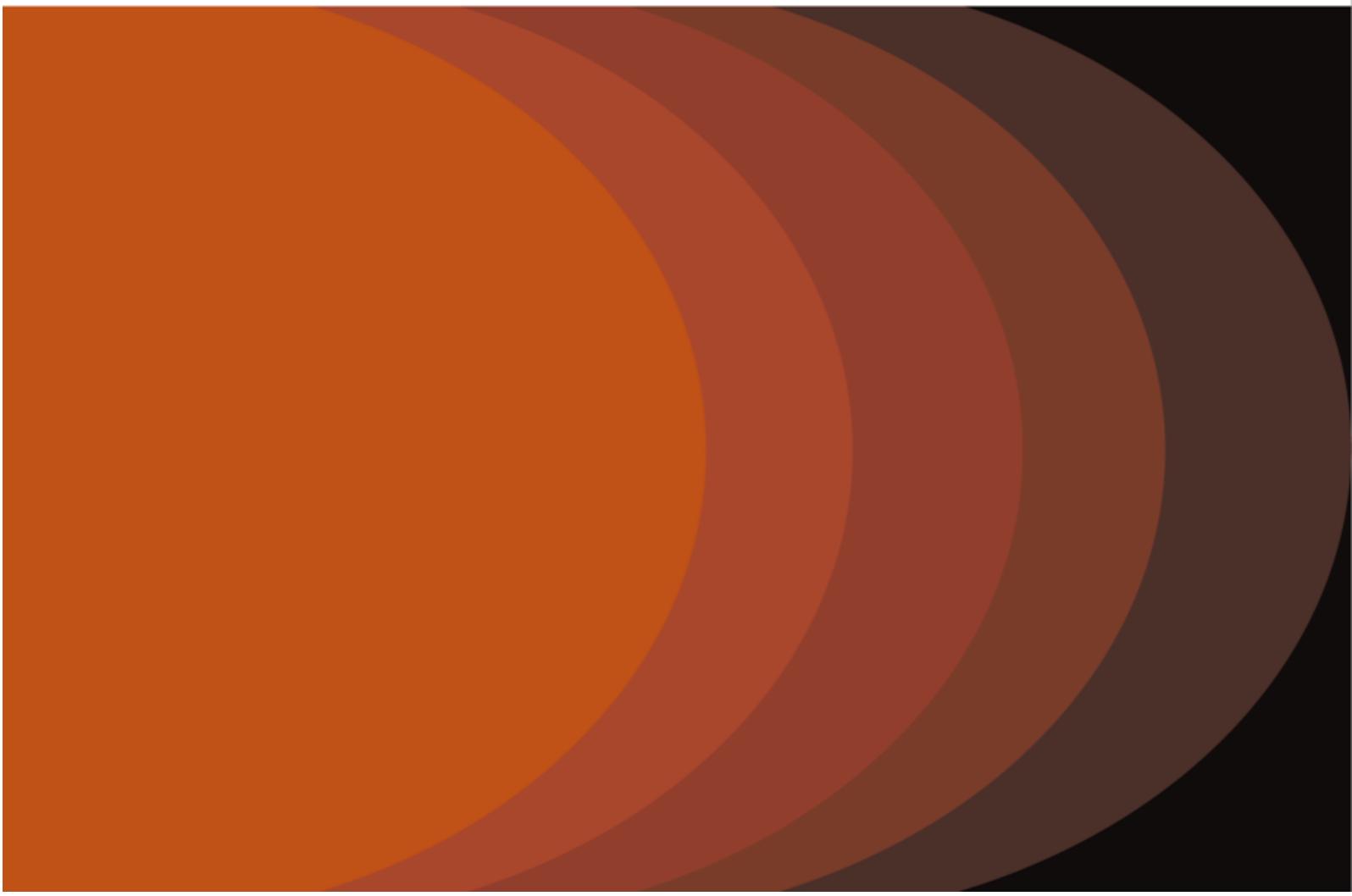




Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in
Merton

HM Inspectorate of Probation, August 2021



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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

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Introduction

This inspection is part of our programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Merton Youth Justice Service (YJS) across three broad areas of its work, referred to as 'domains': the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. We inspect against 12 'standards', shared between the domains. Overall, Merton YJS was rated as 'Good'.

Our standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended. Published scoring rules generate the overall YOS rating. The findings and subsequent ratings in those domains are described in this report. Our fieldwork, conducted through off-site analysis of case files and phone and video conferencing, took place between 17 May and 20 May 2021.

There is a clear vision, which is well communicated across the partnership, and the YJS board is well attended. Board members advocate for YJS children and have sufficient seniority to make decisions and commit resources from their own agencies. As a result, children can swiftly access a range of services and support, and there are good pathways for universal, targeted and specialist provision. The workforce has a range of skills, knowledge and experience to develop trusting and supportive relationships with children, although staff morale has been affected by the proposed restructure and the timing of the current consultation process. Quality assurance processes are used well, enabling a reflective and considered approach to the management of complex cases.

The case management of court disposals was of a high standard, supported by strong and purposeful management oversight. Assessment was rated as 'Outstanding' and was based on a wide range of sources and detailed information. We saw thorough and balanced analysis of factors to support desistance, address safety and wellbeing, and understand the risk of harm to others. Planning, implementation and review were 'Outstanding', with strong evidence of effective partnership work and individualised responses to children and their families.

The joint work associated with out-of-court disposals was 'Outstanding', underpinned by a joint decision-making panel and a clear protocol with relevant stakeholders. Assessment work was 'Outstanding'. It was strengths-based, which helped staff to develop effective working relationships with children and families. Planning and implementation were 'Outstanding' for desistance work in all cases, and good in work to address safety and wellbeing and the risk of harm to others.

There is much for which to commend Merton YJS and the partnership, reflected in their overall rating of 'Good'. However, the quality of the service could improve through further developing the use of data to inform longer-term planning, to better identify trends and connections, and to evidence the ongoing impact of its work. That said, should the YJS maintain the strengths identified in this inspection, we are confident that they can improve from their already strong base.



Marc Baker
Director of Operations

Ratings

Merton Youth Justice Service		Score	30/36
Overall rating		Good	
1. Organisational delivery			
1.1	Governance and leadership	Good	
1.2	Staff	Good	
1.3	Partnerships and services	Outstanding	
1.4	Information and facilities	Requires improvement	
2. Court disposals			
2.1	Assessment	Outstanding	
2.2	Planning	Outstanding	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Outstanding	
2.4	Reviewing	Outstanding	
3. Out-of-court disposals			
3.1	Assessment	Outstanding	
3.2	Planning	Good	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Good	
3.4	Joint working	Outstanding	

Recommendations

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

The Merton Youth Justice Service should:

1. improve the analysis and use of data to shape the strategic and operational delivery of the YJS
2. ensure that the staff ethnicity profile properly reflects the YJS cohort of children
3. implement plans and actions to reduce the over-representation of black and mixed-heritage children in the YJS
4. continue to invest in embedding a strategic and operational approach to trauma-informed practice.

Background

Youth offending teams (YOTs) supervise work with children aged 10 to 18 who have been sentenced by a court, or who have come to the attention of the police because of their offending behaviour but have not been charged – instead, they were dealt with out of court. HM Inspectorate of Probation inspects both these aspects of youth offending services. We use the terms child or children to denote their special legal status and to highlight the obligations of relevant agencies such as social care, education and health to meet their safety and wellbeing needs.

YOTs are statutory partnerships, and they are multidisciplinary, to deal with the needs of the whole child. They are required to have staff from local authority social care and education services, the police, the National Probation Service and local health services.¹ Most YOTs are based within local authorities; however, this can vary.

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

Merton is situated in the south west of London. It is one of the safest London boroughs, with an overall recorded crime rate of 62.4 per 1,000 persons in 2020-2021, compared to a London average of 93.4.² Predominantly suburban in character, Merton is ranked the fifth least deprived of the 33 London boroughs, although this masks significant social, economic and health inequalities. Wards in the east of the borough tend to show worse outcomes for residents across various indicators, including life expectancy, unemployment and educational attainment.

Merton has a rich mix of ethnicity, culture and languages. Greater London Authority data from 2018 puts Merton's black, Asian and minority ethnic population at 77k. This means black, Asian and minority ethnic groups make up just under 38 per cent of the population of 210k. Merton is one of the most religiously diverse boroughs in London. This diversity is reflected in its schools. Of a population of 49k children aged 0-18,³ almost three-quarters of pupils (36k) are from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, 39.3 per cent speak a language that is not English, and over 120 languages are spoken in the borough. Despite such challenges, the proportion of schools judged to be good or better in Merton is high, at 95 per cent. This includes the pupil referral unit (PRU) as well as special schools. This is better than the London and national averages and is evident within the systemic approach to partnership work between the YJS and the PRU, through coordinated training and effective joint working. The effectiveness of this approach is reflected in the fact that 85 per cent of the children currently open to the YJS are in suitable education or training.

¹ The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 set out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

² Merton data – crime and community safety.

³ Office for National Statistics. (2020). UK population estimates, mid-2019 (ons.gov.uk).

Merton's Youth Justice Service (YJS) is a multi-agency service. It has case practitioners and specialist practitioners, many of whom are from partner agencies. The team is part of the adolescent and family service, which sits within the children's social care and youth inclusion division in the children, schools and families directorate.

In the last year, there have been staffing changes at senior level and a decision taken to consult with staff about a proposal to restructure the whole of the children's social care and youth inclusion division. The previous long-standing head of service for youth justice left the authority in autumn 2020. To ensure continuity of expertise and effective oversight of the service during a period of change, a YJS service manager position was created on an interim basis. Merton's new director of children's services (DCS) took up post in April 2021 following a five-month period with an interim DCS. The partnership acknowledges that this has had an impact on chairing arrangements of the YJS management board (known as the youth crime executive board).

The formal staff consultation on a proposed restructure of the children's social care and youth inclusion division is ongoing, with the aim to seek better alignment between the YJS, adolescent team and children's social care. The consultation closed in May 2021 and, understandably, the process and the proposed changes have given rise to some anxiety within the division.

Merton's Covid-19 recovery plan was submitted to the Youth Justice Board in October 2020. This outlined the actions that were to be taken to ensure the continuation of critical services. The partnership put oversight structures in place to ensure that leaders reviewed staffing levels regularly and modified the way in which staff engaged with children. Risk-based decisions were made to prioritise face-to-face visits and interventions with children who posed the highest risk to themselves or others. The partnership also set up a detached outreach service to engage with children during the first and second lockdowns. This was underpinned by effective information-sharing with the borough police.

Since 2016, Merton YJS has seen a continued trend of improved performance against the three national key performance indicators (custody, reoffending and first-time entrants). Although the rate of first-time entrants is below both the London and the England and Wales averages, the reoffending binary rate (45.2 per cent) and the frequency rate (1.92) are higher than the national rate of 38.5 per cent and 1.52 respectively.

Disproportionality is recognised as an issue across the YJS partnership. This is evident in the percentage of black children (30.8 per cent) and mixed-heritage children (25.9 per cent) cautioned or sentenced between April 2020 and March 2021, compared with the wider children's population of 10.7 per cent and 11.3 per cent for these ethnic groups. The YJS board has analysed this data and is developing a coordinated strategic and operational plan in response.

Contextual facts

Population information

206,548	Total population Merton (2019) ⁴
18,326	Total youth population (10–17 years) in Merton (2019) ⁴

Demographics of children cautioned or sentenced⁵

Age	10–14 years	15–17 years
Merton YJS	17%	83%
National average	22%	78%

Race/ethnicity	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
Merton YJS	56%	44%	0%
National average	69%	28%	3%

Gender	Male	Female
Merton YJS	92%	8%
National average	85%	15%

Additional caseload data⁶

12	Total current caseload: community sentences
1	Total current caseload in custody
1	Total current caseload on licence
89	Total current caseload: youth caution, youth conditional caution, community resolution or other out-of-court disposal

⁴ Office for National Statistics. (2020). *UK population estimates, mid-2019*.

⁵ Youth Justice Board. (2021). *Youth justice annual statistics: 2019-2020*.

⁶ Information supplied by Merton YJS, reflecting caseload on 10 May 2021.

1. Organisational delivery



Strengths:

- There is a clear vision, which is well communicated across the partnership, supported by collaborative strategic arrangements.
- The YJS board is well attended and includes all statutory partners, as well as other partners, such as community safety, police and crime commissioner and the voluntary sector.
- Board members advocate for YJS children and have sufficient seniority to make decisions and commit resources from their own agencies.
- Staff report that supervision is regular, purposeful and beneficial. Quality assurance processes are used well, enabling a reflective and considered approach to the management of complex cases.
- The workforce has the full range of skills, knowledge and experience to develop trusting and supportive relationships with children and families.
- Children can swiftly access a range of services and support, with specific pathways for universal, targeted and specialist provision.
- The YJS has a suite of policies, procedures and current service level agreements across a range of organisations and services.

Areas for improvement:

- Some proposed and scheduled management board actions have 'drifted' in the previous 12 months.
- The staffing group is not diverse and does not reflect the community/YJS cohort.
- Staff morale has been affected by the proposed restructure and the timing of the current consultation process.
- There are shortfalls in the use of performance data to shape strategic and operational service delivery.
- There is no link between the YJS management board and the local criminal justice board.

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

1.1. Governance and leadership



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

Good

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

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

There is a clear vision, which is well communicated across the partnership, and strategic partnership arrangements are mature and collaborative. Alongside the YJS strategic plan developed in 2019, Merton's Covid-19 recovery plan was submitted to the Youth Justice Board in October 2020. This outlined the actions that were to be taken to ensure continuation of critical services.

The YJS board is well attended. It includes all statutory partners, as well as other partners, such as community safety, police and crime commissioner and the voluntary sector. Board members have all received appropriate induction and there are terms of reference. There is a strong education presence, with a mix across the board of long-serving and relatively new members. The board chair is the director of children's services (DCS). She has been in place since April 2021 and has sat on the board for several years in her previous assistant director role. Some proposed and scheduled actions have 'drifted' in the previous 12 months, as a consequence of the board having had three different chairs and some change of membership.

Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?

Board members consistently advocate for YJS children and have sufficient seniority to make decisions and commit resources from their own agencies. The board gave examples of the systemic approach it has taken to many issues affecting the YJS cohort. These included: police strategic re-alignment of the YJS to public protection and safeguarding teams; improving the joint work between the YJS and the pupil referral unit (PRU); restorative justice training; introduction of a 'no comment' pilot to address disproportionality within the YJS cohort; a stop and search pilot; the use of police notifications (known as 'Merlins'), which enabled early intervention through liaison and diversion pathways; and joint work with statutory and third-sector organisations to address youth violence.

The board has a culture of support and challenge. Strategic partners share responsibility for addressing the complex needs of YJS children. For example, board members are encouraged to attend 'practice weeks' and audit cases. There were also discussions on the mandatory 'wandering'⁷ of children attending YJS, the ethics of the stop and search pilot, and challenge on the numbers of YJS children in the PRU.

⁷ A process by which an individual is bodily checked over with a handheld electronic weapons detection device.

Members described 'uncomfortable' discussions on disproportionality, which had led to some progress and the creation of a specific subgroup to oversee such issues.

The YJS board is part of a network of partnership arrangements that work across both Merton and the whole of London. YJS board members provide strategic links to other partnership forums, such as the safeguarding children's partnership, the community safety partnership, the MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) board, the SEND (special educational needs and/or disabilities) board, the children's trust board, the violence reduction partnership and the health board. This would be improved by identifying a link between the YJS management board and the local criminal justice board, to further align strategic themes across the partnership.

Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?

The current YJS head of service has been an interim appointment since January 2021. She is well respected across the partnership and has used her experience in previous YOT and social care senior leadership roles to shape the board's agenda and activity

There are sufficient links between the YJS head of service, YJS operational managers and the board. This ensures the board has an awareness of its impact on practice. YJS team managers have given presentations to the board on specific areas, such as reoffending, restorative justice and engaging children. Examples were also given of instances where the YJS head of service escalated individual children's cases to senior leaders to resolve issues successfully.

Operationally, YJS management team members have designated lead responsibilities and sit on relevant multi-agency operational groups. Partnership managers describe mature and collaborative relationships with their YJS counterparts.

The Covid-19 pandemic has limited the opportunity for staff members to engage with YJS board members. Staff and team managers report that, previously, they were able to undertake work such as practice audits, attend team development days and give presentations to the YJS board. This work should be re-instigated on a virtual basis to enable ongoing communication between the YJS board and practitioners, pending such activities resuming face to face.

Board members and YJS managers are aware of business risks and have an action plan and evidence of steps taken to mitigate them. Areas they have identified across the YJS partnership include: ongoing response/demand for services arising from Covid-19; managing the current consultation process and organisational change; addressing disproportionality; uncertainties on violence reduction partnership funding (which impacts on third-sector providers); and continuing to embed a trauma-informed pathway.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Key staffing data⁸

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent, FTE)	31
Average caseload per case manager (FTE)	10

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

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

Staffing levels are planned. There are five case managers, of whom four manage post-court cases and one manages the out-of-court disposal cases. The case management structure is split across a 'risk and desistance' team and a 'prevention and partnerships' team.

The staffing group is not sufficiently diverse and does not reflect the community or the YJS cohort. The wider population of black, Asian and minority ethnic children is currently 44 per cent, compared with 66 per cent for the YJS cohort. Based on staff responses to the survey undertaken for this inspection, 78 per cent of staff were white British.

Workloads are described by staff as manageable. For the out-of-court disposal worker, the caseload and the turnover are higher. Workloads are actively reviewed, given the complexity and profile of the cases within the YJS. Staff stated that, when required, they pick up out-of-court disposal cases to support the out-of-court disposal case manager. Inspectors were pleased to see that decisions on allocation considered the child's individual circumstances, with managers recognising the importance of continuity of established child/practitioner relationships where relevant.

There are three managers in the operational leadership team, who report to the interim head of service. One of the management posts is a half-time role. This manager specifically undertakes quality assurance and feedback, while the other two oversee the 'risk and desistance' team and the 'prevention and partnerships' team respectively. There is trust and collaboration between the team managers, which has enabled them to establish a consistent benchmark of quality.

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

The workforce has a comprehensive range of skills, knowledge and experience to develop trusting and supportive relationships with children and families. The majority of case managers are qualified social workers or probation officers. Nearly all the

⁸ Data supplied by YOT and reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

other staff have degrees, and the rest have several years of experience. Staff describe their line managers as supportive, knowledgeable and accessible.

Staff morale has been affected by the proposed restructure and the timing of the current consultation process. Despite this, we found that staff were committed to YJS children and had continued to produce high-quality work in the inspected cases. However, there are high levels of anxiety and uncertainty, with both staff and team manager groups perceiving that they have not been listened to. Staff and team managers feel that the proposed restructure will impact on the quality of work with YJS children.

Staff reported that they had received a full induction, with opportunities for shadowing, training and peer support/learning. This was across the YJS and wider partnership services, which enabled them to understand how teams and agencies worked together.

Succession planning has been evident, despite the limited opportunities in a small service. Staff who do not have a professional qualification (such as in social work or probation) also described a progression pathway, in which they complete an evidence-based work portfolio, including observation and sign-off by managers, which allows movement to a higher grade. We were pleased to see such an approach, although staff perceived that such opportunities may be limited in the future.

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

Staff report that supervision is regular, purposeful and beneficial. Quality assurance processes are used well, enabling a reflective and considered approach to the management of complex cases.

Within every inspected out-of-court disposal case, and all but one inspected court case, management oversight and supervision was judged to be sufficient. Inspectors agreed with classifications of risk of harm and safety and wellbeing in every case inspected across our sample.

Appraisals are well received by staff and contain a mixture of organisational and individual objectives. Partnership agencies have their own performance reviews. The YJS contributes to these, using available opportunities to provide input.

Reward and recognition processes are in place. Staff gave examples of where they had received local and national nominations via the Merton staff group newsletter and Butler Trust. Some staff have received individual staff excellence awards, and the YJS speech and language team has received an award. Staff describe a:

“constant flow of mini pats on the back.”

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

There is a workforce development plan, and staff described a wide range of training opportunities. This includes specialist AIM2/3 training, trauma-informed approaches, AMBIT, Signs of Safety and motivational interviewing. Specialist SAVRY (structured assessment of violence and risk in youth) training was delivered in-house by forensic Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Staff highlighted that internal and external partner agencies are also involved in training providing by the service. This enables them to develop a shared

understanding and approach. Managers also offer YJS-specific training to wider children's services social workers. There is also collaborative training across neighbouring YOTs; for example, panel member training is delivered jointly by Merton and Sutton YOTs. Although small in number, volunteers are well catered for and good support is provided by the restorative justice worker and one of the YJS police officers. Overall, practitioners described a culture of learning, reflection and continuous improvement.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Outstanding

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

Is there a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of children, to ensure that the YOT can deliver well-targeted services?

The YJS has a good understanding of the characteristics of the children in its cohort. Children can swiftly access a range of services and support, with specific pathways for universal, targeted and specialist provision.

Staff and managers across the partnership regard offending as a safeguarding issue, and there is a clear and shared understanding that a child's offending has an impact on their future life chances.

The partnership is heavily invested in a strategic and operational approach to trauma-informed practice. It has obtained funding for additional psychology resource to support training and roll-out of this approach across the service, education, social care, police and third-sector partners.

In response to the Lammy review,⁹ the service is undertaking work related to children who give 'no comment' interviews, and other disproportionalities in youth justice. The partnership has implemented a three-month 'non-admissions' pilot. This provides an opportunity for diversionary intervention with children who may not have initially admitted their offence.

Disproportionality has been an area of focus for the YJS management board, who clearly recognise the over-representation of black and mixed-heritage children within the service. The partnership has made some initial progress by establishing a specific task-and-finish subgroup, but there remains further work to be done. The interim YJS service manager has played a key role in driving recent work, such as the non-admissions pilot.

⁹ Lammy Review. (2017). *An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system.*

Does the YOT partnership have access to the volume, range and quality of services and interventions to meet the needs of all children?

There are clear working protocols and well-developed pathways for children, with strong examples of innovative and responsive practice. For example, the approach to addressing education needs within the YJS cohort is coordinated across schools, a designated speech and language therapist, the PRU and post-16 colleges and training providers. The effectiveness of this approach is reflected in the fact that 85 per cent of the children currently open to the YJS are in suitable education or training.

Partnership managers understand the specialist work their staff undertake with YJS children and there is regular supervision, joint oversight and communication with relevant team managers.

Some staff within the YJS and wider children's services have received initial training on the AMBIT model. This approach of 'team around the worker' includes investment in the relational approach to work, whereby the person with the best relationship with the child undertakes work, rather than necessarily someone from a named agency. This approach is yet to be fully delivered and embedded across the whole workforce, but there are plans to extend it to other staff and services as part of the trauma-informed pathway.

There are trusted and high-quality relationships between staff across the partnership, which have been sustained despite the impact of Covid-19. The YJS has a clinical CAMHS psychologist to support case formulation and deliver interventions with relevant children. The speech and language therapist provides support and assistance to both children and colleagues where required. This enables the YJS to take individualised and informed approaches to its work with children. Substance misuse services are provided by Catch22, and there is evidence of strong coordinated work with case managers.

There is a strong offer from third-sector providers, including detached youth work projects and a music project. Organisations such as 'Unique Talent' undertake work with children involved in (or at risk of) exploitation in gangs. The Jigsaw project supports children suffering from bereavement or emotional wellbeing issues.

There is a range of reparation projects, and a restorative approach runs through the delivery of work across the partnership. Alongside these projects, more tailored reparation activities (such as making personal protective equipment masks and devising crime awareness posters) have been adapted to ensure they can be delivered during the Covid-19 restrictions. Children have also achieved qualifications in areas such as food hygiene and bicycle maintenance, as a result of their reparative work/interventions.

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

Public protection and safeguarding agencies are linked effectively, primarily through the multi agency risk, vulnerability and exploitation panel (MARVE). This is chaired by the head of service and allows agencies to share the management of any child assessed as high risk of harm, having a high level of safety and wellbeing needs or at a high risk of reoffending. There are other panels, such as the youth integrated offender management and the safety and wellbeing panel, which enable the partnership to share responsibility for managing complex cases.

The joint decision-making panel, which oversees out-of-court disposal decisions and work undertaken, is well established, with clear lines of accountability. The panel is attended by a wide range of agencies and all partners understand the role, function and benefits of the panel. Decision-making is well informed, dynamic and responsive to need and individual circumstances. Staff gave examples of individualised approaches the service had taken, including where it had balanced welfare and victim considerations well.

The partnership operates a liaison and diversion panel, which is funded through contributions from the clinical commissioning group (health). This panel discusses cases where the police have submitted a 'Merlin' notification (either via a stop and search or other reason) and shares relevant multi-agency information. If it is determined that the child requires preventative support to avoid them formally entering the criminal justice system, agencies identify the best professionals to take this work forward and intervene accordingly.

In all multi-agency panels and meetings, the emphasis is on meeting the complex needs of children. This ensures that support can be provided across the partnership, in most cases by someone with whom the child has a trusted relationship.

Staff report that YJS referrals to children's social care are generally accepted. Where there are issues or disagreements around thresholds, cases are escalated to a manager appropriately and resolved. A social work manager sits on the liaison and diversion panel and often acts as a single point of contact from this panel to the multi-agency safeguarding hub, which is located in the YJS building.

Sentencers expressed confidence in the quality of YJS court work, and the relationships between YJS court staff and children. The YJS team manager sits on the local court user group, and the YJS court officer role is undertaken by the case manager, who also holds out-of-court disposal cases. This has brought benefits; for example, sentencers are now more confident in sending cases back for out-of-court disposals.

Transition processes are evident and sufficient. The seconded probation officer fulfils a split role, in which she holds YJS cases and also 18 to 25 year olds within her designated team in the National Probation Service. This enables transitioned cases to receive supervision and intervention according to their specific needs.

Involvement of children and their parents and carers

The YJS obtains feedback from children through quarterly feedback groups, which are then shared with YJS senior leaders through management board reports.

Our text survey of children had only one respondent, who was positive about the service received from the YJS. The lead inspector spoke with two children by telephone, who were complimentary about the YJS's response to their individual needs and the partnership services that supported them (particularly education workers and substance misuse workers). Children clearly feel positive about the one-to-one work undertaken and have trusted relationships with their case managers.

1.4. Information and facilities



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

Requires improvement

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

Are the necessary policies and guidance in place to enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

The YJS has a suite of policies and procedures, which are regularly updated when required and are accessible to all staff. Referral pathways are clear and there are current service level agreements and working protocols across a range of organisations and services. Staff described how line managers guide them in the use of these policies, which include escalation protocols if required.

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

Although we did not visit the YJS office as part of this inspection, the premises are accessible, with good transport links. The YJS is co-located with other partnership staff, such as speech and language services, Catch22 (the substance misuse service), the education, training and employment worker, the CAMHS psychologist and the contextual safeguarding (gangs) worker. This enables effective joint working and communication.

Staff describe the environment as 'child-friendly and welcoming', stating that safety measures are well considered and in place. Group work (for approximately six to eight children) is available. Other venues (such as Vestry Hall Community Centre) are used for restorative justice projects, and also provide a place to meet children if the YJS office is not appropriate. Within the YJS building, staff can use the ground-floor unit to see children with mobility issues. An example of the child-focused approach was given by the YJS police officer, who described a 'uniform-free' office policy. Children are transferred to the nearby police station if they need to be seen by an officer in police uniform.

Do the information and communication technology (ICT) systems enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

Staff describe ICT systems as reliable and able to facilitate case management work and exchange of information with partners where required. YJS staff have access to MOSAIC social care records, while partnership staff within the YJS (apart from the police) have access to both YJS systems and their own agency system.

Is analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement?

Processes for learning lessons are well developed across the partnership. Critical learning reviews are shared at board level and disseminated to staff through reflective training, team meetings and email.

Some board members highlighted challenges in terms of 'horizon scanning' and further developing the use of data to inform longer-term planning. Board minutes

show that performance data could be improved to give more focused and rich information. Alongside this, data could be better 'owned' by YJS team managers, to enable them to better identify trends and connections.

Inspectors found that the granularity of data needs to be improved to evidence the ongoing impact of the YJS's work. This includes breakdowns of the levels of first-time entrants and reoffending for all out-of-court disposals, data on cases being returned from court for out-of-court disposals, cross-referencing of victim satisfaction surveys and types of victim work undertaken, data to explain why youth conditional cautions have increased, and longer-term aggregated analysis of key performance monthly returns for the liaison and diversion scheme.

Managers describe the case management system as 'clunky', and although data on performance management can be drawn from it, the process is labour-intensive. The service will be changing the case management system in September 2021. It is anticipated that this will provide greater functionality and improve the quality and timeliness of performance data. YJS managers expressed concern about the future capacity of the business support roles in the service under the proposed restructure, as this could have a negative impact on the timeliness, collation and quality of data.

Senior leaders gave assurances that strategic and operational decisions were informed by analysis of current and projected data. However, the management board must ensure that the YJS remains focused on these activities, given some of the shortfalls identified in this inspection.



2. Court disposals

We took a detailed look at eight community sentences and one custodial sentence managed by the YJS. We also conducted nine interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery of services; and reviewing.

Strengths:

- Assessment work was 'Outstanding'. It was based on a wide range of sources, well-reasoned and in all cases correctly classified.
- Planning across desistance, keeping the child safe and keeping others safe was 'Outstanding'. It was sequenced and responded to changes in circumstances.
- There was evidence of effective partnership working in a large majority of cases.
- YJS staff developed excellent and trusted relationships with children and their families, which supported effective engagement.
- Reviewing for desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others was 'Outstanding'.
- Assessment and implementation of work to promote the safety of victims and maximise opportunities for restorative justice were consistently evident.
- Management oversight of court orders promoted high-quality casework practice.

Areas for improvement:

- The quality of enforcement practice was variable and deemed sufficient in only half of relevant cases.
- Planning to manage the risks to actual or potential victims was not consistent.

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

2.1. Assessment



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

Outstanding

Our rating¹⁰ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

Of the 9 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	9	9
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	9	9
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	9	9

The quality of assessment was rated as 'Outstanding'. In every case, inspectors judged that assessment met our required standards in relation to desistance, keeping the child safe and managing the risk of harm that the child posed to others.

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

Of the 9 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	9	9
Does assessment consider the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, utilising information held by other agencies?	9	9
Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	9	9
Where applicable, does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	7	6
Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and their likelihood of engaging with the court disposal?	9	9

¹⁰ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s, and opportunities for restorative justice?	6	5
Is the child and their parents and carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	9	9

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

Of the 9 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	9	9
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	9	8
Where applicable, does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	8	8

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Of the 9 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	9	9
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	9	9
Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	9	9

Inspectors found that assessments were well informed, strengths-based and correctly classified safety and wellbeing and the risk of harm to others. Case managers drew together current and historical issues or behaviours, which in turn resulted in balanced and well-reasoned assessments. A large majority of cases contained information from other agencies and sources (including social care, the police, education and health). Inspectors judged that all but one relevant case gave sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims and opportunities for restorative justice. The involvement of the child and parents and carers was evident in all cases, as was consideration of the diversity and wider social and familial context of the child.

2.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

Our rating¹¹ for planning is based on the following key questions:

Of the 9 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	9	9
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? ¹²	8	8
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? ¹³	9	9

We rated the planning work for court disposals as 'Outstanding'. In every case, the planning to address desistance factors, the safety and wellbeing of the child, and keeping other people safe met our required standards.

Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?

Of the 9 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	9	9
Does planning take sufficient account of the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child?	9	9
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	9	8
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	9	9
Where applicable, does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s?	7	6

¹¹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

¹² This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.

¹³ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping other people safe.

Is the child and their parents and carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	9	8
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Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Of the 8 cases with factors related to keeping the child safe:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	8	8
Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (for example, child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	7	7
Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	8	8
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	8	8

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Of the 9 cases with factors related to keeping other people safe:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	9	9
Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	8	8
Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	8	5
Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	9	8
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	9	9

Planning was strengths-based and responsive to the child's diversity needs and social and familial context. Involvement of children and parents or carers in plans was evident in all but one case, and staff included actions on all the key areas to support desistance identified during their assessment. Planning was aligned with other services and involved partner agencies in all cases. However, planning to address

specific concerns and risks to actual and potential victims was inconsistent and lacking in some cases.

Within the complex YJS cohort, circumstances in a child’s life can change quickly. Case managers need to consider the potential for change in each case so that, should concerns escalate, they are prepared and more likely to respond effectively. Inspectors found that contingency planning (both to keep the child safe and to manage the risks posed to others) was sufficient in every case.

2.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.	Outstanding
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Our rating¹⁴ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Of the 9 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child’s desistance?	9	8
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child? ¹⁵	8	7
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people? ¹⁶	9	8

The quality of implementation and delivery was rated as ‘Outstanding’. In all but one case, inspectors judged that implementation and delivery met our required standards in relation to desistance, keeping the child safe and managing the risk of harm that the child posed to others.

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child’s desistance?

Of the 9 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	9	8
Does service delivery reflect the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents and carers or significant others?	9	8

¹⁴ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

¹⁵ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.

¹⁶ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping other people safe.

Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	9	9
Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents and carers?	9	7
Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration including access to services post-supervision?	9	9
Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	9	8
In cases where it is required, are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	4	2

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

Of the 8 cases with factors related to keeping the child safe:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	8	7
Where applicable, is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?	7	6

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

Of the 9 cases with factors related to keeping other people safe:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	9	8
Where applicable, is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	5	4
Where applicable, is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	8	7

It was clear that case managers take a strengths-based approach to their work. Inspectors found that the YJS had access to a wide range of specialist staff and other resources to deliver well-coordinated and innovative interventions to children. Enforcement was not always used appropriately where required, although in most cases sufficient work was delivered to promote victims' safety. We also found clear

arrangements to support children who were looked after, open to social care, criminally exploited, or who had emotional wellbeing or substance misuse issues.

2.4. Reviewing



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

Outstanding

Our rating¹⁷ for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

Of the 8 cases inspected ¹⁸	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	8	8
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	7	7
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	5	5

We rated the work on reviewing cases as 'Outstanding'. In all the cases we inspected, there was sufficient review of desistance factors, issues concerning the safety and wellbeing of the child, and of any risk of harm to others posed by the child. Reviews were well-informed and analytical. This responsiveness to changing circumstances helped to maintain children's engagement, enabled safeguarding and public protection issues to be managed, and ensured that the work delivered was effective and meaningful.

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

Of the 8 cases where there were changes in factors related to desistance:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors linked to desistance?	8	8
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	8	8
Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	8	8

¹⁷ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

¹⁸ We only expect to see evidence of reviewing in cases where there have been changes in factors related to desistance, keeping the child safe and/or keeping other people safe.

Is the child and their parents and carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	8	8
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Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Of the 7 cases where there were changes in factors related to keeping the child safe:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing?	7	7
Where applicable, is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?	7	7
Where applicable, does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	5	5

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Of the 5 cases where there were changes in factors related to keeping other people safe:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to risk of harm?	5	5
Where applicable, is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	5	5
Is the child and their parents and carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their risk of harm, and are their views taken into account?	5	5
Where applicable, does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	3	3

Inspectors found that reviewing focused sufficiently on building on the child's strengths, enhancing protective factors, and assessing the level of motivation and engagement in all cases. Reviews completed by case managers led to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work in every case. The management oversight of court orders also consistently promoted high-quality casework practice. Several children supervised by the YJS had complex needs, and their circumstances could change rapidly. In all relevant cases, reviewing was contemporaneous and informed by detailed input from other agencies to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, and the risk of harm posed to others.

3. Out-of-court disposals



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

We examined the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance. For the three cases where there were factors related to harm, we also inspected work done to keep other people safe. In the four cases where safety and wellbeing concerns were identified, we looked at work done to safeguard the child. We also looked at the quality of joint working with local police.

When children receive an out-of-court-disposal, we expect to see the service maximise the likelihood of successful outcomes by addressing desistance factors, effectively engaging with children and their parents or carers, and responding to relevant diversity factors. We also expect to see children being kept safe, and their safety and wellbeing needs being addressed. Finally, we expect everything reasonable to be done to manage the risk of harm posed by children who have offended. This should be through high-quality assessment and planning, with the delivery of appropriate interventions, effective leadership and management, and good joint decision-making and partnership working across all statutory and voluntary agencies.

Strengths:

- The work associated with out-of-court disposals was excellent, underpinned by a joint decision-making panel and a clear protocol.
- The YJS provided timely information. It made a positive contribution to decision-making and provided a clearly recorded rationale for decisions in all cases.
- Assessment work was 'Outstanding' for desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others.
- The service took a fully inclusive approach with partners, colleagues, families and children to make sure that the appropriate disposal was delivered and implemented effectively.
- Children and families continue to receive support from the wider specialist, targeted and mainstream services after their out-of-court disposal ends.
- Out-of-court disposal work was delivering positive outcomes for children.

Areas for improvement:

- Planning in relation to victim work and contingency planning to manage risk of harm to others was not consistent across all cases.
- In some cases, there was insufficient delivery of services to manage risk of harm to others.

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

3.1. Assessment



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

Outstanding

Our rating¹⁹ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

Of the 5 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	5	5
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	5	5
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	5	5

We rated the assessment work for out-of-court disposals as 'Outstanding'. In every case, the assessment of desistance factors, the safety and wellbeing of the child and keeping other people safe met our required standards.

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

Of the 5 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's acknowledgement of responsibility, attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	5	5
Does assessment consider the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, utilising information held by other agencies?	5	5
Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	5	5
Where applicable, does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	3	3
Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	5	5

¹⁹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

Where applicable, does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s, and opportunities for restorative justice?	3	3
Is the child and their parents and carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	5	4

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

Of the 5 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	5	5
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	5	5

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Of the 5 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	4	4
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including any other assessments that have been completed, and other evidence of behaviour by the child?	4	4

There was sufficient analysis of offending behaviour in all cases, with a strengths-based approach evident in every case and involvement of children and parents in all but one case. Assessments routinely drew on information from multiple sources to gain the best understanding of a child's circumstances and history. This led to sufficiently detailed assessments being completed before the joint decision-making panel. Assessments also considered the support and intervention required. There was sufficient focus on safety and wellbeing issues, with appropriate classification of cases. Risk of harm assessment work was 'Outstanding', with all cases drawing on available sources of information from other agencies.

3.2. Planning



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

Good

Our rating²⁰ for planning is based on the following key questions:

Of the 5 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	5	5
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? ²¹	4	3
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? ²²	3	2

Planning to address desistance was 'Outstanding' in all of the cases inspected. The overall rating for this standard, however, was driven by the score for planning for keeping the child and other people safe, where inspectors found that not all cases met our requirements. This resulted in a rating of 'Good'.

Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?

Of the 5 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	5	5
Does planning take sufficient account of the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child?	5	5
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	5	5
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	5	5
Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to	5	4

²⁰ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

²¹ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.

²² This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping other people safe.

mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?		
Where applicable, does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s?	3	2
Is the child and their parents and carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	5	4

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Of the 4 cases with factors relevant to keeping the child safe:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	4	3
Where applicable, does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (for example, child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	4	3
Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	4	4

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Of the 3 cases with factors relevant to keeping other people safe:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	3	2
Where applicable, does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	1	1
Where applicable, does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	2	1
Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	3	2

Planning for desistance was strengths-based, proportionate and responsive to the child's diversity needs and social and familial context in all cases. Opportunities for community integration were offered in all but one case. Planning for safety and wellbeing often aligned with other agencies' plans. However, in the cases inspected, there was inconsistency in the focus on victims. Inspectors found shortfalls in the quality of contingency planning for risk of harm to others. This is important, as there should be a clear plan of action in the event of risk to the child (or to other people)

either increasing or decreasing. Children’s circumstances can change rapidly, and contingency planning needs to be in place to respond to these changes. Inspectors judged that contingency planning to keep the child safe was evident in every case, and sufficient to keep other people safe in all but one case.

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating²³ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Of the 5 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child’s desistance?	5	5
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child? ²⁴	4	3
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people? ²⁵	3	2

Implementation and delivery to address desistance were ‘Outstanding’ in all of the cases inspected. The overall rating for this standard, however, was driven by the score for planning for keeping the child and other people safe, where inspectors found that not all cases met our requirements. This resulted in a rating of ‘Good’.

Does service delivery effectively support the child’s desistance?

Of the 5 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	5	4
Does service delivery reflect the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents and carers or significant others?	5	5
Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents and carers?	5	5

²³ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

²⁴ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.

²⁵ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping other people safe.

Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	5	4
Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	5	5

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?

Of the 4 cases with factors related to the safety of the child:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	4	3
Where applicable, is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	4	4

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?

Of the 3 cases with factors related to the safety of other people:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Where applicable, is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	2	2
Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	3	2

In nearly all cases, children were given access to services to support desistance, and it was clear that the case managers took a strengths-based approach to their work. The YJS had access to a wide range of specialist staff and other resources to deliver suitable and innovative interventions to children. Case managers responded to the diversity and wider social/familial context of the child and developed good working relationships. Case managers advocated on behalf of children and made timely referrals to specialist and mainstream services, such as substance misuse, CAMHS, education, and speech and language. However, not all cases saw sufficient delivery of services to manage risk of harm to others, although, overall, the rating for this standard was still 'Good'.

3.4. Joint working



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

Outstanding

Our rating²⁶ for joint working is based on the following key questions:

Of the 5 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the child, supporting joint decision making?	5	5
Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal? ²⁷	3	3

Overall, joint working for delivery of out-of-court disposals was rated as 'Outstanding'. We looked at three youth conditional caution cases as part of the sample of five out-of-court disposal cases.

Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the child, supporting joint decision-making?

Of the 5 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Where applicable, are the recommendations by the YOT for out-of-court disposal outcomes, conditions and interventions appropriate and proportionate?	5	5
Do the recommendations consider the degree of the child's understanding of the offence and their acknowledgement of responsibility?	5	5
Where applicable, is a positive contribution made by the YOT to determining the disposal?	5	5
Is sufficient attention given to the child's understanding, and their parents'/carers' understanding, of the implications of receiving an out-of-court disposal?	5	5

²⁶ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

²⁷ This question is only relevant in youth conditional caution cases.

Is the information provided to inform decision-making timely to meet the needs of the case, legislation and guidance?	5	5
Where applicable, is the rationale for joint disposal decisions appropriate and clearly recorded?	5	5

Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal?

Of the 3 cases with youth conditional cautions:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Where applicable, does the YOT inform the police of progress and outcomes in a sufficient and timely manner?	2	2
Is sufficient attention given to compliance with and enforcement of the conditions?	3	3

The YJS provided timely information and made a positive contribution to decision-making in all cases. We saw a clearly recorded rationale for disposals in every case, with all of them indicating that the child and their parents or carers understood the implications of the disposal. Attention was paid to compliance and the enforcement of youth conditional cautions in every case.

Annexe 1: Methodology

HM Inspectorate of Probation standards

The standards against which we inspect youth offending services are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. These standards are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.²⁸

The inspection methodology is summarised below, linked to the three domains in our standards framework. We focused on obtaining evidence against the standards, key questions and prompts in our inspection framework. It is important that all youth offending services, regardless of size, are inspected to highlight good practice and to identify areas for improvement. Of course, some YOTs have very small caseloads and so any percentages or figures quoted in these reports need to be read with care. However, all domain two samples, even for the smallest YOTs, meet an 80 per cent confidence level, and in some of the smaller YOTs inspectors may be assessing most or all of that service's cases.

Domain one: organisational delivery

The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance and the chair of the YJS management board delivered a presentation covering the following areas:

- How do organisational delivery arrangements in this area make sure that the work of your youth offending service is as effective as it can be, and that the life chances of children who have offended are improved?
- What are your priorities for further improving these arrangements?

During the main fieldwork phase, we conducted 14 interviews with case managers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. We held various meetings, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and information. In total, we conducted eight meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.²⁹

Domain two: court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Nine of the cases selected were those of children who had received court disposals three to 12 months earlier, enabling us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and reviewing. Where necessary, interviews with other people closely involved in the case also took place.

We examined nine court disposals. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of five), and where possible we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm,

²⁸ HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards are available here:

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

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. Five of the cases selected were those of children who had received out-of-court disposals two to 12 months earlier. This enabled us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and joint working. Where necessary, interviews with other people closely involved in the case also took place.

We examined five out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set so that the combined case sample size comprises 60 per cent domain two cases and 40 per cent domain three. Where possible, we ensured 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.

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

Ratings explained

Domain one ratings are proposed by the lead inspector for each standard. They will be a single judgement, using all the relevant sources of evidence. More detailed information can be found in the probation inspection domain one rules and guidance on the website.

In this inspection, we conducted a detailed examination of a sample of nine court disposals and five out-of-court disposals. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards: assessment, planning, and implementation/delivery. For court disposals, we look at reviewing; and in out-of-court disposals, we look at joint working with the police. For each standard, inspectors answer a number of key questions about different aspects of quality, including whether there was sufficient analysis of the factors related to offending; the extent to which children were involved in assessment and planning; and whether enough was done to assess and manage the safety and well-being of the child, and any risk of harm posed to others.

For each standard, the rating is aligned to the lowest banding at the key question level, recognising that each key question is an integral part of the standard.

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

We use case sub-samples for some of the key questions in domains two and three. For example, when judging whether planning focused sufficiently on keeping other people safe, we exclude those cases where the inspector deemed the risk of serious harm to be low. This approach is justified on the basis that we focus on those cases where we expect meaningful work to take place.

An element of professional discretion may be applied to the standards ratings in domains two and three. The ratings panel considers whether professional discretion should be exercised when the lowest percentage at the key question level is close to the rating boundary – for example, between 'Requires improvement' and 'Good' (specifically, within five percentage points of the boundary; or where a differing judgement in one case would result in a change in rating; or where the rating is based upon a sample or sub-sample of five cases or fewer). The panel considers the sizes of any sub-samples used and the percentages for the other key questions within that standard, such as whether they fall within different bandings and the level of divergence, to make this decision.

Overall provider rating

Straightforward scoring rules are used to generate the overall provider rating. Each of the 10 standards will be scored on a 0-3 scale, as listed in the following table.

Score	Rating (standard)
0	Inadequate
1	Requires improvement
2	Good
3	Outstanding ☆

Adding the scores for each standard together produces the overall rating on a 0-30 scale, as listed in the following table.

Score	Rating (overall)
0-6	Inadequate
7-18	Requires improvement
19-30	Good
31-36	Outstanding ☆

We do not include any weightings in the scoring rules. The rationale for this is that all parts of the standards framework are strongly linked to effective service delivery and positive outcomes, and we have restricted ourselves to those that are most essential. Our view is that providers need to focus across all the standards, and we do not want to distort behaviours in any undesirable ways. Furthermore, the underpinning evidence supports including all standards/key questions in the rating, rather than weighting individual elements.