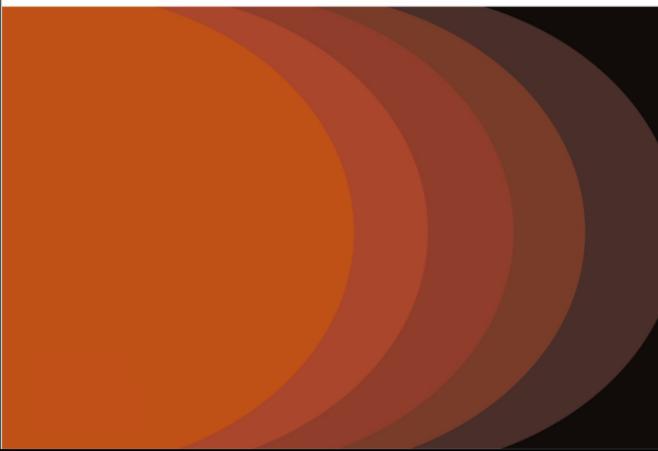
Effective practice guidance: Case supervision

- Provides an overview of case supervision in context, what children tell us about their experience of youth justice practice, the aim of the youth justice system and legislative framework.
- Explores effective practice through case summaries, accompanied by inspector's comments take-away learning in each area.
- Uses ASPIRE model to examine:
 - **desistance**
 - **keeping the child safe**
 - **keeping other people safe.**





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inspections of youth offending services



Read the full report and access other resources mentioned on our website:

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