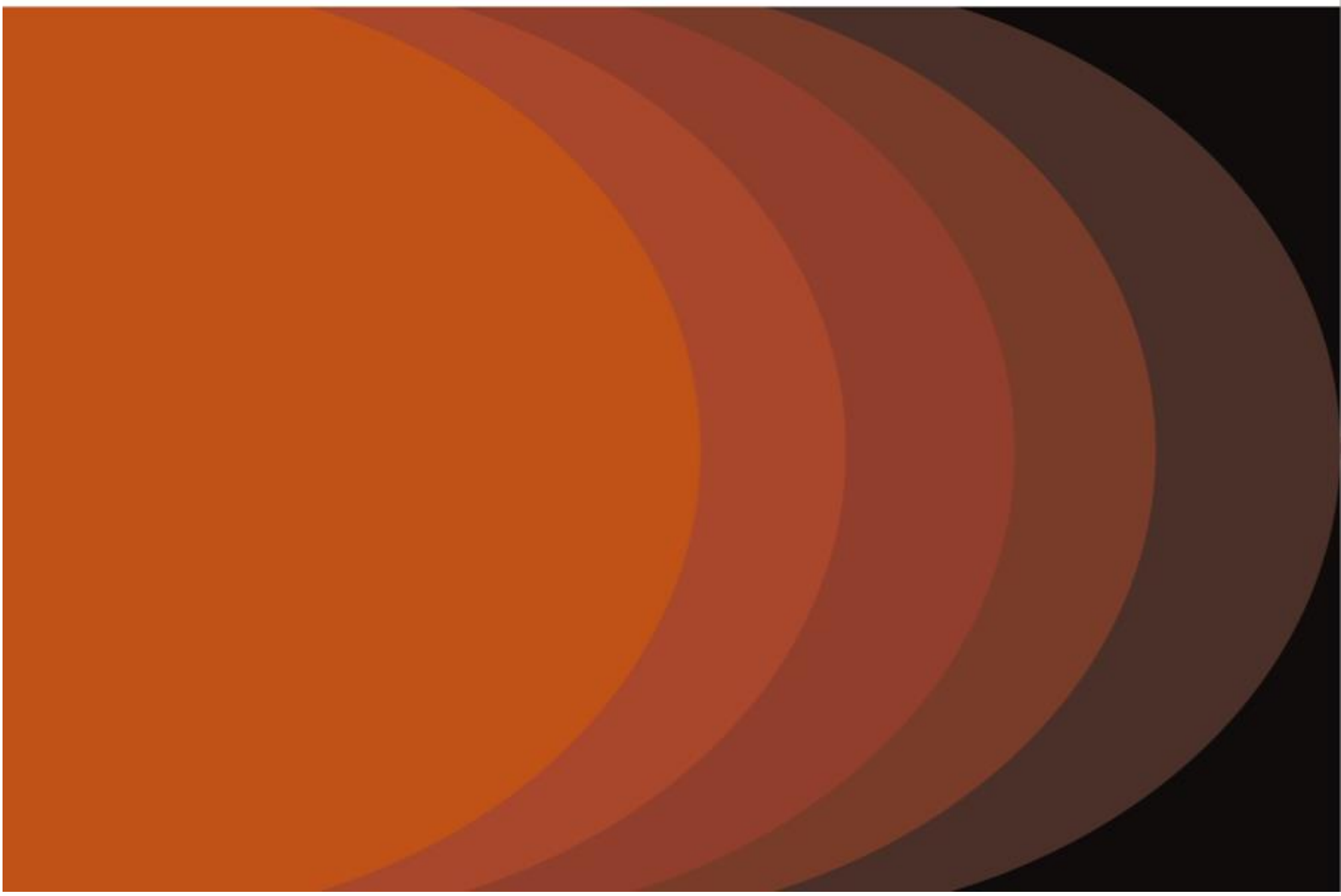




Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in
Stockton-on-Tees

HM Inspectorate of Probation, February 2021



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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 Stockton-on-Tees 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, Stockton-on-Tees YOS was rated as 'Outstanding'.

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 was conducted through off-site analysis of case files, and telephone and video conferencing took place between 21 September and 24 September 2020.

The Stockton-on-Tees Youth Offending Team (YOT) Management Board is chaired by the managing director of the local authority, who is knowledgeable about, and actively engaged in, the work of the YOT. Board members are aware of the challenges facing children in the justice system, and they advocate for them in their own individual services.

The Police and Crime Commissioner's office has provided funding for children to receive a triage outcome as an alternative to prosecution. In contrast to other police areas, however, Cleveland Police have had a policy of limiting children to only one opportunity for a triage diversion. This has recently changed in some of the Cleveland areas but not in Stockton-on-Tees, and addressing this imbalance needs to be a priority for the Management Board.

A stable and highly motivated staff team is delivering excellent services to children and families, and they are supported by competent managers who offer the right balance of challenge, support and guidance. The YOT Head of Service provides clear leadership and direction, setting high standards and ensuring that they are achieved. There is a culture of accountability, learning and development.














The quality of assessment and planning for children subject to court orders is good. We assessed the services delivered to children, and the standard of reviewing their impact, to be outstanding for post-court work. Staff know the children they work with well and form strong relationships with them and their families. They demonstrate an ability to deliver difficult messages while maintaining good working relationships, and this supports the delivery of effective interventions.

Joint working between the YOT and the police to deliver out-of-court disposals is outstanding. High-quality assessments which involved parents and carers and considered the personal circumstances of children were completed in every case. The quality of work delivered to children was also outstanding.



Marc Baker
Director of Operations

Ratings

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| Stockton-on-Tees Youth Offending Service | Score | 32/36 |
| Overall rating | Outstanding |  |
| 1. Organisational delivery | | |
| 1.1 | Governance and leadership | Good  |
| 1.2 | Staff | Outstanding  |
| 1.3 | Partnerships and services | Outstanding  |
| 1.4 | Information and facilities | Outstanding  |
| 2. Court disposals | | |
| 2.1 | Assessment | Good  |
| 2.2 | Planning | Good  |
| 2.3 | Implementation and delivery | Outstanding  |
| 2.4 | Reviewing | Outstanding  |
| 3. Out-of-court disposals | | |
| 3.1 | Assessment | Outstanding  |
| 3.2 | Planning | Good  |
| 3.3 | Implementation and delivery | Outstanding  |
| 3.4 | Joint working | Outstanding  |

Recommendations

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

The Youth Offending Team Management Board should:

1. work with Cleveland Police to review and amend the triage policy.

The Stockton-on-Tees Youth Offending Team should:

2. involve children in the development of service delivery
3. strengthen its planning arrangements for keeping children safe, ensuring that contingency plans are clear and robust.

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 (YOSs). 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 healthcare, 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.

Around 200,000 people live in Stockton-on-Tees. It comprises several towns – Stockton, Billingham, Thornaby, Ingleby Barwick, Norton and Yarm – and some rural villages. The population is increasing, with a 2.8 per cent rise over the last seven years.

Inequality is a challenge. There are affluent areas alongside areas of deprivation. Nine wards are in the 10 per cent most deprived in the country. Snapshot surveys of domestic abuse experiences among the YOT cohort have shown that, on average, almost two-thirds have experienced domestic abuse. In the last two years, there have been increased levels of criminal exploitation and some serious offending by some children, associated with organised crime gangs. YOT cases have become progressively more complex in recent years.

There has been a decrease in the overall YOT caseload, for out-of-court disposal cases and post-court cases. Youth crime has fallen substantially in Stockton-on-Tees over the last five years. In 2014/2015, there were 724 offences committed by 401 10–17 year-olds. In 2019/2020, this had fallen to 320 offences committed by 144 10–17 year-olds. The YOT is performing well against national key performance indicators for first-time entrants and for custody; it is better than the England and Wales and North East average for both. The most recent published data shows reoffending rates to be worse than the national average, and improving this is a priority of the YOT and the Management Board.

The YOT is part of the ‘early help’ service within Stockton-on-Tees children’s services. Since 2017, the YOT has been combined with the targeted support team. The targeted support case workers undertake work from the early help service, primarily with adolescents. They also support exit planning for YOT cases where a need for ongoing support has been identified. All YOT posts are permanent, while the targeted case worker posts are temporary, and several them are currently vacant

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

pending a children's transformation review, which was due to start in autumn 2020. The vacancies have not had an impact on the delivery of youth justice services, and the targeted support work is currently being absorbed by the wider early help provision.

Contextual facts

Population information

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 197,348 | Total population Stockton-on-Tees (2011) ² |
| 19,342 | Total youth population (10–17 years) in Stockton-on-Tees (2019) ² |

Demographics of children cautioned or sentenced³

| Age | 10–14 | 15–17 |
|----------------------|------------|------------|
| Stockton-on-Tees YOS | 32% | 68% |
| National average | 23% | 77% |

| Race/ethnicity | White | Black and minority ethnic | Unknown |
|----------------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Stockton-on-Tees YOS | 93% | 5% | 1%⁴ |
| National average | 70% | 26% | 4% |

| Gender | Male | Female |
|----------------------|------------|-----------|
| Stockton-on-Tees YOS | 93% | 7% |
| National average | 85% | 15% |

Additional caseload data⁵

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 19 | Total current caseload: community sentences |
| 1 | Total current caseload in custody (remand case) |
| 1 | Total current caseload on licence |
| 9 | Total current caseload: youth caution |
| 6 | Total current caseload: youth conditional caution |
| 9 | Total current caseload: community resolution or other out-of-court disposal |

² Office for National Statistics. (June 2020). *UK Population estimates, mid-2019*.

³ Youth Justice Board. (January 2020). *Youth Justice annual statistics: 2018 to 2019*.

⁴ In some circumstances, figures may not total or may exceed 100. This is due to the rounding up/down of figures.

⁵ Information supplied by YOT, reflecting caseload on 11 September 2020.

1. Organisational delivery



Strengths:

- The Board Chair is well engaged, has a good understanding of YOT work and holds each Board member to account for their contributions to improving outcomes for YOT children.
- Partners are committed to providing responsive and individualised services that meet the needs of children.
- The YOT has good links with the special educational needs and disabilities team, and with local schools.
- Staff are skilled and motivated, and report high levels of satisfaction. There is a framework for staff development which promotes retention and succession planning.
- The YOT management team provides clear direction and ensures that staff have the right level of training, guidance and supervision to deliver the strategy set by the Board.
- Management oversight was effective in every inspected case.
- Staff workloads are manageable, and they have the capacity to establish trusting relationships with children and families.
- There is good access to useful information and there are working systems to support improvement in most aspects of service delivery.

Areas for improvement:

- Children have the opportunity of only one triage intervention. The Board needs to consider how this can be resolved, so that children in Stockton-on-Tees have the same diversion opportunities as those in other areas.
- The Head of Service for the YOT does not attend the Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safer Children Partnership, and this is a missed opportunity for sharing information and for the partnership to benefit from her specialist youth justice knowledge.

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

1.1. Governance and leadership



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

Good

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

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

The youth justice plan for 2019/2020 was agreed and signed off by the Board and sets out the vision and priorities for the YOT. In line with YJB requirements, and in response to the impact of Covid-19, a business continuity plan is in place and this is supported by a YOT development plan. Staff contributed to the youth justice plan through discussions at team meetings and they are aware of the vision and priorities for the service.

The Stockton-on-Tees YOT Management Board is a mature partnership, with good attendance from key partners who are of the right level of seniority. Catalyst Stockton represents the voluntary sector, and establishes links between the YOT, community groups and local charity organisations. There is an induction process for Board members, and this includes meeting YOT staff. There is also an induction and information pack available to all new members.

The Board is chaired by the council's managing director, reflecting the priority that the local authority gives the YOT. The Board Chair is well engaged, has a good understanding of YOT work and holds each Board member to account for their contributions to improving outcomes for YOT children. The YOT Head of Service and team managers reported feeling supported by the Board Chair, who keeps in touch with them on a regular basis. We saw examples of issues being escalated to the Board, such as the lack of a performance manager for the YOT, and these being effectively resolved.

Issues having an impact on youth offending are prominent on the agendas of other key strategic groups, including the children's social care partnership. Constructive working relationships, and a shared understanding at a strategic level, support effective direct service delivery to children and families. The Head of Service for the YOT does not attend the Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safer Children Partnership, and this is a missed opportunity for sharing information and for the partnership to benefit from her specialist youth justice knowledge.

As well as monitoring national key performance outcomes, the Management Board takes account of emerging trends, policy directives and legislation, research and thematic inspections. Information on compliance with the conditions of YJB grant funding, YOT performance reports, six-monthly quality assurance casework audits and the findings of the National Standards Audits are presented and discussed at Board meetings.

In contrast to other police areas, however, Cleveland Police has a policy of limiting children to only one opportunity for diversion, which means that they can still enter the formal youth justice system as a result of very low-level offending. The delivery of triage is funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and there has been some reduction in funding in the past 12 months. Additionally, children's services have a pending restructure which is due to happen in the next few months, and any potential impact on YOT resources is not yet known. As a result, despite being aware of the need to strengthen the out-of-court provision, this has not yet happened owing to the pending restructure. Addressing this must be a priority for the YOT Management Board if it is to ensure that children in Stockton-on-Tees have the same diversion opportunities as those in other nearby areas.

Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?

YOT Management Board members are focused appropriately on the needs of YOT children and the delivery of high-quality services to them. Board members advocate for the YOT in their own service; for example, the Clinical Commissioning Group has commissioned trauma-informed provision and practice training. The YOT has commissioned speech and language provision from the NHS Foundation Trust in response to data analysis and Board discussions.

The strong partnership between the police, children's social care services and health services has enabled the YOT to address priority concerns. Effective joint work has meant that processes have been put in place to keep children at risk of exploitation, safe through the multi-agency vulnerability, exploited, missing and trafficked (VEMT) panel.

The partnership is aware that a large number of YOT children (31 per cent) are identified as having special educational needs (SEN), and that school exclusions are becoming an increasing challenge. This is being monitored, and we were impressed by the actions that the partnership has taken to address this. The YOT has been awarded SEN and/or disabilities (SEND) Quality Lead status in recognition of its work to support children with SEND. Close partnership working with the SEN department allows early identification of children and enables prompt and appropriate responses to take place. The YOT education, training and employment (ETE) adviser is a qualified teacher and has access to school databases, which further enhances swift access to information, including up-to-date attendance, SEND status and exclusions. This means that case managers are kept up to date in 'real time' about children's attendance and can respond swiftly to any concerns.

The YOT holds a two-monthly ETE clinic, which provides a forum for discussion and problem-solving of cases where school placements are unsuitable or at risk of breakdown, alongside discussions about barriers to engagement in post-16 provision. Representatives include the senior adviser for inclusion development and school improvement, school admissions manager and SEN manager. There are escalation pathways in place from this forum. Additionally, the YOT ETE adviser sits on the fair access panel, which allows them to have a voice in decisions for unplaced children.

Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?

The positive findings of our inspection are indicative of the quality of the YOT leadership. Managers have high aspirations for children, and a good understanding of their needs and how best to meet them. We found that management oversight was effective in every inspected case.

The YOT management team provides clear direction and ensures that staff have the right level of training, guidance and supervision to deliver the strategy set by the Board. Team meetings take place regularly, and key messages from Board meetings are shared. Board minutes are available to all staff. Some staff have attended the Board, as have volunteers and a member of the public who received victim support from the YOT. Staff feel sufficiently updated on strategic issues such as budget and recruitment, and the majority are aware of the activities of the Board.

The Head of Service has an open-door policy. Ideas and suggestions from staff are encouraged and we were provided with clear examples of where these have led to change – for example, improved court processes.

1.2. Staff



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

Outstanding

Key staffing data⁶

| | |
|---|----|
| Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent, FTE) | 41 |
| Average caseload per case manager (FTE) | 7 |

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?

Staff have manageable workloads. Each case manager holds approximately seven cases, and this affords them time to engage in a meaningful way with children and families, and to offer ongoing support beyond the end of any YOT intervention. The skills and experience of staff are considered in the allocation of work. Duty rotas are in place to maintain the quality of delivery during any period of absence, and the YOT works closely with the court staff from neighbouring YOTs, so they are always aware when a child appears in court.

Almost all staff responding to our survey report feeling 'very motivated' to deliver high-quality services to children and families. Inspectors were impressed by the staff's excellent engagement skills and consistent approach to desistance work, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm. One inspector commented that:

"Staff form excellent working relationships with children and families but do not avoid delivering difficult messages where necessary. Even when they are met with resistance, they do not compromise and are able to sustain and maintain strong working relationships that support the delivery of effective interventions".

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

All case managing staff are qualified in a youth justice or youth-related field and there are opportunities for staff progression within the service. The management team has received management training, and attention is paid to succession planning using 'act up' positions and paid honorariums. All volunteers who responded to our survey have received sufficient training, are well supported and feel included in the wider team.

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

Workloads are actively monitored by managers and there is a joint allocation process, whereby staff have both a line manager and an allocated primary manager

⁶ Data supplied by the YOT and reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

for each case. This promotes reflective practice, and staff benefit from additional mentoring and support with their more challenging cases. Eighty-seven per cent of staff responding to our survey consider their supervision to be 'very good'. There is high morale within the team, and staff feel valued and appreciated.

Staff value the appraisal process and feel that it supports their learning and development. Seconded staff receive supervision from the home agency, which completes their appraisal. Poor performance is identified and addressed, with appropriate plans put in place to support improvement.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

Continuous learning and improvement is promoted at all levels. A training plan is in place, and practitioners have the time to attend training and development opportunities. Almost all staff consider that their training and development needs are met. Joint manager arrangements, quality assurance processes, effective practice forums and staff training all support and promote service development. The Head of Service quality assures the management oversight of casework, to make sure that it is thorough, and we considered this to be an area of strength.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Outstanding

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

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

There is a clear understanding of reoffending data, offending types, sentence/disposal types, the numbers at risk of child criminal exploitation (CCE), and analysis of educational status and need. The YOT understands the demographics, and the issues and challenges that children and their families are experiencing, and it uses this evidence to target resources, put processes in place and work with partners. For example, analysis by the YOT in relation to the risks of CCE were raised at the local Tees strategic board, and this led to changes in the strategic response to CCE in Stockton and the Tees local authorities.

The Head of Service has recently identified that several children from Asian and Asian mixed-heritage backgrounds have become known to the YOT. This is a new development that has been quickly identified and is being analysed to understand the implications. From our inspection of casework, it was clear that issues of diversity, be it in respect of language, Looked After Child status or learning needs, are identified and responded to through bespoke personalised interventions.

A life coach (counselling) role, complementary to the work of the YOT child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) mental health nurse, was initially funded from the Troubled Families grant but is now funded directly from the YOT budget, following analysis of the impact of the work being done and recognition of the need for it to continue.

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

Most of the staff and volunteers responding to our survey feel that they have sufficient access to the services, interventions and partnership resources they need to work with children. The YOT ensures that there are up-to-date resources in place for the YOT staff to use in their one-to-one sessions with children; their suitability is regularly reviewed, to ensure that they keep up with emerging trends.

The YOS benefits from good healthcare, ETE and restorative justice provision. A life coach position has been developed to support the delivery of a trauma-informed approach to practice. There are no waiting lists for CAMHS, or for substance misuse and a speech and language therapy (SALT) practitioner. In addition, there is access to a forensic CAMHS team and an educational psychologist. A new trauma-informed care pathway has been developed for YOT children. If a YOT case manager is working with a child accessing this service, they receive clinical supervision to assist them in their work.

All appropriate secondments, including police and probation staff, are in place and lead to sound working practices in out-of-court disposals and transition to adult services.

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

The YOT Head of Service, together with the police, has analysed the impact on children of the procedural delays in 'released under investigation' decisions. The YOT is now in the process of considering what voluntary interim support can be offered to children and families while they wait for matters to conclude.

The Director of Children's Services is an active member of the YOT Management Board. This has helped to create a shared understanding of the needs and vulnerabilities of children involved with the YOT. We found that this promoted effective joint working between the YOT and the children's social care team in the delivery of services to children and families. In addition, good working relationships between the YOT and the early help service support effective exit and stepdown planning for children when they reach the end of their YOT intervention.

In response to incidents in care homes, a restorative practice project was initiated by the YOT to support the reduction in the number of children in care entering the criminal justice system. Restorative champions were identified in each care home and were linked to the YOT restorative practice coordinator, to promote a consistent response and the regular sharing of best practice in restorative approaches. The YOT restorative practice coordinator is involved in the induction of all new care home staff in addition to supporting partnership work with the police to improve joint decision-making in response to incidents.

The YOT ETE worker, who is a teacher, has forged positive relationships with schools and colleges. The YOT is represented at the fair access panel and advocates for YOT children, who are increasingly affected by school exclusion.

Given their recognised expertise in working with and engaging adolescents, YOT case managers and targeted support workers complete 'return home' interviews for children open to social care who have been missing from home. Information is then shared at the VEMT panel, for connections and themes to be considered.

Involvement of children and their parents/carers

The YOT carried out a consultation with parents to establish if they could improve the support offered to families. A theme emerged regarding aggression from children to parents, and the YOT responded by ensuring that parenting programmes were made available to all parents who would benefit from these. The YOT has tried several methods to capture the views of children, such as analysing the findings of self-assessments and undertaking surveys with children. The findings have not been fully utilised to improve the delivery of services, however, and this is an area that needs to be addressed.

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.

Outstanding

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?

The YOT has a dedicated, centrally located performance manager, who produces high-quality reports for the Board, including a mix of local and national indicators.

The Stockton-on-Tees YOT and targeted support team practice handbook is a helpful document which provides clear guidance and links to policies, research and resources. Almost every staff member who responded to our survey said that they understood the YOS policies and procedures either 'well' or 'very well'.

A quality standards and assurance framework set out how the service will ensure that it delivers high-quality provision.

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

We were unable to view the YOT facilities, but most staff and volunteers reported that the YOT facilities are suitable for delivering work to children. Owing to the impact of Covid-19, staff have adapted the ways that they are working with children; for example, 'walk and talk' sessions and other contact has been via telephone and doorstep visits. Staff have worked hard to maintain contact with children and families during this challenging period.

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

Staff have access to the children's social care database, to assist them in their assessments. YOT police undertake searches on Niche and the police national computer, and information is shared in a timely way with case managers. The YOT education worker has access to the education database and undertakes detailed checks on each child. Checks include school attendance and SEN status. If education and healthcare plans are in place for a child, these are easily obtained, which means

that the specific needs of the children are considered in devising ways of working with them.

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

The YOS has used findings from previous inspections, including thematic inspections, to improve and develop practice. Effective practice sessions are arranged on a routine basis, and discussion topics are informed by findings from quality assurance and suggestions from staff.

Following the 2015 thematic report on resettlement,⁷ the YOT carried out a benchmarking exercise and shared it with the Management Board. This led to the YOT becoming part of an accommodation commissioning process, and it is now a member of the accommodation panel, where it can advocate for YOT children, especially those leaving custody.

The YOT is responsive to emerging themes identified in casework, by undertaking further analysis. Surveys of domestic abuse experiences among the YOT cohort, for example, have shown that, on average, almost two-thirds have experienced domestic abuse. As a result, resource packs for promoting healthy intimate relationships and addressing teen-to-parent abuse have been developed.

The YOT has undertaken an analysis of the impact of out-of-court disposals in general, but it has not looked specifically at triage, to consider any implications for children who have the opportunity of only one triage disposal. Undertaking this analysis would be helpful when considering the resources that might be required to improve the current out-of-court disposal provision.

⁷ HM Inspectorate of Probation, the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted. (2015). *Joint Thematic Inspection of Resettlement Services to Children by Youth Offending Teams and Partner Agencies*.



2. Court disposals

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

Strengths:

- Assessments focused on the strengths of children and addressed structural barriers that might have a negative impact on their progress.
- The delivery and reviewing of work to support desistance, manage safety and wellbeing, and address risk of harm to others are outstanding.
- Victims and restorative justice were considered in all elements of post-court work.
- Children and their parents and carers were meaningfully involved in the assessment, planning, delivery and reviewing of interventions.
- The delivery of interventions was well coordinated, with appropriate involvement from other agencies.

Areas for improvement:

- Contingency planning to keep children safe was not always detailed or specific enough to be effective.

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/carers.

Good

Our rating⁸ 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 | 6 |
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe? | 8 | 7 |

⁸ 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 sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe? | 8 | 6 |
|---|---|---|

The quality of assessment in this YOT was rated as 'Good'. We saw thorough assessments to support desistance, and, in most cases, the assessment of how to keep other people safe was sufficient. Assessments of safety and wellbeing were outstanding.

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 | 7 |
| Does assessment consider the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, utilising information held by other agencies? | 8 | 6 |
| 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? ⁹ | 4 | 4 |
| 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 | 7 |
| 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 | 8 |

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 | 7 |

⁹ Structural barriers were identified in four of eight cases

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate? | 8 | 7 |
| Where applicable, does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child? | 8 | 6 |

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 | 6 |
| 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 | 7 |

Assessments were informed appropriately by input from a variety of sources, including children's social care, the police and mental health services. This meant that the full circumstances and life experiences of the child were understood, and behaviour was analysed within that context. Children and their parents and carers were meaningfully involved in the assessment process.

Consideration was routinely given to identifying a child's strengths, aspirations and protective factors, which could be harnessed to promote their integration into mainstream services to support desistance. Barriers that might prevent a child from making changes, such as access to training and/or education and positive activities, were given appropriate attention.

The needs and wishes of victims were considered in every case, and opportunities for restorative justice were promoted where it was deemed appropriate. Inspectors noted that assessments were well balanced, focusing equally on the welfare of children and managing risk of harm to others.

2.2. Planning



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

Good

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

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.

| 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? ¹¹ | 8 | 5 |
| Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? ¹² | 8 | 6 |

The planning in all cases inspected was sufficient in respect of the focus on desistance. Planning to promote safety and wellbeing did not meet our standards in every case and was originally assessed as 'Requires improvement'. Having considered our findings in more detail, we applied professional discretion to this score, uplifting it to 'Good', as this was a more accurate reflection of the overall practice we saw in planning. Planning to keep other people safe was good, with adequate attention being paid to the needs and wishes of actual and potential victims in every relevant case.

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 | 7 |
| Does planning take sufficient account of the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child? | 8 | 7 |
| Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary? | 8 | 7 |
| 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? | 6 | 6 |
| Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account? | 8 | 8 |

¹¹ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.

¹² 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 8 cases with factors related to keeping the child safe: | Relevant cases | Number 'Yes' |
|--|----------------|--------------|
| Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks? | 8 | 7 |
| Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child? | 8 | 7 |
| Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child? | 8 | 6 |
| Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified? | 8 | 5 |

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

| Of the 8 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? | 8 | 8 |
| Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate? | 6 | 6 |
| Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims? | 6 | 6 |
| Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people? | 8 | 8 |
| Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified? | 8 | 6 |

Written plans were clear and well sequenced, paying attention to the most urgent priorities and how work to address them would be delivered. Planning addressed issues of desistance, and in every case there was a good level of involvement of the child and their parents and carers in the planning process. We saw an excellent example of a plan being put in place for a parent which offered support for their own needs, as well as assisting them to develop strategies for dealing with their child's challenging behaviour.

In most cases, enough attention was paid to keeping the child safe, and planning promoted the safety of others in every case. We saw evidence of planning at the VEMT, and this was aligned with plans held by other services, such as education and children's social care. Contingency planning requires strengthening, to set out what actions will be taken, and by whom, if concerns regarding safeguarding or risk of harm to other people increase.

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating¹³ 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 | 8 |
| Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child safe? ¹⁴ | 8 | 8 |
| Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people? ¹⁵ | 8 | 8 |

In every case, the implementation and delivery of services sufficiently supported desistance, the safety of the child and the risk of harm to others. The consistency of high-quality service delivery was outstanding.

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 |
| 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 | 7 |

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.

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

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT? | 8 | 7 |
| In cases when it is required, are enforcement actions taken when appropriate? ¹⁶ | 1 | 1 |

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

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

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

| Of the 8 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? | 8 | 8 |
| Where applicable, is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims? | 7 | 7 |
| Where applicable, is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated? | 7 | 7 |

Inspectors were impressed with the skill that case managers demonstrated in delivering services and interventions to children and families. The individual needs of the child were considered in every case, and any barriers which may make change difficult to achieve were taken into account. In every case, it was clear that staff worked hard to engage children and families; even when they were initially faced with resistance, they remained consistent and committed. Staff advocated for children and liaised effectively with partner agencies to deliver targeted interventions and make sure that children received the support they needed. Good information sharing between agencies supported a joined-up approach. Education was a priority in every case, and there was involvement from the police and children's social care services where this was relevant. Appropriate referrals were made – for example, to the VEMT panel – and inspectors felt that the panel discussions and actions added value to the work delivered.

¹⁶ Enforcement action was required in one out of eight cases

2.4. Reviewing



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

Outstanding

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

| Of the 8 cases inspected: ¹⁸ | Relevant cases | Number 'Yes' |
|---|----------------|--------------|
| Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance? | 5 | 5 |
| Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? | 7 | 7 |
| Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? | 4 | 4 |

In every case, where changes had been identified, reviewing focused sufficiently on the progress of the child, in terms of desistance. Equally, case managers reviewed the impact that interventions were having on keeping the child and the public safe, and work plans were appropriately adjusted in response to such factors.

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

| Of the 5 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? | 5 | 5 |
| Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors? | 5 | 5 |
| Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers? | 5 | 5 |
| Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account? | 5 | 5 |

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 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? | 5 | 5 |
| Where applicable, does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child? | 7 | 7 |

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

| Of the 4 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? | 4 | 4 |
| Where applicable, is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm? | 4 | 4 |
| Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their risk of harm, and are their views taken into account? | 4 | 4 |
| Where applicable, does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm? | 3 | 3 |

Reviewing was an ongoing process in most cases, especially when there were vulnerabilities relating to exploitation. This was supported by the VEMT practitioners group and the multiagency plans that had been put in place. When risks and concerns increased, we saw evidence of cases being escalated for management review and input. Professionals meetings and joint home visits – for example, with the police and children’s social care services – supported the effective multi-agency reviewing of interventions and plans. The ongoing reviewing of the child’s needs and circumstances meant that other professionals, such as CAMHS, were introduced in a timely way. Workers did not remain fixed to delivering the original plan of work, and there was a clear focus on meeting the changing needs of children.

There were two cases that did not involve other agencies in the reviewing of safety and wellbeing, and in these cases no input was required. There was one case where there was no change in circumstances relating to risk of harm, so no adaptation to the plan of work was required.

3. Out-of-court disposals



We inspected five cases managed by the YOT that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of one youth conditional caution, one youth caution and three triage cases. We interviewed the case managers in four cases.

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

Strengths:

- Equal attention was paid to desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk to others in assessments and in the delivery of interventions.
- Attention was given to the child's understanding, and that of their parents and carers, of the implications of receiving an out-of-court disposal.
- The rationale for joint disposal decisions were appropriate and clearly recorded.
- The YOT's recommendations were well informed, analytical and personalised to the child, supporting joint decision-making.
- There were effective joint working arrangements in place with the police to support the delivery of out-of-court disposals.
- The involvement of the child and their parents and carers was an area of strength.

Areas for improvement:

- Planning and contingency planning for safety and wellbeing should clearly set out what action will be taken, and by whom, if there is an increase in concern.

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

3.1. Assessment



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

Outstanding

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

| Of the 5 cases inspected: | Relevant cases | Number 'Yes' |
|---|----------------|--------------|
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance? | 5 | 4 |
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe? | 5 | 4 |
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe? | 5 | 5 |

In almost every case, the assessment of desistance factors, the safety and wellbeing of the child, and keeping other people safe was sufficient. We therefore rated the assessment of cases 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 | 4 |
| 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? ²⁰ | 3 | 3 |
| Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change? | 5 | 5 |
| Where applicable, does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s, and opportunities for restorative justice? | 4 | 3 |
| Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account? | 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.

²⁰ Structural barriers were identified in four cases

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 | 4 |

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? | 5 | 5 |
| 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 |

In all cases inspected, assessments were of a sufficient quality. There was strong involvement of the child and their parents and carers evidenced in all cases, and diversity needs were considered, as were the strengths and protective factors of the child.

Assessments provided a clear analysis of the offence and any underlying factors that may have had an impact on the child's behaviour. They were informed by appropriate information sources, such as social services reports, victim contact, police information, speech and language assessments, and child and parent self-assessments. This provided a clear picture of the life of the child, their attitude, home circumstances and any traumatic events which may have had an impact on their development. Consideration was given to the views of victims, and the child's attitude/motivation to engage in restorative justice.

3.2. Planning



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

Our rating²¹ for planning is based on the following key questions:

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 | 4 |
| Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? ²² | 4 | 3 |
| Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? ²³ | 3 | 2 |

We rated the planning work of out-of-court disposals as 'Good'. Planning to support the child's desistance and to keep other people safe was outstanding. The overall score for this area of practice, however, was driven by our findings of the quality of planning to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, which was 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 | 4 |
| 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 | 5 |
| Where applicable, does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s? | 4 | 4 |
| 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 4 cases with factors relevant to keeping the child safe: | Relevant cases | Number 'Yes' |
|--|----------------|--------------|
| Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks? | 4 | 2 |
| Where applicable, does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child? | 4 | 4 |
| Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified? | 4 | 3 |

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

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

In all cases, the motivation of the child to engage with their interventions was fully considered. Their parents and carers were involved in the planning process, as staff recognise that this promotes engagement and progress. Diversity needs were considered in every case, which meant that additional support could be put in place for children who needed it. Planning did not promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, however, and this was because of a deficit in contingency planning. Where risk has been identified, concerns can escalate quickly. It is therefore important that there are clear plans in place as to what action will be taken in these circumstances, and the plans should be known to all those included in their delivery. Planning to manage the risk of harm to others met all of our standards in every relevant case. Victim issues were prioritised and considered as a matter of course.

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating²⁴ 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? ²⁵ | 4 | 4 |
| Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people? ²⁶ | 3 | 3 |

We rated the delivery of out-of-court disposal work as 'Outstanding'. In all cases inspected, the work was sufficient to support desistance and the safety of the child, and address any risk of harm.

Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?

| Of the 5 cases inspected: | Relevant cases | Number 'Yes' |
|---|----------------|--------------|
| Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales? | 5 | 4 |
| Does service delivery reflect the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents/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 | 4 |
| 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 |

²⁴ 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.

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

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

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?

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

As with post-court work, case managers demonstrated a skilled approach to promoting the engagement of children. Out-of-court disposals are brief interventions, but in the cases inspected, a lot was achieved within a short timeframe. There was a holistic approach, and children were referred to relevant services, including a SALT practitioner, ETE worker and life coach. Offence-focused interventions and victim awareness sessions were completed where appropriate. There was joint working with other services, and case managers demonstrated a flexible approach, undertaking sessions in children's homes if this was the most suitable setting for the child.

3.4. Joint working



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

Our rating²⁷ 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 |

²⁷ 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 the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal? ²⁸ | 1 | 1 |
|--|---|---|

We rated joint working as 'Outstanding', as the majority of the cases inspected met our standards.

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? | 4 | 4 |
| Do the recommendations consider the degree of the child's understanding of the offence and their acknowledgement of responsibility? | 4 | 4 |
| Where applicable, is a positive contribution made by the YOT to determining the disposal? | 4 | 4 |
| Is sufficient attention given to the child's understanding, and their parents/carers' understanding, of the implications of receiving an out of court disposal? | 5 | 5 |
| Is the information provided to inform decision-making timely, to meet the needs of the case, legislation and guidance? | 4 | 4 |
| Where applicable, is the rationale for joint disposal decisions appropriate and clearly recorded? | 4 | 4 |

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

| Of the 1 case with a youth conditional caution: | Relevant cases | Number 'Yes' |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Where applicable, does the YOT inform the police of progress and outcomes in a sufficient and timely manner? | 1 | 1 |
| Is sufficient attention given to compliance with, and enforcement of the conditions? | 1 | 1 |

Joint working was of a sufficient standard in all the cases we inspected. In all relevant cases, the YOT made a positive contribution to determining the disposal decision. The child's individual circumstances were considered when deciding what

²⁸ This question is only relevant in youth conditional caution cases.

the best disposal would be, and in every case the implications of receiving an out-of-court disposal for children and their parents and carers had been made clear to them.

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.²⁹

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. All domain two samples, however, even for the smallest YOTs, meet an 80 per cent confidence level, and in some of the smaller YOTs inspectors may be assessing most or all of that service's cases.

Domain one: organisational delivery

- The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance, and the managing director of the local authority delivered a presentation covering the following areas:
- How do organisational delivery arrangements in this area make sure that the work of your YOS is as effective as it can be, and that the life chances of children who have offended are improved?
- What are your priorities for further improving these arrangements?

During the main fieldwork phase, we conducted 12 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 nine meetings, including with managers, partner organisations and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.²⁸

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 seven to 10 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, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

²⁹ HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards are available here:

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

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 six to 10 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 that the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

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

Ratings explained

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

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