



Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

Youth offending service inspections

External guidance manual

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1. Statement of purpose and values

1.1. Statement of purpose

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending service work with adults and children. We publish reports following each inspection, highlighting good and poor practice. We also rate each organisation as 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Requires improvement' or 'Inadequate'. We are independent of government, and speak independently.

1.2. Values

Influential

We care about making a positive impact on the organisations we inspect and the individuals they work with.

Independent

We ensure that the judgements we make are supported by evidence, and are fair and impartial.

Professional

We work in a respectful, transparent, professional way, listening to and sharing learning internally and externally.

Inclusive

We will work as 'One HMI Probation', valuing and respecting each other's viewpoint and skills, so that everyone feels a part of what we do.

Diverse

We are passionate about diversity and the value that comes through giving everyone a voice in our inspections and the chance to succeed in our organisation.

1.3. Our mandate

HM Chief Inspector of Probation's responsibilities are set out in Section 7 of the *Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000*, as amended by the *Offender Management Act 2007* section 12(3)(a). This requires the Chief Inspector to inspect (section 1) and report to the Secretary of State (section 3) on the arrangements for the provision of probation services.

Under Section 7(6) of the *Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000*, HM Chief Inspector of Probation is also conferred to inspect and report on youth offending teams (YOTs), established under the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998 section 39*, and bodies acting on their behalf.

We are the independent source of fair comment for ministers and the public on the effectiveness of the work of probation and youth justice providers.

Based on our independence, expertise and experience we can uniquely focus on the identification of best and effective practice. We identify when our standards are being met and delivered well and highlight examples of this.

We test the effectiveness of provision and provide assurance. Critically, we make recommendations to identify and disseminate effective practice, challenge poor performance and encourage improvement. We provide evidence-based intelligence for commissioners and providers, designed to play a key part in facilitating and encouraging improvement in effective service delivery.

The impact of COVID-19 on HM Inspectorate of Probation inspections is set out on our website.

1.4. Confidentiality

In group meetings and case interviews with practitioners, we provide an assurance that information shared will only be used in an aggregated form, and will not identify individual staff members, unless immediate action is needed to protect an individual.

We will anonymise information before including it in any publications, but information is not treated as confidential. This extends to all information provided to us in writing or verbally, by staff working for the inspected organisation or under contract to that organisation." We use all available evidence to help us make an inspection judgement. Similarly, information provided to us by stakeholders invited to contribute to the inspection, is not treated as confidential.

2. Overview of youth inspection

2.1. Introduction

The term youth offending team (YOT) is used throughout this document to describe the provision of youth offending services regardless of how they are structured and named locally. The term YOT is consistent with the wording of the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998*.

Key features of the inspection programme are:

- underpinning our inspections and judgements with agreed standards
- rating each YOT using a four-point scale from 'Outstanding' to 'Inadequate'
- the inclusion of out-of-court disposal work alongside sentenced cases
- evidence-based judgements about organisational delivery.

The selection of YOTs for inspection is guided by our published YOT selection criteria¹ and includes both services selected on a random basis and on the basis of potential concerns about performance. The inspection standards cover three domains. Domain one covers organisational delivery, including how well the YOT is led and governed. Domains two and three look at the quality of post-court supervision and the quality of out-of-court disposals respectively.

Most inspections of YOTs are 'single' inspections, where HM Inspectorate of Probation is the only inspectorate involved. A small number of YOTs receive a joint inspection. In these we inspect against the standards across all three domains and include inspectors from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and the Care Quality Commission. In England, social care and learning and skills inspectors are part of the team, and in Wales we are joined by the Care Inspectorate Wales, Health Inspectorate Wales and Estyn. We adapt our inspection methodology to take a proportionate approach to inspecting small YOTs with relatively low caseloads.

We publish a report following each inspection and we also report annually against each standard on the extent to which the enduring aims of youth justice are being met across the system as a whole.

In all our work with YOTs, 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.

2.2. Standards for inspection

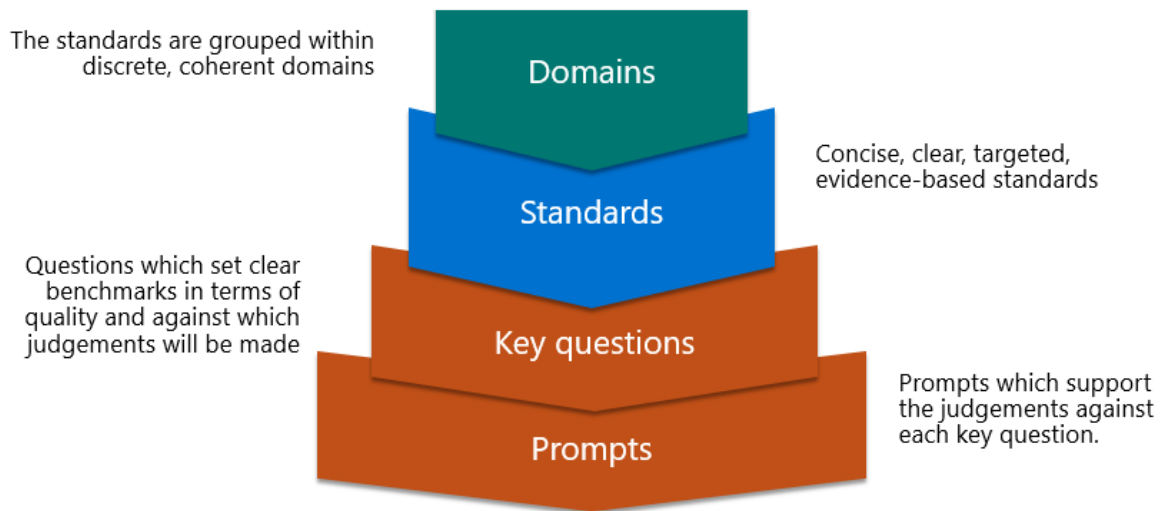
Our standards are based on a set of principles that we think YOTs should meet to deliver high-quality youth justice practice. They are based on established models and frameworks, and are grounded in evidence, learning and experience.

The standards are grouped into domains, with each standard underpinned by key questions and prompts, which aim to be coherent, comprehensive and balanced. Domain one covers organisational arrangements, including governance and leadership, staffing, partnerships and services, information and facilities. Domain two covers the quality of work in cases subject to a court disposal. Domain three covers work delivered under out-of-court

¹ <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/documentation-area/youth-offending-services-inspection/>

disposals. The framework is supported by inspection guidance materials that assist reliable and valid judgements.

Figure 1: The standards structure



This guidance manual sets out the arrangements for the inspection programme, covering all aspects of the inspection process and methodology, as well as roles and responsibilities of HM Inspectorate of Probation staff.

2.3. Inspection principles

How we inspect

We assess quality rather than either the specifics of a process or the use of any particular tool. For example, we consider the quality of assessment in the round rather than the use of any document, tool or process. The wording of our key questions and prompts reflects this.

What we judge

We decide on a rating based on what and how an organisation is achieving. We also acknowledge effort in the report narrative. We are interested in the performance of the organisation at the time we inspect and typically do not make judgements about how policy and practices may influence future impact.

How we score domains

In domains two and three each key question is integral to effective case delivery, linked to the core purposes of youth offending services, and sufficient attention needs to be given to all of them. Therefore, the rating that can be achieved for the standard is set at the lowest score achieved at key question level.

Domain one is different, in that there is a greater number and range of key questions. So, a deficiency against one key question will not necessarily override strengths in the others and a qualitative judgement is made on the appropriate rating.

More information about our standards is available on our website:

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/documentation-area/probation-inspection>

2.4. Summary of inspection phases

The inspection consists of three phases:

- Phase I: Pre-fieldwork planning and preparation
- Phase II: Fieldwork
- Phase III: Post-fieldwork.

Phase I: Pre-fieldwork planning and preparation

The pre-fieldwork phase normally commences four weeks before the fieldwork with the announcement of the inspection and the issue of documentation to assist the planning and preparation. A telephone planning meeting takes place the week following the announcement (normally week -3).

Phase II: Fieldwork

For single inspections, there is one week of fieldwork, during which case inspections and meetings take place. Small YOT inspections run from Monday to Thursday.

Joint inspections only:

The first fieldwork week comprises case inspections only. It is followed by an off-site review week and then a second fieldwork week. During the second fieldwork week the majority of meetings take place, and issues arising out of cases inspected during the first fieldwork week are followed up by partner inspectorates.

Phase III: Post-fieldwork

On completion of the fieldwork phase, the lead and deputy lead inspector prepare draft ratings proposals and summarise evidence and key findings for an internal 'ratings panel' meeting, held the week after fieldwork is completed.

The ratings panel is chaired by the director of operations and includes the lead inspector and the head of youth inspection programme. The Chief Inspector, deputy lead inspector and assistant inspectors attend if available. The panel ensures that ratings fully reflect the balance of the evidence, and that they are sufficiently consistent across inspections. A summary of the ratings panel decision is sent to the inspected body on the Friday after the meeting has been held.

The lead inspector then prepares an inspection report, which is normally submitted to the inspected organisation for factual accuracy checking on the Monday of week 6 (six weeks after the end of fieldwork). There is a deadline to return any comments to the lead inspector and head of youth inspection programme by the Monday of week +8.

The report is normally published in week +12 in England and in week +15 in Wales to allow for translation. We confirm the anticipated publication date once factual accuracy checking is complete.

Welsh Language Scheme

In accordance with the *Welsh Language Act 1993*, HM Inspectorate of Probation has adopted the principle that in the conduct of its inspections in Wales, it will treat the Welsh and English languages equally. HM Inspectorate of Probation has a Welsh Language Scheme which sets out how we deliver services in Welsh. This was approved by the Welsh Language Board on 04 May 2011.

More information can be found on our website:

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-hmi-probation/equalitydiversityinclusion/?highlight=Welsh%20language%20scheme>

3. Phase I: Pre-fieldwork and planning

3.1. The inspection team for phase I

The inspection team for phase I consists of:

- lead inspector
- information and data team
- administrator operations (inspection)
- head of youth inspection programme.

3.2. Pre-fieldwork activity

Key documents and background information are collated by the information and data team to support the lead inspector in planning the inspection.

Background information

The information and data team provides the lead inspector with background information at week -7. This information pack contains published data on caseload, performance, crime levels, proven reoffending, education, training and employment (ETE) information, offending by looked-after children, and population characteristics. The lead inspector assesses and analyses this information before fieldwork.

The background information provided includes:

- children supervised in the community at period end
- first-time entrants
- use of custody
- reoffending rates
- previous inspection information
- MAPPA (multi-agency public protection arrangements) data by area
- list of all community safeguarding or public protection incidents
- published OFSTED/Estyn inspections of local authority child safeguarding arrangements/JTAI [Joint Targeted Area Inspections] for the previous 12 months
- published CQC/HIW inspections of drug and alcohol and mental health treatment
- names and addresses all youth and Crown courts in the area.

The administrator starts to prepare for the inspection four weeks before fieldwork (week -4). After the inspection announcement, the YOT is required to submit the required evidence in advance; identify the case samples for domains two and three; and arrange interviews and meetings with key staff members and stakeholders.

3.3. Inspection announcement

Inspection announcements are normally made on the Friday four weeks before the fieldwork commences. The announcement is made by the lead inspector (or the deputy lead inspector

if the lead inspector is not available) by telephone to the YOT manager, or the most senior manager available.

Following the announcement call, the inspected area receives an email confirming the inspection including the project plan, guidance for submitting domain one evidence in advance, case sample specifications, leaflets for staff, and information about surveys of sentencers and children. We ask the YOT to nominate a link manager to work with HM Inspectorate of Probation to make the necessary arrangements for the fieldwork.

3.4. Project plans

The external project plan provides the inspected organisation with details of key timescales and activities required, from pre-fieldwork to post-fieldwork.

The YOT receives the project plan with the announcement letter, normally at the end of week -4. The nominated link manager from the YOT needs to check the key dates and identify any conflicts with other significant commitments. The link manager should raise any issues with the project plan with the administrator who works with the lead inspector to consider changes where necessary. The YOT should ensure all relevant staff involved in the inspection planning processes are familiar with the project plan.

3.5. Telephone planning meeting

The telephone planning meeting takes place as soon as possible following the announcement, usually on the Tuesday of week -3. The telephone planning meeting may simply be a one-to-one conversation between the lead inspector and the link manager, or it may involve others.

The lead inspector facilitates the meeting and covers the following:

- the impact of COVID-19 on the YOT, and agreement about any specific timescales to be covered by evidence in advance
- an outline of the inspection methodology in more detail, explaining the domains and processes
- case sample selection criteria, spreadsheet completion and deadline for return to HM Inspectorate of Probation (section 4 provides detailed guidance on the criteria for each domain)
- a discussion about the required evidence to be submitted in advance of the inspection
- clarification of the local organisational arrangements, offices where the case assessments will take place OR an explanation of how inspection activity will be conducted remotely due to the impact of COVID-19
- case sample issues
- case manager interviews and scheduling
- surveys to be conducted, including all staff and volunteers, a youth court representative and a text survey of children
- management meetings and other inspection activity
- access to IT, rooms and buildings (if required)
- proposed schedules and key dates

- arrangements for the on-site logistics meeting (if required) and the local authority presentation.

Joint inspections only

The planning meeting also considers wider partnership issues that need to be included in the second fieldwork week. The YOT is asked to nominate a link manager from within the YOT for each partner inspector, with responsibility for the aspect of local arrangements that the inspector is focusing on. This link manager will be the inspector's first point of contact when making final arrangements whilst on-site. A more detailed planning meeting for the second fieldwork week takes place during fieldwork week one.

A list of standard meetings is provided for all inspections (see section 5). The planning meeting provides the opportunity, for the lead inspector to request additional meetings during fieldwork.

The planning meeting is documented by the lead, including notes on any key questions raised by the YOT. A copy of the minutes is issued to the link manager, the HM Inspectorate of Probation administrator and any other relevant people.

3.6. Evidence in advance

HM Inspectorate of Probation provides the YOT with a checklist of standard evidence required in advance, and a list of further evidence that should be submitted if available. We provide a domain one evidence source grid for the YOT to complete to map submitted evidence against our standards. The lead inspector uses this evidence to assess against the domain one standards and to identify relevant topics to be followed up during fieldwork.

Standard evidence in advance (single and joint inspections)

- A brief description of the YOT's local context, up to three pages
- YOT organisation chart, including names and roles of managers
- Structure chart showing where the YOT sits in relation to the local authority
- Description of local arrangements for out-of-court disposals, including any arrangements/tools/processes in place for assessment, planning and delivery of interventions
- Latest approved YOT business plan
- Current YOT improvement plan
- Log of attendance at the YOT management board (previous 12 months)
- Minutes of all YOT management board meetings (previous 12 months)
- Agenda and all papers of the most recent YOT management board
- List of all community safeguarding or public protection incidents (previous 12 months)

Where available, the following information is also required:

- Evidence of how the YOT responds to inspections, including HM Inspectorate of Probation thematic inspections
- Current local strategy and action plan for prevention work

- Local safeguarding children policy
- Local policy for assessing and managing risk of harm
- List of policies and procedures on case management, including safety and well-being and public protection
- List of memoranda of understanding, service level agreements, secondment arrangements
- Evidence of how the YOT management board monitors performance
- Evidence of how the YOT management board holds members and partners to account
- Latest available analyses of local offending
- Details of arrangements with partners for managing risk of harm to others or addressing safety and well-being of children
- Copy of any service agreement with the youth court
- Evidence of how the YOT management board makes sure services are suitable for the diversity of the local population, including data on levels of disproportionality in the local youth justice system and YOT caseload and details of local actions being taken to deal with this
- Current strategy for seeking the views of children, parents/carers and victims, including examples of how they made a difference to services
- Evidence of how the YOT has used learning from community safeguarding and public protection incidents (CSPPIs) and other events to drive improvements
- Evidence of how quality assurance systems or other processes have been used to drive improvement
- Evidence of how staff training needs are addressed and assessed
- Evidence of how workload and staffing levels are managed and how cases are allocated to staff
- Evidence of how the YOT partnership makes sure the nature and diversity of workforce responds to local needs

Small YOT Inspections only

For small YOT inspections, the YOT is not required to complete the evidence in advance grid. We request that YOT submit a maximum of 20 pieces of written evidence. We ask the YOT to focus on identifying the best available evidence, rather than all available evidence. The YOT can use up to three of the 20 pieces for anything specific/local/innovative or bespoke that they would wish inspectors to see.

Standard evidence in advance (small YOTs):

- a brief description of the YOT's local context, up to three pages
- YOT organisation chart, including names and roles of managers
- structure chart showing where the YOT sits in relation to the local authority
- latest approved YOT business/strategic plan
- log of attendance at the YOT management board (previous 12 months)

- minutes of all YOT management board meetings (previous 12 months)
- most recent YOT quarterly performance report
- current YOT improvement plan
- local policy or overview describing arrangements for out-of-court disposals, including any arrangements/tools/processes in place for assessment, planning and delivery of interventions
- evidence of resettlement policies/overview and working arrangements with partners (eg. YCS/Secure Estate)
- list of all community safeguarding or public protection incidents (previous 12 months)
- evidence of how the YOT responds to inspections and internal/external QA audits or reports, including HM Inspectorate of Probation thematic inspections, national reports, reoffending data etc)
- local safeguarding children policy
- local YOT policies for case management, managing risk of harm and safety & well-being
- list of memoranda of understanding, service level agreements, secondment arrangements
- evidence for seeking the views of children, parents/carers and victims, including examples of how they made a difference to services
- evidence of how staff training needs are addressed and assessed (for example, workforce development audit/plan).

Where available, the following information may also be submitted:

- up to three pieces of evidence describing any innovative or bespoke work, such as a commissioned arrangement or a specific project.

Additional guidance

- Evidence should be recent or current (normally produced within the last 12-18 months, unless it is a key policy that has been in place longer).
- Use of our YOT Management Board attendance log is optional, if the YOT has a local register that can be submitted.
- We do not want details of community safeguarding or public protection incidents, just a log.

Completion of domain one evidence in advance grid

- (Not applicable for small YOT inspections)
- The YOT uses the domain one evidence in advance grid to assist gathering of documentary evidence against the domain one standards, key questions and prompts. The YOT maps the submitted documents against the published domain one inspection standards. Where evidence is contained in longer documents, it is helpful to indicate the section/page where the lead inspector can locate the relevant evidence.

- In many cases, documents from the standard evidence in advance list will cover the relevant questions. In other cases, the YOT may need to identify their own additional evidence to submit. If the YOT has no available evidence for a particular question, it is better to leave that question blank than to submit material that does not inform our standards. HM Inspectorate of Probation asks that the YOT sends their best evidence, rather than all available evidence, to inform each of the key questions. It is not necessary to provide evidence against each prompt; normally, three-five documents for each key question is sufficient. The lead inspector may request additional evidence as the inspection progresses.

Organisational data spreadsheet

An organisational data spreadsheet is sent to the YOT with the announcement letter. This document requests a range of data, including the budget, staff profile, caseloads and services. We request this to allow us to:

- triangulate against the data collected from other sources, including case managers, on issues like caseload and staff engagement
- ensure that contextual data related to inspection of domain one is collected in a consistent way across different services
- support further, national level research and analysis of the factors underlying high quality youth offending provision, to advance our understanding of effective practice.

We recognise that some services may not be able to provide all this data. Where data is not available, or does not exactly meet our specifications, the spreadsheet allows this to be explained.

Submission of evidence in advance

Evidence in advance, including the domain one evidence in advance grid and the organisational data spreadsheet, must be supplied electronically to HM Inspectorate of Probation. Our email system and servers are part of the MoJ secure network. Evidence should be sent to youthinspections@HMIProbation.gov.uk and copied to the lead inspector.

If the YOT has access to an existing secure website to allow information sharing, and would prefer to use that method to share evidence in advance, the lead inspector can facilitate that.

Joint inspections only

The lead inspector shares relevant evidence in advance with partner inspectors, prior to the second fieldwork week. The following additional evidence is requested, to support the work of partner inspectors during their fieldwork. Some of this information may need to be requested from the relevant partner organisations.

Joint inspection only, additional evidence in advance:

- structure chart and names of education, training and employment (ETE), health and substance misuse, police and other specialist staff working within, or closely with, the YOT
- structure chart that shows links between YOT and other agencies in the area, including criminal justice, local authority, committee safety health and children's services

- local police force procedure for out-of-court disposals, including any policy/procedures used to decide when to refer children who have received, or are being considered for, and out-of-court disposal to the YOT for assessment or intervention
- list of children currently supervised subject to multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) and Integrated Offender Management (IOM)
- list of children currently subject to MAPPA management (level 2 or 3) or IOM
- list of all children who have received an out-of-court disposal (including any issue directly by police) in the previous three months; indicating whether or not the case was referred to the YOT for any reason
- list of currently supervised children in receipt of alcohol or substance misuse treatment, physical or emotional health intervention, speech and language intervention, or awaiting treatment or assessment for any of these issues
- details of health and substance misuse providers (including liaison and diversion) working with the YOT, and contact details for a link manager in each organisation
- list of all children currently supervised by the YOT who have a child protection plan, child in need plan, or are looked after (including information about whether the inspected local authority is home or host). Also note whether any of these children are listed as missing from home or identified as being at risk of criminal or sexual exploitation
- list of providers of early help and/or other specialist services working with the YOT
- monitoring information that shows ETE achievements of children supervised by the YOT, including those at school, pupil referral unit, custodial institutions and elsewhere
- list of current education providers for children supervised by the YOT (pupil referral units, alternative education or equivalent)
- list of children currently being supervised who are listed as children missing education or identified as not in education, training or employment.

This additional evidence is submitted during the week prior to the second fieldwork week, and is discussed in more detail at the planning meeting during the first fieldwork week.

3.7. Presentation by the local authority

On the first day of the fieldwork, there is a presentation from the local authority chief executive or chair of the YOT management board. The lead inspector should be informed in advance if a substitute will deliver the presentation. Other relevant staff may be involved or attend, as agreed with the lead inspector. For small YOT inspections, the presentation can be delivered by the YOT manager, rather than the YOT Management Board Chair.

Guidance on the presentation

Please cover the following, with specific reference to domain one (organisational delivery) of the HM Inspectorate of Probation youth inspection standards:

- What does HM Inspectorate of Probation need to know to understand the local context for this YOT?

- How does the governance and leadership of the YOT support and promote the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?
- How are staff within the YOT empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?
- Is there a comprehensive range of high-quality services in place to enable personalised and responsive provision for all children?
- Is timely and relevant information available, with appropriate facilities in place, to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children?
- How have you responded to findings and recommendations from previous inspections, including thematic inspections?
- What are your current challenges?
- What are your priorities for further improvement?

These questions relate specifically to domain one (organisational delivery) of the HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection standards for youth offending work. The presentation should directly address the inspection standards and their supporting questions and prompts, and should support the inspection team to find evidence to make their judgements. Any specific examples or evidence presented should relate to work carried out within the previous 18 months.

Arrangements for presentation

One hour is allowed for the presentation, to include 10 minutes for any discussion. The purpose of the discussion is to identify additional sources of evidence, either documents that can be provided or individuals or groups with whom the inspectors could meet during this second fieldwork week.

An electronic copy (Word, PowerPoint or pdf) of the presentation should be provided to the lead inspector. A paper copy should also be provided at the start of the presentation to all inspectors who are present, to assist them when making notes (not required for inspections conducted remotely).

How evidence from the presentation will be used in the inspection:

The presentation and materials will be used to help the lead inspector prepare for the inspection, and, to inform inspection findings on domain one (organisational delivery).

The presentation should not be regarded as a substitute for the structured evidence in advance submission.

Joint inspections only

The presentation takes place on the Monday afternoon of the second fieldwork week. It is usually attended by the full inspection team, including partner inspectors.

We do not provide a template for the presentation.

3.8. Local assessors

On most youth inspections, HM Inspectorate of Probation include local assessors in the inspection team. The exception is some of the small YOT inspections, where local assessors are not used, given the short period of fieldwork, smaller case samples and the capacity of an allocated assistant inspector to provide support and oversee. In the few small YOT

inspections where local assessors are used, they will be experienced and have undertaken inspection activity within the core HM Inspectorate of Probation programme previously. Local assessors will not be used in inspections where fieldwork is conducted remotely. Local assessors are professionals from other YOTs, working with HM Inspectorate of Probation on a short-term basis. During inspections they examine and assess the quality of practice carried out by front-line staff in individual cases, against HM Inspectorate of Probation's published inspection standards.

Local assessors:

- complete the HM Inspectorate of Probation case assessment training
- work on a YOT inspection team for a full week each, in a location other than their normal place of work (or any other place where they may have a conflict of interest)
- receive support and assistance from HMI Probation inspection team while working on inspection.

4. Case sample

4.1. Case sample confidence levels

The margin of error (or confidence interval) for our case assessment findings depends on the selected sample size: the larger the sample size is as a proportion of the overall caseload, the surer we can be that our findings reflect the eligible population.

The case samples for youth inspections consist of domain two (post-court) cases and domain three (out-of-court disposal) cases. Based on what previous inspections have told us is a typical ratio of out-of-court to post-court cases, in the combined sample we draw for each YOT, 60 per cent will be domain two cases and 40 per cent domain three. In our standard inspections, the size of domain two case samples ranges from 12 to 68, and the size of domain three case samples ranges from 8 to 46. The total size of the case sample depends on the size of the YOT. In small YOT inspections we aim for total case samples of between 7 and 18.

The larger case samples are handled by having more assistant inspectors and local assessors on site during the inspection fieldwork week. Our initial calculations for the required domain two sample sizes have been based on achieving a margin of error of five percentage points and a confidence level of 80 per cent for a simple random sample of monthly commencements. This means, for example, that if our inspection of a sample of cases shows that 47 per cent are being satisfactorily supervised we can be 80 per cent sure that the true percentage for the total eligible caseload is between 42 per cent and 52 per cent. Importantly, this assumes that the sample is truly random – which links to the sampling method (see next section). For inspection purposes, an 80 per cent confidence level provides a balance between cost-efficiency and statistical precision.

We calculate our sample sizes based on annual published data about your workloads. Occasionally, a YOT may find the number of cases within our specified time periods is smaller than the required case sample. In those circumstances, we inspect all available cases, but do not extend the case sample timeframe.

4.2. Stratification

The case sampling approach is based on the following two stages:

Stage 1: Where applicable, in larger YOTs, cases are chosen from across sites or teams. For most YOTs, this stage is not required.

Stage 2: HMI Probation then adopts a stratified sampling approach to the selection of the final inspection sample for both post-court and out-of-court cases. We ensure that the proportion of cases in the selected sample in each stratification group closely matches the proportion in the longlist.

Stratified sampling – the eligible population (of cases being supervised by the YOT) is divided into non-overlapping strata (subgroups), and cases are then randomly selected from within each stratum. The number of strata and the variables used are linked to the issues being explored (that is, where there are likely to be differences in our findings). The stratification variables for children (our secondary sampling units) are gender, disposal type and the assessed level of safety and well-being and risk of serious harm (RoSH).

4.3. Specification and selection

The case sample longlist should be submitted by the YOT by the Friday of week -3. The lead inspector discusses the impact of COVID-19 on the YOT, and will be mindful of this when selecting cases to inspect.

Lead inspectors will give a bespoke briefing to the assistant inspectors about how to apply suitable proportionality when making inspection judgements where samples include cases that have had shorter/longer periods of supervision than we normally expect.

Within each sub-group, the aim is to inspect the maximum number of cases for that group (rather than the pure 80 per cent confidence numbers). In some circumstances the domain two and domain three ratio will be adapted if there is a shortfall in the numbers of one type of case, and surplus of the other type of case.

Domain two (post-court) case sample specification

The YOT is asked to provide a longlist of all cases sentenced to a referral order, community order or custody during a specific timescale. The sample should exclude:

- cases where the initial order was not made out to the inspected YOT
- cases where the only requirement was a curfew, unpaid work or attendance centre
- youth rehabilitation orders where there is no element of supervision or intensive supervision and surveillance requirement
- cases consisting of an extension to an existing referral order.

On the case sample longlist, the YOT is asked to identify any cases that potentially meet our exclusion criteria:

- cases that have been formally transferred out of the YOT, or have terminated within four weeks of their commencement or release from custody
- cases where the inspected YOT acted as a 'host' YOT for a Looked After Child
- cases which are (or have been during the sample period) subject to community safeguarding and public protection incident (CSPPI) procedures.

HM Inspectorate of Probation may exclude cases meeting any of these criteria from inspection, but cases must still be included on the case sample spreadsheet.

The HM Inspectorate of Probation administrator organises the longlist and applies the stratification variables using the YOT case sample calculator. The stratification groups are:

- boys: community sentence; high/very high RoSH and/or safety and wellbeing
- boys: community sentence; non-high/very high RoSH and/or safety and wellbeing
- boys: post-custody
- girls.

A final selected case sample is then chosen, avoiding excluded cases but matching the stratification proportions. This is used for preparing the schedule.

Domain three (out-of-court) case sample selection

The YOT is asked to provide a longlist of cases subject to an out-of-court disposal during a specific timescale. The sample should include **all** out-of-court disposal cases, where the YOT has been asked to undertake an assessment **and/or** deliver interventions; **including**

services delivered directly by the YOT, delivered under other local authority or partnership arrangements, or delivered on a commissioned basis by another provider.

On the case sample longlist, the YOT asked to identify any cases that potentially meet our exclusion criteria:

- cases where the child lives outside the YOT area (including Looked After Children where the YOT is the home YOT), unless the YOT being inspected undertook initial assessment in that case
- cases where the consideration for delivery of an out-of-court disposal was undertaken by a different police force, unless the inspected YOT undertook initial assessment in that case
- any cases which are (or have been during the sample period) subject to community safeguarding and public protection incident (CSPPI) procedures
- cases that have been transferred out unless the inspected YOT undertook initial assessment in the case.

HM Inspectorate of Probation may exclude cases meeting any of these criteria from inspection, but cases subject to these potential exclusion criteria must still be included on the case sample spreadsheet.

The HM Inspectorate of Probation administrator organises the longlist and applies the stratification variables using the YOT case sample calculator. The stratification groups are:

- boys: youth cautions
- boys: youth conditional cautions
- boys: community resolutions or equivalent
- girls.

A final selected case sample is then chosen, avoiding excluded cases but matching the stratification proportions. This is used to prepare the schedule.

5. Schedules

5.1. Weekly schedules

Fieldwork week – single inspections

The lead and deputy inspectors are each allocated two or three cases per inspection, depending on the YOT inspected. The remainder of their activity during the fieldwork week includes gathering domain one evidence, through meetings with YOT staff and other stakeholders. A team of assistant inspectors and local assessors undertakes most case inspections and, where necessary, lead and facilitate meetings. On some inspections, assistant inspectors may also have time allocated to conduct meetings or observations.

Fieldwork weeks – small YOT inspections

There is no deputy lead inspector on small YOT inspections. The lead inspector does not inspect cases, as they undertake all the scheduled domain one meetings and gathering of evidence.

The YOT is issued with the final schedules for the fieldwork week by the Wednesday of the week before fieldwork starts. The schedule identifies the time of each case manager interview, which lasts up to 60 minutes for a domain two case and 45 minutes for a domain three case. The YOT should inform case managers of the times scheduled for interviews.

Fieldwork weeks – joint inspection

The first fieldwork week for joint inspections consists almost entirely of case inspections for domains two and three.

The lead and deputy lead inspectors then normally spend a week off-site reviewing the evidence from the case inspections, before the second fieldwork week takes. During the second fieldwork week, the lead and deputy conduct most of the domain one meetings. They are joined by partner inspectors from HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and the Care Quality Commission, and dedicated social care and education and skills inspectors, who follow up any case-related issues identified in the initial fieldwork week and undertake meetings with relevant staff about the partnership arrangements. These include a mix of one-to-one and group meetings. The YOT needs to provide all those taking part in interviews and meetings with information about the venue, date and timings.

5.2. Domain one meetings

Domain one scheduling

Planning the schedule for domain one takes place during the pre-fieldwork phase. The list of core meetings below sets out the standard meetings that inspectors hold during the fieldwork week.

An outline schedule is sent by HM Inspectorate of Probation to the inspected service following the announcement of an inspection, indicating the days and times inspectors are available for meetings. Some meetings are fixed in the schedule, for others the YOT has the flexibility to identify when it is most convenient to hold them.

Depending on the geography of the inspected YOT, some meetings may be scheduled to take place by telephone. Depending on the YOT, an individual might need to cover more than one of the tasks outlined in the list of core meetings. In that case, we only need to

schedule one meeting with that person. Similarly, if the role identified is covered jointly by two or more people, the YOT can schedule for all of them to attend.

For group meetings, the optimum number of attendees is between six and 10. For inspections being delivered remotely, the lead inspector discusses with the YOT the preferred means of conducting group meetings, which may be using Microsoft Teams or Skype.

This list below covers the core meetings we routinely wish to cover. Other meetings may be arranged either during the planning meeting, or as the fieldwork progresses.

YOT inspection meetings – single inspections

Individual meetings:

- YOT manager (or designated manager with direct operational and strategic responsibility for delivery of YOT services)
- Management Board Chair (for small YOT inspections, there is no separate meeting with the chair, who attends the main meeting with board members).

Group meetings:

- YOT management team (operational and other managers, excluding the YOT manager)
- staff focus group (including case managers and support staff, covering court disposals and out-of-court work)
- partnership staff group (representing staff of statutory partner organisations either co-located in the YOT, or with direct responsibility for working with YOT cases, and any other partners the YOT works closely with)
- Board members group (including all statutory partners, but excluding the Board Chair except for small YOT inspections, and any members directly employed by the YOT)
- partnership managers group (link managers from statutory and other partners)
- restorative justice and victim workers (staff directly delivering restorative justice, victim engagement and reparation)
- out-of-court disposal scheme (operational managers from YOT, police decision-maker and other partners, including link to other diversionary/early prevention work)
volunteers (including referral order panel members, may also include mentors or other volunteers if used) (not required for small YOT inspections).

YOT inspection meetings – additional meetings for joint inspections only

Individual meetings:

- information manager and quality assurance/performance manager (people responsible for provision of information to the Management Board and internal quality assurance)
- local authority chief executive (unless also Management Board Chair; in YOTs covering multiple local authorities, this meeting could involve a group of chief executives, or one acting as a representative)
- local authority elected member (with clear responsibility covering the work of the YOT)

- probation services link managers (operational link managers, NPS and CRC, including line manager officer of any seconded staff).

Police inspector meetings:

- YOT seconded police staff
- line manager of YOT secondment police staff
- local MAPPA coordinator
- police Integrated Offender Management (IOM) link
- police member of YOT Management Board
- observation of internal YOT risk planning forum (if scheduled)
- observation of delivery of out-of-court disposal
- visit to local police station and custody suite.

Health inspector meetings:

- YOT manager responsible for liaison with health partners
- individual meetings (by specialism) with health staff seconded to or working closely with the YOT
- individual meetings (by specialism) with line managers of manager of health staff seconded to or working closely with the YOT
- health member of YOT management board (separate meetings if multiple)
- local NHS Commissioner for children
- child and adolescent mental health strategic lead (if not health member of Management Board).

Children's social care inspector meetings:

- lead operational manager in YOT for safeguarding and child protection
- strategic lead in children's services with responsibility for children known to the YOT and/or at risk of offending (focus on Looked After Children, care leavers, children in need, children with child protection plans)
- children's social care member of Management Board
- director of children's services (England)/director of social services (Wales) (if not the social care member of Management Board)
- representatives of other strategic boards (LSCB/scrutiny) (any arrangements responsible for overseeing the effectiveness of joint work with the YOT)
- local authority children's services operational managers, including managers responsible for care leavers, out of area provision, Looked After Children.

Education, learning and skills inspector meetings:

- Education, training and employment (ETE) workers in the YOT or engaging closely with the YOT
- YOT middle manager responsible for ETE workers in the YOT or engaging closely with the YOT

- learning and skills or education members of the Management Board
- senior officer education (England) or equivalent/director of education (Wales) (if not the education member of Management Board)
- local provider of information, advice and guidance services
- education welfare link for the YOT in the local authority
- observation of education/training provision attended by children from the YOT.

We recognise that arrangements vary between YOTs and local authorities, so the standard list of meetings is just for guidance. In general, we do not want to meet with the same person more than once, and the planning meeting is an opportunity to identify the most relevant attendees.

5.3. Team meetings

Team meetings for the inspection team are held on the Wednesday afternoon for all inspections. There is an additional meeting on Friday morning for standard single inspections, and the first fieldwork week of joint inspections. During the second fieldwork week of joint inspections, team meetings are held daily. A meeting room may be required for this; no ICT access is required in this room.

6. Phase II: Fieldwork

6.1. Methodology

Domain one: organisational delivery

In domain one, the lead and deputy lead inspectors focus on governance and leadership, staff, partnerships and services, and information and facilities. During the pre-fieldwork period, the lead inspector assesses the evidence submitted in advance by the YOT, identifying any gaps or areas for clarification in the evidence for standards and key questions. The fieldwork week (two weeks for joint inspections) includes meetings where further evidence can be gathered, and provides an opportunity to triangulate evidence and information. Inspectors are looking for evidence of the impact of organisational delivery on the quality of work in cases inspected in domains two and three.

For inspections during the period where YOT service delivery has been impacted by COVID-19, inspectors focus on evidence that is not affected by the COVID-19 period.

Domain two: post-court supervision

Domain two centres on the quality of practice. We examine those tasks relating to the supervision of children, specifically assessing, planning, implementing and reviewing. The lead and deputy inspectors undertake some case inspections, with most cases completed by assistant inspectors and local assessors. The case inspections take place during the fieldwork week. Section four provides more detailed information about the selection process, exclusion criteria and sample sizes.

Case inspections include reading and assessing relevant information available through electronic records and assessment and planning tools. Inspectors need access to the local case management system and any other electronic recording system. YOTs need to provide any additional paper documents relevant to the inspected case.

We undertake interviews with the case manager for each case within the selected sample. During the period impacted by COVID-19, interviews will be scheduled using video or telephone conferencing arrangements, rather than face-to-face meetings. Case discussions cover assessment, planning, implementation and reviewing. Case managers are also asked about their broader experience of management oversight, and access to services for children. Where the case manager is unavailable, an interview can be held with a suitable replacement. If this is not possible, the case is inspected as a file read.

Domain three: out-of-court disposals

Domain three examines the quality of practice in the supervision of children subject to out-of-court disposal supervision, including assessment, planning, implementation, joint working. This is inspected using the same methodology as domain two. Section four provides more detailed information about the selection process, exclusion criteria and sample sizes.

Joint inspections

When the YOT is subject to a joint inspection, domains two and three are inspected during the first fieldwork week.

The cases are then reviewed by the relevant partner inspectors at the start of the second fieldwork week, and any activities or further information are followed up during that week.

The lead inspector identifies lines of enquiries and summarises the initial findings from the first fieldwork week.

Dealing with cases that should have been excluded

Occasionally, during fieldwork, it becomes apparent that a case on the schedule does not meet the case sample specification, and should have been excluded at an earlier stage. If this happens, the inspector will have a brief conversation with the case manager to let them know that the case should not have been put forward for inspection. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause.

The inspector then speaks to the deputy lead inspector about whether a substitute case needs to be identified as a file read. If possible, the inspector conducting the file read arranges a telephone conversation or brief meeting with the case manager.

6.2. Domain guidance material

Guidance has been developed for each domain. This explains how evidence should be assessed and how to form judgements against key questions and standards. The purpose of the guidance is to provide advice, consistency and a shared understanding of the required expectations. The guidance material is separated into the following documents:

- Domain one: rules and guidance (RaG) and ratings characteristics documents
- Domain two: case assessment rules and guidance (CARaG)
- Domain three: case assessment rules and guidance (CARaG).

Purpose of the domain one rules and guidance

The domain one rules and guidance explains how evidence should be assessed and how judgements should be formed against key questions and standards. The rules and guidance are based on international and national youth offending standards and rules, and our own standards and benchmarks.

Role of the rating characteristics

The rating characteristics indicate what will guide a lead inspector to recommend a specific rating. They provide a framework to support the lead inspector's recommendation rather than being a checklist; we do not expect every characteristic to be present for the corresponding rating to be given.

The characteristics for 'Good' and 'Requires improvement' are closely aligned to the key questions and prompts in the standards framework.

The characteristics for 'Outstanding' capture whether the organisation is:

- innovative and creative
- forward-looking and proactive if
- open and transparent
- supportive, empowering and inclusive
- agile and responsive
- collaborative and outward-looking.

The characteristics for 'Inadequate' capture whether the organisation is:

- solely reactive
- defensive and blaming
- characterised by division and conflict
- unresponsive
- inward-looking.

Purpose of the domain two and three case assessment rules and guidance

Domain two and domain three case assessment rules and guidance (CARaGs) are comprehensive sets of published rules and guidance to be followed by inspectors and local assessors in their assessment of individual cases. The CARaGs promote transparency and consistency in our inspection of cases. Inspection staff and local assessors should use the appropriate CARaG as a reference document when assessing a case.

Guidance is provided in the CARaGs for the key questions and prompts. The CARaGs are updated regularly to ensure they remain consistent with any changes that we make at standard, question and prompt level and so that they remain linked to evidence. The CARaGs also contain links where relevant to more detailed guidance.

Copies of the guidance documents can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Probation website. <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/documentation-area/youth-offending-services-inspection/>

Impact of COVID-19 on inspection judgements

We recognise the impact of COVID-19 on the ability of YOTs to provide their services, and the importance of giving a fair assessment of the work of YOTs during periods impacted by contingency arrangements or exceptional delivery model arrangements.

As far as possible, inspectors will:

- focus on evidence that is not affected by the COVID-19 period
- ensure that focus group discussions or meetings with leaders focus on periods not affected by the COVID-19 period
- exceptionally, discuss with the head of youth inspection programme how to take account of any strong evidence from the COVID-19 period, either as good practice or as a matter of concern.

6.3. The inspection team for phase II

The inspection team for phase II consists of:

- lead inspector
- deputy lead inspector (not for small YOT inspections)
- assistant inspectors.
- local assessors (some inspections).

6.4. Inspection sites (including administration/business support)

During the pre-fieldwork phase, the inspection sites are identified and the inspection team allocated to specific offices. The Inspectorate is aware that private office space may not be

available in all inspection sites for the whole fieldwork phase. The YOT may allocate the team to a desk in an open office with access to private interview rooms, in accordance with the schedule.

On arrival, a YOT representative gives an induction to the building, including a health and safety briefing. Inspection staff need access to fobs, and information on opening and closing times.

For inspections conducted remotely, all interviews and meetings will be scheduled to take place using video or telephone conferencing.

6.5. IT access to case files

All inspection staff need access to, and a briefing on, the local YOT case management system. The lead inspector arranges for IT access during the planning meetings with the YOT.

Inspectors should be provided with any additional paper documents or access to local folders if relevant information is stored separately.

For organisations subject to a joint inspection, the partnership inspectorates need access to their relevant case recording systems for fieldwork week two.

For inspections conducted remotely, we expect the YOT to arrange remote access to case management systems for the inspection team. If the YOT cannot arrange this, they will need to arrange for laptops to be couriered to the inspection team, so that case records can be accessed.

6.6. Case manager interviews

As part of our assessment of a case, an inspector interviews the case manager for that case. This interview provides an opportunity for the case under inspection to be discussed in more detail, and to gather evidence for domain two or three. Inspectors provide an introduction and overview to the case manager to help them understand the process of the inspection. The interview includes constructive feedback to the case manager, delivered in a productive and sensitive manner to encourage reflective discussions. The detail of the interview will not be discussed with line managers, unless there are serious concerns about the case (prompting an 'alert' to be raised – see below).

Where the case manager is not available, we ask that another suitable person with a sufficient understanding of the case attends the interview. That would normally be the line manager or supervisor of the case manager, although in some circumstances another colleague with knowledge of the case may be suitable. The inspector will contact that person prior to the interview to check how much they know about the case. If they have little knowledge of the case, a telephone call during the scheduled interview slot may be arranged as an alternative, to avoid unnecessary travel. If no alternative is available, the case is assessed based on the written material alone (as a file read).

We sometimes get asked if the second person can attend the interview with the current case manager. Our preference is to interview the current case manager alone, with following exceptions:

- where a recent change of case manager means the previous one can add something useful to the assessment of the case
- where a second person has played a key role in delivery of an intervention

- where the responsible officer is very new to the role and needs support from a colleague.

6.7. Alert process

Individual alerts

We have a responsibility to act on our concerns if we identify a significant actual or potential risk of harm to other people, or to the individual concerned, or where there is organisational practice that requires immediate attention. The following procedures provide all inspection staff with an effective and consistent mechanism for tackling serious situations that require immediate attention.

An alert encompasses practice, or practice omissions, that require immediate remedial action to be taken (usually by the organisation responsible for the case) to reduce or contain an identifiable, significant and imminent risk.

Inspection staff should ask themselves:

- what might happen if no action is taken?
- how serious is the risk?
- when might it happen (that is, how imminent is it)?

If we are concerned that there is danger to life and limb, or an incident from which recovery will be difficult or impossible, or that an offence has taken place or is taking place (for example, fraud), then we need to act.

Through the individual alert process we are seeking assurance, confirmed by evidence, that actions have been taken. We do not manage the risk directly. Any incidents recorded via the individual alert system may inform the inspection findings or recommendations. For inspections during periods impacted by COVID-19, our individual and organisational alert procedures can be invoked regardless of the timeframe in which the criteria for these are met.

Organisational Alerts

The organisational alert procedure provides all inspection staff with an effective and consistent mechanism for tackling situations of identifiable, systemic, significant and imminent risk which require immediate attention. Organisational alerts are not designed to address general poor practice even if this is on large scale.

The purpose of the organisational alert procedure is to assist inspected bodies to address issues of identifiable, systemic, significant and imminent risk where this has not otherwise been done. The fact that an organisational alert has been raised will be described in the published inspection report.

6.8. Meeting format

Meetings with groups of staff should ideally consist of six to 10 people; in larger groups, some participants could be overlooked, while smaller ones might not generate sufficient diversity of views. Staff should be of the same grade (or doing the same role), and should not be included in groups with their line managers or senior managers. If attendees are not of the expected role or grade, inspectors may advise them that their attendance is not required. Certain meetings might require consistency of factors such as gender, age and ethnicity of attendees.

Meetings with groups normally last between 45 and 90 minutes. The meeting should take place in a space that is private, not subject to interruptions and with sufficient comfortable seating. The inspected organisation is responsible for identifying the best location for meetings to take place, ensuring there is a good representation.

For meetings conducted by video or telephone conference, the inspection schedule contains instructions for participants about how to join the meeting. To enable participants to play a full part in the meeting, the numbers of participants joining a remote meeting should be a maximum of six.

6.9. Closing the inspection fieldwork

The fieldwork phase on single inspections ends on Friday at 1pm. For small YOT inspections, the fieldwork normally ends on Thursday at 1pm. For joint inspections, the second week of fieldwork concludes on Thursday evening.

On the final day of the inspection, the lead inspector:

- ensures all fobs/security passes have been returned
- explains the process for confirming ratings for standards and the overall rating for the organisation
- has a final conversation with the head of service about how the inspection fieldwork has gone, and arranges for a telephone call after the ratings panel
- outlines the process for report writing and submission of the draft report
- discusses the process if there are factual inaccuracies in the draft report
- explains the process for challenging ratings
- highlights key dates and the next steps for improvement plans and final report publication
- explains that the head of inspection programme will contact the SPOC or chief executive after publication of the report, for their general feedback about the conduct of the inspection.

Single and small YOT inspections

At the end of fieldwork, the lead inspector will not have a full analysis of data, and the findings will not have been discussed at the ratings panel. Therefore, it is not possible to provide feedback on findings to the YOT at this stage.

Joint inspections

In the final meeting with the head of service, on the Thursday morning of the second week of fieldwork, the lead inspector gives some feedback, where possible, about the anticipated ratings for domains two and three. No feedback is given about the ratings for domain one at this stage. There is an opportunity for discussion of these after the Inspectorate's ratings panel has met and the ratings panel report has been agreed and shared with the inspected service, which normally takes place five days after the end of fieldwork.

6.10. Quality assurance

HM Inspectorate of Probation undertake a range of quality assurance activity, both on-site during inspection fieldwork, and remotely. The lead inspector informs the link manager of any planned quality assurance activity.

Our approach to quality assurance is designed to validate the quality of the judgments we are making across all our inspection domains and identify areas for improvement in the inspection methodology. The objective is to ensure that inspection practice, judgements and reports:

- are of consistently high standard
- maintain our reputation for high-quality inspection and provide assurance to stakeholders that the judgements we make are sound and backed-up by the available evidence
- evolve to reflect feedback and learning on what is working and what needs to be clarified or changed
- support inspectors to understand where their inspection skills require development
- identify improvement opportunities in our processes/systems and training.

Feedback from assurance activity informs our approach to identifying priorities for individual and group development, as well as improving our methodology by identifying where additional guidance and clarity may be required.

Quality assurance strategy

The HM Inspectorate of Probation quality assurance strategy is designed to be manageable and proportionate to the risk. Our approach assures the following:

- domain one judgements made by the lead and deputy lead inspectors
- the judgements our inspectors make in probation domain two cases and youth domain two and domain three cases – including how we assess the information contained in case management and assessment systems, the conduct and approach taken in responsible officer/case manager interviews and how this informs the judgements that we capture in our inspection tools
- the judgements made in probation domain three cases, where there are no individual interviews with practitioners, and how these are captured in our inspection tools
- leadership and conduct of an inspection by the lead inspector and deputy lead inspector
- the quality of meetings held on inspection, including conduct of the inspector facilitating the meeting and recording and analysis of the evidence captured
- the ratings panel submission, the decision-making at the ratings panel and the accuracy of the published inspection reports
- the clarity of our reports and the underpinning evidence which supports the findings we make on inspections.

The principles underpinning this approach are as follows:

- quality assurance should be consistent, thorough, proportionate and fair
- the frequency of quality assurance activity should be transparent
- assurance activity is particularly focused on the early stages of an inspector's career with us, when it is particularly important to determine whether individuals have achieved competence in inspection practice. We also assure the quality of work completed after the initial induction period to ensure that quality is maintained
- we are clear who is accountable for quality at different stages of the inspection process

- we balance the need for on-site and off-site quality assurance
- we assure all inspection domains
- assurance is the role of everyone in the organisation; we do not rely on a single assurance lead role to undertake all assurance activity.

Roles and responsibilities

The following individuals within HM Inspectorate of Probation have key responsibilities to implement the strategy:

- the Chief Inspector sets the overall strategy for quality assurance
- responsibility for the effectiveness and implementation of the quality assurance approach sits with the director of operations
- the head of inspection methodology and assurance is responsible for overseeing the work of the quality leads and applying the results of quality assurance activity to the continual development of methodology, and guidance
- the head of training will ensure a linkage between quality assurance and training to improve inspectors' performance
- the lead inspector is responsible for the quality of the inspections that they lead and the timely submission of information. By exception, they will provide feedback on the quality and contribution of inspection team members where they consider there may be an issue. They will provide feedback on the quality of the operations support to the inspection
- the head of communications is responsible for the quality of the proof-reading processes either undertaken by contract editors or internally
- the senior officer in the data and IT team is responsible for providing management information on the pattern of inspection scoring of individual staff
- the heads of inspection programme periodically observe case interviews and conduct of meetings during inspection fieldwork, contribute to quality assurance of domain one evidence, and liaise with the head of inspection methodology and assurance if any bespoke quality assurance is needed during individual inspections
- quality leads support the early learning of new inspection staff, deliver a programme of quality assurance activity in respect of domain two and domain three cases in youth and adult inspection programmes, including observation of some case inspection interviews, and conduct bespoke quality assurance on individual inspections when required.

Inspection Assurance Framework

We take a proportionate approach to the quality assurance of inspection activity. The assurance framework will be common to both probation and youth inspections and cover the following:

- all inspectors need to demonstrate competence in case inspection before they are actively deployed on inspection fieldwork
- every inspector is observed undertaking case inspection interviews at least twice in the first six months after they join

- every inspector is subject to quality assurance of domain two and domain three case inspections relevant to their sector, and an annual on-site quality assurance observation
- every assistant inspector receives routine and proportionate quality assurance of all types of domain two and domain three cases
- every assistant inspector is observed undertaking case inspection interviews at least twice on each inspection programme in a 12-month period
- there is periodic quality assurance of domain one activity, including conduct and recording of meetings and ratings panel and report writing processes.

All quality assurance activity is recorded, with feedback given to the individual staff member and their line manager. We assess the degree to which quality is maintained and action will be undertaken to address identified weaknesses in the judgements being made, including feedback to the individual inspector and additional development activity as appropriate. If weaknesses persist over a number of inspections, then this would be managed through our performance management process.

7. Phase III: Post-fieldwork

7.1. Ratings explained

Domain one ratings

Domain one ratings for each inspection are not led by our findings in individual cases, although we always check the correlation between domains and the need for further analysis. Instead, the evidence we need for domain one ratings comes primarily from data, documents and evidence submitted by the YOT, and through interviews with leaders, managers, staff, staff and volunteer surveys, feedback from children and other relevant stakeholders.

Domain one ratings are proposed by the lead inspector in each case. The rating characteristics provide a framework for the lead inspector's recommendation; we do not expect every characteristic to be present for the corresponding rating to be given.

The characteristics are closely aligned to the key questions and prompts in the standards framework.

The characteristics for 'Outstanding' capture whether the organisation is:

- innovative and creative
- forward-looking and proactive
- open and transparent
- supportive, empowering and inclusive
- agile and responsive
- collaborative and outward-looking.

The characteristics for 'Inadequate' capture whether the organisation is:

- solely reactive
- defensive and blaming
- characterised by division and conflict
- unresponsive
- inward-looking.

More detail about domain one ratings can be found in the Youth domain one ratings characteristics guide, available on the website at:

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/documentation-area/youth-offending-services-inspection/>

Domain two/three ratings

Domains two and three ratings are based on the results of the inspection of individual cases. Ratings are at the standard level, and are based on the consolidated results (at key question level) of all cases inspected in the relevant domain. The data and information team collate the completed forms from the inspection team and provide an analysis of the findings to the lead and deputy, copied to the head of inspection programme.

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

In this example, based on an analysis of 23 cases, the score for one of the key questions under the Assessment standard, falls into the 'Outstanding' band, and for another in the 'Good' band; but as the score for the final key question is in the 'Requires improvement' band (61 per cent of cases inspected rated as satisfactory), the overall standard is rated as 'Requires improvement'.

Assessment

Requires Improvement

A 1 S	Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	#	%
	Yes	20	87%
	No	3	13%

A 2 S	Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	#	%
	Yes	15	65%
	No	8	35%

A 3 S	Does assessment analyse how to keep other people safe?	#	%
	Yes	14	61%
	No	9	39%

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 the child safe, we exclude those cases where the inspector deemed there were no factors related to safety and well-being. This is because we focus on those cases where we expect meaningful work to take place.

Use of professional discretion

An element of professional discretion may be applied to the standards ratings in domains two and three. Exceptionally, the ratings panel will consider whether professional discretion should be exercised in relation to a rating for a domain two or three standard where 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 there are fewer than five cases in the relevant sample. The panel will consider 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. See section 4.1 for more information about confidence levels.

In the example below, the provisional rating at the standard level would be 'Requires improvement', as the lowest score at the key question level is 63 per cent. The upper boundary of the 'Requires improvement' band is 64 per cent, so the ratings panel considers whether other inspection data would support increasing the rating at standard level to 'Good'. Here, the panel would take into account the scores for the other key questions under this standard, and other evidence from inspected cases, to decide whether or not the provisional rating should be varied.

Planning

Requires Improvement

P 1 S	Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	#	%
	<i>Note: question not applicable for all cases</i>		
	Yes	18	78%
	No	5	22%

P 2 S	Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	#	%
	<i>Note: question not applicable for all cases</i>		
	Yes	12	63%
	No	7	37%

P 3 S	Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping people safe?	#	%
	<i>Note: question not applicable for all cases</i>		
	Yes	13	72%
	No	5	28%

Overall YOT rating

Straightforward scoring rules are used to generate the overall YOT rating. Each of the 12 standards are scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; and 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0-36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows:

- 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. Our view is that YOTs need to focus across all the standards, and we do not want to distort behaviours through weighting.

7.2. Ratings panel meeting

The ratings panel normally takes place on the Tuesday morning of the week following completion of the fieldwork. The panel normally consists of the director of operations (who chairs and records the decision of the panel), the lead inspector and head of youth inspection programme. The Chief Inspector and deputy lead inspector may attend, if available; the head of standards and head of inspection methodology and assurance attend some ratings panels.

The lead inspector presents the proposed ratings to the panel in a structured way, and in line with the following principles and processes:

- the panel checks that the proposed ratings for domain one are evidence-based and balanced, and in line with published rules and guidance
- the panel considers the validity, source and weighting of the evidence for domain one and determines whether the rating proposed by the lead inspector is appropriate
- the panel ensures linkages are made between domain one standards (particularly leadership) and ratings for domain two and domain three
- the panel considers whether professional discretion should be exercised in relation to any of the domain two or three ratings. The panel only revises the domain two or domain three scores at the key question level if they believe that to do otherwise would not be a true reflection of how the inspected organisation is performing
- the panel makes sure that ratings are consistently applied across inspections
- the panel ensures that any evidence covering the COVID-19 period is treated fairly and does not unduly influence inspection ratings
- the panel provides a level of protection and challenge for the lead inspector
- the panel focuses only on ratings and key findings and does not quality assure other aspects of the inspection.

Use of professional discretion

The ratings panel must consider whether professional discretion should be exercised in relation to a rating for a domain two or three standard in all cases when the lowest percentage at the key question level:

- is within five percentage points (and thus the margin of error) of the rating boundary; and/or
- would fall into a different rating boundary from a change in judgement in one case; and/or
- is based upon a sample or sub-sample of five cases or fewer.

When considering whether to exercise professional discretion, the panel must consider:

- the percentages for all the key questions within the standard, noting their bandings, whether within five percentage points of the rating boundaries, and the levels of divergence;
- the sizes of all the samples and sub-samples used; and
- supporting qualitative evidence relating to the specific standard.

Following the ratings panel, the Chair of the panel completes the ratings panel summary. The administrator sends the inspected organisation a copy of the summary of the ratings panel meeting, which includes the agreed ratings.

7.3. Challenging ratings and making complaints

We are committed to ensuring our processes are transparent and fair, and of a professional standard. This includes handling complaints proficiently in an open and rigorous way, investigating the matters raised thoroughly, and replying as quickly as possible to any concerns raised with us.

Organisations can make a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the way in which we carry out, or fail to carry out, our business. This includes the quality of our work or the way we work, including the conduct of the organisation or individual members of staff. It can also include issues with our inspection judgements. Our complaints policy can be found on our website: www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-hmi-probation/complaints/

While our formal complaints policy covers any issues organisations may have with the findings of our inspections, the expectation is that these are dealt with informally, negating the need to invoke the formal complaints policy.

There is, therefore, an opportunity to raise such issues at the factual accuracy check. Providers are discouraged from raising such issues prior to this, for example when they receive the initial ratings panel summary, as they will not be in possession of the more detailed evidence base that supports the inspection ratings. The director of operations is the final decision-maker on any matters of factual accuracy and/or challenge to inspection ratings.

We aim to address any concerns or dissatisfaction as early as possible, preferably before they are escalated to formal complaint. If an organisation is not satisfied with the response from the director of operations concerning a challenge to ratings, they can then invoke the formal complaints procedure. That will need to be supported with new evidence. We will not reconsider on the basis that our judgements are disappointing to the organisation.

7.4. Report writing

As the public product from the inspection, it is important that the report is well presented, credible and accessible to the lay reader. Equally, to drive improvement in practice, the report needs to present the information required by the technical audience.

The lead inspector completes the first draft of the report, including presenting their recommended judgements to the ratings panel in the first week after the fieldwork is completed. The following processes are carried out to finalise the report:

- initial editing by an external contractor
- structure, accuracy and quality check by the head of youth inspection programme
- review by director of operations
- factual accuracy check by the YOT
- statistics checking by data and information team
- final proof-reading
- final review by the lead and head of youth inspection programme
- report design by communications team
- report signed off by the Chief Inspector or director of operations.

Final review and sign off by HMI Probation

The YOT normally receives a copy of the draft report on Monday morning of week +6 with a deadline to return any comments to the head of youth inspection programme and lead inspector in 10 working days. The head of youth inspection programme and lead inspector consider the comments from the YOT and provide a response.

7.5. Report publication

The report will usually be published during week +12 in England, and week +15 in Wales. Changes to this publication date may be made in advance. The lead inspector will discuss any changes in the anticipated publication date with the inspected organisation.

The communications team submit the final report and press release to the Secretary of State around five working days before publication; the team then send an embargoed copy of the report and any press release to the inspected organisation.

7.6. Action plans

The YOT draws up an action plan to address the report's recommendations. The lead inspector considers the action plan, working with the head of youth inspection programme. The lead inspector then sends an acknowledgement letter, noting acceptance of the plan or identifying amendments if required.

The action plan is followed up during the next inspection, when progress is reviewed.