



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

New Youth Justice Inspection Framework (November 2024)

Frequently asked questions

What are the key features of the new programme?

- The introduction of the victims' standard.
- Putting work with children and victims at the forefront of our inspections.
- Inspecting all YJSs against the same core domain two and victim standards.
- Having a single domain two standard which includes statutory, out-of-court disposals, resettlement, and bail and remand.
- Introduction of review of Appropriate Adult provision.
- Emphasis upon achieving positive change and keeping children and communities safe.

Why is the programme changing?

The current programme has been running since 2018. The youth justice landscape has changed significantly during this time and, upon completion of inspections of all youth justice services in England and Wales, we recognised the need to refresh, revise, and fully update all aspects of the programme to ensure it is fit for purpose moving forward. We also wanted to ensure the framework is up to date, utilising a current, evidence-led research base.

How often will we be inspected?

The new framework is designed to enable us to:

- be much more agile in our inspections, targeting our inspection activity when and where it is most needed
- be proportionate
- deliver a rolling inspection programme.

This is different to the current programme which has a start and a finish date between which all YJSs will have had an inspection. We want to ensure we move away from long gaps between inspections and have the ongoing promise of an inspection, even if you have already been inspected. We intend that everyone will have at least one type of inspection every 4 – 4 ½ years, but this may be more frequent and may mean you experience both types of inspections (see inspection types below) at different points.

How will you decide when we will be inspected and how frequently will inspections occur?

We take a risk and random approach to selecting services for inspections, informed by a variety of information. This includes information from the YJB (in line with our published MOU), and information from other inspectorates alongside other intelligence and information. We also want to ensure we regularly inspect areas that are considered to be high performing in order to promote effective practice, and take this into consideration when deciding where to go and when.

How long will we get between the announcement and the inspection?

Following feedback from the sector, we are changing our announcement day to a Wednesday. Announcements will normally happen three-and-a-half-weeks before the fieldwork (for both types of inspection). There may be some exceptions to this, such as around Christmas or Bank Holidays, when we take into consideration non-working days and may announce slightly earlier.

What standards are there in the new framework?

Our standards are split into two domains and a victims' standard. They are structured separately to allow us to judge and rate specific areas of work, but we recognise that the domains do not operate in isolation. Domain one covers organisational arrangements, with standards for governance and leadership, staffing, and partnerships and services. Domain two covers the quality of the YJS's work with children, with standards for assessing, planning, and the delivery of work with children. The victims' standard is a distinct standard.

Is there more than one type of inspection?

Yes. We want to ensure that the quality of YJS work delivered to children and victims is prioritised in our inspection activity and we want to ensure our resources are effectively targeted in driving high-quality services for children and victims. We have therefore developed two types of inspection:

- **Inspection of Youth Justice Work with Children and Victims:** A one-week inspection, where we inspect work with children and victims through our domain two standards and the victims' standard.
- **Inspection of Youth Justice Services:** A planned two-week inspection where we inspect the organisational arrangements and activity through our domain one standards alongside domain two standards and the victims' standard.

A YJS could receive either type of inspection. Our manual gives detail about what the different types of inspection entail.

Is it true we could get a 'reactive' inspection of youth justice services (IYJS) after we have had an inspection of youth justice work with children and victims? (IYJWCV)

Yes. If we are either concerned by our findings or we have seen significant effective practice through the IYJWCV, we may choose to find out more about this through inspecting against the domain one standards and returning for a second week. We want to understand more about how governance and leadership, staffing, and partnerships and services have contributed to what we have seen in work with children and victims. This second week will involve focus groups/ meetings with staff and managers, partnership managers, the management board, the Board Chair, and the YJS Head Of Service. We will undertake a

small number of these reactive inspections. In making our decisions about a reactive IYJS we follow three principles: impact, fairness, and flexibility.

How will we be informed if you decide to have a 'reactive' inspection of youth justice services (IYS) after our inspection of youth justice work with children and victims (IYJWCV). How soon will a 'reactive' IYS happen, and will we have to have a new case sample?

A YJS will be informed of our decision to return, in writing, following our ratification meeting (normally held the Wednesday of the week following the IYJWCV fieldwork). We will look to return to the YJS about four – six weeks after our initial fieldwork, to inspect the work against the domain one standards. We will not inspect a fresh sample of work.

How will you inspect work with children?

All work with children will be inspected under the domain two standards. The single sample will include any children subject to bail or remand, out-of-court disposals, community sentences or resettlement. We will select cases from those different groups, representing the proportions in the workload of the YJS.

How will you inspect work with victims?

The introduction of a victims' standard sits outside of domains one and two, and as such is a 'standalone' standard. The standard consists of two key questions:

- Question V1.1 looks at the sufficiency of frontline delivery to individual victims, with inspectors examining victim case records and undertaking case interviews with staff.
- Question V1.2 looks at the organisational arrangements and activity for work with victims, with inspectors using qualitative evidence to make judgements.

How will you understand our local arrangements for delivering out-of-court disposals and victim work?

We will hold a meeting the week before fieldwork to discuss local arrangements for delivering out-of-court disposals, victim work, and child, parents, or carers participation.

Do you wish to speak with children, parents, or carers and how will you ensure they see inspection feedback in a format that they can understand?

We are increasing our focus and opportunities to speak with children, parents, or carers who are or have recently been working with the YJS and value their views and feedback on the quality of service they are receiving. We have developed an animation to show to children, parents, and carers to help them understand who we are and what we do. During fieldwork we will offer opportunities for children, parents, or carers to speak with us. We are also developing child-friendly reports to go alongside the inspection report, which services can share with children, to explain the findings of the inspection.

What are multi-agency case discussions?

We have introduced two multi-agency case discussions (MACD's) into both types of inspection. We will schedule two meetings and identify two cases to be discussed (one at each meeting) identified in the finalised case sample. These provide an opportunity to illustrate the quality of multi-agency/partnership work within the YJS. We ask the YJS partnership to review these cases before inspection fieldwork starts, using a template provided. Reviewing activity should be done collaboratively, including the case manager and

any partnership workers involved with each child. All relevant staff across the partnership should attend the multi-agency case discussions. During the discussion, the inspector will guide the conversation to explore how the YJS and partners have worked with the child to achieve positive change and keep the child and the community safe.

Will there still be decision rules and guidance impacting upon ratings for organisational arrangements?

Yes, in inspection of youth justice services we inspect and rate the service against all of the standards including all domain one standards. We recognise there are significant links to what we see in the delivery of work with children, governance and leadership, and partnerships and services. Therefore, for those standards, decision rules and guidance will be applied. Full details are in our published Rules and Guidance.

How will you make sure our partnerships and the management board are held accountable in the IYJWCV inspections, if you are not looking at their work?

We see high-quality delivery as a product of effective governance and leadership, the right staffing arrangements, and strong partnerships and services. Inspection evidence demonstrates that only in exceptional cases do we see high-quality service delivery in spite of poor-quality organisational arrangements and activity.

Therefore, in IYJWCV we look at the quality of leadership and governance, staffing and partnerships and services through the lens of the work delivered to children and victims. We will be able to comment, feedback and make recommendations in relation to the quality of organisational and partnership arrangements in IYJWCV.

Additionally, we have introduced multi-agency case discussions for both types of inspection to ensure there is a clear focus upon the quality of partnership work, and in both types of inspection the fieldwork starts with a presentation from the Board Chair, again highlighting the accountability of the board and the partnership from the outset.

You are no longer looking at diversity separately. How will you ensure that services are delivering on their duties in terms of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and how will you highlight effective practice in this area?

We look for evidence of appropriate activity on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) across all of our standards. For domain one we look at data collection and analysis and we expect services to explain any disproportionality and be taking appropriate action to address it.

We have strengthened our approach to EDI by ensuring it runs through everything that we do and ensuring that our standards require EDI considerations to be actively addressed across everything that a YJS does.

We will assess the quality of the YJS's work in terms of EDI and this will influence the judgements that we reach on all of our standards. We will continue to report on EDI in a separate section in our reports.

How will we be rated?

The overall rating for each YJS is derived from the ratings for the domain two and victims' standards, irrespective of the type of inspection. In IYJS inspections only, domain one standards are rated independently, and do not contribute to the overall rating for the service. The reason for this approach is to be fair to YJS, irrespective of the type of

inspection they receive, and to ensure that the overall rating is driven by the quality of work being delivered to children and victims.

Straightforward scoring rules are used to generate the overall YJS rating. Each of the four core standards is scored on a scale of 0 to 3, in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; and 'Outstanding' = 3.

Adding the scores for the core standards produces a total score ranging from 0 to 12, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows:

- 0–2 = Inadequate
- 3–6 = Requires improvement
- 7–10 = Good
- 11–12 = Outstanding

When will we get our report?

For both types of inspection you will receive a rating outcome, normally by the end of the second week following fieldwork. Following this, a draft report should be sent on the Monday morning four weeks after the end of the inspection fieldwork, for a factual accuracy check.

For IYJWCV inspections, the report will usually be published 10 weeks after the inspection fieldwork (12 weeks in Wales). The timescales for IYJS inspections are 11 and 13 weeks respectively. Changes to the anticipated publication date may be made in advance.

You are including the delivery of AA services for the first time, but this information is not held on case files. How will you inspect that?

We recognise that we cannot see evidence through case files of the delivery of appropriate adult services. Instead, we will look at it through our organisational arrangements and explore whether there are effective arrangements for the provision of appropriate adults.

We will check whether appropriate adults are available for all children who need them on a 24/7 basis, that appropriate adults are effectively trained and that children are not held in detention longer than necessary because of the lack of an appropriate adult. We will expect effective arrangements for information exchange between the appropriate adult and the YJS and we will look for evidence of arrangements being monitored, evaluated, and reviewed on a regular basis (at least once a year) by the YJS to ensure appropriate delivery of the service. We will find this evidence through the appropriate adult policy, commissioning, and contract arrangements where the service is contracted out, appropriate adult training records, staff feedback and feedback from children.