

Youth offending services inspection

Domain one characteristics

HMI Probation, March 2018



Contents

1.1	Governance and leadership	3
1.2	Staff	5
1.3	Partnerships and services	7
1.4	Information and facilities	9

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

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

The characteristics for 'outstanding' capture whether the Youth Offending Team (YOT) is:

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

The characteristics for 'inadequate' capture whether the YOT is:

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

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 and young people.

Outstanding

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

The vision and strategy is stretching and challenging while remaining achievable. It is both evidence-based and innovative, focused upon improving the quality of delivery through child/young person-centred practice.

Partnership arrangements are fully collaborative and outward-looking, maximising the benefits for children and young people through the appropriate exchange of expertise, resources and knowledge. The YOT is represented on all relevant strategic groups, representation is consistent and those attending demonstrate appropriate decision-making authority. It is clear how all staff are to work together within the partnership arrangements, with strong collaboration and support, clear lines of accountability and the avoidance of duplication.

The vision and strategy is communicated in a timely and transparent way across the YOT, with a clear proactive approach to embedding and monitoring new ways of working. The YOT's culture is one of involvement, transparency, ownership, empowerment and improvement, with leaders consistently listening and explaining their decisions and staff feeling empowered to identify ways to improve how they do their job. Learning and collaboration networks are in place, identifying opportunities for creativity, innovation and improvement – evidence-informed innovation is celebrated and championed. Staff at all levels are actively encouraged to raise concerns and those who do are supported. Leaders having a strong track record of listening to staff concerns and acting on them in a timely, responsive manner. There is strong evidence of the YOT anticipating risks, with mitigations and controls having proven fully effective.

Good

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

The YOT Management Board sets a clear vision and strategy for delivering a high-quality service for all children and young people, adhering to the evidence-base. The Board includes all necessary statutory and non-statutory partners. The Chair of the Board is well engaged with a sufficient understanding of the YOT's work, and other members are active in their attendance, recognising the contributions their respective agencies make.

Board members advocate the work of the YOT in their broader roles, and relevant local strategic partnerships give priority to work to support desistance and prevent harm, supporting integration with wider services. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities within the partnership arrangements, and what they are accountable for.

The YOT leadership team provides an effective link to the Management Board,

successfully delivering and operationalising the vision and strategy. The team effectively communicates the vision and strategy to staff and stakeholders, and promotes openness, constructive challenge and ideas. Risks to the service are sufficiently understood by the team, with appropriate mitigations and controls in place.

Requires improvement

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

The vision and strategy set by the YOT Management Board does not sufficiently prioritise the quality of service and adherence to the evidence-base. The Board does not include all necessary statutory and non-statutory partners. The Chair of the Board is not consistently engaged, with some gaps in the understanding of the YOT's work, and not all of the other members are active in their attendance.

Not all Board members consistently advocate the work of the YOT in their broader roles, and not all relevant local strategic partnerships give priority to work to support desistance and prevent harm, hindering integration with wider services for children and young people. Not all staff understand their roles and responsibilities within the partnership arrangements, and what they are accountable for.

The YOT leadership team is not delivering and operationalising all aspects of the vision and strategy. The team does not consistently communicate the vision and strategy to staff and stakeholders, and openness, constructive challenge and ideas are not always encouraged. Not all risks to the service are sufficiently understood by the leadership team, with gaps in the mitigations and controls in place.

Inadequate

The governance and leadership of the YOT does not sufficiently support and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people.

The vision and strategy is unclear, out of date, poorly aligned to the evidence-base or insufficiently focused on quality. There is minimal evidence of innovation.

The YOT is represented on few strategic groups, and/or representation is sporadic or at an inappropriate decision-making level. Within the partnership arrangements, the collaboration and cooperation between teams is poor, with high levels of division and conflict. There is evidence of blaming others. Staff do not understand how their roles fit within the arrangements, and there is a lack of clarity about the authority to make decisions.

The YOT leadership team has no detailed or realistic plans to deliver the vision and strategy. Staff are not aware of or do not understand the vision and strategy, and their views are not sought and decisions are not explained, resulting in a lack of alignment between the issues described by staff and those understood by leaders. The culture is top-down, directive and defensive, and staff do not feel valued, supported and appreciated. When staff raise concerns, they are not treated with respect. There is no effective system for identifying, capturing and managing issues and risks. Any mitigating actions or improvements that leaders have sought to make have been inadequate. Consequently, leaders are not doing enough to tackle poor delivery,

significantly hindering the progress of children and young people. The leadership is insufficiently focused upon safety and security, giving serious cause for concern.

1.2 Staff

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

Outstanding

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

The staffing structure and levels are proactively monitored and reviewed, optimising the ability of the workforce to deliver a fully effective service. There is a focus upon current and likely future demands, reflected in the approach to recruitment, mobility and the strategy for covering staff absences. There are continual and holistic reviews of individual workloads, accounting for the differing demands of individual cases.

The workforce has the full range of skills, knowledge and experience to deliver a high-quality service and to establish trusting, supportive, challenging and meaningful relationships with children and young people. The mixed use of internal and external resource, including volunteers and mentors, is impressive, with a focus upon the maximum benefit for each child/young person. The YOT ensures that staff have the necessary skills and knowledge for any specialist roles, and that staff are equipped to move into new roles as the YOT may require. There are high levels of staff satisfaction and motivation, with staff feeling proud of the YOT as a place to work, committed to its future success and highly motivated to deliver positive outcomes for children and young people.

Giving and seeking timely feedback, engaging in performance discussions, and coaching are a core part of the day-to-day running of the YOT. Managers are approachable and available when needed, and meet regularly with their staff. They provide sound professional guidance, challenge, encouragement and motivation, with thoughtful, honest and constructive feedback on performance. They pay attention to personal and career development, support staff to achieve their goals, and are responsive to staff concerns. They empower staff to build on their strengths and address behaviours that are getting in the way of improved performance, with staff clearly understanding what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. New staff benefit from highly effective induction, which includes the importance of adapting work to meet the needs of children/young people and respecting and valuing diversity.

Continuous learning is embedded within the culture of the YOT. All staff feel deeply involved in their own professional development, and are encouraged and proactively supported to undertake self-evaluation, reflect on and debate their practice, acquire new skills and disseminate best practice, creating an open dialogue throughout the YOT. There is a comprehensive training plan, preparing staff to work with a diverse range of children and young people, taking account of their distinctive needs. Attention is given to equality of access to training, with appropriate flexibility and the use of innovative solutions to meet learning and development needs. Internal and external secondments for staff development purposes are actively supported.

Good

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

Staffing levels are planned and reviewed to meet the changing demands and profiles of the children/young people, and staff workloads are actively managed. There is an effective strategy to maintain the quality of delivery during periods of planned and unplanned staff absences.

Staff are motivated to contribute to the delivery of a quality service. Cases are allocated to staff who are appropriately qualified and/or experienced, assisting in the development of trusting, supportive, challenging and meaningful relationships with each child/young person. Where volunteers and mentors are used, they are appropriately selected and supported to fulfil clearly-defined roles. There is an appropriate strategy in place to identify and develop the potential of individual staff to support succession planning.

Staff are appropriately supervised, and there is an effective induction programme for new staff. The appraisal process is actively used to ensure that staff are competent to deliver a quality service, with sufficient attention given to identifying and addressing poor performance and recognising and rewarding exceptional work.

The YOT identifies and plans for the learning needs of all staff, and provides appropriate access to in-service training. A culture of learning and continuous improvement is promoted and valued.

Requires improvement

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

Staffing levels are not always planned and reviewed to meet the changing demands and profiles of the children and young people, while staff workloads are inconsistently managed. There are some shortfalls in the strategy for maintaining the quality of delivery during periods of planned and unplanned staff absences.

Not all staff are motivated to contribute to the delivery of a quality service. Some cases are allocated to staff who are insufficiently qualified and/or experienced. Where volunteers and mentors are used, they are not always appropriately selected and supported to fulfil clearly-defined roles. There are some weaknesses within the strategy for identifying and develop the potential of individual staff to support succession planning.

Not all staff receive effective supervision, and the induction programme for new staff has its limitations. The appraisal process is not always used effectively to ensure that staff are competent to deliver a quality service, with inconsistent attention given to identifying and addressing poor performance and recognising and rewarding exceptional work.

The YOT does not identify and plan for the learning needs of all staff, and there are some limitations in the access to in-service training. A culture of learning and continuous improvement is not consistently promoted and valued.

Inadequate

Staff within the YOT are not empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people.

There are substantial or frequent staff shortages, impacting upon the quality of the service and the ability of the YOT to deliver its strategy. There high levels of stress, work overload and blame. Staffing levels are not actively monitored and reviewed, and there is no effective workforce planning to ensure that the YOT can meet current and likely future demands.

The workforce lacks the range of skills, knowledge and expertise required to deliver a high-quality service, and this is not being addressed. The mix of internal and external resource, including volunteers and mentors, is not being managed effectively, failing to deliver benefits for the children and young people. Many cases are allocated to staff who are insufficiently qualified and/or experienced. There are low levels of staff satisfaction, motivation and resilience.

The culture is one in which staff are not equipped to fulfil their responsibilities or held accountable for their work. Meetings with staff are irregular, and there is a lack of quality supervision, guidance, challenge and support. Managers are not doing enough to provide feedback of good practice or to tackle poor practice. The induction programme for new staff is deficient.

The YOT does not have a training plan that ensures equality of access to training, and staff are not developing the knowledge, skills and experience to enable them to deliver a high-quality service. There is minimal evidence of learning, self-evaluation and reflective practice, and no evidence of internal and external secondments for staff development.

1.3 Partnerships and services

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

Outstanding

The range and quality of services fully enable a personalised and responsive service for all children and young people.

There is an in-depth understanding of the characteristics of the children and young people, based upon a wide range of recent and reliable information. Particular efforts are made to anticipate future demands and to understand complex cases and the diversity of cases, recognising the need to develop services which meet the specific needs of all children and young people.

There is a strong mix of targeted, specialist and mainstream services, providing the necessary range and depth of intervention to meet the full range of needs. There is sufficient flexibility and options to cater for those with often chaotic and unstable circumstances, and the most vulnerable children and young people. The services are easy to access and child/young person-centred, with all efforts having been made to

identify and remove any obstacles or barriers to access. Robust evaluation and quality assurance is an intrinsic part of service delivery, involving partners and other providers where appropriate, with a focus upon identifying good practice and aspects for improvement.

Collaboration with partners, providers and the local community is integral to how services are planned, ensuring that the services meet the needs of the children/young people and allow for appropriate innovation. Opportunities to provide integrated services and pathways of delivery, particularly for children and young people with multiple and complex needs, are well-developed. The YOT promotes understanding of the needs of the children and young people, and provides advice to help other providers make sure that their services are relevant and readily accessible. There are clear and sound inter-agency protocols, including, for example, referral processes and transitional arrangements, supporting a seamless approach to accessing services. Information is exchanged in a spirit of partnership, while adhering to privacy and confidentiality requirements.

Good

The range and quality of services sufficiently enable a personalised and responsive service for all children and young people.

The analysis of the profile of children and young people is sufficiently comprehensive and up to date, capturing desistance needs, safety and wellbeing factors, risks of harm, and diversity factors. Sufficient attention is given to local patterns of sentencing and offence types, helping to anticipate future demands. The analysis is used to influence service delivery.

The YOT partnership has access to the volume, range and quality of services, including specialist and mainstream interventions, to meet the desistance needs and diversity of the children and young people. Sufficient attention is given to the ability of the services to build on strengths and enhance protective factors. The quality of services is reviewed and evaluated, with remedial action taken where required.

Arrangements with partners and providers are established, maintained and used effectively to support desistance, maintain safety and wellbeing, and manage the risk of harm to others. The YOT ensures that courts are sufficiently aware of the services available, supporting their sentencing decisions.

Requires improvement

The range and quality of services insufficiently enable a personalised and responsive service for all children and young people.

The analysis of the profile of children and young people is not consistently updated and does not capture the full range of desistance needs, safety and wellbeing factors, risks of harm, and diversity factors. Sufficient attention is not consistently given to local patterns of sentencing and offence types, limiting the ability of the YOT to anticipate future demands. Opportunities for the analysis to influence service delivery are being missed.

The volume, range and quality of services do not meet the desistance needs and diversity of all children and young people. Sufficient attention is not being given to the

ability of the services to build on strengths and enhance protective factors. The quality of services is not consistently reviewed and evaluated, with remedial actions not always taken where required.

Not all arrangements with partners and providers are established, maintained and used effectively to support desistance, maintain safety and wellbeing, or manage the risk of harm to others. The courts are not regularly updated on the services provided by the YOT, impeding the effectiveness of their sentencing decisions.

Inadequate

The range and quality of services do not enable a personalised and responsive service for all children and young people.

There is limited understanding of the needs of the children and young people, with the profiling lacking sophistication and/or using information which is insufficiently robust, relevant and/or timely. No attention is given to local patterns of sentencing and offence types, preventing any ability to anticipate and respond to future demands.

Needs are not being addressed, with children and young people frequently and consistently unable to access services in a timely way or at all. Services lack adaptability and are not set up to support those children and young people with chaotic and unstable circumstances. There are clear barriers and there has been little or no attempt to remove them, to ensure that the services are more responsive and reactive to need. There is limited availability of specialist interventions, interventions for minority groups, or interventions for those in vulnerable circumstances. There is limited or no quality assurance or evaluation of the services delivered, with leaders and managers consequently unable to address shortfalls or deteriorations in the quality of provision.

Services offered by partners and other providers are not being utilised, severely restricting the range and depth of provision available. Partnership arrangements are under-developed, there are significant delays in referrals, attempts are not being made to improve accessibility, and the potential for integrating services is not being explored. Courts are not aware of the services provided by the YOT, severely impeding the effectiveness of their sentencing decisions.

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 and young people.

Outstanding

Information and facilities fully support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children and young people.

Policies and procedures are regularly and proactively reviewed, improved and communicated to help staff assume responsibility and act quickly and effectively. Attention has been given to aligning and linking associated policies and protocols, both within the YOT and with partner agencies.

The YOT's delivery environment is accessible to all staff and children/young people and it supports a rehabilitative culture through encouraging positive and open interactions while meeting the requirements of safety, security, privacy and confidentiality.

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems support effective and integrated service delivery, with the ability to record and access key information whenever and wherever required. The systems and associated protocols support robust information exchange, with information being provided responsibly and critical information made available without delay. The management information capabilities are fully developed, providing timely, targeted and user-friendly reports.

Leaders and managers have an in-depth understanding of the YOT's strengths, weaknesses and capabilities, with key information communicated in readily-accessible formats. There are comprehensive arrangements in place to analyse, trend and benchmark performance, using reliable and timely information. A range of approaches are used to gain feedback from children/young people and other stakeholders, with a focus upon inclusivity. Potential new ways of working are explored through self-evaluation and through learning from others and applying findings from reviews, research and scrutiny. Good practices and areas for development, improvement, creativity and innovation are identified, with the YOT taking decisive steps to improve delivery.

Good

Information and facilities sufficiently support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children and young people.

The necessary policies and guidance are in place to enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children and young people. They are communicated effectively to all those to whom they apply, and they are regularly reviewed.

The YOT delivers its work in places which are sufficiently accessible to staff and children/young people. The delivery environment is a safe place for working with children and young people, and it supports effective engagement and the delivery of appropriate personalised work.

The ICT systems enable staff to plan, deliver and record their work in a timely way, and to access information as required. The systems produce the necessary management information and facilitate the exchange of information with partners, providers and other key stakeholders.

Improvement plans are supported by the YOT's assurance systems and performance measures, the views of children/young people, their parents/carers and other key stakeholders, and learning from audits, inspection and other review processes. Service delivery is further appraised through evaluation and development of the underlying evidence base. All these sources of learning and evidence are used to drive improvement, with actions taken promptly when required.

Requires improvement

Information and facilities insufficiently support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children and young people.

The necessary policies and guidance for delivering a quality service, meeting the needs of all children and young people, are not all in place. They are not always communicated effectively to all those to whom they apply, and they are not reviewed consistently.

The YOT does not deliver all of its work in places that are sufficiently accessible to staff and children/young people. The delivery environment is not a safe place for working with all children and young people, or for supporting effective engagement and the delivery of appropriate personalised work in all cases.

The ICT systems do not always enable staff to plan, deliver and record their work in a timely way, or to access information as required. The systems do not produce all necessary management information or facilitate the exchange of all required information with partners, providers and other key stakeholders.

There are some gaps within the YOT's assurance systems and performance measures. The views of children/young people, their parents/carers and other key stakeholders are not routinely sought, and the learning from audits, inspection and other review processes is not always evaluated. Service delivery is not consistently appraised through evaluation and development of the underlying evidence base. The sources of learning and evidence are not always used to drive improvement, with actions not consistently taken when required.

Inadequate

Information and facilities do not support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children and young people.

There are significant gaps in policies and guidance, impeding the delivery of a quality service. Those that are in place have been poorly communicated and are not well understood, and many require reviewing. The policies to help keep individuals safe are insufficient.

The YOT's delivery environment has poor accessibility and is unfit for purpose, failing to offer the necessary levels of safety, security, privacy and confidentiality, and hampering effective engagement.

The ICT systems do not support the recording of timely, relevant and reliable data and fail to provide key information for planning and delivering services. The systems fail to support robust information exchange, with data not submitted to partners, providers and other key stakeholders as required and critical information not being provided promptly. Management information is produced in a way that is unhelpful.

Performance indicators are not reported to an acceptable standard, and the information used to monitor performance is unreliable, out of date or not relevant. There is very limited or no monitoring of performance trends and outcomes. The views of children and young people are not heard or acted on, and there is a defensive attitude to complaints and a lack of transparency in how they are handled. Lessons to be learned and good practice are rarely identified through feedback from other stakeholders, and there are limited or no performance discussions with partners and other providers. The YOT rarely seeks to learn from others, and opportunities to benefit from research, learning reviews and scrutiny are not valued. There is minimal evidence of the sources of learning and evidence being used to drive improvement, and actions are not taken when they are required.