



An inspection of youth offending services in

Barking and Dagenham

HM Inspectorate of Probation

DECEMBER 2018

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Yvonne McGuckian, supported by a team of inspectors, as well as staff from our operations and research teams. HMI Probation was joined by colleague inspectors from police, health, social care and education. The Head of Youth Offending Team Inspections, responsible for this inspection programme, is Alan MacDonald. We would like to thank all those who helped plan and took part in the inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

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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This publication is available for download at:

www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation

Published by:

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation
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Foreword

This is the first report of our joint youth offending service (YOS) inspections, where during the second fieldwork week, we were joined by inspectors from the partner inspectorates to assess the effectiveness of the partnership arrangements.

We have given Barking and Dagenham YOS an overall rating of 'Requires improvement'. This inspection found the service and its partners have some clear strengths, and its staff, leaders and Management Board were committed to following an established plan of improvement. Nonetheless, Barking and Dagenham YOS must improve its delivery of effective services to children and young people who find it difficult to stop offending, are often vulnerable and pose a risk to the public.

The work of the YOS in managing children and young people who become involved in gangs and who have been exploited and trafficked into criminal activity is often complex. We were struck by the problems faced when trying to manage children involved in 'county lines' at a local level. This work was hampered by little oversight, coordination or support at a national level.

We found good strategic and management links with children's social care and education providers, but joint work to keep children safe was not sufficiently integrated, and was hindered by a lack of understanding of the distinct roles of the YOS and social workers in responding to children and young people who have experienced trauma. As we found in our report *The Work of Youth Offending Teams to Protect the Public*,¹ understanding the effects of trauma and providing a tailored response is critical to effective offending behaviour work.

The YOS has struggled to maintain a stable and experienced staff team, and a lot of management time has been focused on recruitment and induction. Much of the YOS's management oversight has been reactive. However, staff skills and knowledge are developing and the management team has developed a positive culture, where there is a strong belief in children and young people's capacity to change and achieve good outcomes.

Our inspection found that too many children and young people known to the service were not in suitable education. There is strong evidence to show that education is a key factor in desistance from offending; the YOS recognises this, as it has a clear focus on desistance.

The recommendations in this report have been designed to assist Barking and Dagenham YOS to build on its strengths and focus on areas for improvement.



Dame Glenys Stacey
Chief Inspector of Probation

¹ HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2017). *The Work of Youth Offending Teams to Protect the Public*.

Overall findings

Overall youth offending work in Barking and Dagenham is rated as: **Requires improvement**. This rating has been determined by inspecting the youth offending services in three domains of their work. The findings in those domains are described below.



Organisational delivery

Our key findings about organisational delivery were as follows:

- Governance and leadership of the YOS is strong. Oversight arrangements effectively align YOS priorities to those of the wider partnership.
- The Management Board needs a more accurate and nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to offending to best target its resources.
- Health provision is outstanding and work with the police effective.
- Some partnership work needs to improve, specifically children's access to statutory education and integrated work with children's social care. These areas are critical to desistance and safeguarding.
- Case management has been affected by staffing difficulties, which although appropriately managed, have been difficult to resolve. We found wide variations in the standard of work.
- Board members use their position on the Board to provide accessible services to children and young people in contact with the YOS. Members appropriately challenge and hold the YOS manager to account.
- The YOS manager provides a good link to the Management Board and has been instrumental in developing the Board's understanding of work to reduce offending, manage risk of harm and reduce vulnerability.



Court disposals

Our key findings about court disposals were as follows:

- Initial assessments of desistance are better than those of safeguarding and risk of harm to others. Assessments of risk and vulnerability to gang involvement, criminal exploitation and trafficking need to improve.
- Planning to keep children safe is inadequate. A lack of clarity about the roles of YOS case managers and those working in children's social care leaves some children exposed to risk.
- Work to support desistance and keep children safe needs to improve. Work to reduce risks to others is better.

- Although case managers are aware of changes in the circumstances of children and young people and adapt approaches accordingly, this is often not reflected in planning.



Out-of-court disposals

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

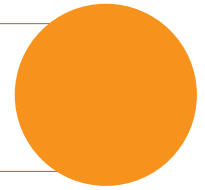
- Assessments of safeguarding and risk of harm to others do not pay enough attention to desistance.
- The use of a locally devised, clear and simple planning document has helped case managers to coordinate and focus action.
- Work to reduce offending and keep children safe is completed in most cases. Case managers and specialist workers have developed good relationships with children and young people.
- Joint work with the police is good and decision-making for out-of-court disposals is proportionate and timely.

Service: Barking and Dagenham Youth Offending Service

Fieldwork started: September 2018

Overall rating

Requires improvement



1. Organisational delivery

1.1	Governance and leadership	Good	
1.2	Staff	Requires improvement	
1.3	Partnerships and services	Requires improvement	
1.4	Information and facilities	Good	

2. Court disposals

2.1	Assessment	Requires improvement	
2.2	Planning	Inadequate	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement	
2.4	Reviewing	Requires improvement	

3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1	Assessment	Requires improvement	
3.2	Planning	Requires improvement	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement	
3.4	Joint working	Good	

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 Barking and Dagenham. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth offending services, and better protect the public.

Barking and Dagenham YOS should:

1. make sure that all children and young people who come into contact with the YOS receive their statutory entitlement to education and access to high quality education and training services that are matched to their needs and interests
2. produce effective plans to support desistance, keep children safe and manage risk of harm to others
3. consider the wishes and needs of victims to inform individual case management.

The Director of Children's Services should:

4. make sure that thresholds for access to services for children and families are understood and applied by children's social care.

The Youth Justice Board should:

5. assist the YOS and its partners to identify and respond to the issue of 'county lines', and resolve the difficulties they face when applying a local approach to a national problem.

Introduction

Youth Offending Services (YOSs) supervise 10–18-year-olds 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. HMI Probation inspects both these aspects of youth offending services.

YOSs are statutory partnerships, and they are multi-disciplinary, to deal with the needs of the whole child. They are required to have staff from local authority social care and education, the police, the National Probation Service and local health services.² Most YOSs are based within local authorities; however, this can vary.

YOS 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 (YJB) provides some funding to YOSs. It also monitors their performance and issues guidance to them about how things are to be done.

Background

Barking and Dagenham YOS is in the Children's Services and Support department of the local authority, having moved from the Community Safety Partnership at the end of 2017. Barking and Dagenham is one of the fastest changing and growing communities in Britain. The population in 2017 was estimated to be 210,711.³ Barking and Dagenham has the 11th highest Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score in England.⁴ An increasingly diverse borough, 40 per cent of the 10-17 population are from minority ethnic backgrounds compared to 60 per cent in Barking and Dagenham overall.⁵

The YOS's delivery model is based on relationships, is focused on desistance and has a trauma-informed approach. In the last six months, staff have received training in these areas, and staff in schools and children's social care are also adopting desistance as part of their practice framework. The YOS plays a key role in supporting the partnership in addressing the gaps in skills and knowledge required to deal with gangs and serious youth violence.

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 provide assurance on the

² The *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* set out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

³ *UK Population estimates, mid-2017*, Office for National Statistics, (June 2018).

⁴ *Table 6: The 20 local authority districts with the highest proportions of children in income deprivation: The English Indices of Deprivation*, Department for Communities and Local Government (2015).

⁵ Calculation using *Census (2011)*, Office for National Statistics, (December 2012) against *UK Population estimates, mid-2017*, Office for National Statistics, (June 2018).

effectiveness of work with adults and children who have offended to implement orders of the court, reduce reoffending, protect the public and safeguard the vulnerable. We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice, and use our data and information to encourage good quality services. We are independent of government, and speak independently.

HM Inspectorate of Probation standards

The standards against which we inspect 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 people who have offended.⁶

⁶ HMI Probation. (March 2018). *Standards for inspecting probation services*
<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

Key facts

**First-time entrant rate⁷
per 100,000**

554

Barking and
Dagenham YOS

301

Average for
England and Wales

Reoffending rates⁸

47.3%

Barking and
Dagenham YOS

41.9%

Average for
England and Wales

Population information



Total population Barking and Dagenham⁹ 210,711

Total youth population⁹ 23,635

Total black and minority ethnic
youth population¹⁰ 9,535

Caseload information¹¹

Age	10-14	15-17
Barking and Dagenham	30%	70%
National average	24%	76%
Race/ethnicity	White	Black and minority ethnic
Barking and Dagenham	57%	42%
National average	73%	24%
Gender	Male	Female
Barking and Dagenham	87%	13%
National average	83%	17%



⁷ First-time entrants, October 2016 to September 2017, Youth Justice Board (YJB).

⁸ Proven reoffending statistics, October 2015 to September 2016, Ministry of Justice, (July 2018).

⁹ UK Population estimates for: Mid 2017, Office for National Statistics (June 2018).

¹⁰ Census (2011), Office for National Statistics (December 2012).

¹¹ Youth Justice annual statistics: 2016 to 2017, YJB, (January 2018).

1. Organisational delivery



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

The governance and leadership of the YOS is effective in most areas. Oversight arrangements effectively align the YOS priorities to those of the wider partnership including the Community Safety Partnership. In January 2018, the YOS was brought into the Children's Services Directorate, from the Community Safety Partnership, to best meet the needs of children and young people.

The current YOS plan recognises the need for more detailed and nuanced data analysis, to fully understand the needs of a changing and increasingly complex and diverse cohort. In response, the partnership has developed a new analysis template, which is about to be implemented.

The Board is not yet sufficiently aware of all the factors that contribute to their youth offending. Further research is needed to gain an understanding of all issues that affect offending behaviour and its consequences. For instance, Barking and Dagenham has the highest national rates of reported domestic violence. The local authority is concerned that more incidents go unreported and that this type of violence has become normalised, which is detrimental to children and young people who witness or live with it.

Most partners are represented at board level and the Board is chaired appropriately. The Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) has chosen not to attend the Board, but there are effective links at management and operational levels. Board members use their position to provide accessible services to children and young people in contact with the YOS.


Members appropriately challenge and hold the YOS manager to account. For example, the National Probation Service (NPS) identified a high breach rate among 18-25-year-olds. The YOS has addressed the problem and children and young people now receive better support when they transition to adult probation services, while the NPS increases its contribution to the YOS.

The direction and strategy for the YOS is evidence-based and led by its best available intelligence. The Board actively seeks to provide a service that meets the needs of children and young people, and we found some examples of innovation.

Providing a quality service is a key aim for the Board, YOS managers and their staff. The Board is ambitious and committed to children and young people, but the absence of joint performance information limits partners' shared understanding of emerging themes, strengths and risks.

In the past year, the Board has had three Chairs. The previous Board Chair demonstrated a good understanding of the specific work of the YOS and the necessary interplay with other services, building on the mature relationships evident

between Board members, and promoting innovation. The new Chair's role, as Head of Children's Services, should assist with the alignment between the YOS and wider children's services.

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

The effectiveness of service delivery has been undermined by significant staffing difficulties. Supported by the Board, the YOS manager has undertaken a staffing review, to improve previous poor performance. This inspection found that the quality of work in some areas had improved, but recruiting staff of a sufficient calibre, had taken longer than anticipated. As a result, staff had high caseloads and the Head of Service and remaining operational manager had much wider roles than we would normally see.

The YOS management team has taken a pragmatic approach and focused the work of the team appropriately, but this sometimes means that the quality of work is not as good as it needs to be. Day-to-day support and advice for case managers is readily available and of a good standard. Formal staff supervision has been inconsistent, because competing demands are placed on the operational manager.

Appropriate recruitment and retention strategies are in place and every effort is made to induct staff quickly. While the YOS is expected to be fully staffed shortly after the inspection, many of the staff group are new to YOS work and still developing their knowledge and specialist skills, such as their ability to identify and manage risk of harm and deliver interventions. The YOS has developed a comprehensive and suitable training programme. Knowledge of educational entitlement remains limited, and child protection thresholds and social workers' responsibilities are not fully understood. Where possible, complex cases are allocated to more experienced case managers, but this is not always achieved.

Plans are in place to provide regular staff supervision, training and development, but supervision has not been offered routinely due to a shortage of operational managers. Staff consider the quality assurance methods used to be helpful, but they do not replace regular supervision. Effective practice sessions, run by the Head of Service, have been well received by the staff team.

Learning and development opportunities are available and appropriately targeted. However, the impact and implementation of training is not always tracked due to inconsistent supervision and quality assurance processes. The YOS uses the expertise of specialist workers to improve staff's understanding of key areas of practice, including relationship building.

Children and young people receive good support from a range of specialist workers and case managers make appropriate referrals to them, which are acted on promptly. The skills and knowledge of workers from Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Subwize (the substance misuse service) are deployed effectively and flexibly to support young people's diverse needs and willingness to engage. Football and martial arts sessions, arranged and attended by CAMHS staff, are used in some cases to link up with young people who are initially reluctant to discuss mental health with the CAMHS service.

All the staff we spoke to were committed to their work and had a strong belief that the children and young people could desist from crime and achieve good outcomes. They had received training in trauma-informed practice, which was starting to change practice approaches. To their credit, managers and staff work tirelessly to minimise the impact of staffing difficulties on children and young people, and engagement remains very good.

1.3 Partnerships and services	Requires improvement
A comprehensive range of high-quality services is in place, enabling personalised and responsive provision for all children and young people.	

A wide range of services are available for children and young people, most of which are personalised and responsive. Pockets of the service provision were judged to be outstanding; but two issues have resulted in the rating of 'Requires improvement'.

Thresholds for children's access to statutory children's services are not consistently understood or applied. This means that the significant safeguarding needs of children and young people are not always identified or do not always receive an appropriate response. Given the serious nature of children's offending and associated vulnerability this is particularly important.

Too many children and young people do not receive the education they are entitled to. Evidence demonstrates that this is key to desistance, so this lack of provision has the potential to undermine other work to reduce offending. Children and young people experience unnecessary disruption in their attendance because case managers and key partners are often slow to plan and implement effective placements.

The YOS does not have a full range of education specialists within the team and as a result, too many young people do not receive effective support to meet their individual needs or interests. In almost all the cases we assessed, case managers did not have access to specialist support to help them plan children's education to support desistance. Some children who were registered at school, were not attending, which the YOS and partners are not addressing well enough.

A minority of young people attend appointments with a skilled and effective careers adviser which helps them to consider their options and make informed decisions about their next steps. A few young people have gained very useful vocational experience and qualifications through restorative justice workers, including the construction skills certification scheme (CSCS) card.

A large proportion of the children and young people have received effective mentoring from the Spark2life scheme, which has contributed to improving their self-control and decision-making by helping them focus on personal development and self-discipline.

Health services are outstanding. Partnership staff have a good understanding of the qualities, experiences and knowledge of children and young people, and work with them to tailor interventions. There are many examples of this work, including the use of sports activities to increase confidence and self-image, with the aim of changing the young person's perception that carrying a knife is a necessity.

Services provided by the police, including the gangs unit, are good, as is information-sharing. Targeted mentoring and exit strategies are in place to help those who want to leave gangs, including good support from the main housing provider.

Strategic and operational analysis is limited, and there is no offending profile. The partnership and case managers do not have a good enough understanding of the factors that contribute to offending in children and young people, such as how they learn from the consequences of their actions. The Board is partly aware of this and has provided additional resources to better understand a fluid and changing profile. Inspectors have identified that the narrow scope of the existing strategy, with its focus on serious crimes, means that children and young people can potentially be exposed to adults who commit 'lower-level' crimes without any obvious consequences. The Board needs to have a better understanding of the reality of children's lived experience and its implications for their profile of offending.

Work across the YOS partnership to address 'county lines' issues is developing and there are examples of appropriate responses to issues when they arise. With regards to nationwide issues, the YOS has done everything within its control to identify children who are being criminally exploited, but it does not have the resources or reach into every police force and local authority where children and young people are found. Very little guidance or support is available from the Youth Justice Board (YJB).


The commissioning needs of children who are looked after, including children placed out of their local area, are well considered. The YOS is central to the recruitment of foster carers, helping young people who offend to remain in their local community. Parenting programmes are well established and have a proven record of working with parents successfully.

The range of programmes available within the YOS to engage young people and families is impressive, responsive to individual need, and diverse as well as inclusive.

Recent initiatives, including the amalgamation of early help services and the youth at risk matrix team, help with the early identification of children and young people at risk of gang involvement. The exploitation pilot is an innovative project, which strengthens joint work on the management of complex cases. The impact of these initiatives has yet to be fully evaluated.

The YOS's analysis of diversity and disproportionality is very good. It draws on population forecasting undertaken by the local authority and is shaping service delivery. However, the quality and effectiveness of services and interventions are not evaluated sufficiently and there is no systematic approach to monitoring the effectiveness of all services.

Arrangements with the NPS and CRC for transferring children and young people are well established and effective.

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

Staff understand the policies and procedures that apply to their work. They have been reviewed recently and written in a way that promotes effective practice. The risk management policy provides staff with a good mix of practical and evidence-based direction.

All staff are aware of the referral pathways that provide access to services from partner agencies, but some staff are less confident about the thresholds applied by children's social care teams.

The YOS is based in the same, well located and accessible building as the children's social care team and the multi-agency safeguarding hub (Mash). Having its own secure entrance, children and young people are greeted by a helpful and friendly receptionist. Rooms used for interviews with children and young people are basic but adequate. In addition, staff often see children in community buildings, such as local libraries, community centres and family homes. These venues help manage risk of harm to the child or young person, but less consideration is given to staff's safety. This is an important issue, as staff often meet with children and young people who are known to carry weapons and who are under threat from others.

The YOS uses the IT system well, for example, all documents are attached to the child's or young person's case file. Support for new staff is readily available, as is a wide range of appropriate training. All case managers can access information held on the children's social care system 'Liquid Logic', enabling them to read key information.

The YOS management team has developed a positive, open learning culture, and staff find managers helpful and approachable. Although staff can speak to managers informally, there is a lack of formal supervision because there has only been one operational manager for the last six months.

Service improvement plans have been developed over the last three years in response to inspections, audits and performance information. Targets outlined in those plans are appropriate and progress is reviewed by the Board.

Case managers seek and take account of the views of children and young people, their parents and carers and others involved in individual cases. A youth participation group has been established and the YOS manager has well developed plans for how this group will be used to improve services. Children and young people have been involved in staff recruitment and have made some useful observations about candidates.

Summary

Strengths:

- The YOS and partner agencies have developed a culture of learning.
- The YOS manager and the Management Board understand where improvements are needed.
- Health care provision for children and young people is excellent.
- Managers are supportive and easily accessible to staff.

Areas for improvement:

- There is a lack of specialist education workers in the YOS.
- Too many children and young people do not have access to high quality statutory education entitlement.
- The roles and responsibilities of YOS case managers and social workers are not sufficiently understood. Thresholds for accessing children's social care services are unclear.
- The Board needs better and more nuanced data so it can fully understand the offending profile of children and young people.
- Strategies for recruiting and retaining staff should continue.

2. Court disposals



Work with children and young people 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	Requires improvement
Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	A solid orange circle, representing a 'Requires improvement' rating.

Case managers have access to a wide range of relevant and up-to-date information to inform assessments. Information from the police is very detailed and provided in good time. Case managers can view the records held on the children's social care system 'Liquid Logic'. The information provides a good basis for assessing the needs of children and young people.

Assessments of the help and support children need to desist from offending are very good, taking account of maturity levels, motivation to comply with the court order, individual strengths and protective factors. The views of parents and the child or young person are gathered and used to inform the assessment.


Risk of harm assessments lack analysis and case managers need to understand the full extent of the risk posed to others. Obvious risk issues, for example carrying a knife, are identified, but the underlying reasons are not. As a result, case managers are underestimating the potential for risk of harm. In a few cases, the child was classified as a low risk of harm, as they were not known to the gangs matrix or did not have an extensive history, despite there being indications of willingness to use violence, which is known to be a feature of gang members.

The cases we have seen show that the YOS is managing some very complex children and young people, who pose serious risk of harm to other people, but who often do not have many previous convictions. Almost half of the assessments were not completed quickly enough after the order started, which means in many cases risk management planning started too late.

Many children and young people are vulnerable because of their own actions. Case managers are identifying these factors, but their impact is being underestimated. In eight cases, the vulnerability levels had been set too low. We identified five cases where the classification should have been very high, but where the YOS's classification was lower.

In some cases, there was an overly narrow assessment of safety and wellbeing. Where children's social care staff had made an assessment, it became the prevailing view and the offending-related safeguarding issues, such as the safety of siblings, were not fully incorporated. In one example, the initial assessment of 'high' was based on information that the child was involved in 'county lines' activity and susceptible to criminal exploitation. While this was accurate, the child was unsafe because of significant drug debts. His home had been attacked while his siblings were present. The assessment of risks to his safety and wellbeing should have been higher.

Victims' wishes and experiences are not given sufficient priority, a critical omission given the significant violence used by some children and young people.

2.2 Planning	Inadequate
Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	


Planning to support desistance is based on assessment, is individually tailored and includes relevant interventions. Parents are routinely involved in planning, especially in relation to maintaining and building on the child's strengths. It involves the specialist services available in the YOS, including emotional and mental health services, the gangs unit and reparation activities. Desistance planning is well sequenced and recorded.

Planning to keep children and young people safe was inadequate. Only 48 per cent of cases had sufficient planning to address identified safety and wellbeing issues, some of which were significant and urgent.

Planning is often based solely on the action that the YOS can take and does not include or complement the plans of children's social care. While we have seen some good examples of joint work with social workers, too much work is undertaken in isolation, without a shared understanding of the full safety and wellbeing issues relevant to the child or young person. The YOS rarely plans for any risks to siblings, even when the risks are enduring and imminent. Joint work with children's social care workers is hindered by the social care team's lack of communication, despite case managers' often persistent efforts to obtain information.

Similarly, planning for the management of the risk of harm to others, does not include all agencies who need to be involved, such as the police. Too little consideration is given to the needs of actual and potential victims and we found sufficient contingency planning in just half of the cases. Planning to help and support victims was good enough in just 42 per cent of cases where it was needed. Specific safety issues were not managed, despite the availability of some good information.

The YOS faces substantial difficulties in undertaking safety planning for children who are suspected of being trafficked and exploited by serious organised crime gangs, commonly known as 'county lines'. Planning to keep these children safe was inadequate in many cases as it was based on action that could only be taken if the child was in the local area. The YOS is limited in the action it can take when the child is out of the area and needs to be protected by the police force or children's social care department in a different local authority area. The traditional area-based child protection system does not cope with the unique and complex difficulties when children are trafficked or exploited through 'county lines' activity. There is little support, advice or direction at a national level on coordinating work to protect and safeguard these children.

2.3 Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement
High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child or young person.	

Work undertaken with children and young people is mostly based on the development of a trusting relationship with the worker. This is one of the YOS's strengths. Case managers and partnership workers, spend time getting to know children and young people. They carefully consider where children are seen, because many of them are unwilling to visit some locations because of gang issues.

Children and young people access a wide range of interventions, including mentoring, one-to-one work with a psychologist, help with substance misuse and emotional and mental health problems. Housing providers work effectively with the YOS to relocate children and their families within the borough. We found an example of effective joint work in one case. An inspector commented:

"During one incident following release, Eddie had called his YOS officer from his care home to report that there was a group of young people outside his placement and that he did not feel safe. Children's social care and the YOS worked together to find another placement outside of the borough to keep him safe."

It is clear that, although staff are trying to deliver high quality services, the effectiveness of the work has sometimes been undermined by frequent changes in case managers, which disrupt work and relationships.

Some offending behaviour work is not targeted effectively, because offending-related risk and intent have been underestimated. In one case, a young person was suspected of being involved in 'county lines' activity. A referral was made to the children's social care team. The focus of the YOS's assessment was on homelessness, despite him telling the YOS staff member that he was living in a "client's house and selling drugs from her property". The offending behaviour sessions held do not address this type of offending or consider the risk he poses to the woman.

In only 55 per cent of the cases was there sufficient delivery of interventions designed to keep children safe. Again, this was often due to a lack of joint working or shared understanding of specific safeguarding issues.

Sufficient interventions to reduce the risk of harm to others were delivered in just over 60 per cent of cases and included some one-to-one work. Victim awareness sessions were offered in most cases.

Good support is provided to those who wanted to attend college or training, but there is not enough specialist support for case managers who are trying to work with schools. In the majority of cases, case managers produced comprehensive assessments, which identified children's and young people's individual education, training and employment needs. However, case managers do not do enough to use this information to help meet those needs. As a result, many young people do not receive a good enough level of support to help them improve their educational attainment and employment prospects. The proportion of young people who were not registered as receiving education or training or who were in employment was too high.

2.4 Reviewing	Requires improvement
Reviewing of progress is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	

Although reviews were undertaken, they do not always lead to the required changes in plans or work. Changes in the management of the child or young person as a result of a review, were made in just over half of the cases.

Reviews of the effectiveness of work to promote desistance focus on changes in circumstances, take motivation into account and include the parents' or carers' views.

In nine (of a possible twenty-six) cases, responses were not appropriate when there was a change to the child's safety and wellbeing needs. We found that issues were overlooked when the case manager changed and there was a lack of information-sharing by other agencies in cases where vulnerability had increased.

Despite providing good information at the start of orders, information from children's social care services and the police is not easy to obtain as the case progresses. When the initial assessment is carried out, case managers receive intelligence held on local police systems and the police national computer. However, police systems do not alert police officers to the fact that the child or young person is open to the YOS, other than if they have been arrested or interviewed for an offence. Not all safeguarding plans are shared with the police, limiting its response. Reviews led to required changes being made in only half of cases.

When indicators showed the risk of harm to others had changed, they were recognised and received a response in half of cases. Given the seriousness of the behaviour and offending, this was not sufficient.

An inspector made the following comment about a case:

"When the child assaulted two other boys, a review of his violence should have taken place; it was mentioned in his looked after children review, but this was information sharing rather than active management of his violence."

Summary

Strengths:

- Good relationships have developed between children and young people, case managers and other YOS case managers.
- Good support is provided to address a wide range of physical, emotional and mental health issues.
- There is a clear focus on work and interventions designed to support desistance from offending.
- A good range of offending behaviour interventions are delivered, including victim awareness and reparation programmes.

Area for improvement:

- Risk of harm to others and safety and wellbeing issues are sometimes underestimated.
- The distinct but complementary roles of social care workers and YOS case managers are not sufficiently understood.
- Reviews do not lead to required changes being made to the management of the case and information is not always shared with the police.
- Staff changes have led to disruptions in the delivery of case management.

3. Out-of-court disposals



Work with children and young people 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	Requires improvement
Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	

Most of the out-of-court disposal cases that we saw were less serious than cases of court disposals and tended to be less complex. Assessments give a good account of the child or young person's motivation and whether they have taken responsibility for their actions. Most were completed in good time and drew on the information held by other agencies. However, assessments were too variable and some lacked analysis. Structural barriers to offending, such as school exclusions and issues of diversity, family and social context are not paid sufficient attention, despite being important in desistance.

Assessments are often based solely on the account of the child or young person. In one case, we noted that the background information to the offence stated that the police were called to a group of youths fighting with knives. The child was stopped by police as a result and during his interview admitted that he had become involved in a fight and that he had found some cannabis on the floor. The assessment did not explore the possibility that the incident was gang – or drug – related.

Risk of harm to others was a factor in two-thirds of the cases we assessed. Too few assessments used all the available information, and were based exclusively on the incident that brought the child to the police's attention, without analysing other risky or problematic behaviour. This demonstrates a limited understanding of the actual and potential risk to others.

The needs or wishes of victims are assessed but not given a sufficient profile in assessments. This is the case even where the victims have had ongoing day-to-day contact with the child, typically parents, siblings and peers.

3.2 Planning	Requires improvement
Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	


The YOS has developed its own planning record, which clearly outlines the interventions to be delivered. Planning to support the child's desistance is proportionate to the offence and careful thought is given to sequencing, to make sure work can be done within appropriate timescales. Planning was targeted to the child's level of maturity and understanding, and considered the views of the child or

young person and their parents or carers in most of cases. Planning for desistance is good.

Planning to keep the child safe needs to improve and was good enough in just over 60 per cent of cases. To improve, planning needs to be better coordinated to incorporate other agencies' plans – all but one child and young person had plans from another agency. Contingency arrangements are not always in place.

Planning for the management and reduction of risk of harm to others is good. It addresses risk of harm factors and involves other agencies when necessary. Direct action to protect actual and potential victims was incorporated in around half of the plans.

The needs and wishes of victims were included in planning in just over half of the relevant cases. The police provide good information to the victim worker, who makes persistent attempts to contact them. Their known needs and wishes are not taken into account often enough, including in cases where the child and young person are in contact with the victim at school or at home. Restorative justice opportunities are offered where possible and indirect victim awareness work is delivered by the YOS victim worker.

3.3 Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement
High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child or young person.	

Good quality interventions to support desistance and keep children safe consist of one-to-one and group sessions. They were delivered in nearly every case. The YOS offers a range of group interventions to children and young people and parents focusing on emotional health and wellbeing, substance misuse, parenting, identifying gang involvement and weapons awareness. Interventions are appropriately targeted and delivered at a suitable pace. Case managers develop good relationships with children and young people, which form the basis of effective work.


Children undertake sessions to raise their awareness of the consequences of offending for themselves and their community. Case managers know the children and young people well and believe that they can change their behaviour and stop offending. An inspector wrote:

“The case manager built a positive and meaningful relationship with the young person to support desistance. This was developed through the workers’ understanding of the difficulties he was facing including bereavement, but also supporting his motivation to achieve a positive future for himself.”

In every case, excellent work was undertaken to help children comply with voluntary interventions, which included understanding their motivation and delivering a flexible and responsive service to meet individual needs. Children are seen at a range of local venues and at home.

Despite this, work to reduce and manage risk of harm to others needs to improve. Adequate work to meet the specific needs of actual and potential victims had been undertaken in only half of cases. Interventions to reduce the risk of harm to others

are not delivered consistently and some children do not undertake any targeted work at all in this area. Some children are at risk of joining gangs, so this work is critical.

3.4 Joint working	Good
Joint working with the police supports the delivery of high-quality, personalised and coordinated services.	

Joint working between the police and the YOS is good, based on open communication and a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. The YOS has recently established an out-of-court disposal panel, where individual cases are discussed and decisions made. This process formalises the previous decision-making process, which was informal, but nonetheless effective. YOS managers and police are based in the same office and have prompt and detailed discussions about referrals as they come in. Decisions on the type of out-of-court disposal are made jointly following screenings. Cases are then allocated and a fuller assessment undertaken.

A new out-of-court disposal panel has been developed in response to the HMI Probation thematic *Out-of-court disposal work in youth offending teams*.¹² The range of sanctions available to the panel are community resolution (locally referred to as triage), caution, conditional caution or charge, but there is no option for no further action.

Cases referred by the community police to the YOS, for an out-of-court disposal are first reviewed by a police evidence review officer (ERO). This process unnecessarily delays the YOS's opportunity to work with a child or young person when the incident is fresh in their mind, and motivation at its strongest. The new panel should provide a clear record of the rationale behind decision-making, which is sometimes difficult to track.

There is no specific strategy to reduce the number of children in care being criminalised. The YOS often meets children and young people placed in children's homes by other local authorities. If these children and young people are offered an out-of-court disposal, there is little contact with the home social worker, and interventions are not incorporated into care planning.

¹² HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2018). *Out-of-Court disposal work in youth offending teams*.

Summary

Strengths:

- Good joint decision-making is undertaken by the YOS and police.
- Delivery of a good range of interventions to prevent further offending is consistent.
- The number of children and young people entering the criminal justice system has been reduced over the last year.
- Attention is paid to engaging children and young people and securing compliance with voluntary interventions.
- A clear planning process has resulted in focused and targeted objectives.

Areas for improvement:

- Case managers need to pay more attention to the expressed wishes of victims, and draw up plans to protect them.
- Interventions to reduce the risk of harm to others should be delivered in all cases where they are needed.
- The specific needs of children who are looked after should be considered.

Annex 1 – Methodology

The inspection methodology is summarised below, linked to the three domains within our standards framework. Our focus was on obtaining evidence against the standards, key questions and prompts within the framework.

Domain one: organisational delivery

The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance and the outgoing and new Chairs of the Management Board 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 and young people who have offended are improved?
- What are your priorities for further improving these arrangements?

During the main fieldwork phase, we surveyed 13 individual case managers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. The second fieldwork week is the joint element of the inspection. HMI Probation was joined by colleague inspectors from police, health, social care and education. We explored the lines of enquiry which emerged from the case inspections. Various meetings and focus groups were then held, allowing us to triangulate evidence and information.

Domain two: court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Of the cases selected, 60 per cent were those of children and young people 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. In some individual cases, further enquiries were made during the second fieldwork week by colleague inspectors from police, health, social care or education.

We examined 31 post-court cases. 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. Of the cases selected, 40 per cent were those of children and young people who had received out-of-court disposals three to five months earlier. This enabled us to examine work relating to assessing, planning, implementing and joint working. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place. In some individual cases, further enquiries were made during the second fieldwork week by colleague inspectors from police, health, social care or education.

We examined 19 out-of-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.

Annex 2 – Inspection results

1. Organisational delivery

Standards and key questions	Rating
<p>1.1. Governance and leadership</p> <p>The governance and leadership of the YOS supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people.</p> <p>1.1.1. Is there a clear local vision and strategy for the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people?</p> <p>1.1.2. Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?</p> <p>1.1.3. Does the leadership of the YOS support effective service delivery?</p>	Good
<p>1.2. Staff</p> <p>Staff within the YOS are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people.</p> <p>1.2.1. Do staffing and workload levels support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people?</p> <p>1.2.2. Do the skills of YOS staff support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people?</p> <p>1.2.3. Does the oversight of work support high-quality delivery and professional development?</p> <p>1.2.4. Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?</p>	Requires improvement
<p>1.3. Partnerships and services</p> <p>A comprehensive range of high-quality services is in place, enabling personalised and responsive provision for all children and young people.</p> <p>1.3.1. Is there a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of children and young people, to ensure that the YOS can deliver well-targeted services?</p>	Requires improvement

- 1.3.2. Does the YOS partnership have access to the volume, range and quality of services and interventions to meet the needs of all children and young people?
- 1.3.3. Are arrangements with statutory partners, providers and other agencies established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services?

1.4. Information and facilities	Good
Timely and relevant information is available and appropriate facilities are in place to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children and young people.	
1.4.1. Are the necessary policies and guidance in place to enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children and young people?	
1.4.2. Does the YOS's delivery environment(s) meet the needs of all children and young people and enable staff to deliver a quality service?	
1.4.3. Do the information and communication technology (ICT) systems enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children and young people?	
1.4.4. Is analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement?	

2. Court disposals

Standards and key questions	Rating and % yes
2.1. Assessment	Requires improvement
Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	
2.1.1. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child or young person's desistance?	84%
2.1.2. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child or young person safe?	63%
2.1.3. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	57%

<p>2.2. Planning</p> <p>Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.</p>	<p>Inadequate</p>
<p>2.2.1. Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child or young person's desistance?</p>	<p>80%</p>
<p>2.2.2. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child or young person safe?</p>	<p>48%</p>
<p>2.2.3. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</p>	<p>62%</p>
<p>2.3. Implementation and delivery</p> <p>High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child or young person.</p>	<p>Requires improvement</p>
<p>2.3.1. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child or young person's desistance?</p>	<p>62%</p>
<p>2.3.2. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child or young person?</p>	<p>55%</p>
<p>2.3.3. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?</p>	<p>65%</p>
<p>2.4. Reviewing</p> <p>Reviewing of progress is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.</p>	<p>Requires improvement</p>
<p>2.4.1. Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child or young person's desistance?</p>	<p>62%</p>
<p>2.4.2. Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child or young person safe?</p>	<p>58%</p>
<p>2.4.3. Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</p>	<p>56%</p>

3. Out-of-court disposals

Standards and key questions	Rating and % yes
3.1. Assessment Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	Requires improvement
3.1.1. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child or young person's desistance?	58%
3.1.2. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child or young person safe?	74%
3.1.3. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	68%
3.2. Planning Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	Requires improvement
3.2.1. Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child or young person's desistance?	89%
3.2.2. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child or young person safe?	64%
3.2.3. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	71%
3.3. Implementation and delivery High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child or young person.	Requires improvement
3.3.1. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child or young person's desistance?	89%
3.3.2. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child or young person?	83%
3.3.3. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	63%

3.4. Joint working	Good
Joint working with the police supports the delivery of high-quality, personalised and coordinated services.	
3.4.1. Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the child or young person, supporting joint decision-making?	76%
3.4.2. Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal?	78%

Annex 3 – Glossary

AssetPlus	Assessment and planning framework tool developed by the Youth Justice Board for work with children and young people who have offended, or are at risk of offending, that reflects current research and understanding of what works with children.
Child protection	Work to make sure that all reasonable action has been taken to keep to a minimum the risk of a child experiencing significant harm.
Community resolution	Used in low-level, often first-time, offences where there is informal agreement, often also involving the victim, about how the offence should be resolved. Community resolution is generic term, in practice many different local terms are used to mean the same thing.
County lines	Young people who are coerced into transporting drugs or money on behalf of gangs across the country, mostly from urban to more rural areas.
Court disposals	The sentence imposed by the court. Examples of youth court disposals are referral orders, youth rehabilitation orders and detention and training orders.
Criminal exploitation	Occurs when the children and young people are exploited, forced or coerced into committing crimes.
Desistance	The cessation of offending or other antisocial behaviour.
Education, training and employment	Work to improve learning, and to increase future employment prospects.
First-time entrants	A child or young person who receives a statutory criminal justice outcome (youth caution, youth conditional caution or conviction) for the first time.
Local Authority	YOSs are often a team within a specific local authority.
Multi-agency public protection arrangements	Where probation, police, prison and other agencies work together locally to manage offenders who pose the highest risk of harm to others. Level 1 is single agency management where the risks posed by the offender can be managed by the agency

	responsible for the supervision or case management of the offender. Levels 2 and 3 require active multi-agency management.
Out-of-court disposal	The resolution of a normally low-level offence, where it is not in the public interest to prosecute, through a community resolution, youth caution or youth conditional caution
Personalised	A personalised approach is one in which services are tailored to meet the needs of individuals, giving people as much choice and control as possible over the support they receive. We use this term to include diversity factors.
Risk of serious harm	Risk of serious harm (ROSH) is a term used in AssetPlus. All cases are classified as presenting either a low/ medium/high/very high risk of serious harm to others. HMI Probation uses this term when referring to the classification system, but uses the broader term risk of harm when referring to the analysis which should take place in order to determine the classification level. This helps to clarify the distinction between the probability of an event occurring and the impact/severity of the event. The term 'risk of serious harm' only incorporates 'serious' impact, whereas using 'risk of harm' enables the necessary attention to be given to those young offenders for whom lower impact/severity harmful behaviour is probable.
Referral order	A restorative court order which can be imposed when the child or young person appearing before the court pleads guilty, and whereby the threshold does not meet a youth rehabilitation order.
Safeguarding	A wider term than child protection, it involves promoting a child or young person's health and development and ensuring that their overall welfare needs are met.
Safety and wellbeing	AssetPlus replaced the assessment of vulnerability with a holistic outlook of a child or young person's safety and well-being concerns. It is defined as "those outcomes where the young person's safety and well-being may be compromised through their own behaviour, personal circumstances or because of the acts/omissions of others" (<i>AssetPlus Guidance</i> , 2016).

Youth caution	A caution accepted by a child following admission to an offence where it is not considered to be in the public interest to prosecute the offender.
Youth conditional caution	As for a youth caution, but with conditions attached that the child is required to comply with for up to the next three months. Non-compliance may result in the child being prosecuted for the original offence.
YOT/YOS	Youth Offending Team is the term used in the <i>Crime and Disorder Act 1998</i> to describe a multi-agency team that aims to reduce youth offending. YOSs are known locally by many titles, such as youth justice service (YJS), youth offending service (YOS), and other generic titles that may illustrate their wider role in the local area in delivering services for children.
YOS Management Board	The YOS Management Board holds the YOS to account to ensure it achieves the primary aim of preventing offending by children and young people.
YJB	Youth Justice Board: government body responsible for monitoring and advising ministers on the effectiveness of the youth justice system. Providers of grants and guidance to the youth offending teams.



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ISBN: 978-1-84099-834-4