

An inspection of youth offending services in

Sandwell

HM Inspectorate of Probation

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Pauline Burke, 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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www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation

Published by: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation 1st Floor Civil Justice Centre 1 Bridge Street West Manchester M3 3FX

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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 Sandwell YOS across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery first, and then the quality of court disposals work, and out-of-court disposals work.

We have given Sandwell YOS an overall rating of 'Good'. Our inspection found outstanding areas of practice alongside aspects that required improvement.

At the time of the inspection, Sandwell YOS was experiencing a period of transition: the YOS was moving to new independent trust arrangements and decisions were being made about the strategic accountability of the Management Board. We found the Board could be more effective in setting the direction and strategy for the YOS.

Sandwell YOS supervises a disproportionately high number of black and mixed-race young people and has a high custody rate. Consultations had been undertaken with young people and innovative projects and interventions developed to better improve their engagement. From a strategic perspective, partners need to be confident that the disproportionality is not because of possible discrimination within the justice system.

We found the YOS to be creative in its engagement with children and young people, and it provided an excellent range of interventions to support desistance from offending. The work with court orders was good; assessments and planning that looked at a child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others were outstanding. The YOS needs to improve the reviewing of cases to ensure that these accurately reflect the changes in a child or young person's life.

Our inspection found that the work undertaken with out-of-court disposals required improvement to ensure that it resulted in a positive outcome for children and their families. Its work with victims also required improvement so that the victims' wishes were considered across all interventions.

The recommendations in this report have been designed to assist Sandwell YOS to build on its strengths and focus on areas for improvement.

Dame Glenys Stacey

Chief Inspector of Probation

Overall findings

Overall, Sandwell is rated as: **Good**. This rating has been determined by inspecting the youth offending service in three domains of its work. The findings in those domains are described below.



Organisational delivery

Our key findings about organisational delivery were as follows:

- The Management Board was not as effective as it needed to be in setting the direction and strategy for the YOS and in improving its engagement with frontline staff.
- The YOS leadership promoted a culture of innovation and creativity and there
 was a wide range of resources to meet the needs of children and young
 people and their families.
- There was a skilled workforce and a commitment to training, especially regarding assessments and delivering interventions to promote desistance.
- Consultation with children and young people had led to the provision of specific services and interventions.
- It was not clear that the partnership understood the reasons for a high level of disproportionality in regard to black and mixed-race young men, and the potential discriminatory impact on custody rates.
- The YOS had a lower threshold for out-of-court-disposals, compared with similar YOSs, in order for all children to be assessed. However, it did not have evidence that this leads to a positive outcome for children and young people.
- Restorative justice practice did not always consider the wishes of victims and specific attention was required to engage black and minority ethnic victims.



Court disposals

Our key findings about court disposals were as follows:

- Assessments were thorough and took into account information from other agencies in all areas of desistance, safety and wellbeing and risk of harm.
- Planning considered the views of the child or young person and their parents/carers, and interventions were innovative, creative and focused on engagement.
- Priority was given to building positive working relationships with children and young people and their parents/carers.

- The quality of reviewing, particularly where the risk of harm to others is concerned, needed to be improved.
- Work to promote the safety of victims was less well developed than other areas of practice.



Out-of-court disposals

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

- There was a good range of information gathered from different agencies to help support the decision-making process, and assessment and planning to support desistance were strong.
- Staff demonstrated good engagement skills and fully considered any barriers to the child or young person's motivation.
- Assessment and planning were inadequate and did not appropriately consider the child or young person's safety and wellbeing, nor did they accurately reflect the child or young person's risk of harm. Both of these areas needed to improve.
- The reviews of out-of-court disposals were poor and did not consider the changes in the child or young person's life, especially in regard to their safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others.
- The rationale given for the out-of-court disposals must be evidenced and management oversight needs closer scrutiny of the process for it to be effective.
- A system should be in place to monitor the outcome for a child if they have not complied with the out-of-court disposal.
- A contingency plan needs to be agreed so that out-of-court work is not delayed due to it being reliant on a small number of staff.

Service: Sandwell Youth Offending Service

Fieldwork started: August 2018

Overall rating

Good



1. Organisational delivery

1.1	Governance and leadership	Requires improvement
1.2	Staff	Good
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	Good
2.4	Reviewing	Requires improvement

3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1	Assessment	Inadequate
3.2	Planning	Inadequate
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement
3.4	Joint working	Outstanding

Recommendations

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

The Chair of the YOS Management Board should:

1. make sure that the Management Board is effective in setting the direction and strategy for the work of the YOS and improve its engagement with frontline staff.

The YOS Management Board should:

2. identify and minimise the impact of discrimination and disadvantage in the criminal justice system, especially for children and young people from a black and minority ethnic background.

The YOS Manager should:

- 3. ensure that assessing and planning for work in out-of-court disposals are of a good quality and manage the risk of harm to others, address safety and wellbeing factors and meet the needs of the child or young person
- develop the YOS's victim and restorative justice processes to make certain that the needs of potential and actual victims and opportunities for restorative justice are fully considered and acted upon, in every relevant case.

Introduction

Youth Offending Services (YOSs) 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, the police, the National Probation Service and local health services. Most YOSs are based within local authorities; however, this can vary.

YOS 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 YOSs. It also monitors their performance and issues guidance to them about how things are to be done.

Sandwell YOS covers six towns and is part of the West Midlands Combined Authority. Sandwell received a statutory direction to create a children's trust. The trust, which came into effect in April 2018, is operationally independent from the local authority. It is commissioned to provide a number of services, including the YOS. Historically, the YOS Management Board was a sub-group of the Community Safety Partnership, but its relationship with the children's trust has not yet been decided. According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation for England published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in 2015, Sandwell was the 13th most deprived area.

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 offended.²

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

² HM Inspectorate's standards are available here: <u>www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/</u>

Key facts

First-time entrant rate per 100,000



Sandwell YOS



Average for England and Wales

Reoffending rates⁴



Sandwell YOS



Average for England and Wales

Population information



Total population Sandwell 5	325,460	
Total youth population ⁵	39,924	(10.1%)
Total black and minority ethnic youth population ⁶	11,961	(38.0%)

Caseload information⁷

National average

Age	10-14	15-17
Sandwell	25%	75%
National average	24%	76%
Race/ethnicity	White	Black and minority ethnic
Sandwell	53%	39%
National average	73%	24%
Gender	Male	Female
Sandwell	88%	12%



83%

17%

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

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

 $^{^{5}}$ Population estimates for UK: Mid 2017, Office for National Statistics.

⁶ Ethnic Group by Sex by Age - expressed as a proportion youth population, Census (2011), Office for National Statistics.

⁷ Youth Justice annual statistics: 2016 to 2017, YJB, January 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	Requires Improvement
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.	

There has been a change in the strategic direction of the YOS since April 2018, when it moved from the Community Safety Partnership to the independent children's trust alongside children's social care. When the inspection took place, the YOS was still undergoing a period of transition and decisions were being made about the strategic accountability of the YOS Management Board. There was a draft Youth Justice Plan in place that had been circulated to partners for consultation. The YOS acknowledged that the plan would have to be updated to reflect the new strategic arrangements. The YOS reported on its progress to the Safer Sandwell Partnership and on its performance to the Sandwell Children's Trust Operational Performance Board.

There was a commitment to attending the YOS Management Board by most statutory partners, although there was no children's social care representative and attendance by the clinical commissioning group was not always consistent. The Chair of the Youth Court bench was a regular attendee, and in its feedback the court was very positive about its relationship with the YOS.

The Management Board had experienced a period of instability, with frequent changes of Chair. The last Chair had taken this role for only three months and was moving areas, so a new Chair had been appointed. Despite these changes, the Board showed itself to be both knowledgeable and concerned about the challenges that children and young people faced in Sandwell. It had considered how to engage their views on service design and delivery, and a young person had recently attended the Board to talk about his experiences.

The YOS was involved in a broad range of local partnerships, and this worked well. For example, it was part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), which enabled it to become involved with regional collaborations as well as to access additional funding.

The WMCA had recently commissioned a research programme (Abuse, Loss, Trauma, Attachment and Resilience (ALTAR), which explored the impact of these experiences on children and young people in the youth justice system. This child-focused way of working was being implemented across the partnership, with YOS staff being trained in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE).

There was a good range of partnership staff in the service, which included a seconded police officer and a seconded probation officer. The YOS had close links to an organisation that provided substance misuse services, and to Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) workers. Kaleidoscope, a service for children and young people who are experiencing emotional wellbeing issues, was also integrated into the YOS. The

Kaleidoscope worker provided a link to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The liaison and diversion staff member formed part of the out-of-court disposal panel. The YOS had commissioned services, including Communicate for improving literacy and Kitchen Table Talks for family work. At the time of the inspection, there was no education, training or employment (ETE) worker, but a recruitment process was underway to fill this post.

The arrangements for out-of-court disposals exceeded the statutory minimum that is required. Most young people who admitted an offence in the area were referred to the out-of-court disposal panel, although this excluded offences of a serious nature or those that involved harmful sexual behaviour. A desktop information-gathering exercise was undertaken by the panel, which consisted of a police officer, a YOS worker and a liaison and diversion worker. A screening tool was completed with the child and their parent or carer when they attended the panel.

The out-of-court disposal process is based on the intervention being completed before the disposal is closed. If the child or young person fails to comply, they are re-referred to the police investigating officer, who will reconsider the outcome of the original offence. Inspectors raised a concern that this was overly coercive and could lead to 'up-tariffing'; that is, young people who were suitable for a community resolution but did not cooperate with the programme ended up with a caution.

The head of service was the key link between the Management Board and staff, although management team members had attended Board meetings to present information on specific issues, such as working with girls and young women. Despite this, overall, there was limited engagement between the board and frontline staff.

The Management Board did not set the direction and strategy for the YOS. There was a focus within the partnership on implementing the Children's Trust Action Plan. The management team saw its role as implementing the Youth Justice Plan at an operational level. It was evident that the YOS leadership promoted innovative work. Staff were encouraged to think creatively and to discuss their ideas of how to engage with children and families.

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

Staffing levels in the YOS were appropriate and workloads were manageable. The YOS had been able to fill new posts and had successfully recruited to vacant posts. Staffing levels were reported on a monthly basis to the Children's Trust Performance Board Meeting.

Staff attendance was usually good, but there had been some recent sickness absence. This had been actively managed by the head of service and team managers. Team managers discussed case allocations between the three different teams and workload was a regular agenda item for supervision meetings with staff.

All of the out-of-court work was completed by a YOS worker and a police officer. Although both were highly motivated and committed to their roles, there was an absence of contingency planning and resilience in these arrangements.

It was reported that the out-of-court disposal work was delayed when either staff member was on leave or sick.

The workforce was diverse. There was evidence of access to training, which was supported and encouraged. The YOS had concentrated on implementing ALTAR and ACE in recent months. It needs to ensure that this concentration on desistance work is not at the expense of factors relating to a child or young person's risk of harm or their safety and wellbeing.

All staff had received training in the principles of restorative justice. There had been a temporary victim worker, who was responsible for liaising with black and minority ethnic victims in response to low take-up of restorative justice provision from this group. Since the funding finished for this role, this area of work has received less attention. The specialist restorative justice workers, however, felt that the service was committed to restorative justice and ensuring it was properly resourced and delivered effectively.

The YOS used volunteers as both panel members and mentors. All felt that they had received good training and supervision that was relevant to their role.

There was an induction pack for all staff new to the service. Supervision meetings took place monthly, and team managers had received training in supervision skills. They felt their approach to supervision balanced staff wellbeing, professional development and case work, and were confident that they took a reflective approach to case discussions. There was evidence that managers managed staff performance effectively.

Management oversight of post-court cases was evident and detailed, and staff felt supported in their work. In out-of-court disposals, management oversight was only evident at the case closure stage. It was unclear whether the manager agreed with the assessment and planning or, if concerns arose during the supervision of the case, that these issues had been discussed with them.

Staff had a strong commitment to creativity and innovation. They had received extensive training on speech and language, ACE and child sexual exploitation. Harmful sexual behaviour cases were worked jointly with staff trained in Assessment Intervention Moving on 2 (AIM2), who were supervised by an AIM2 manager. However, staff's understanding of criminal exploitation and county lines was less well developed. There was also no specific response to domestic abuse cases and a lack of knowledge about child to parent violence.

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 reports were provided for the Management Board, and these included information about local and national indicators. The Management Board was aware of the high custody rates in the area, which were above the average for England and Wales. It had analysed the data, and concluded that the custody sentences had been for serious offences or when the child or young person had already been subject to a court order. Work in relation to groups and gangs was organised through the multiagency gang exploitation meetings, which YOS practitioners attended.

The Management Board had specific concerns about the over-representation of black and mixed-race young males in the youth justice system in Sandwell. This had led to several projects being commissioned, including from a company specialising in the engagement of young people from minority ethnic groups. The company completed a consultation exercise with young people whom the YOS was not engaging well and produced a video of their responses. As a result, the YOS is now working with two mentoring companies, and the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance cohort is able to access a music studio. Furthermore, this has recently led to the piloting of Kitchen Table Talks, a new initiative that aims to capture parents' ideas and feedback. The YOS has also introduced the Heritage Project, which gives young people from a variety of ethnicities and cultures the opportunity to explore their heritage, including the experiences of older generations.

The managers and staff suggested that the over-representation of black and mixedrace young males could be linked to possible discrimination within the local justice system. HMIP suggests that the YOS should do more to explore the link between disproportionality and custody rates to see if the ethnicity of children and young people affects the response from criminal justice agencies, at all stages of the system.

The YOS carried out a comprehensive analysis of desistance needs, evidenced through the ALTAR project report, which studied 12 YOS cases. It also funded a Popular Opinions Leader pilot, which attempted to influence the wider behaviour of a group by engaging the most influential people in that group.

Managers were aware that they had a lower threshold for interventions in out-of-court disposals than many other YOTs. They undertook a lot of work with young people subject to community resolutions; however, they did not have evidence that intervening at this stage was having a positive impact.

Children and young people had timely access to an impressive range of services, provided by both partner agencies and commissioned services. There was evidence of the YOS escalating concerns with partners when required. Managers recently met with the pupil referral unit to discuss current cases and identify potential future ones. Relationships with children's services were generally good. Arrangements were in place with multi-agency public protection arrangements, and the YOS risk, safety and wellbeing meetings were also multi-agency.

The YOS had used creative reparation, which was an individualised approach using arts and crafts, to respond to the needs of individuals. Work with victims, however, was inconsistent and tended to be general victim awareness work rather than taking a proactive approach to involving victims themselves.

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.



Policies were up to date and discussed in team meetings. Panel members felt there was a clear procedural framework to operate within.

Access to partnership services was good and staff understood how to refer children and young people to them. There were effective systems for obtaining victim consent and contact details from the police.

The YOS office was in the town centre, where there was plenty of public transport. This meant that it was accessible for children and families. The leaving care team was based at the same location. All children and young people completed a safety mapping questionnaire to gather information on where they felt safe to meet.

Staff in the YOS had access to both the early help and children's social care systems. The YOS's ChildView database could produce relevant management information and provided performance reports for a variety of audiences. The YOS had a quality assurance procedure and conducted internal audits, as well as being involved with thematic multi-agency audit arrangements.

The YOS had promoted a culture of learning and had produced several evaluation reports on programmes that it had commissioned. It had considered the findings of HMIP's out-of-court disposals thematic report and made changes as a result, including doing more to obtain the views of children and young people. A case that was reported to the Youth Justice Board because of a serious incident had also been presented to the Management Board, which outlined lessons learned.

The service had worked hard to get, and use, the views of children and young people and had commissioned projects and services because of those consultations. It had produced a young people's version of the Youth Justice Plan.

Summary

Strengths:

- The YOS leadership promoted a culture of innovation and creativity and there
 was a wide range of resources to meet the needs of children and young
 people and their families.
- There was a skilled workforce and a commitment to training, especially regarding assessments and delivering interventions to promote desistance.
- There was an experienced operational management team who provided effective oversight in post-court cases.
- Consultation with children and young people had led to the provision of specific services and interventions.
- Work with groups and gangs involved multiple agencies and the YOS completed a safety mapping questionnaire with all children and young people.

Areas for improvement:

- The Management Board needed to set the direction and strategy for the YOS in order for it to be effective.
- The Management Board needed to improve its engagement with frontline staff.
- The partnership should understand whether the over-representation of black and mixed-race males is linked to high custody rates due to potential discrimination in the justice system.
- There was no contingency planning or resilience in the staffing of out-of-court disposals.
- Management oversight of out-of-court disposals was ineffective as it occurred at the case closure stage and did not consider the quality of the assessments, plans or reviews.
- There was no evidence that the approach to out-of-court-disposals was meeting the needs of children and young people.
- Staff needed to improve their knowledge of criminal exploitation and county lines issues.
- Assessments, planning and interventions concerning domestic abuse cases, and especially young person to parent abuse, needed to be strengthened.
- Restorative justice practice required improvement to meet the needs of victims, and specific attention needed to be given to engaging black and minority ethnic victims.



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.	\triangle

The quality of initial assessments intended to support the child or young person's desistance from offending was sufficient in all cases in the sample. Similarly, in all cases, staff used information held by other agencies, taking into account the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child or young person. They also gave appropriate attention to understanding the child or young person's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change. The views of the child or young person and their parents/carers were considered in 97 per cent of the cases.

It was apparent from assessments that case managers took a strengths-based approach to their work with children and young people, and had a good understanding of approaches to desistance. They were confident in referring to, and using, information from other agencies. There was clearly a broad range of services on offer.

The needs and wishes of victims and opportunities for restorative justice were less well developed than other aspects of assessment. They were only good enough in 57 per cent of relevant 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.

Factors related to the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person were fully identified in most of the cases. Sufficient use was made of other assessments, or information held by other agencies, in undertaking assessments. In a small number of cases, staff did not give enough attention to analysing what controls or interventions could best promote safety and wellbeing. Inspectors agreed with the safety and wellbeing classification in nearly all of the cases. Where they disagreed, this was because the classification was judged to be too low.

The case of S (m) showed the strengths of assessments in Sandwell:

"There is clear assessment of the dangers the child places himself in by his actions of going missing and traveling to large cities. The child has been open to children's services for some time and there is ongoing information-sharing between agencies to support the safety of the child."

Risk of harm to others by the child or young person, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk, was identified in more than half of the cases. Similarly, most of the cases used available sources of information and involved other

agencies where appropriate. In 22 per cent of cases, staff did not give enough attention to analysing appropriate controls and interventions to manage or minimise risk of harm to others, although overall most cases appropriately analysed how to keep other people safe.

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

Planning focusing on supporting the child or young person's desistance was sufficient in 97 per cent of cases. In most cases, the plan set out the interventions and services most likely to support the child or young person's desistance. These included factors such as lifestyle, self-identity and education, training and employment. In almost all cases, the planning was proportionate to the sentence received and the interventions were capable of being delivered within the timescale.

In the case of H (m), the inspector noted:

"A clear plan was developed for interventions, which was reflective of the assessed areas of risk/need in order to promote desistance."

As with assessment, planning to take account of the needs and wishes of victims was less well developed. Sufficient attention had been paid to victims' needs and wishes in only 63 per cent of relevant cases. However, the child or young person and their parents/carers had been involved in the planning, and their views had been considered, in the majority of cases.

The YOS used a risk panel to oversee the planning for cases in which the child or young person was assessed as posing a high risk of harm to others and/or there was a high level of risk in terms of their safety and wellbeing. These were multi-agency meetings, although inspectors noted that most of the actions were for the YOS case managers. The evidence from case reviews showed that the risk panel arrangements were effective.

Planning sufficiently addressed the child or young person's safety and wellbeing in 88 per cent of cases and set out effective contingency arrangements to manage the risks in the majority of cases. The YOS was particularly successful in involving other agencies where necessary, and its plans aligned with those of other services in almost all cases reviewed. The commissioning of a number of services allowed case managers to access support from other agencies when additional input was required.

Planning to keep other people safe was sufficient in most cases inspected, although other aspects of planning were less well developed. Plans addressed the specific risks to actual and potential victims in less than three-quarters of cases reviewed. Effective contingency arrangements to manage identified risks to others were also in place in less than three-quarters of cases. Overall, in most cases the planning focused sufficiently on keeping people safe.

2.3 Implementation and delivery

Good

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



Interventions designed to reduce reoffending and support desistance were comprehensive, and services had been commissioned specifically to address this area of work. In most cases, the services delivered were those that were most likely to support desistance and recognise and respond effectively to the diverse needs of the child or young person.

The YOS had focused a lot of its work on engaging the child or young person and giving them every opportunity to comply with the order. This had included consultation events that had led to the introduction of mentors to work alongside children. The case evidence supported this approach, with 97 per cent of cases giving sufficient focus to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child or young person and their parents/carers. In 90 per cent of cases every attempt was made to help children and young people comply, using methods including home visits and transport arrangements. It was clear that staff were encouraged to develop innovative and creative interventions to work with children and their families. Careful consideration was given to developing the best methods to communicate with children and young people, and speech and language therapists were actively involved in cases.

The example of L (m), aged 12 years, showed this engagement:

"L was very difficult to engage. He is of mixed race and was brought up in household of mostly white people. He had a disrupted upbringing and he was likely to have experienced trauma. The focus of the YOS intervention was through a mentor who had a similar heritage. They focused on building a relationship with him and using that relationship to work for change. This is in line with trauma informed practice principles."

Like assessment and planning, work to address the needs of victims was not as strong as it needed to be. This area of work was given sufficient attention in only just over half of relevant cases. There were some good opportunities for restorative justice, but these were not always considered or acted upon.

The delivery of services to promote the child or young person's safety and wellbeing was evident in 85 per cent of cases. In most cases, the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child or young person safe was sufficiently well coordinated.

The delivery of services to keep other people safe was of sufficient quality in most cases inspected, although, like planning, some aspects were less well developed than desistance and safety and wellbeing. The protection of actual and potential victims was only addressed well enough in just over half of relevant cases. The involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm was sufficiently well coordinated in three-quarters of cases. Overall, in most cases the implementation and delivery of services effectively supported the safety of other people.

2.4 Reviewing

Requires improvement

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



The reviewing of work to keep the child or young person, and other people, safe required improvement. Young people's circumstances can change rapidly. This can result in an increased, or sometimes decreased, likelihood of reoffending, risk of harm to others or risks to their safety and well-being. Case managers should review their plans when there is a change in the young person's circumstances that could affect their behaviour.

In line with assessment, planning, implementation and delivery, the child or young person's barriers to motivation and engagement were reviewed in 90 per cent of cases. Once again, this demonstrated the importance that the YOS had placed on encouraging children and young people to comply with orders.

In most cases the reviews led to changes in the plan of work to support desistance. In just over three-quarters of cases the child or young person, and their parents/carers, were fully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and their views were considered.

Reviewing of a child's safety and wellbeing was informed by information from other agencies in the majority of cases, although this led to the necessary changes in the ongoing plan of work in only 52 per cent of relevant cases.

An inspector stated in regard to the case of A (m):

"Generally, reviewing does focus on keeping the child safe; however, there is intelligence which would suggest that the child may be involved in drug dealing along with an older brother. The ongoing risk and safety meeting recognises the incidents and intelligence, but has not recorded actions to further develop the information, or a contingency to address any potential risk."

Staff did not sufficiently recognise and respond to ongoing changes in factors related to risk of harm. In over half the cases, the review process had identified and responded to changes in factors relating to risk of harm to others. Partner agencies were involved in risk of harm reviews in most cases, although the reviews only led to changes in the plan of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm in 57 per cent of relevant cases. Overall, reviewing focused sufficiently on keeping other people safe in 62 per cent of cases.

Summary

Strengths:

 Assessments were thorough and took into account information from other agencies in all areas of desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm.

- Planning considered the views of the child or young person and their parents/carers.
- Interventions were innovative and creative and focused on engaging the child or young person.
- Priority was given to building positive working relationships with children and young people and their parent/carers.
- Speech and language therapists were used to help understand the child or young person and their communication needs, in order to enable them to comply.
- There was a specific focus on building on the strengths of the child or young person, and enhancing positive factors in their life.

Areas for improvement:

- The quality of reviewing, particularly where the risk of harm to others is considered, needed to be improved.
- 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 case we inspect against four standards.

3.1 Assessment Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers. Inadequate

The process of deciding on an out-of-court disposal was well established, and the YOS accepted referrals from the police for all cases from the second community resolution onwards. A panel made decisions, aided by information from other partner agencies, and the disposal outcome was agreed. The panel completed the assessment with the child in front of their parent/carer. For Youth Conditional Cautions, the AssetPlus assessment tool was completed at a later stage.

The quality of assessments was inadequate. This was one of the lowest-rated aspects of practice for Sandwell, although the assessment in relation to desistance was better than those relating to safety and wellbeing and risk of harm. In 60 per cent of cases, there was sufficient analysis of offending behaviour. In 70 per cent of cases, the assessment focused on the child or young person's strengths and protective factors. Most cases showed that staff had considered the child or young person's level of maturity, and ability and motivation to change. The majority had involved the child or young person and their parents/carers in the assessment, and taken their views into account.

As the assessment of the child or young person is completed at the panel, the child is not seen alone and therefore has no opportunity, within the process, to raise any safeguarding concerns with staff. Assessments of safety and wellbeing showed that risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person were clearly identified and analysed in only 45 per cent of cases. There was a clear, written record of the assessment of the child or young person's safety and well-being in less than half of the cases.

In 65 per cent of cases, the assessment did not sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe. Half of the cases used all available sources of information, including other assessments that had been completed. In 60per cent of cases, the case manager's classification of risk of serious harm was correct.

In one example, the inspector recorded that in the case of C (m):

"The child had previous arrests and a community resolution for violent offences against an unknown victim. They were also displaying aggressive and violent behaviour towards their parents. There was no evidence of a full and clear assessment of the nature of this violence and the child's propensity for serious harm."

3.2 Planning Inadequate

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



The planning of interventions to support desistance factors was outstanding. The views of parents/carers were considered in all but two cases and in a similar proportion, interventions were proportionate and matched to the child or young person's needs.

The planning for services for victims was poor. Sufficient attention was given to the needs and wishes of the victim in 30 per cent of relevant cases.

Planning was inadequate in terms of keeping the child or young person, or other people, sufficiently safe. Although planning involved different agencies, and agency plans were aligned in most cases, it did not include contingency arrangements for the identified risks in 70 per cent of cases. Planning to manage risk of harm did not promote the safety of other people in the majority of cases, and it addressed specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims in only a small proportion of cases.

One inspector noted in the case of K (f):

"The planning of interventions is proportionate to the offence and seeks to address the internal factors on decision-making, victim awareness and consequences. The victim's father is contacted and views sought. The father was in agreement with the panel's decision, that the child should write a letter of apology to the victim. This was never completed and it is apparent from the case manager's interview that they were not aware of this request...they stated that the child would have been willing to write a letter of apology had she been asked to do so. This is a missed opportunity and there appears to be a disconnect between the restorative justice victim workers and the case managers."

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

Interventions to support desistance were delivered in good time in nearly all of the cases, and service delivery reflected the diversity of the child or young person and involved parents/carers in most cases.

As seen in post-court cases, attention is given to encouraging and enabling the child or young person's compliance with the work of the YOS in 90 per cent of cases. This emphasised how the YOS has focused on creating innovative interventions, alongside commissioning specialist services to enable the child to engage with the work.

One inspector noted in the case of S (f):

"Excellent coordination of services by gathering appropriate background information. Not only were services engaged, the process was immediate and reflected the young person's need to receive counselling and an intervention to deal with her anger management issues."

In only 60 per cent of cases did the service promote the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person, and the implementation and delivery of services to support the safety of other people effectively were evident in only half the cases. In 30 per cent of cases the involvement of other agencies was not coordinated to help keep the child safe.

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

The panel had access to a good range of information to assist in decision-making. A full range of disposals were available to the panel, including community resolution, youth caution, youth conditional caution, and charge. However, the rationale for the decision made by the panel was not clearly recorded in more than half of the cases.

The majority of cases considered the child or young person's understanding of the offence and their acknowledgement of responsibility as well as their understanding, and their parents'/carers' understanding, of the implications of receiving an out-of-court disposal.

In the opinion of the inspectors, management oversight met the needs of the case in only 40 per cent of cases and it was inadequate in 30 per cent of cases.

Summary

Strengths:

- There was a good range of information gathered from different agencies to help support the decision-making process.
- Assessment and planning to support desistance were strong.
- Staff demonstrated good engagement skills and fully considered any barriers to the child or young person's motivation.

Areas for improvement:

- The quality of assessments and planning for a child or young person's safety and wellbeing, or their risk of harm, was inadequate.
- The child or young person was not seen alone and so was not offered the opportunity to disclose any safeguarding issues.

- Reviewing a child or young person's safety and wellbeing or their risk of harm needed to improve.
- The rationale for the out-of-court disposal given must be evidenced clearly on the case file.
- The wishes and the needs of the victims should be considered as part of the planning process for out-of-court disposal cases.
- The process for management oversight needs to change for it to be effective
- A system should be in place to monitor the outcome for a child if they have not complied with the out-of-court disposal.

Annex 1: Methodology

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

Domain one: organisational delivery

The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance and the Chief Executive, (or delegated representative), 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 16 individual case managers, and 6 volunteers, 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. In total, we conducted 12 meetings, either face to face or by telephone.

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 30 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 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.

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 20 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 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.

Annex 2: Inspection results

1. Organisational delivery

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Standards and key questions

Rating

1.1. Governance and leadership

Requires improvement

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.

- 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?
- 1.1.2. Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?
- 1.1.3. Does the leadership of the YOS support effective service delivery?

1.2. Staff Good

Staff within the YOS are empowered to deliver a highquality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people. Good

- 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?
- 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?
- 1.2.3. Does the oversight of work support high-quality delivery and professional development?
- 1.2.4. Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

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.

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?

- 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	Outstanding
Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	
2.1.1. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child or young person's desistance?	100%
2.1.2. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child or young person safe?	93%
2.1.3. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	90%

2.2.	Planning	Outstanding
	ing is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively ing 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?	97%
2.2.2.	Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child or young person safe?	88%
2.2.3.	Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	83%
2.3.	Implementation and delivery	Good
servic	quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated es are delivered, engaging and assisting the child or person.	
2.3.1.	Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child or young person's desistance?	80%
2.3.2.	Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child or young person?	89%
2.3.3.	Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	79%
2.4.	Reviewing	Requires
perso	wing of progress is well-informed, analytical and nalised, actively involving the child or young person neir parents/carers.	improvement
2.4.1.	Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child or young person's desistance?	80%
2.4.2.	Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child or young person safe?	81%
2.4.3.	Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	62%

3. Out-of-court disposals

Standards and key questions	Rating and % yes
3.1. Assessment	Inadequate
Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	
3.1.1. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child or young person's desistance?	60%
3.1.2. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child or young person safe?	45%
3.1.3. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	35%
3.2. Planning	Inadequate
Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	
3.2.1. Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child or young person's desistance?	90%
3.2.2. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child or young person safe?	40%
3.2.3. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	17%
3.3. Implementation and delivery	Requires
High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child or young person.	improvement
3.3.1. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child or young person's desistance?	90%
3.3.2. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child or young person?	60%
3.3.3. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	50%

3.4. Joint working	Outstanding
Joint working with the police supports the delivery of high-quality, personalised and coordinated services.	
3.4.1. Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the child or young person, supporting joint decision-making?	84%
3.4.2. Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal?	95%

Annex 3: Glossary

AssetPlus	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.
CE	Criminal exploitation: occurs when children and young people are exploited, forced or coerced into committing crimes.
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.
Court disposals	The sentence imposed by the court. Examples of youth court disposals are referral orders, youth rehabilitation orders and detention and training orders.
County lines	Young people who are coerced into transporting drugs or money on behalf of gangs across the country, mostly from urban to more rural areas.
CSE	Child sexual exploitation is a type of child abuse, occurring when a child or young person is encouraged, forced or manipulated to take part in sexual activity in return for something, for example presents, drugs, alcohol or emotional attention.
Desistance	The cessation of offending or other antisocial behaviour.
DTO	Detention and Training Order: a prison sentence for a child or young person. The length is specified by the court and the child or young person is placed in either a secure children's home (SCH), secure training centre (STC) or young offender institution (YOI). The placement is dependent upon age and vulnerability. The DTO will have both custodial and community elements, when the child or young person will be released on license.
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.
ETE	Education, training and employment: work to improve

	learning, and to increase future employment prospects.
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.
НМІР	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation.
LA	Local authority. YOSs are often a team within a specific local authority.
Learning style	A theory that individuals have a preferential way to absorb, process, comprehend and retain information. They can include, for example, solitary or group learning, discussion or practical teaching styles.
Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA)	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.
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.
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 which should take place in order 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. The term '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.
RO	Referral order: a restorative court order which can be imposed when the child or young person appearing before the court pleads guilty, and whereby the threshold does not meet a youth rehabilitation order.



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ISBN: 978-1-84099-828