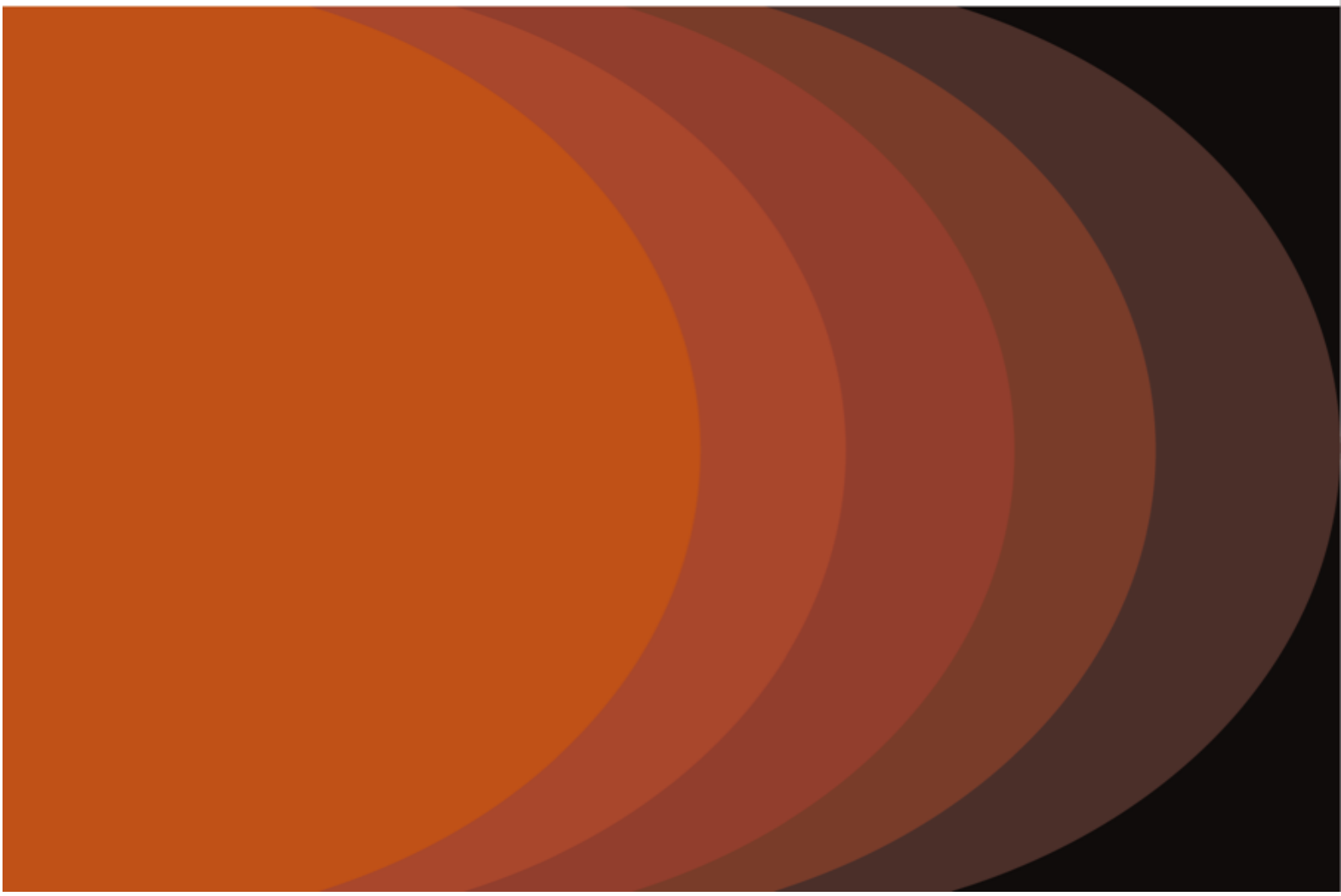




Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in
North Somerset

HM Inspectorate of Probation, December 2020



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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending service work with adults and children.

We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice and use our data and information to encourage high-quality services. We are independent of government and speak independently.

Please note that throughout the report the names in the practice examples have been changed to protect the individual's identity.

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Introduction

This inspection is part of our four-year programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated North Somerset YOS 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, North Somerset YOS 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 telephone and video conferencing, took place between 14 September and 18 September 2020.

North Somerset YOS staff are well supported to deliver a high-quality service. As a result, staff, and information and facilities have been rated as 'Good'. There is room for improvement in governance and leadership, and partnerships and services, however, which have both been rated as 'Requires improvement'. YOS managers support effective service delivery. The YOS Management Board, however, does not provide sufficient strategic direction and scrutiny. Although children have access to a good range of services, there is insufficient monitoring in place to make sure that interventions are effective or targeted to meet the specific needs of YOS children.

We inspected eight post-court cases. Assessment and planning were both rated as 'Outstanding'; implementation and delivery, and reviewing were rated as 'Good'. Practitioners took a trauma-informed approach to case management and worked well with specialist colleagues to tailor service delivery to the needs of each case.

The YOS actively listened to and represented the views of victims in its casework but work to keep them safe was not always given sufficient priority.

We assessed the quality of work in five out-of-court cases. Assessment and joint work were rated as 'Outstanding'. Planning, and implementation and delivery were rated as 'Good'. Practitioners took an analytical and proportionate approach to understand the key factors to address, and collaborated well with partners, and parents or carers to deliver relevant services. Joint work to implement out-of-court work with the police was a strength.



Marc Baker
Director of Operations

Ratings





North Somerset Youth Offending Service **Score** **26/36**

Overall rating **Good** 





1. Organisational delivery

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

2. Court disposals

2.1	Assessment	Outstanding	
2.2	Planning	Outstanding	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Good	
2.4	Reviewing	Good	

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 six recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of youth offending services in North Somerset. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth offending services, and better protect the public.

The North Somerset Youth Offending Service should:

1. plan for and deliver timely, appropriate action to address the specific concerns and risks relating to actual and potential victims
2. work with the police to remove delays in the out-of-court disposal decision-making process.

The YOS Management Board should:

3. agree a vision and partnership strategy for the delivery of services that meets the specific needs of children working with the YOS
4. undertake a comprehensive analysis of the profile of YOS children, to understand their safety and wellbeing, and desistance needs better, and feed this into the development of service provision
5. introduce systems to evaluate whether its interventions and services benefit children and the community
6. involve children and their parents or carers, and other stakeholders in decisions about the range and shape of YOS services and interventions to be provided.

Background

Youth offending teams (YOTs) supervise 10–18-year-olds who have been sentenced by a court, or who have come to the attention of the police because of their offending behaviour but have not been charged – instead, they were dealt with out-of-court. 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.

North Somerset became a unitary authority in 1996. It borders Bristol and the Mendips and reaches south to include Weston-super-Mare. Although considered to be relatively affluent, this seaside resort includes some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England. The district also includes pockets of rural deprivation. Weston-super-Mare accounts for 51 per cent of the YOS caseload. The service is based there, helping to reduce issues relating to transport for many of its service users.

The latest nationally published data indicates that there are fewer children of black and minority ethnic heritage living in North Somerset (4 per cent) than across the south-west (6.4 per cent) or in England and Wales (18.3 per cent). This data, however, reflects information collected through the 2011 national census and may not represent the current ethnic composition for children.

The number of children cautioned or sentenced in North Somerset is small (69 in 2018/2019).² The total sentenced by the courts has reduced, changing the balance of its out-of-court to post-court work, which the YOS estimates now stands at 60 per cent to 40 per cent, respectively. YOS children have complex issues, and 7 of the 13 whose cases we assessed during this inspection had committed a violent offence or were presenting with violent behaviour.

The YOS sits in the North Somerset children's services directorate. Although it has a small statutory caseload, its remit extends beyond this to include the authority's prevention team, harmful sexual behaviour and substance advice service (SAS). It also provides operational management for the Avon and Somerset young victims service and for the region's enhanced case management project.²

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

² Youth Justice Board. (2020). *Youth Justice annual statistics: 2018 to 2019*.

Contextual facts

Population information

215,052	Total population in North Somerset (2018) ³
19,364	Total youth population (10–17 years) in North Somerset (2018) ³
751	Total black and minority ethnic youth population in North Somerset (2011) ⁴

Demographics of children cautioned or sentenced⁵

Age	10–14	15–17
North Somerset YOS	17%	83%
National average	23%	77%

Race/ethnicity	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
North Somerset YOS	84%	3%	13%
National average	70%	26%	4%

Gender	Male	Female
North Somerset YOS	75%	25%
National average	85%	15%

Additional caseload data⁶

38	Total current caseload: community sentences
1	Total current caseload in custody
1	Total current caseload on licence
23	Total current caseload: youth caution
15	Total current caseload: youth conditional caution
79	Total current caseload: community resolution or other out-of-court disposal

³ Office for National Statistics. (2020). *UK Population estimates, mid-2019*.

⁴ Office for National Statistics. (2012). *Census 2011*.

⁵ Youth Justice Board. (2020). *Youth Justice annual statistics: 2018 to 2019*.

⁶ Information supplied by YOT, reflecting caseload submitted to YJB for 01 July 2019 – 30 June 2020.

1. Organisational delivery



Strengths:

- The YOS is led by competent senior and middle managers who promote a culture of professional curiosity, learning and reflection.
- Practitioners are skilled and motivated to deliver positive outcomes for children and the community.
- The YOS has invested well in regional initiatives to broaden the range of interventions and services available to North Somerset YOS children.
- There is a strong and effective strategic focus on reparation and restorative justice.
- The structure of the YOS allows children good access to a range of services and interventions that support their desistance, and safety and wellbeing, and keep other people safe.

Areas for improvement:

- There is no up-to-date, agreed vision or cohesive partnership strategy to support the work of the YOS.
- There is too little in-depth analysis of the profile of, and outcomes for, YOS children to provide assurance that the appropriate services and interventions are available and effective.
- Issues relating to disproportionality are not considered sufficiently well at a strategic level.
- There are no measures in place to include the perspective of children, their parents and carers, and the community in decisions about the range and shape of services to be provided by the YOS.

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.

Requires improvement

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?

Overall, the YOS Management Board does not champion the interests of YOS children. Although Board members provide examples of ad hoc scrutiny and challenge to the YOS, the Board has some way to go before it can evidence that it is delivering clear, strategic direction and governance.

Board members are actively interested in the lives of YOS children but are not advocating for them effectively at a strategic level. Changes in the Chair and membership of the Board have not helped this.

The Board recognises the requirement for the YOS to perform well against key performance targets, but there is no clear, agreed vision for what else the YOS is trying to achieve. The 2018–2021 Youth Justice Plan is the only strategic document that brings together the YOS' priorities and objectives. The Plan was reviewed, revised and agreed by YOS Management Board (19/06/2019) and North Somerset Full Council (24/09/2019). It was approved by the YJB in September 2020.

Board meetings were suspended during the Covid-19 period of lockdown. Members were provided with a small number of email updates and performance reports. This was a time, however, when the Board should have been providing additional support to the YOS and the challenges it faced. By the time of the first Board meeting for 2020, there will have been a nine-month gap, leaving the YOS without sufficient governance and scrutiny.

While North Somerset unitary authority has overarching responsibility for compliance with the *Equality Act 2010*, the Board has limited insight about how the general duties under this Act should shape the priorities of, and service provision by, the YOS.

Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?

The YOS plays an integral and active role in partnership arrangements and initiatives. Senior partners are responsive and actively collaborate with the YOS to strengthen service provision for children. The positive partnership with the police, for example, has strengthened YOS case management and led to an integrated strategic approach to violence reduction.

The Board has not, however, given enough consideration to how a systemic partnership model could strengthen outcomes for children. Currently, work to help achieve its key performance measures often involve the YOS working with a single partner, when a fully integrated model with all agencies would provide greater benefits.

There is limited active challenge at Board level between partners. Where this has happened, however, action has been taken to address the concerns raised, for example, to strengthen the engagement of YOS children with the SAS and increase their participation in post-16 education, training and employment (ETE).

Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?

The experienced YOS service leader sets the strategic agenda. The management team promotes and balances the best interests of YOS children and the community, and this ethos percolates across the organisation.

Senior managers understand the risks to YOS service provision and are working to address these. Some relate to the size of the YOS and its diminishing budget. Leaders work hard to maximise the use of limited resources, identifying alternative funding streams to keep YOS children high on the strategic agenda and extend the range of services available. A good example of this is the young victims service, initiated by North Somerset YOS, that benefits children across Avon and Somerset. In line with youth offending services generally, North Somerset is expecting its workload to rise as courts reopen following the Covid-19 lockdown period. The YOS is working with the youth court to manage this.

Managers communicate well with their staff. They update them on strategic issues and seek, and act on, their feedback about their experience of working with the YOS.

In the main, staff are content with their links with the Board. They are aware of its activities and value opportunities to attend Board meetings to discuss their work.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Key staffing data⁷

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent, FTE)	4.6
Average caseload per case manager (FTE)	8.5

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?

At full capacity, the YOS comprises 40 paid members of staff. Many work on a part-time basis and each needs to be managed and motivated to work effectively. The organisation is led by a small management team, which works actively to support its staff. The enthusiasm and level of satisfaction among YOS practitioners are impressive.

The YOS staff include student social workers, social workers in their assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) and 40 volunteers. This benefits all parties and expands the YOS's pool of skills and experience. There are arrangements in place to support and help develop volunteers, some of whom have become paid members of staff.

The YOS has two full-time police staff: one police officer and one police youth intervention officer. Each fulfils a distinct purpose, one focusing on out-of-court work and the other fulfilling the role of YOS police officer and facilitating the victim liaison role. Together, they provide a valuable, specialist service that strengthens the partnership between the two organisations.

⁷ Data supplied by YOT and reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

Workloads vary. New case managers are not allocated cases initially, and some others have protected workloads. Staff and managers are busy but, generally, have manageable workloads. A small number of practitioners were feeling pressured by their workloads at the time of our inspection.

The YOS has seen a substantial turnover in staff. Having a number of practitioners starting within a short timeframe has had an impact on the workload of busy managers. The YOS did not have the benefit of a seconded probation officer for more than a year and has been unable to fill its vacancy for a mental health specialist.

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

Children work with well-qualified, skilled and creative practitioners. This strengthens the engagement of children and the potential for positive outcomes. Partners describe YOS staff as proficient and curious, and good at taking into account a child's lived experience.

Practitioners are assigned to a discrete functional team but work collaboratively across the organisation, seeking specialist advice from colleagues and co-working cases where appropriate. This approach is especially helpful to new practitioners, who are supported effectively by more established staff and managers, through a mix of coaching, advice and guidance.

Workloads are actively managed. Cases are allocated in consultation with individual case managers. This process takes account of their workloads, skills and interests. Staff report that they feel motivated, and, should they have any diversity and individual needs, these are taken into account by their managers.

The YOS understands the benefits of having a diverse staff group. Almost all its practitioners are women, and leaders acknowledge that some boys benefit most from engaging with men. To help with this, boys with specific needs can work with men through the trusted relationships or high-impact families programmes, or work with the police youth interventions officer.

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

The YOS uses a range of approaches to check the quality of case management. New staff are coached beyond their induction period. Practitioners welcome this ongoing support and their managers' approach to one-to-one supervision. They also have the opportunity to discuss cases through reflective practice and peer supervision sessions.

The YOS has used formal management measures to address staff performance issues. Conversely, staff are encouraged to celebrate their strengths, and are praised for good work. The YOS can also nominate those who perform exceptionally well to the authority's performance awards scheme.

The YOS's quality assurance framework sets high standards for the oversight of practice. This has been a busy year for the YOS, complicated by the Covid-19 lockdown. This has affected managers' capacity to audit casework. The YOS has, however, met its obligation to complete its national standards audit.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

There are well-established learning and development arrangements, and staff have a good range of relevant training opportunities.

The YOS management team is highly qualified to work with children and provide effective leadership. New managers have effective support to fulfil their roles.

Practitioners work within a culture that promotes improvement, learning and reflection. They are able to access training as they identify their needs and, where appropriate, are encouraged to complete continuing professional development courses.

North Somerset unitary authority has adopted a trauma recovery approach and Signs of Safety assessment and planning tools. YOS practitioners have attended training, some jointly with their children's social care services colleagues, to help them understand and implement these. The YOS has applied this learning to both its corporate and operational functions, helping to embed it into practice. We found evidence in the cases we inspected that a trauma recovery approach was now intrinsic to the work of the YOS.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Requires improvement

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?

Children have access to a wide range of services and interventions. The YOS lacks a sufficiently well-developed, comprehensive needs assessment, however, to assure itself that provision is targeted and personalised. This is a weakness. The YOS does not interrogate its own data – for instance, information provided by its assessment tools – in order to have an in-depth understanding of its children.

Where reports provide data relating to children's offending characteristics – for instance, the North Somerset Serious Violence Problem Profile – these provide too little analysis of the lived experience of these children and the context in which they have offended.

The YOS relies on police national computer data to understand the demographics of its children. This indicates that, of the 70 children cautioned or sentenced in North Somerset in 2019/2020, three identified as black and minority ethnic.

The ethnicity of three children was recorded as 'unknown but further information has been received from the YOS, following the inspection, demonstrating that the service has knowledge about each of these children'.⁸

During the inspection, different groups of children were suggested as being over-represented in the YOS caseload. This included being a girl; having a learning disability; not being in ETE; and living in areas of high deprivation. YOS performance reports clearly identify the prevalence of the latter two issues. In addition, recent YJB data suggests that the YOT is working with a greater proportion of girls and 15–17-year-olds than is normal for YOTs in the region and across England and Wales.⁹

The YOS is actively responding to diversity and inclusion needs identified in individual cases. It would benefit, however, from drawing out themes and trends from the collective caseload, to identify underlying disparities and inform work to strengthen service delivery.

An anti-oppressive group convenes every other month, to help practitioners explore their attitudes and unconscious bias. Recently, practitioners have used this forum to consider the impact of the Black Lives Matter campaign, exploring how 'white privilege' affects the lives of black children and influences the quality of YOS service delivery.

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

The YOS applies a holistic approach to its work with children. The remit of the YOS extends from prevention work with those who have yet to offend, to the provision of ongoing support for children after their period of statutory supervision. Children and their parents and carers have access to a broad range of services that reflect the YOS commitment to trauma-informed practice. Interventions include non-violent resistance courses, weapons awareness sessions, and programmes to help with anger management and emotional wellbeing.

The Junction 21 mentoring and advocacy service provides support for children in or leaving care, and vulnerable children on the cusp of offending. Recognising that children who offend are often victims themselves, the YOS is also the lead organisation for the Avon and Somerset young victims service. Demand outstrips supply for Junction 21 and the young victims service but YOS children are prioritised for inclusion.

The YOS's approach to restorative justice and reparation is thorough and thoughtful. The YOS police officer and case managers work collaboratively to incorporate the views of victims into their case management decisions. Reparation is tailored to reflect a child's strengths, interests and lived experience. The YOS reviewed and adapted its approach to reparation and restorative justice during the Covid-19 lockdown period. Mediation continued via telephone conferencing, and the YOS maximised the use of its allotments for reparation work and as a location for

⁸ Police national computer data is updated when the YOS begins work with children, which includes correcting missing information. The routine update of the case management system has occurred since the report was provided to the Inspectorate. Two are 'white British.' The third unknown was subsequently identified as a Dorset Looked After Child living in North Somerset, and, as such, has been removed from the dataset in accordance with YJB guidelines.

⁹ Youth Justice Board. (2020). *Youth Justice annual statistics: 2018 to 2019*.

meetings with staff and children. The YOS is developing a tracking and data information management system to improve the monitoring and analysis of its victims work.

Every child is referred to the SAS, which is integrated into the YOS. Once there, they participate in a health assessment, facilitated by social worker-qualified practitioners who have attended training to fulfil this role. We were advised that it is rare for a child to refuse to engage, or not to complete their programme, with the SAS.

The YOS facilitates the Avon and Somerset enhanced case management initiative. Funded by the YJB, this provides a psychology-led methodology that focuses on addressing adverse childhood experiences and using a trauma recovery approach to desistance. By the time of our inspection, it had been applied in three North Somerset cases.

Practitioners are trained to provide a specialist service for children who display harmful sexual behaviour. Referrals are accepted from agencies across North Somerset, whether or not a child is already working with the YOS. Of the 19 children (to August 2020) who had completed a programme to address their harmful sexual behaviour, the YOS knew of only 1 who had continued to display such behaviour.

The youth court has a good understanding of services and interventions delivered by the YOS through pre-sentence reports and the active engagement of the YOS team at court. The YOS has been working with the courts recently, to help establish and manage the expected influx of children sentenced as the courts reopen after the Covid-19 lockdown.

Children, and parents and carers who take part in YOS programmes and initiatives are asked to provide feedback about their experience and the benefits of their participation. There is too little quantitative evaluation of the quality and impact of interventions, however, to provide assurance that they effectively support desistance.

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

The YOS's strong partnership with the police has led to a fully integrated model for out-of-court work. The regional out-of-court disposal scrutiny panel has reviewed six North Somerset cases in the past 18 months and endorsed the outcomes allocated for each of these. The YOS has adjusted its assessment process in response to guidance from HM Inspectorate of Probation, which has helped to strengthen the quality of its analysis of safety and wellbeing, and factors linked to risk of harm. The YOS reviewed out-of-court processes during 2018/2019, prior to the period inspected. The Board also considered out-of-court processes, as evidenced in its minutes of December 2019. The YOS could do more to identify areas for development, however, and if and how its approach helps to reduce first time entrants and reoffending rates.

Unable to recruit to the mental health specialist post, the YOS has worked with the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire clinical commissioning group (CCG) to appoint an interim senior practitioner in the SAS (who had yet to start at the time of our inspection), who will provide advice about mental health, and speech and language issues. Prior to their departure – and not because of it – the mental health specialist had provided training to SAS, Youth Inclusion and Support Project (YISP), and court and community team practitioners in the completion of mental

health assessments. Additionally, case holders in the court and community supervision team can seek advice and support from the mental health worker in the YISP team.

Practitioners across teams have attended training to help them identify children's emotional and mental health, and speech and language needs. We found that the measures in place in the cases we inspected did not meet the needs of all the children working with the YOS; some assessments were not sufficiently thorough and not all children were able to access timely, appropriate mental health provision. It is envisaged that the recent reconfiguration of CCG arrangements, which facilitates commissioning across three YOTs, will strengthen opportunities for health service provision for North Somerset YOS.

We learned that children's social care engagement with the YOS has improved during the last 12 months. In the main, we found that YOS and children's social care practitioners worked collaboratively to support children and their parents and carers. Referrals to the children's services referral and assessment team, however, did not always receive an appropriate response, even when advocated by YOS management.

Involvement of children and their parents and carers

The YOS has adapted the HM Inspectorate of Probation ViewPoint survey, to understand how children rate its post-court services. The questionnaire is available online at the three-month point of a sentence. Children are contacted at the end of their order by someone in the YOS with whom they have not worked before, to remove bias and encourage honest feedback from respondents. Children completing referral orders are invited to complete a feedback form to rate the service provided and capture the impact of this on their thinking and future behaviour.

Other teams in the YOS, including YISP, SAS, the young victims service and Junction 21, also gather feedback from the children, and parents and carers they support.

The YOS uses the feedback to identify themes for service improvement. Individual case managers also receive feedback, where relevant, and children and their parents and carers are updated about any changes made as a result.

There are no systems in place, however, to involve children and their parents and carers in decisions about the range and shape of services and interventions to be provided.

As part of our inspection process, we invited children to participate in a text survey. The eight children, or their parents and carers, who rated the YOT service gave it an average score of 8 out of 10 (with 10 being the most positive score). The six children, or their parents and carers, who rated how well their YOT helped them stay out of trouble gave it an average score of 9 out of 10. Most comments were positive, and included:

"My worker was very good and helped me a lot".

"Phone calls every day; day trips out; always reliable; friendly; just generally so kind, I don't have relationships with anyone like it".

One respondent, however, offered:

"I just don't feel like it's helping me at the moment".

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.

Good

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 high-quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

Practitioners have access to up-to-date protocols, guidance and policies. Additionally, managers are responsive to their requests for information and clarification. In the main, staff understand the policies and procedures that apply to their role.

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

The YOS building is based in Weston-super-Mare, where the greatest proportion of its children live, and within easy reach of trains and buses. During our inspection, we were advised that the building is suitable for one-to-one work with children but needed more rooms for group work and meetings. The YOS has 'You're Welcome' accreditation, which celebrates the friendly nature of the environment for children. The reception area looks uncluttered and comfortable, with walls decorated with advice and information, some of which has been prepared by service users.

Practitioners work with children at school, in libraries and in other community venues, which is particularly important to children faced with access, and safety and wellbeing issues. Children are also encouraged to use the store of bicycles, to increase their mobility and community integration, and strengthen their engagement with the YOS.

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

Staff report that, despite inconsistent internet connectivity, local authority ICT equipment and services support their work sufficiently well. The provision of laptops and iPhones enables them to work in the community and at home, and information management systems enable effective recording of casework.

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

The YOS welcomes opportunities to strengthen service provision and works enthusiastically to succeed against its key performance measures. Full performance reports are well written and provide useful background and information to help the reader understand the context within which the YOS works and the way that performance is measured. These are complemented with quarterly performance dashboards.

The Board uses the data available to inform its decisions to support improvement. In 2019/2020, the proportion of 16–18-year-olds working with the YOS and in ETE stood at 38 per cent. This is, rightly, of concern to the Board. To address this, the

YOS and education partners now complete a monthly audit of the ETE status of children at the end of their disposal. Those not in ETE are offered ongoing support from the authority's post-16 youth employment service. YOS practitioners have a good understanding of the role that ETE plays in desistance, and we found, in the cases we looked at, that children were provided with appropriate support to find a placement.

To complement the quantitative data, the Board is provided with case studies that highlight the experience of individual children with complex needs. The YOS has also looked in detail at cases involving racially aggravated offending, to understand underlying factors.

The YOS completes self-assessments against HM Inspectorate of Probation standards and inspection findings, in order to identify its strengths and areas for improvement, and to prepare itself for inspection.

The Board is presented with a range of performance data relating to the services that the YOS facilitates for all children in North Somerset, such as Junction 21 and the young victims service. This does not, however, help the Board understand outcomes specifically for YOS children.

Overall, performance management systems lack sophistication. They provide too little insight into underlying factors, such as child exploitation or contextual safeguarding issues, and how these affect outcomes. This has an impact on the ability of the YOS to target and measure the success of its improvement work.



2. Court disposals

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

Strengths:

- The YOS's 'children first' ethos was evident in all aspects of its casework.
- Practitioners took a trauma-informed approach, working with partners and families to understand and provide services that recognise a child's lived experience.
- Planning included a good balance of activities to support desistance and to address offending behaviour.
- Service delivery was tailored to the needs of each case and to reflect a child's personal circumstances.
- Children engaged well with the YOS and activities delivered during their orders.
- Reparation and restorative justice were considered where appropriate, and arrangements were adjusted to meet the conditions imposed by the pandemic lockdown.
- The YOS took a collaborative approach with partners, to monitor safety and wellbeing issues and adjust the plan of action to respond to changes.

Areas for improvement:

- Assessments did not take enough account of the measures and interventions already in place, or that were needed to promote safety and wellbeing, and protect other people.
- There was not enough focus on protecting actual and potential victims.
- Contingency planning did not support prompt action to meet changes in risk of harm, and safety and wellbeing.
- The YOS did not respond robustly enough to mounting risk of harm concerns.

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 8 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	8	8
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	8	8
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	8	8

The quality of assessment was rated as 'Outstanding'. Practitioners had completed thorough assessments to support desistance, and sufficient assessments of how to keep the child and other people safe.

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

Of the 8 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	8	8
Does assessment consider the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, utilising information held by other agencies?	8	8
Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	8	8
Where applicable, does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	7	7
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?	8	8

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	6
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	8	6

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

Of the 8 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	8	8
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	8	8
Where applicable, does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	8	4

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Of the 8 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?	8	7
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	8	8
Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	8	4

Most of the cases we inspected involved complex issues relating to risk of harm, and safety and wellbeing. Case managers worked collaboratively with partners, the children and their parents/carers to understand all the factors in the case. This included the child's lived experience, strengths, interests and diversity characteristics. They kept the needs and wishes of victims in mind, considering direct reparation and the potential for restorative justice where appropriate.

2.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

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

Of the 8 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	8	8
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? ¹²	7	7
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? ¹³	7	6

Nearly every aspect of planning to support desistance and to keep the child safe was sufficient. Planning to keep other people safe was not as strong but, overall, work against this standard was rated as 'Outstanding'.

Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?

Of the 8 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?	8	8
Does planning take sufficient account of the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child?	8	8
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	8	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?	8	8
Where applicable, does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s?	5	4

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

Of the 7 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?	7	7
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?	7	6
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	7	5

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Of the 7 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?	7	6
Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	7	7
Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	6	4
Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	7	5
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	7	5

Planning to support desistance was comprehensive and provided a good balance between the child's aspirations and the need to complete offending behaviour work. Case managers tailored their approach to reflect the individual needs of the child. The use of My Plan, which set out the work to be completed in child-friendly language, added value to referral order contracts.

There was evidence of collaborative planning with partner agencies, including the pupil referral unit, police and children’s social care.

Care was taken to consider issues specific to, or more prevalent among, girls, to make sure that they received the support and care relevant to their wellbeing needs.

Planning to address risk of serious harm was generally sufficient. The quality of planning relating to controls and interventions, however, especially to keep victims safe, was inconsistent.

We saw an example of thorough pre-release planning that gave consideration to how post-detention and training order requirements and multi-agency arrangements could help to manage risk of harm.

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating¹⁴ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Of the 8 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child’s desistance?	8	7
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child safe? ¹⁵	7	7
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people? ¹⁶	7	5

Implementation and delivery to keep children safe was consistently effective, and work to support desistance was sufficient in nearly every case. The overall rating for this standard was determined by the lowest score in this section – the quality of the management of risk of harm to others. As such, it was rated as ‘Good’.

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

Of the 8 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?	8	7

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 reflect the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents/carers or significant others?	8	8
Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	8	8
Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents/carers?	8	8
Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration including access to services post-supervision?	8	8
Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	8	8
In cases when it is required, are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	1	1

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

Of the 7 cases with factors related to keeping the child safe:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	7	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 7 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?	7	5
Where applicable, is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	7	4
Where applicable, is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	7	5

Practitioners were successful in encouraging children to engage meaningfully with them. There was a need to enforce compliance in only one case, and the YOS used appropriate measures to do this. Reparation continued in an adapted form

throughout the Covid-19 lockdown period and retained its focus on benefiting both the child and, where possible, victims and the community. In the main, children were able to access relevant services and interventions but we noted that some children who needed help to support their mental health, and speech and language needs did not receive this.

Case managers were sensitive to the fact that children could be victims as well as perpetrators. In most cases, they worked collaboratively with children’s social care and other agencies to support safety and wellbeing.

The response at the start of the court order to manage and reduce the risk of harm that a child posed to others was not always robust enough. As a result, some actual and potential victims were left without sufficient protection.

2.4. Reviewing



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

Good

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	7
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	7	7
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	7	5

Work was adapted, where necessary, to support safety and wellbeing and, generally, to encourage desistance. The quality of reviewing to keep other people safe was not always consistent and this led to an overall rating of 'Good'.

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	7
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child’s strengths and enhancing protective factors?	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.

Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	8	7
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	8	7

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?	6	5

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Of the 7 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?	7	5
Where applicable, is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	7	6
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their risk of harm, and are their views taken into account?	7	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	1

Practitioners focused well on safety and wellbeing throughout the court order. They liaised frequently with partner agencies such as probation and children's social care services, the child and their family, to be aware of changes as these occurred. This helped to make sure that there was an appropriate response to changing circumstances. In two cases, the focus on keeping the child safe took precedence over the need to protect other people. Case managers identified that the risk of harm was increasing but did not take sufficient action to address this.



3. Out-of-court disposals

We inspected five cases managed by the YOT that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of three youth conditional cautions, one youth caution and one community resolution. 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 two cases where there were factors related to harm, we also inspected work done to keep other people safe. In the five 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.

Strengths:

- Assessments were proportionate and analytical.
- The YOS used its assessment tools effectively to record relevant factors in the case.
- The views and wishes of victims were considered, including the potential for restorative justice.
- Practitioners liaised well with agencies and families to provide a holistic and personalised response to the child's needs.
- Children were offered ongoing support from the YOS or signposted to other agencies as they completed their out-of-court disposal work.
- Practitioners worked well with children to address issues relating to their lifestyle, self-identity, substance misuse and ETE.
- The YOS worked effectively with the police to implement out-of-court disposals.

Areas for improvement:

- Disposal decisions were not always made in a timely way.
- In one case, the level of risk of harm was underestimated, so affecting the quality of work to protect other people.
- Management oversight did not always have a sufficient impact on the quality of practice.
- Case records did not provide enough information about disposal decisions and delivery.

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/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	4

Assessment of factors linked to desistance and to support safety and wellbeing was sufficient in every case. In one case, not enough was done to understand fully how to keep others safe. Assessment was rated as 'Outstanding'.

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	2
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/carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	5	5

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	4
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?	3	3
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?	3	3

3.2. Planning



Planning is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents/carers.	Good ²⁰
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Our rating²¹ for planning is based on the following key questions:

²⁰ Planning was judged to be sufficient in the majority of cases. Due to the size of the sample, performance in one case had a disproportionate impact on the overall score for this standard. For this reason, the ratings panel agreed to exercise professional discretion, and agreed a rating for planning of Good.

²¹ 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.

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? ²²	5	5
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? ²³	2	1

Planning to support desistance, and safety and wellbeing was thorough. It was good enough, however, in only one of the two cases that presented factors linked to risk of serious harm. This had a disproportionate impact on the rating for this standard. In light of the YOS' general performance, planning was rated as '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 mainstream services, following completion of out-of-court disposal work?	5	4
Where applicable, does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s?	3	3
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	5	5

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

²³ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping other people safe.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Of the 5 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?	5	5
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	4
Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	5	3

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Of the 2 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?	2	1
Where applicable, does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	2	1
Where applicable, does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	1	1
Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	2	0

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good²⁴

²⁴ Due to the size of the sample, performance in one case adversely affected the rating for this standard. Overall, implementation and delivery was strong, and the ratings panel agreed to apply professional discretion to uplift the rating for this standard to Good.

Our rating²⁵ 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? ²⁶	5	5
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people? ²⁷	2	1

The YOS worked well to support desistance and the child's safety and wellbeing. In one case, there was too little impetus, initially, to address factors linked to risk of harm. In light of the YOS' general performance against this standard, however, implementation and delivery was rated as '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	3
Does service delivery reflect the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents/carers or significant others?	5	5
Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents/carers?	5	5
Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	5	5
Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	5	5

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.


²⁷ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping other people safe.

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?

Of the 5 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?	5	5
Where applicable, is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	5	5

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?

Of the 2 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?	2	1

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

Our rating²⁸ 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? ²⁹	3	3

The YOS contributed effectively to out-of-court disposal decisions, working well with the police to implement youth conditional cautions. As a result, joint working was rated as 'Outstanding'.

²⁸ 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.

²⁹ This question is only relevant in youth conditional caution 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	4
Is the information provided to inform decision-making timely to meet the needs of the case, legislation and guidance?	5	2
Where applicable, is the rationale for joint disposal decisions appropriate and clearly recorded?	5	3

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	1
Is sufficient attention given to compliance with and enforcement of the conditions?	3	3

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.³⁰

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 YOSs, meet an 80 per cent confidence level and in some of the smaller YOSs inspectors may be assessing all of that service's cases.

Domain one: organisational delivery

- The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance and the interim assistant director of Children's Support & Safeguarding People and Communities, and youth offending service leader, 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 11 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 seven meetings, with managers, partner organisations and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.³⁰

Domain two: court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Eight of the cases selected were those of children who had received court disposals 6–14 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 eight court disposals. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of 5), and where possible we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm,

³⁰ HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards are available here:

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.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 2–11 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 5.

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 eight court disposals and five out-of-court disposals. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards: assessment, planning, and implementation and 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 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 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.