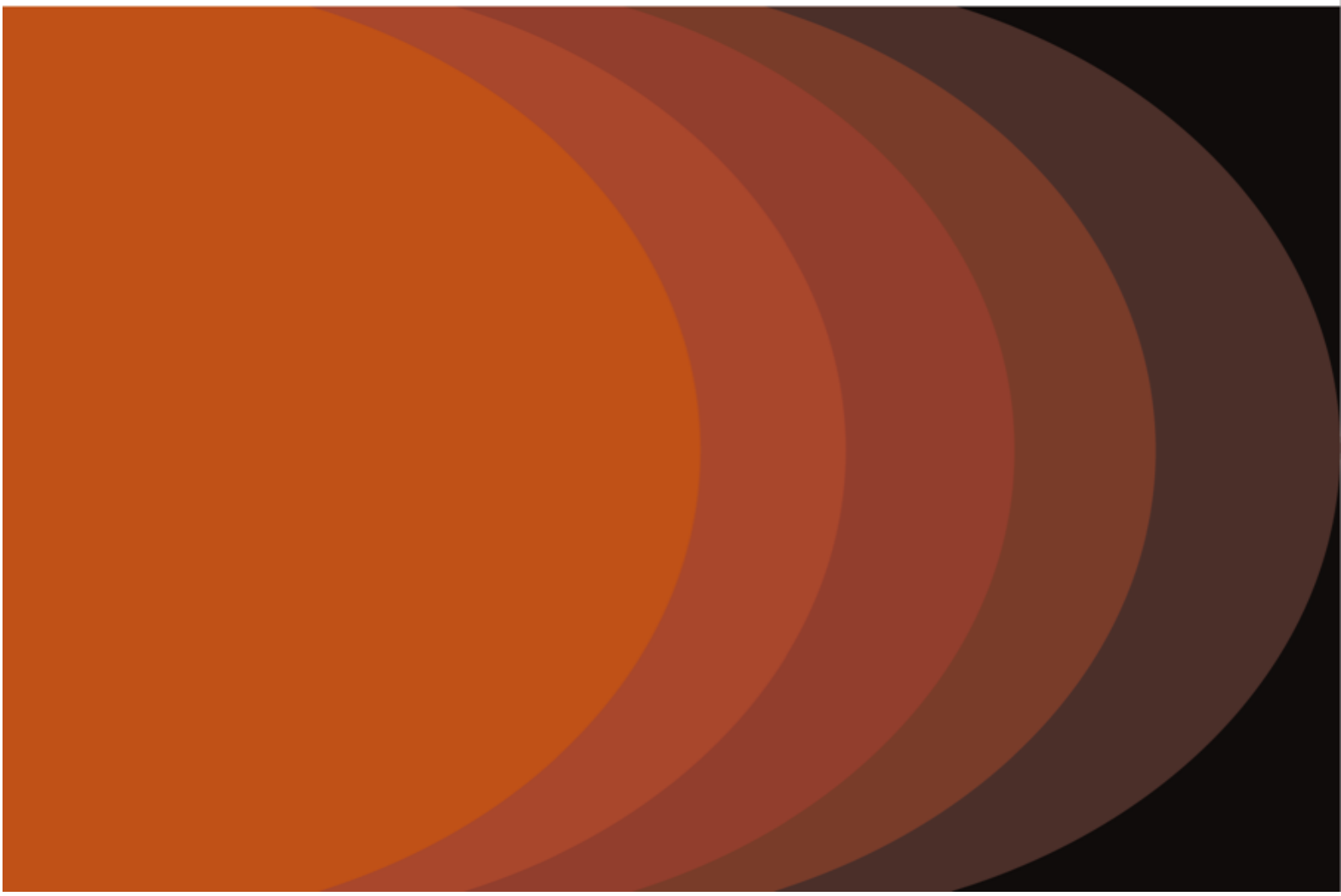




Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in
South Tyneside

HM Inspectorate of Probation, February 2021



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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 South Tyneside Youth Justice Service (YJS) across three broad areas of its work, referred to as 'domains': the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. We inspect against 12 'standards', shared between the domains. Overall, South Tyneside YJS was rated as 'Requires improvement'.

Our standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended. Published scoring rules generate the overall YOS rating. The findings and subsequent ratings in those domains are described in this report. Our fieldwork, conducted through off-site analysis of case files and phone and video conferencing, took place between 19 and 22 October 2020.

Over the past 12 months the Chair of the Management Board, Board members and Service Manager have taken a variety of actions to review, strengthen and improve the service. This includes actions to provide better governance, improve the consistency of support to staff, widen access to partnership services and use information and data to drive performance. Some of these measures have already had the desired effect but others, including a staff restructure and implementation of quality assurance measures, have not yet had time to embed. This partly explains the mixed performance we found in domains two and three.














In work with children who are subject to court orders, the focus on improving the quality of assessments was evident. These were outstanding. This should give the Board confidence that its action plans are effective. As the service implements its improvement plan, its focus should turn to the quality of planning and reviewing. The delivery of interventions to manage and reduce risk of harm to others was also a clear focus of work, but further attention is needed to bring safety and wellbeing work up to the same high level.

The service aims to deal with children at the lowest possible point in the criminal justice system. This is to prevent any adverse effects of early contact with the justice system later in life. Following a review of work to deliver out-of-court disposals, a new assessment process has been implemented. This single format is an improvement on the previous assessment types; however, planning for the safety and wellbeing of children and management of any risk of harm the child might pose to others are inadequate and need significant improvement. Undoubtedly, progress has been hampered by the steps needed to manage the Covid-19 pandemic. However, based on the evidence we have seen, there is reason to believe that the planned actions of the YJS will result in improvements in service delivery and outcomes for children in the future.



Marc Baker
Director of Operations

Ratings

South Tyneside Youth Justice Service		Score	14/36
Overall rating	Requires improvement		
1. Organisational delivery			
1.1	Governance and leadership	Good	
1.2	Staff	Requires improvement	
1.3	Partnerships and services	Requires improvement	
1.4	Information and facilities	Requires improvement	
2. Court disposals			
2.1	Assessment	Outstanding	
2.2	Planning	Requires improvement	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement	
2.4	Reviewing	Requires improvement	
3. Out-of-court disposals			
3.1	Assessment	Requires improvement	
3.2	Planning	Inadequate	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement	
3.4	Joint working	Requires improvement	

Recommendations

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

The South Tyneside Youth Justice Service should:

1. take steps to improve its planning for safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others, including contingency arrangements
2. review the risk and needs of children at regular intervals and when there is a significant change
3. provide consistent management oversight that is effective in improving practice
4. improve the knowledge and understanding of the roles and responsibilities between the Management Board and staff team.

The Director of Children's Services should:

5. review the decision-making processes for out-of-court disposals to make sure that safeguarding issues are identified and responded to as needed.

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.

South Tyneside YJS is in the North-East region of England. Levels of deprivation are high; the Indices of Multiple Deprivation ranked South Tyneside as the 23rd most deprived borough nationally in 2015. In 2019 South Tyneside was ranked 13th on the local authority districts with the highest population of children and older people with income deprivation. The local authority has felt the effects of this, with 6.9 per cent of all people unemployed compared with just 3.9 per cent nationally. It has seen a rise in the rate of 16–17-year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEET), which increased from 3.9 per cent in 2016 to 4.7 per cent in 2019. This contrasts with a declining rate among comparable neighbouring authorities and the average for England. The local authority has concerns about the further impact on its communities due to the health and financial implications of Covid-19.

South Tyneside has a stable workforce and population. High levels of unemployment are a feature of the area’s loss of coal mining and manufacturing industries. Being on the coast, there is some seasonal employment.

South Tyneside benefits from good working relationships with partners at both strategic and operational levels. Ofsted rated children’s services as ‘Good’ in February 2017.

The YJS is undergoing change, following a review by the Board, and the appointment of a new YOS Manager about 18 months ago.

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

Contextual facts

Population information

150,976	Total population (2019) ²
13,142	Total youth population (10–17 years) in South Tyneside (2019) ²

Demographics of children cautioned or sentenced³

Age	10–14 years	15–17 years
South Tyneside YJS	37%	63%
National average	23%	77%

Race/ethnicity	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
South Tyneside YJS	86%	4%	10%
National average	70%	26%	4%

Gender	Male	Female
South Tyneside YJS	79%	21%
National average	85%	15%

Additional caseload data⁴

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

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

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

⁴ Information supplied by YOT, reflecting caseload on 29 September 2020. This case load figure will have been effected by the Covid pandemic and is lower than usual for this service.

1. Organisational delivery



Strengths:

- The Management Board, partners and the Head of Service have a clear vision to provide children with the best start in life. This is underpinned by a partnership-wide strategy.
- Membership of the Management Board was reviewed and refreshed a year ago. The effectiveness of governance arrangements has also been subject to external review, and the Board has taken action to improve management oversight of service delivery.
- There are strong partnerships with the police and the alternative education provider. These have translated into high levels of children attending school, education or training and some innovative work with the police to recognise children who are vulnerable.

Areas for improvement:

- The work of the Board is not visible to the workforce. Just 40 per cent of staff who responded to our staff survey felt they understood the role and function of the Board. Board members are aware of this gap and are taking steps to improve this.
- The intended improvements to case management and work with children are not consistently evident. The YJS new case management standards are beginning to improve practice, but implementation has been hindered by Covid-19 and inconsistent management oversight.
- Despite some examples of individualised work, there is no specific response for girls, who are over-represented within the cohort.
- Thresholds for access to some services were unclear, particularly for children on out-of-court disposals. Although local authority children's services considered and assessed the children's needs, it was our view that the services provided were not always at the right level of the statutory intervention.

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 Board has a clear vision for children who are supported by the YJS. The Board, as part of the South Tyneside Partnership, has a collective vision for all children in the borough to have the 'best start in life'. As a result, the Board has focused on early intervention, restorative skills and desistance, with the aim of reducing the number of first-time entrants and reoffending rates.

Staff who we spoke to, and who completed our survey, knew the functions of the Board but were not familiar with how it contributed to the YJS's objectives. Board members have recognised this as a gap and have started to make their roles and functions more visible and improve communications with operational staff. An example is the recent attendance of the victim worker to talk to the Board about her work. Plans are in place for other workers to attend the Board to inform members about aspects of the service's work and, although halted by Covid-19 restrictions, plans had been made for Board meetings to take place at the YJS premises to allow greater interaction.

The Management Board has consistent attendance and has recently been refreshed to include a councillor. It is attempting to widen representation from education services, which will further strengthen it.

The Chair of the Management Board has a good knowledge of the service and has been well supported by the Head of Service to increase specific knowledge of current youth justice work.

There is an increasing appreciation of the needs of children in care, and there have been successful efforts to reduce the number who come into the criminal justice system. The Head of Service has presented a paper on this subject to the corporate parenting board. There are plans to use restorative approaches in children's residential services to manage conflicts without involving the police.

At a strategic level there is a strong understanding of the role that deprivation, neglect and domestic abuse can have on children's behaviour as routes into crime. Universal services are in place to mitigate some of these risks, including the retention of youth clubs and youth workers. The YJS children can benefit from these services.

Although numbers are small, the service has a higher number of girls than local and national averages. We found that there has been a drive to understand girls' individual needs but there is no gender-based strategy. This means that potential learning from national research and evidence on gender-based approaches is not applied.

The YJS has analysed the reasons why children who are black, Asian or of dual heritage offend. These are similar to their peers, with deprivation being the main driver of offending.

Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?

Partnerships with the Northumbria police force are strong. The police officers who work with the YJS provide good information and have been instrumental in supporting work to identify children who are vulnerable to exploitation.

There are two notable examples of this. The first is the development of a vulnerable child marker on police IT systems. This includes children who are in contact with the YJS. This provides all police officers who come into contact with children with a clear indication that the child may be in need of safeguarding. In a similar vein, the police are working with the public transport service Nexus to identify children who are using the Metro system without paying. This initiative is designed to reduce unnecessary criminalisation of children and to identify those who may be involved in transporting drugs as part of 'county lines'.

There are pathways into the substance misuse service and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The YJS used to have practitioners based in the service, but these were moved back into targeted service provision some time ago. The relationships with these workers have endured; in particular, the CAMHS worker is available for consultation and advice by phone, taking on referrals quickly when made. This has been beneficial during Covid-19 restrictions.

The substance misuse service is a 'lifespan' service, which gives children a clearer route through the justice system, as it is a continuous service and does not have an enforced transition when children reach the age of 18. This approach is designed to remove disruption to services and provide continuity of care. This is a service design feature not often seen that should benefit children as they move into adulthood. The YJS probation representative spoke highly of this approach, as it provides consistency when other services change.

There is further work needed to develop the services needed for children who are subject to out-of-court disposals. This group of children and type of case make up the bulk of the service's work. In the small number of cases we assessed (four), we found that some partners' responses were not always matched to a child's needs. This was despite several multi-agency meetings being in place to provide a safety net for children and their families.

A new assessment process was introduced in January 2020. This provides a single assessment framework, replacing a number of previously used formats. The panel considers this an improvement, and in our view, it gives a consistent approach to assessment and decision-making. Once the panel has agreed on an outcome, the YJS provides interventions most closely linked with desistance, and then makes referrals to partner agencies for support services. In our sample some of these assessments had shortcomings, including how the identified safety and wellbeing needs of children were to be met.

We saw similar examples in cases where the child had a court order, where planning, delivery of interventions and reviewing of safety and wellbeing required improvement.

Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?

In 2018, the local authority commissioned an internal review (of operations) and an external review (of leadership, management and governance). The reviews found that leadership of the service, quality assurance and performance information systems all required improvement. The need for these reviews was heightened by the sudden death of the previous Service Manager in April 2018.

Since that time, strategic management of the service had been exercised by the Head of Education and Learning and the Service Manager for early help, who oversaw the appointment of a new Operational Manager in 2019 and a staffing restructure, which was completed in early 2020.

The Head of Service is knowledgeable and has quickly established an expected level of service standards. Where he has had the time to focus on these, we found good-quality work. The close attention to improving the timeliness and quality of assessments has improved performance, and we have rated assessment in domain two as outstanding. Unfortunately, we have not seen this level of quality in performance against our other practice standards.

There is a culture of openness and constructive challenge. This has been aligned with the higher expectations of standards of work, so that staff have a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Managers appreciate the risks to the service and have taken steps to address these; the ongoing staffing restructure is one such example. The management team has carefully considered the management structure that is needed to drive and sustain good-quality work.

1.2. Staff



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

Requires improvement

Key staffing data⁵

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent, FTE)	31
Average caseload per case manager (FTE)	6

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

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

Staffing structures have been reviewed and adapted to meet service needs. This process is part-way through and key appointments are expected to be made in the next few months.

Caseloads are actively managed using a spreadsheet that gives an immediate overview of each staff member's workload. Caseloads at present are around six. This

⁵ Data supplied by YOT and reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

is lower than usual, because of the closure of courts during the pandemic. Caseloads are normally between 10 and 12.

Cases are allocated to one of two grades of staff. Youth Justice Officers tend to manage all the children with statutory court orders and who have the greatest levels of risk and vulnerability. They also hold the majority of out-of-court disposal cases. Youth Justice Support Officers undertake intervention work with children and contribute to some out-of-court disposal assessments, either for development or to cover for staff absence.

Absences are monitored and managed and cases are reallocated to other staff as needed to provide continuity of services to children.

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

Staff have access to a range of training provided by the local authority and have undertaken some role-specific training on trauma-informed practice and harmful sexual behaviour.

Some staff have not received training on basic YJS tools, including AssetPlus, and there has been no specific training on the risk of harm to others. There have been increased opportunities for coaching and staff have found team meetings helpful for sharing information and knowledge.

Staff are motivated to meet the service standards but frustrated by some inconsistent management advice. We found that management oversight is not always followed through, nor does it always lead to improvements in case management.

Succession planning is in place, and there are examples of how staff have been given cases to manage to develop their skills. This included a Youth Justice Support Officer holding a referral order case.

The Probation Officer staffing is due to change from one full-time equivalent to a 0.7 Probation Officer and a 0.3 Probation Service Officer. At the time of the inspection, the role descriptions for these posts were in the process of being agreed, to ensure that these staff are used to the best effect.

The staff team are representative of the area they serve. Many live in the locality and have a detailed understanding of the communities in which children live.

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

Staff receive routine and frequent supervision from managers who have developed an inclusive culture that emphasises collaborative learning and working. This has been particularly important during the period when staff have been working remotely.

Induction programmes are in place and have been adapted for remote working. The two staff who had been inducted in the last 12 months spoke positively about the process. Both have shown good progression. One commented on how she has been supported to understand the work from a child's perspective.

However, staff referenced some inconsistent management oversight, and we found this in our assessment of case work. Actions requested were not always followed up, and in a few cases, there were gaps in planning or interventions that were not

identified by managers. We found effective management oversight in just half of the domain two and domain three cases. Staff viewed oversight on these cases much more positively than we did. In a number of cases, there was little recording of advice or direction. One case manager did not agree with or understand the reasoning behind a decision for a partnership agency to undertake an intervention, when she felt best placed to do this. In another case where there was escalating risk, this was not given the oversight needed and as a result the case lacked a proper response to manage the increasing risk of harm.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

The Board and Head of Service recognise the need for a service-specific training needs analysis. This has been planned and will be used to identify gaps in training for both new and established staff. Until this analysis is undertaken, staff will continue to access training offered by the local authority on core subjects such as safeguarding, domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation.

The YJS has given considerable attention to developing core assessment skills to standardise and improve the use of AssetPlus. This has been delivered in a variety of ways, including formal training, strong quality assurance processes and one-to-one coaching. This has been successful. We found that assessment of desistance, risk of harm and safety and wellbeing was outstanding.

Too few staff said their training and development needs were met. Just over half (52 per cent) of those who completed our staff survey said that their training and development needs were partially met. A quarter (26 per cent) said they were mostly met and a fifth (21 per cent) said they were fully met.

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?

The partnership with the police is strong at a strategic and operational level. The out-of-court disposal process is used across the region, with a recently introduced assessment format based on AssetPlus. The police are the driving force behind reducing the number of first-time entrants and the desire to deal with children's offending behaviour at the earliest possible point. This has resulted in the use of Outcome 22⁶ deferred decisions, as these do not necessarily leave a trace on children's records and do not require an admission of guilt.

The number of children from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds committing offences is low, at four per cent of the YJS cohort when the national average is 26 per cent. The Head of Service focuses closely on this group of children,

⁶ Outcome 22 means that diversionary, educational or intervention activity, resulting from the crime report, has been undertaken and it is not in the public interest to take any further action.

understanding that percentages do not tell the whole story when there are so few children in the service. To that end, the YJS has carried out an analysis of the reasons why these children offend and enter the criminal justice system. This showed that the primary reasons are the same as for the white children: offending behaviour is linked to poverty and not discrimination. The use of Outcome 22 also ensures that if children will not admit guilt, then they still have the option of an out-of-court disposal. This helps children overcome any particular mistrust of the police, an issue highlighted in the Lammy Review as having a disproportionate effect on black and dual heritage children.⁷

The YJS recognises that girls and children in care are over-represented in the caseload. Again, the percentages can be misleading as numbers are small. Work is underway with residential services to better manage the behaviour of children in care, using restorative approaches rather than involving the police for minor issues.

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

There are well-established pathways to services that promote a personalised response to children's needs. These include access to CAHMS for advice, assessment and signposting to services. Similarly, children can access substance misuse services, and waiting times had been reducing before Covid-19.

There are very good links with alternative education providers, who work well with the education, training and employment (ETE) worker and case managers to identify and overcome barriers to children receiving education. 90 per cent of children on the current caseload are in ETE. This is high compared with what we normally see, although the small numbers of children involved can lead to big fluctuations. Priority is given to maintaining education and learning for this group of children.

The Board has improved its reporting data to understand and monitor the children's educational outcomes. These close links are essential, as a high proportion (40 per cent) of children have an education, health and care plan (EHCP). Despite this, there is no routine assessment of speech, language and communication needs by a qualified therapist.

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

The range and quality of analysis are increasing. Patterns of sentencing are monitored, as are offence types. This is starting to assist the Board and partners in targeting specific risks and needs.

The YJS identifies links between offending and neglect and domestic abuse. This is helping the Board to make links across children's services and the wider partnership. An example is the Thurston Project. This Youth Endowment Fund project works on strengthening family resilience by improving communication, parenting skills and problem-solving.

Escalation processes are in place and used. Children are discussed at multi-agency assessment team (MAAT) meetings, where their needs and risks can be assessed,

⁷ Lammy, D. (2017). *The Lammy Review: An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System.*

and partners asked to provide services. This is additional to internal YJS forums such as the risk and vulnerability panel.

Thresholds for access to some services are unclear, particularly when planning for children on out-of-court disposals, which we have rated as inadequate. In our limited sample, we saw cases where a child showed significant and clear indicators of trauma and distress. Children's services undertook an assessment of these cases, but in our view responded at too low a level, potentially leaving the children unsupported.

Children who receive out-of-court disposals do not always have their complex safety and wellbeing needs planned for or receive services to promote their safety and wellbeing. This was particularly the case where children's criminal and anti-social behaviour children's behaviour children's behaviour was an indication of distress and trauma.

Involvement of children and their parents and carers

One of the key objectives of the YJS is to gather and then use service users' experiences. The Board has been discussing the best ways to do this. The Board Chair gave a very clear commitment to this. Methods of consultation with children and their parents and carers are being developed to increase opportunities to hear about the experiences of children directly. This will bring the YJS into line with other parts of social care.

Case assessments showed that staff spent time talking to children to help to build relationships. This has continued during the restrictions on direct contact put in place because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.4. Information and facilities



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

Requires improvement

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

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

A range of current and appropriate policies are in place. These have been reviewed in the last 12 months. Staff who started working for the service in the past eight months received an induction and knew how to access policy and guidance documents, despite having to undertake induction remotely.

One of the key documents is the case management guidance, which sets out the organisation's expectations. In our survey, 90 per cent of staff said that they understood policy and processes; however, many commented that communication from senior staff could be better.

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

As this inspection took place remotely, the YJS premises were not seen. The YJS is co-located with the independent reviewing officers. The Head of Service has identified the need to make the reception more child-friendly, now that a planned redecoration has taken place.

We received some mixed views from staff about the premises. A few staff said that getting rooms where they could work with children was difficult. Some staff said that there was insufficient desk space for staff to work from the office, under normal circumstances.

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

ICT systems are in place to facilitate remote working. Staff have been trained on how to use the case management system ChildView. Further work is required to ensure that staff are confident in using the case recording system, so that it provides a consistent and comprehensive account of children's contact with the service.

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

The YJS is increasing its focus on measuring performance. This includes a review and expansion of the performance dashboard. At the time of the inspection, resources had been allocated, and a scheme of work was ongoing, to provide detailed performance information to the Management Board and to Service Managers.

There is a strong culture of learning from audit and inspection, not just within the YJS, but across the local authority. For example, in response to the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI), the partnership produced and implemented a comprehensive action plan.

To obtain an external perspective on the quality of practice, the Board commissioned an impartial reviewer to carry out 'deep dive' exercises. The detailed feedback has helped the Board to identify priorities for improvement.

There has been some assessment of the profile of needs of the caseload, including first-time entrants, children in care and those on youth rehabilitation orders. Further analysis is planned.

2. Court disposals



We took a detailed look at six community sentences that were managed by the YJS. 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:

- Assessments of desistance, safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others were outstanding. They focused well on the child's views, and any structural barriers that might prevent progress. Activity was targeted at supporting the child's education, training and employment.
- Interventions to reduce and manage risk of harm were delivered consistently and supported the safety of actual and potential victims.
- Planning to help children lead offence-free lives is effective. Plans contain clear objectives and specify interventions designed to help children make better decisions.

Areas for improvement:

- Reviewing was not happening often enough when there was a significant change, especially in risk of harm to others.
- The YJS needs to improve planning, delivery of interventions and reviewing of safety and wellbeing needs to make sure that assessed needs are met.
- There was no recorded contingency planning, which was a significant gap.
- Delivery of interventions to meet the safety and wellbeing needs of children was underdeveloped. In part this was because staff did not always recognise how children in the YJS demonstrate trauma and distress through negative behaviours.

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.

Outstanding

Our rating⁸ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

Of the 6 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	6	5
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	6	5
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	6	5

The quality of assessment of court orders was rated as 'Outstanding'. We saw thorough assessment to support desistance, and assessment of how to keep the child safe. In several cases staff did not analyse sufficiently how to keep other people safe, but evidence from interviews with staff, and meetings with managers, showed that systems were in place to identify the risks presented by children. The views and perspectives of children, parents and carers were routinely sought and used.

We saw good attention to the child's diversity and social context. Information from other agencies was obtained and used well to add to assessments.

Consideration of the views of victims was developing, promoted by the recent appointment of a victim and restorative justice worker.

Recent work to improve assessments has been effective. These provide an excellent basis for further planned improvement work.

At the time of the inspection, the reported caseload was lower than usual due to the court closures during the Covid-19 restrictions.

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

Of the 6 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	6	4
Does assessment consider the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, utilising information held by other agencies?	6	5

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 focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	6	5
Where applicable, does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	3	3
Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and their likelihood of engaging with the court disposal?	6	5
Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s, and opportunities for restorative justice?	5	2
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	6	5

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

Of the 6 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	6	6
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	6	6
Where applicable, does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	6	5

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Of the 6 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?	6	5
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	6	5
Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	6	4

2.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁹ for planning is based on the following key questions:

Of the 6 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	6	5
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? ¹⁰	5	3
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? ¹¹	6	4

Planning for desistance was strong, with plans outlining key factors that needed to be addressed. This included a strong focus on children's education, training and employment opportunities.

An area for improvement is planning to manage safety and wellbeing issues, where we found too little contingency planning, including in cases where children had ongoing complex needs. The YJS's plans would benefit from closer alignment with the plans prepared by children's social care (both early help and statutory services).

Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?

Of the 6 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?	6	5
Does planning take sufficient account of the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child?	6	5
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	6	4
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	6	5

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.

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

Where applicable, does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s?	5	2
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	6	6

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Of the 5 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?	5	5
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?	3	3
Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	5	5
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	5	1

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Of the 6 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?	6	6
Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	5	4
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?	6	5
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	6	2

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Requires improvement

Our rating¹² for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Of the 6 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?	6	4
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child? ¹³	5	3
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people? ¹⁴	6	5

The delivery of interventions to manage and reduce risk of harm to others was strong, underpinned by a range of appropriate services, including weapons awareness, interventions to address harmful sexual behaviour and relationship programmes.

Where there was a need to work with other agencies to keep children safe and promote their welfare, we saw some good work, and this was particularly the case with the alternative education provider. Work was coordinated sufficiently well with other partnership services in two of the four cases where it was needed.

Children could access a wide range of services to support desistance. We were impressed with the staff's ability to engage children to develop trust. This had been maintained during the move to more remote methods of contact during Covid-19.

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

Of the 6 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?	6	4
Does service delivery reflect the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents/carers or significant others?	6	5

¹² 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.

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

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

Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	6	4
Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents/carers?	6	5
Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration including access to services post-supervision?	6	4
Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	6	5
In cases where it is required, are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	3	2

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

Of the 5 cases with factors related to keeping the child safe:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	5	4
Where applicable, is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?	4	2

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

Of the 6 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?	6	5
Where applicable, is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	6	2
Where applicable, is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	5	4

2.4. Reviewing



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

Requires improvement

Of the 6 cases inspected ¹⁵	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	3	2
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	5	3
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	4	2

Reviewing was not sufficient in all cases. In the main, desistance factors were reviewed, but when there were changes to risk of harm or safety and wellbeing these did not lead to a recorded review or changes to planning in enough cases. These included instances where a child had reported a significant deterioration in mental health and indicators that a child was being exploited. The views of children, parents and carers were usually sought when case managers reviewed their cases.

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

Of the 3 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?	3	2
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	3	2
Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	3	2
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	3	2

¹⁵ 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 5 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?	5	3
Where applicable, is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?	5	3
Where applicable, does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	4	2

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	1
Where applicable, is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	4	2
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their risk of harm, and are their views taken into account?	4	3
Where applicable, does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	3	2

3. Out-of-court disposals



We inspected four cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal and interviewed the case manager in all four cases. These consisted of three youth cautions and one community resolution. We did not inspect any youth conditional cautions. The community resolution used most frequently by Northumbria Police is Outcome 22, which is a mechanism for deferring an immediate decision. The child has the option to undertake interventions on a voluntary basis.

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 four cases where there were factors related to harm, we also inspected work done to keep other people safe. In the four cases where safety and wellbeing concerns were identified, we looked at work done to safeguard the child. We also looked at the quality of joint working with the local police.

Strengths:

- Northumbria Police and the YOTs in the region had reviewed the out-of-court disposal process to provide a consistent approach and reduce the number of children entering the criminal justice system.
- This review has given the YJS the opportunity to review assessments, resulting in one common framework, based on AssetPlus. As this embeds, it should provide a more consistent means of identifying a child's needs and the risks they pose to others.
- The views and wishes of victims had been sought and considered in decision-making and assessments.

Areas for improvement:

- Assessment, delivery of interventions and reviewing all need improvement. The YJS and its partners need to understand better the reasons for children's behaviour, especially when this is an indication that they may be experiencing adverse childhood experiences.
- Planning to manage safety and wellbeing factors and risk of harm to others was insufficient in all four of the cases. In part this was because staff had underestimated safety and wellbeing needs.
- Assessments did not draw out the child's existing strengths, which could have been built on to support desistance.
- The exact nature of risk of harm to others, who was at risk and the form of that risk were not explicit in assessments.

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.

Requires improvement

Our rating¹⁶ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

Of the 4 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	4	2
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	4	2
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	4	2

The YJS had started to use a new assessment format, and managers thought that we would see a marked difference in quality between the old and new formats. This was not the case, and the issues we have highlighted were found in both types of assessment. At the YJS Manager's request, we viewed a further four assessments. Although we did not include them in the case sample and these ratings, they were of better quality.

Assessments did not consider the child's strengths and protective factors, and only one had considered key structural barriers, including education, training and employment.

Half of the assessments provided an accurate picture of safety and wellbeing needs. Only one case had enough analysis of risk of harm.

Gaining the views of the child, parents and carers was a strength.

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

Of the 4 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?	4	2
Does assessment consider the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, utilising information held by other agencies?	4	3
Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	4	0

¹⁶ 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 analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	2	1
Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	4	2
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?	4	4

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

Of the 4 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	4	2
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	4	2

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Of the 4 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	4	1
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including any other assessments that have been completed, and other evidence of behaviour by the child?	4	2

3.2. Planning



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

Inadequate

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

Of the 4 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	4	2
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? ¹⁸	4	0
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? ¹⁹	4	0

Planning for out-of-court disposals was the weakest area of practice and was rated inadequate. We judged that only two of the plans for desistance were good enough and that none of the planning for safety and wellbeing and risk of harm was sufficient. Planning did not take account of the child's wider family issues.

There was a lack of contingency planning, which we had also noted in the domain two cases. Planning was not adequately coordinated with other services, most notably early help and social care.

The needs and wishes of victims were taken into consideration.

Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?

Of the 4 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?	4	2
Does planning take sufficient account of the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child?	4	0
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	4	1
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	4	2

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

¹⁹ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping other people safe.

Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?	4	2
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?	4	2

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 (for example, child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	3	2
Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	4	0

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Of the 4 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?	4	3
Where applicable, does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	4	1
Where applicable, does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	4	1
Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	4	0

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Requires improvement

Our rating²⁰ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Of the 4 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	4	2
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child? ²¹	4	2
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people? ²²	4	2

Service delivery to support desistance, safety and wellbeing and risk to others was sufficient in just half of the cases. In all four cases there were safety and wellbeing needs. In two cases these had not been assessed by the YJS. In our view, two children had a high level of safeguarding need.

Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?

Of the 4 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?	4	2
Does service delivery reflect the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents/carers or significant others?	4	2
Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents/carers?	4	3
Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	4	3
Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	4	3

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

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

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

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	2
Where applicable, is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	3	1

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?

Of the 4 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?	4	3
Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	4	2

3.4. Joint working



Joint working with the police supports the delivery of high-quality, personalised and coordinated services.	Requires improvement
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Our rating²³ for joint working is based on the following key questions:

Of the 4 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the child, supporting joint decision making?	4	2
Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal? ²⁴	0	0

The new process for out-of-court disposals has been in place since January 2020. We found that some threshold issues still need to be worked through. We believe that the new system and process is going in the right direction. However, while the system is bedding in, these children still have complex needs that require a stronger partnership response. We were concerned that, at operational level, staff were

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

²⁴ This question is only relevant in youth conditional caution cases.

conflating a lower level of disposal due to criminal behaviour (Outcome 22) with lower levels of need.

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

Of the 4 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	2
Do the recommendations consider the degree of the child’s understanding of the offence and their acknowledgement of responsibility?	4	2
Where applicable, is a positive contribution made by the YOT to determining the disposal?	4	2
Is sufficient attention given to the child’s understanding, and their parents’/carers’ understanding, of the implications of receiving an out-of-court disposal?	4	1
Is the information provided to inform decision-making timely to meet the needs of the case, legislation and guidance?	4	2
Where applicable, is the rationale for joint disposal decisions appropriate and clearly recorded?	4	1

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

Of the 0 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?	0 ²⁵	0
Is sufficient attention given to compliance with and enforcement of the conditions?	0	0

²⁵ None of the cases we assessed required the service to make a statutory notification to the police of progress or outcomes.

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.²⁶

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

Domain one: organisational delivery

The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance and the Chair of the YJS Management Board delivered a presentation covering the following areas:

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

During the main fieldwork phase, we conducted 10 interviews with case managers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. We held various meetings, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and information. In total, we conducted eight meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.²⁷

Domain two: court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Six of the cases selected were those of children who had received court disposals three to six 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 six 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,

²⁶ HM Inspectorate's standards are available here:
<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

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

Domain three: out-of-court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Four of the cases selected were those of children who had received out-of-court disposals three to five 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 four out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set so that the combined case sample size comprises 60 per cent domain two cases and 40 per cent domain three. Where possible, we ensured the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

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

Ratings explained

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

In this inspection, we conducted a detailed examination of a sample of six court disposals and four 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 when the lowest percentage at the key question level is close to the rating boundary – for example, between 'Requires improvement' and 'Good' (specifically, within five percentage points of the boundary; or where a differing judgement in one case would result in a change in rating; or where the rating is based upon a sample or sub-sample of five cases or fewer). The panel considers the sizes of any sub-samples used and the percentages for the other key questions within that standard, such as whether they fall within different bandings and the level of divergence, to make this decision.

Overall provider rating

Straightforward scoring rules are used to generate the overall provider rating. Each of the ten 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.