

An inspection of youth offending services in

Hertfordshire

HM Inspectorate of Probation

SEPTEMBER 2018

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Bob Smith, supported by a team of inspectors, as well as staff from our operations and research teams. The Head of Youth Offending Team Inspections, responsible for this inspection programme, is Alan MacDonald. We would like to thank all those who helped plan and took part in the inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

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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Foreword

This inspection is part of our new programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. As planned, we have inspected and rated Hertfordshire YOS across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery first of all, and then the quality of court disposals work, and out-of-court disposals work.

We have given Hertfordshire YOS an overall rating of 'Outstanding'. We found the YOS had an active management board with good representation and attendance, and partner agencies demonstrated a strong commitment to the YOS's work. We were impressed by the skilled workforce and the thoroughness of their work. Staff were motivated to deliver a high-quality service and wanted the best for children and young people.

Hertfordshire is one of the largest youth offending services in the country and has the second-highest volume of cases of any service. The YOS is located within the targeted youth support service of the local authority. Consequently, practitioners and managers at the YOS are responsible for a wide range of children and young people, including those who have not offended. Mostly these integrated arrangements of youth justice and other children's services worked very well. Children and young people could access a wide range of services to help them move away from further offending, and they could continue to receive support after the end of their court order or out-of-court intervention.

The YOS's work with children and young people subject to court orders and out-of-court disposals was of an exceptionally high standard. We rated their work on court disposals as 'outstanding' across each of our four standards, and assessment and planning for young people subject to out-of-court disposals were also outstanding. We were pleased to see that children and young people, together with their parents or carers, were involved meaningfully at every stage.

In terms of areas for improvement, the YOS had not considered the recommendations made in our joint thematic review of out-of-court disposals, which we published in March 2018. We urge the YOS to look again at the report, as its decision-making process for out-of-court disposals is not consistent with current best practice.

The recommendations in this report have been designed to help Hertfordshire YOS to build on its strengths and focus on a small number of areas for improvement.



Dame Glenys Stacey
Chief Inspector of Probation

Overall findings

Overall, Hertfordshire was rated as: **Outstanding**. This rating was determined by inspecting the youth offending services in three areas of their work. The findings in those areas are described below.

	Organisational delivery
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Our key findings about organisational delivery were as follows:

- There was a well-chaired, fully constituted management board with a clear line of sight to frontline practice.
- There was a skilled and committed workforce who wanted the best for children and young people.
- The location of the youth offending service (YOS) within local authority targeted youth support services allowed access to a wide range of services for children and young people.
- There was a good operational management team who provided effective oversight and support to their frontline staff.
- The service had not yet considered the findings and recommendations of the joint thematic review of out-of-court disposals published by HMI Probation and HMI Constabulary in March 2018.
- When assessing its performance against other areas, Hertfordshire used data relating to national averages rather than similar authorities.

	Court disposals
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Our key findings about court disposals were as follows:

- Assessments were thorough and YOS staff knew their young people well.
- Assessments were enhanced by effective information-sharing across all relevant agencies.
- The delivery of interventions to reduce the likelihood of further offending was strong.
- The forensic adolescent practitioners had a particularly valuable role within the service.
- Young people's compliance with court ordered requirements was well managed.
- Exit strategies when court orders were complete were well managed, in part because the YOS was located within targeted youth support services.

- Work to promote the safety of victims and maximise opportunities for restorative justice was less well developed than other areas of practice.



Out-of-court disposals

Our key findings about out-of-court disposals were as follows:

- Assessment and planning to support desistance were strong.
- Implementation and delivery of out-of-court disposal programmes were particularly strong in addressing risks of further offending and the child or young person's safety and wellbeing.
- Compliance with out-of-court disposals was good.
- Children and young people could continue to receive support from the youth support service after their out-of-court intervention had concluded.
- Decisions on out-of-court disposals were largely made by the police, and the YOS had little influence.
- The needs and concerns of victims and opportunities for restorative justice were an area of relative weakness.

Service: Hertfordshire Youth Offending Service

Fieldwork started: July 2018

Overall rating

Outstanding



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

Good



1.2 Staff

Outstanding



1.3 Partnerships and services

Good



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

Outstanding



2.2 Planning

Outstanding



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding



2.4 Reviewing

Outstanding



3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

Outstanding



3.2 Planning

Outstanding



3.3 Implementation and delivery

Good



3.4 Joint working

Good



Recommendations

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

The Hertfordshire youth offending service should:

1. Update the out-of-court decision-making process to take full account of the findings and recommendations of the joint thematic report published by HMI Probation and HMI Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services in March 2018.
2. Make sure that information provided to the YOS management board includes data that allows Hertfordshire to compare its performance with that of similar local authority areas.
3. Develop its victim and restorative justice processes to ensure that the needs of potential and actual victims and opportunities for restorative justice are fully considered in every relevant case.

Introduction

Youth Offending Services (YOS) 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. HMI Probation inspects both these aspects of youth offending services.

YOSs are statutory partnerships, and they are multi-disciplinary, to deal with the needs of the whole child. They are required to have staff from local authority social care and education departments, the police, the National Probation Service (NPS) and local health services¹. Most YOSs are based within local authorities; however, this can vary.

YOS work is governed and shaped by a range of legislation and guidance that is specific to the youth justice sector (such as the National Standards for Youth Justice) or applicable across the criminal justice sector (for example guidance on Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements). The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) provides some funding to YOSs. It also monitors their performance and issues guidance to them about how things are to be done.

The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We provide assurance on the effectiveness of work with adults and children who have offended to implement orders of the court, reduce reoffending, protect the public and safeguard the vulnerable. We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice, and use our data and information to encourage good-quality services. We are independent of government, and speak independently.

HM Inspectorate of Probation standards

The standards against which we inspect 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 people who have offended².

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

² HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards are available here:

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

Key facts

**First-time entrant rate³
per 100,000**

295

Hertfordshire YOS

301

Average for
England and Wales

Reoffending rates⁴

43.0%

Hertfordshire YOS

41.9%

Average for
England and Wales

Population information



Total population Hertfordshire

1,176,720

Total youth population

111,018 (9.4%)

Total black and minority ethnic
youth population

17,091 (15.2%)

³ Youth Justice Board, First-time entrants, October 2016 to September 2017.

⁴ Ministry of Justice. *Proven reoffending statistics, July 2015 to June 2016*, April 2018.

1. Organisational delivery



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

The YOS is located within the targeted youth support service of local authority children’s services and is highly integrated within these services. Frontline staff have a mixed caseload of children and young people who have offended and other young people who are receiving support from the local authority.

A matrix management model is in place, which means that some staff may have line managers who do not have specialist knowledge of youth justice. Specialist youth justice managers are available to all case managers to provide support and direction for specific issues relating to young people who have offended.

The local authority has based its vision and strategy on the needs of all children and young people in Hertfordshire. It has avoided setting a vision at an individual service level. The council has gone to some lengths to promote its vision and most staff were able to articulate it. The YOS has a three-year youth justice plan which is updated annually. The plan outlines a clear strategy for the service that is consistent with the council’s vision and includes a range of development activity.

The management board includes representatives from a wide range of organisations and is well attended, although during the inspection we noted that the Community Rehabilitation Company does not attend. The Chair of the management board is knowledgeable and engaged with the service. New members of the board are inducted into their role so that they understand the functions of the YOS. Board members advocate for the work of the YOS, for example by ensuring young people who have offended can access partnership services and that staff contributions to the YOS are maintained.

Partner agencies demonstrated a strong commitment to the work of the YOS. For example, the police second 10 officers to the service, and the health sector provides four forensic specialists. Many staff in the YOS had a dual role in which they had responsibility for young people on court orders and also local authority children’s services cases. They were able to balance these roles effectively, and in some cases could continue to work with a young person, in their children’s services role, after the young person’s court order had ended. This allowed for seamless exit strategies.

There were good links between the management board and the operational team. Practitioners sometimes attended the board to present case studies. One of the operational managers regularly attended the board and saw their role as a bridge between the board and the management team.

Managers could clearly articulate the vision for children’s services in Hertfordshire. An ‘equalities and journey of the child’ subgroup of the board, involving frontline staff,

had been developed. This explored the experience of disadvantaged groups in the justice system.

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

We found a skilled and committed workforce. Inspectors were impressed with the quality of the staff they met. There were specialists who helped young people to find education and employment and also forensic health practitioners who undertook assessments and interventions with many of the most complex cases. Most case managers reported that their caseloads were manageable.

Staff absences were managed and there was a 'buddy' system in place to ensure a designated practitioner was available to cover gaps. Data from case assessments confirmed that the staff were skilled in their work. An allocation system was in place that linked the risk of the case to the skills of the practitioner for court orders. However, all out-of-court disposals were assessed by seconded police officers and in a very small number of cases inspectors were concerned that they did not have the skills commensurate with the complexity of the case. Staff survey feedback shows that the majority of staff were motivated to deliver a quality service and had the skills to undertake their role.

Staff were positive about the management oversight they received, with almost all rating it good or quite good. Almost all staff had received an annual appraisal and managers reported that they were committed to addressing poor performance.

Induction processes for new staff included in-depth introductions to the ChildView case management system and AssetPlus. Some managers did not have a youth justice background and had primary responsibility for other youth services; however, a matrix management arrangement ensured that staff always had access to managers with the level of expertise required.

Staff were skilled in both their work as YOS practitioners and their broader youth support role. More than three-quarters of staff reported that their training needs were fully or mostly met. New training priorities had been identified, including work on trauma informed practice.

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

Extensive management reports were provided for the management board. These included a mixture of local and national indicators. The board was aware of recent trends, such as county lines, gangs and knife crime, and was working with the police to understand the impact of these developments in Hertfordshire. There was an extensive system for monitoring the quality of AssetPlus completion, with reports circulated within the management team and presented to the management board.

The location of the YOS within the local authority targeted youth support services allowed children and young people easy access to a number of other services. Staff reported that developing exit strategies was straightforward and accommodation for young people could also be arranged.

In our staff survey two-thirds reported that they had sufficient access to partnership resources, including substance misuse, mental health and learning and skills services. Access to speech and language services was a notable gap. The service monitored disproportionality in the justice system. The survey of sentencers found a high level of awareness of the services available from the YOS.

The design of the out-of-court decision-making system had not taken account of the recent report by HMI Probation and HMI Constabulary, which recommended that decisions should be made jointly by the YOS and the police. Typically, the police determined the disposal, and the case was then referred to a panel that decided on the work to be done with the young person. We were told that this panel could ask the police to reconsider their decision on disposal but in practice this rarely happened.

The quality of intervention with out-of-court disposal cases was generally good; however, in some cases inspectors commented that they would have expected the disposal to be at a lower level, for example community resolution instead of youth conditional caution. The rate of first-time entrants was 20 per cent higher than for similar local authorities, although local leaders were unaware of this until the inspection.

The YOS had a wide range of interventions to support desistance. The range of specialist practitioners was a particularly valuable resource and enabled the YOS to respond to most types of offences as well as to children who exhibited high levels of risk and complexity in their lives.

1.4. Information and facilities	Good
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.	

A full suite of up-to-date policies and procedures were in place and most staff reported that they understood them quite or very well. Because of the integrated nature of the YOS, many of the policies were shared with the local authority. Access to partnership services was good and staff understood how to refer young people to relevant agencies.

Some staff reported that the ICT system (ChildView) could be slow at times, although inspectors found it ran smoothly during the fieldwork. A specialist information officer managed ChildView, and clearly had a deep understanding of its functionality.

Because the YOS was integrated with other local authority services, all staff had extensive access to children's services case management systems. In certain circumstances staff had to record information on both systems, and where this happened staff described it as burdensome.

Extensive management reports were produced, which were widely circulated. A notable omission from the data was information on how the YOS compared with similar authorities. This would have given Hertfordshire a better understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

There was extensive monitoring of AssetPlus quality, and the impact of this was seen in the case assessment data for domains 2 and 3. The YOS undertakes surveys of young people's views through the use of ViewPoint.

The YOS had participated in HMI Probation's thematic review of youth public protection work and had implemented some of the recommendations.

Summary

Strengths:

- There was a well-chaired, fully constituted management board with a clear line of sight to frontline practice.
- There was a skilled and committed workforce who wanted the best for children and young people.
- The location of the YOS within local authority targeted youth support services allowed access to a wide range of services for children and young people.
- There was a skilled operational management team who provided effective oversight and support to their frontline staff.

Areas for improvement:

- The service had not yet considered the findings and recommendations of the joint thematic review of out-of-court disposals published by HMI Probation and HMI Constabulary in March 2018.
- When assessing its performance against other areas, Hertfordshire used data relating to national averages rather than similar authorities.



2. Court disposals

Work with children and young people 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	Outstanding
Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	

Hertfordshire YOS case managers had a comprehensive knowledge of the young people under their supervision. Initial assessments were of good quality and there was a sufficient analysis of offending behaviour and attitude to offending in almost all cases. The YOS had extensive access to other services' case management systems and drew on the available information effectively. Inspectors found that, in 53 out of the 54 cases they reviewed, staff had fully taken account of wider issues such as family history and functioning and other diversity factors.

A strengths-based approach was embedded in Hertfordshire's practice, and assessments focused on strengths and protective factors in almost all cases reviewed. Where young people faced barriers to change, almost all assessments analysed these factors. Both the child or young person and their parents or carers were meaningfully involved in the assessment and there was evidence that their views were taken into account. In some of the more complex cases, the seconded forensic practitioners undertook supplementary assessments that focused on current vulnerabilities and risks to others and the underlying reasons for them. These assessments were particularly valuable.

The needs and wishes of victims and opportunities for restorative justice were less well developed than other aspects of assessment. Sufficient attention had been paid to these in just over three-quarters of cases. Overall, all of the cases reviewed included a clear written record of the assessment of desistance factors as they related to the child or young person.

The case of G (m) illustrated the strengths of assessment in Hertfordshire:

There was a strong initial assessment, which included the active engagement of the young person and parent separately (which was appropriate given the history of complex trauma). Assessments were enhanced by the targeted youth service model, which meant that the young person was already known to the young homeless team and allocated a social worker.

Where there were concerns about a young person's safety and wellbeing, the assessment identified and analysed these factors in almost all cases reviewed. In doing so, case managers drew on relevant available sources of information, including information supplied by other agencies where appropriate. Inspectors agreed with case managers' classification of safety and wellbeing risks in most cases. There were

a small number of cases where inspectors judged that case managers had not fully taken into account indicators of risk or concerning behaviours. Overall, however, assessment of safety and wellbeing was strong.

Risk of harm to others was assessed accurately in most cases and these assessments were timely. There were a small number of cases where inspectors judged that the risk of harm to others classification was too low. Information from the police was particularly valuable when making these assessments. The information was obtained by a written request to the police and responses were prompt.

2.2. Planning	Outstanding
Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	

Planning was a strength in Hertfordshire. In almost all cases the plan set out the interventions and services most likely to support the young person’s desistance. A strengths-based approach was evident, and in a large majority of cases inspectors found that staff had taken account of strengths and protective factors in plans. Factors such as diversity, family, maturity and motivation were taken into account in most cases reviewed. As with assessment, planning to take account of the needs and wishes of victims was less well developed. Sufficient attention had been paid to their needs and wishes in just two-thirds of cases. Overall, plans were proportionate to the court order and capable of being delivered within an appropriate timescale in almost all cases.

The YOS used a risk panel to oversee the planning for cases where there was a risk of harm to others and safety and wellbeing concerns. At the time of the inspection fieldwork these panels operated at both an area team level (of which there were four) and at county-wide level for the most complex cases. These arrangements were under review. Evidence from case reviews showed that the risk panel arrangements were effective.

Planning to ensure the child or young person’s safety and wellbeing was strong. Factors identified in assessments were addressed in almost all cases. The YOS was particularly successful in involving other agencies where necessary, and the YOS’s plans aligned with those of other services in almost all cases reviewed. The location of the YOS within targeted youth support services allowed case managers to access services when additional input from other agencies was required.

Planning to keep other people safe was sufficient in most cases inspected, although some aspects were less well developed than other areas of planning. Plans addressed the specific risks to actual and potential victims in three-quarters of cases reviewed. Effective contingency arrangements to manage identified risks to others were also in place in just over three-quarters of cases. Overall, we found high-quality planning for children and young people in Hertfordshire.

2.3. Implementation and delivery	Outstanding
High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child or young person.	

Interventions to reduce offending and support desistance were delivered well. Relationships between case managers, young people and parents and carers were good. Services reflected the diversity, family and social context effectively in almost all of the cases reviewed. Education, training and employment had been a significant factor for children and young people at the assessment and planning stage in nearly two-thirds of cases reviewed. In almost all of these cases sufficient activity and interventions had taken place to address these factors.

The five education specialists in the service were a particularly valuable resource, and the location of the YOS within the council's services for young people enabled access to learning and skills services for those children and young people over school leaving age.

Exit strategies and community integration were also enhanced by the location of the YOS. Case managers told inspectors that if the child or young person continued to need support at the end of their court order the case could be re-designated as a youth support case. This enabled them to continue to work with the child or young person under a voluntary arrangement.

The case of R(m) illustrates the strengths of implementation and delivery:

The intervention highlighted a positive working relationship between the case manager, R and his mother. There were regular home visits, text messages and phone calls as a means of ensuring compliance. The interventions delivered took into account the strengths identified by the young person in the self-assessment questionnaire, which included wanting to attend college and work.

Enforcement action was required in just under two-thirds of cases reviewed and appropriate action was taken by case managers in almost all of those cases.

There was a strong focus on safety and wellbeing in the way services were implemented and delivered. In almost all cases inspectors judged that case managers had delivered services effectively to support the child. In most cases in which there were safety and wellbeing concerns, other agencies were involved as necessary.

Implementation and delivery of services to manage risk of harm to others was done well. Inspectors judged that, overall, risk was managed effectively in almost all cases. Staff paid sufficient attention to the protection of actual and potential victims in most cases. There were, however, a small number of cases where the involvement of other agencies was not well coordinated.

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

Young people subject to supervision by the YOS often have complex lives and their circumstances can change rapidly. Case managers should review their intervention plans when a significant change occurs. Referral Orders are reviewed routinely by review panels, which normally meet every three months.

The standard of review in Hertfordshire was high. In almost all cases assessed in the inspection, desistance factors were reviewed effectively. Reviews considered strengths and protective factors as well as motivation levels and potential barriers to progress. The child or young person and their parents or carers were meaningfully involved in the review process in most cases. As a result, the necessary adjustments were made to the plan of work with the young person to support desistance in almost all cases.

Review should also take account of safety and wellbeing factors. Agencies such as local authority children's services and others may have an important contribution to make to review. In most cases, relevant agencies made the necessary input to promote safety and wellbeing.

The case of D(m) illustrated the thorough approach to review:

D's case was reviewed when there were increased concerns about his personal safety, which were that he had disclosed suicidal thoughts and he was threatened with a knife by some peers. This review led to a joint risk panel. As a result, the level of reporting increased and a plan to manage the risk developed. This included a referral to CAMHS and also to the in-house forensic adolescent practitioner. Additionally, the case manager liaised with the police, which made checks in relation to gang involvement.

Review focusing on the risks to others was done effectively in almost all cases. As with safety and wellbeing concerns, other agencies were involved as appropriate.

Summary

Strengths:

- Assessments were thorough and YOS staff knew their young people well.
- Assessments were enhanced by effective information-sharing across all relevant agencies.
- The delivery of interventions to reduce the likelihood of further offending was strong.
- The forensic adolescent practitioners had a particularly valuable role within the service.
- Young people's compliance with court ordered requirements was well managed.
- Exit strategies when court orders were complete were well managed, in part because the YOS was located within targeted youth support services, which are part of the council's services for young people.

Areas for improvement:

- Work to promote the safety of victims and maximise opportunities for restorative justice was less well developed than other areas of practice.

3. Out-of-court disposals



Work with children and young people 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	Outstanding
Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	

The YOS used the AssetPlus assessment tool to assess its out-of-court disposals, and all assessments were undertaken by one of the seconded police officers. Most of the cases in the sample reviewed were subject to youth conditional cautions. Two were subject to a second unconditional caution.

Assessment of desistance factors was strong. Almost all assessments considered the child or young person's attitudes and motivation for offending, family and social context, and strengths and protective factors, and used information held by other agencies.

Assessment of the child or young person's safety and wellbeing and their potential risk of harm to others was not as strong as assessment of desistance factors. Inspectors judged that the safety and wellbeing classification was too low in a quarter of cases reviewed. Overall, however, most assessments sufficiently analysed how to keep the young person safe.

Typically, young people subject to out-of-court disposals have committed less serious offences. In half of the cases, case managers were able to clearly identify and analyse the risk of harm posed to others, including identifying who was at risk and the nature of that risk. Case managers drew on available sources of information in completing their assessment in three-quarters of cases.

In a small number of cases, assessments lacked depth. The case of T(m) was one example of this:

The nature of the offence warranted a more in-depth analysis of T's offending behaviours. It was unclear what had caused such a violent reaction between mother and daughter, although it was known they had a difficult relationship. The assessment implied that the situation had improved because there had been no known repeat incidents. Because there had not been a thorough analysis of the offence, it would be difficult to agree that the assessment had sufficiently analysed how to keep other people safe.

Despite weakness in some aspects of some assessments, inspectors judged that, overall, most out-of-court disposal assessments contained sufficient analysis of how to keep other people safe, where relevant.

3.2. Planning	Outstanding
Planning is well informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	

In common with our findings in relation to assessment, the planning of interventions to be delivered following an out-of-court disposal was stronger in addressing desistance factors than it was on safety and wellbeing and risk of harm. In most cases, plans set out the services and interventions most likely to support desistance. In developing plans, case managers took account of strengths, protective factors, maturity and motivation to change in almost all cases. The child or young person and their parent or carer were meaningfully involved and their views taken into account in most cases.

The effectiveness of planning for the needs and wishes of victims was less strong. Inspectors judged that, in the cases where there was a relevant victim, they were given sufficient attention in two-thirds of cases. Programmes delivered to young people subject to out-of-court disposals will normally be less intensive than if the young person were on an order of the court. In all cases, the intervention was proportionate to the outcome and capable of being delivered in an appropriate timescale.

The case of R(m) illustrates the strong approach to planning to reduce offending and the less well-developed approach to victims and restorative justice:

Planning with the young person is clear and includes a combination of offending behaviour work and strengths-based activities to encourage longer-term desistance (e.g. accompanying the young person to a youth centre to engage him in music activities). From the case manager interview, it was clear that restorative justice had not been considered as a possibility.

There were significant concerns about the safety and wellbeing of many of the children and young people whose cases we examined. Planning generally addressed these concerns, and most plans focused on keeping the young person safe, drawing on other agencies where appropriate. The only area of relative weakness was contingency planning for changes in circumstances and related risks.

A third of the out-of-court cases reviewed had identifiable risks to other people. In those children and young people's cases, most plans identified specific risks, involved other agencies and promoted the safety of those other people.

3.3. Implementation and delivery	Good
High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child or young person.	

Implementation and delivery of interventions following an out-of-court disposal had a strong focus on desistance and the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person but had less of a focus on potential harm to others. In almost all cases reviewed, an effective working relationship was established between the case manager, the child or young person and their parents or carers. Delivery of interventions reflected the diverse needs and circumstances of the child in almost all cases. Compliance with out-of-court disposals was strong. The location of the YOS within targeted youth support services enabled children and young people to access mainstream services in most cases.

In the case of M(m), the inspector noted the strengths of implementation and delivery of interventions to promote desistance:

The intervention included work on consequences and the impact of further offending and a session with the mental health worker. More importantly, the case manager built up a strong rapport with the young person, actively listening to them and giving them the space to think and reflect. Support was also offered to the parent, by way of referral to partner agencies.

Delivery of interventions to support the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person was achieved in almost all cases. In most cases where it was necessary to involve other agencies, the YOS was successful in identifying and obtaining input from these agencies.

For the third of out-of-court disposals where there were identifiable risks to others, the YOS was less effective than in other aspects of implementation and delivery in addressing risk of harm. Sufficient attention to the protection of potential and actual victims was achieved in two-thirds of cases and in a similar proportion of cases services were sufficient to manage and support the safety of other people.

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

Hertfordshire YOS, together with Hertfordshire Constabulary, had not yet adopted the recommendations of the joint thematic review of out-of-court disposals published by HMI Probation and HMI Constabulary in March 2018. Decisions on out-of-court disposals were largely made by the police. Children and young people who were identified as suitable for a youth conditional caution were referred to the YOS, and a seconded police officer then undertook an AssetPlus assessment. The final decision effectively lay with two police sergeants within the constabulary, who would consider the seconded police officer's recommendation. If the case was suitable for a youth

conditional caution, it was referred to a joint panel hosted by the YOS, which determined the intervention.

Inspectors judged that the AssetPlus assessments that were used to inform the decision-making were of good quality in almost all cases. Decision-making took account of the child or young person's understanding of the implications of receiving an out-of-court disposal in most cases. In a third of cases inspectors judged that the YOS had not made a positive contribution to the determinations of the disposal. In two-thirds of the relevant cases reviewed there was a clearly recorded rationale for joint decision-making.

The inspector's observations in the case of J(f) illustrate the limitations of Hertfordshire's approach:

The decision to issue an out-of-court disposal was made solely by the police. They also made the recommendation for conditions and the joint panel appeared to simply ratify the conditions that the police had already considered. The conditions recommended in this case gave no consideration to victim awareness, and reparation was a significant gap.

In many areas, out-of-court disposal interventions are delivered by a range of YOS practitioners, and we expect the police to be kept informed of any issues that arise during the delivery period, such as compliance with the programme. In Hertfordshire the intervention programmes are delivered by seconded police officers. The inspection standard that the YOS works effectively with police in implementing the out-of-court disposal was therefore met in almost all cases.

Summary

Strengths:

- Assessment and planning to support desistance were strong.
- Implementation and delivery of out-of-court disposal programmes were particularly strong in addressing risks of further offending and the child or young person's safety and wellbeing.
- Compliance with out-of-court disposals was good.
- Children and young people could continue to receive support from the youth support service after their out-of-court intervention had concluded.

Areas for improvement:

- Decisions on out-of-court disposals were largely made by the police, and the YOS had little influence.
- The needs and concerns of victims and opportunities for restorative justice were an area of relative weakness in Hertfordshire.

Annex 1 – Methodology

The inspection methodology is summarised below, linked to the three domains in our standards framework. Our focus was on obtaining evidence against the standards, key questions and prompts in the framework.

Domain one: organisational delivery

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

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

During the main fieldwork phase, we surveyed 27 individual case managers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. Various meetings and focus groups were then held, allowing us to triangulate evidence and information.

Domain two: court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Sixty per cent of the cases selected were those of children and young people who had received court disposals six to nine months earlier, enabling us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and reviewing. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

We examined 54 post-court cases. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of 5), and we ensured that the ratios for gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, 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. Forty per cent of cases selected were those of children and young people 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 significantly involved in the case also took place.

We examined 36 out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of 5), and we ensured that the ratios for gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

Ratings

Details of how our ratings system works can be found here:

<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/05/Youth-guidance-manual-external.pdf>

Annex 2 – Inspection results

1. Organisational delivery

Standards and key questions	Rating
<p>1.1. Governance and leadership</p> <p>The governance and leadership of the YOS supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people.</p> <p>1.1.1. Is there a clear local vision and strategy for the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people?</p> <p>1.1.2. Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?</p> <p>1.1.3. Does the leadership of the YOS support effective service delivery?</p>	Good
<p>1.2. Staff</p> <p>Staff within the YOS are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people.</p> <p>1.2.1. Do staffing and workload levels support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people?</p> <p>1.2.2. Do the skills of YOS staff support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people?</p> <p>1.2.3. Does the oversight of work support high-quality delivery and professional development?</p> <p>1.2.4. Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?</p>	Outstanding
<p>1.3. Partnerships and services</p> <p>A comprehensive range of high-quality services is in place, enabling personalised and responsive provision for all children and young people.</p> <p>1.3.1. Is there a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of children and young people, to ensure that the YOS can deliver well-targeted services?</p>	Good

- 1.3.2. Does the YOS partnership have access to the volume, range and quality of services and interventions to meet the needs of all children and young people?
- 1.3.3. Are arrangements with statutory partners, providers and other agencies established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services?

1.4. Information and facilities	Good
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.	

- 1.4.1. Are the necessary policies and guidance in place to enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children and young people?
- 1.4.2. Does the YOS's delivery environment(s) meet the needs of all children and young people and enable staff to deliver a quality service?
- 1.4.3. Do the information and communication technology (ICT) systems enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children and young people?
- 1.4.4. Is analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement?

2. Court disposals

Standards and key questions	Rating and % yes
2.1. Assessment Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	Outstanding
2.1.1. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child or young person's desistance?	96%
2.1.2. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child or young person safe?	94%
2.1.3. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	83%

2.2. Planning	Outstanding
Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	
2.2.1. Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child or young person's desistance?	94%
2.2.2. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child or young person safe?	93%
2.2.3. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	86%
2.3. Implementation and delivery	Outstanding
High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child or young person.	
2.3.1. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child or young person's desistance?	94%
2.3.2. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child or young person?	98%
2.3.3. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	97%
2.4. Reviewing	Outstanding
Reviewing of progress is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	
2.4.1. Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child or young person's desistance?	91%
2.4.2. Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child or young person safe?	95%
2.4.3. Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	91%

3. Out-of-court disposals

Standards and key questions	Rating and % yes
<p>3.1. Assessment</p> <p>Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.</p>	Outstanding
3.1.1. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child or young person's desistance?	94%
3.1.2. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child or young person safe?	83%
3.1.3. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	86%
<p>3.2. Planning</p> <p>Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.</p>	Outstanding
3.2.1. Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child or young person's desistance?	97%
3.2.2. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child or young person safe?	83%
3.2.3. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	85%
<p>3.3. Implementation and delivery</p> <p>High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child or young person.</p>	Good
3.3.1. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child or young person's desistance?	91%
3.3.2. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child or young person?	96%
3.3.3. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	69%

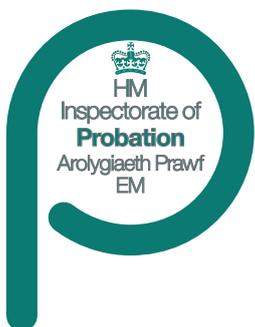
3.4. Joint working	Good
Joint working with the police supports the delivery of high-quality, personalised and coordinated services.	
3.4.1. Are the YOS's recommendations sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the child or young person, supporting joint decision-making?	72%
3.4.2. Does the YOS work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal?	92%

Annex 3 – Glossary

AssetPlus Asset+	Assessment and planning framework tool developed by the Youth Justice Board for work with children and young people who have offended, or are at risk of offending, that reflects current research and understanding of what works with children.
BAME	Black, Asian and minority ethnic (used to refer to members of non-white communities in the UK).
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service: services provided locally by the NHS for the assessment and treatment of children and young people who may have emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties.
Community resolution	Used in low-level, often first-time, offences where there is informal agreement, often also involving the victim, about how the offence should be resolved. Community resolution is a generic term; in practice, many different local terms are used to mean the same thing.
County lines	Young people are (usually) coerced into transporting drugs or money on behalf of gangs across the country, mostly from urban to more rural areas.
Court disposals	The sentence imposed by the court. Examples of youth court disposals are referral orders, youth rehabilitation orders and detention and training orders (explained below).
Desistance	The cessation of offending or other antisocial behaviour.
Dynamic factors	The factors in someone's circumstances and behaviour that can change over time (i.e. living arrangements, relationships, substance misuse).
Enforcement	Action taken by a case manager in response to a child or young person's failure to comply with the actions specified as part of a community sentence or licence. Enforcement can be punitive or motivational.
FTE	First-time entrants: a child or young person who receives a statutory criminal justice outcome (youth caution, youth conditional caution or conviction) for the first time.
HMIP	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation.
MAPPA	Multi-agency public protection arrangements: where probation, police, prison and other agencies work together locally to manage offenders who pose the highest risk of harm to others. Level 1 is single agency management where the risks posed by the offender can be managed by the agency responsible for the supervision or case management of the offender. Levels 2 and 3 require active multi-agency management.

OOCD	Out-of-court disposal: the resolution of a normally low-level offence where it is not in the public interest to prosecute, through a community resolution, youth caution or youth conditional caution.
Personalised	A personalised approach is one in which services are tailored to meet the needs of individuals, giving people as much choice and control as possible over the support they receive. We use this term to include diversity factors.
Reparation	Work by young people who have offended in repairing the harm they have caused to victims or the community. The type of reparation provided should be based on the victim's wishes, where possible.
Risk of Serious Harm	Risk of Serious Harm (ROSH) is a term used in AssetPlus. All cases are classified as presenting either a low/medium/high/very high risk of serious harm to others. HMI Probation uses this term when referring to the classification system, but uses the broader term 'risk of harm' when referring to the analysis to determine the classification level. This helps to clarify the distinction between the probability of an event occurring and the impact/severity of the event. 'Risk of serious harm' only incorporates 'serious' impact, whereas using 'risk of harm' enables the necessary attention to be given to those young offenders for whom lower impact/severity harmful behaviour is probable.
RJ	Restorative justice: a system of criminal justice that focuses on rehabilitation, through reconciliation between victims and the community.
RO	Referral order: a restorative court order, which can be imposed when the child or young person appearing before the court pleads guilty and the threshold of their offence does not meet a youth rehabilitation order.
Safeguarding	A wider term than child protection that involves promoting a child or young person's health and development, and ensuring that their overall welfare needs are met.
Safety and wellbeing	AssetPlus replaced the assessment of vulnerability with a holistic outlook of a child or young person's safety and wellbeing concerns. This assessment is defined as "those outcomes where the young person's safety and wellbeing may be compromised through their own behaviour, personal circumstances or because of the acts/omissions of others" (<i>AssetPlus Guidance</i> , 2016).
YC	Youth caution: a caution accepted by a child or young person following admission to an offence where it is not considered to be in the public interest to prosecute the offender.

YCC	Youth conditional caution: as for a youth caution, but with conditions attached that the child or young person is required to comply with for up to three months. Non-compliance may result in prosecution for the original offence.
YOT/YOS	Youth offending team is the term used in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to describe a multi-agency team that aims to reduce youth offending. YOTs are known locally by many titles, such as youth justice service (YJS), youth offending service (YOS) and other generic titles that may illustrate their wider role in the local area in delivering services for children and young people.
YOT management board	The YOT management board holds the YOT to account to ensure it achieves the primary aim of preventing offending by children and young people.
YJB	Youth Justice Board: government body responsible for monitoring and advising ministers on the effectiveness of the youth justice system. Provider of grants and guidance to the youth offending teams.



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