



Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

Annual report: inspection of youth offending services (2018-2019)

OCTOBER 2019

This report is based on the aggregated findings of our inspections of Youth Offending Teams conducted and provided by the youth inspection team, led by Alan MacDonald and supported by a team of operations, research, communications and corporate staff. The director responsible for this report is Dr Louise Falshaw. We would like to thank all those who participated in any way in the inspections on which this report is based. Without their help and cooperation, the inspections, and this report, 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



"HMI Probation has a critical role to play in reviewing the quality of work that youth offending services do to prevent reoffending and protect the public."

"We found many services have strong leadership and committed staff."

"We found many examples of staff developing strong working relationships with children and young people, and their families. This is to be applauded."

"However, staff need more national support and guidance on issues such as county lines and knife crime."

Despite the huge reduction in the number of children and young people entering the youth justice system for the first time, Youth Offending Teams still face multiple challenges in managing the young people that come into contact with their services. These children may have witnessed serious violence, in the family or among friends; been the victims of maltreatment or abuse at the hands of those they trusted; been in care and experienced the breakdown of multiple placements; become substance misusers; and been excluded from school despite their significant educational needs. Most of these children are vulnerable and some are at risk of being sexually or criminally exploited by others, but some of these children are also a serious risk to others. Youth Offending Teams have to find the right balance between treating these young people as children, and building a trusting and supportive relationship while challenging and tackling their learned offending behaviour.

HMI Probation has a critical role to play in judging whether Youth Offending Teams are getting this balance right and in reviewing the overall quality of the work services are doing to prevent reoffending and protect the public.

Over the past 12 months, we have inspected 26 Youth Offending Teams across England and Wales against a new set of quality standards,

introduced in 2018. At each service we look at 12 different aspects of service delivery and assign each one a rating which we then aggregate to produce an overall rating. We rated the quality of delivery as 'Outstanding' in three Youth Offending Teams, as 'Good' in twelve, as 'Requires improvement' in eight, and, disappointingly, as 'Inadequate' in three Youth Offending Teams.

While each organisation has its own strengths and challenges, we found high-performing services shared some common characteristics – in particular, strong leadership, including both the Team Manager and Management Board; a stable, well-trained and motivated workforce with manageable caseloads; a good range of services, particularly in relation to mental health and education; and good relationships with other partners like the police and social services.

Leadership was a strength in many services – we rated 17 services either 'Outstanding' or 'Good'. The best Management Boards have a deep understanding of their children and young people, a solid grasp of their role and remit, and advocate on behalf of the service.

A decent education is crucial to the life chances of these young people, yet we found education representatives missing from almost a third of the Management Boards we

inspected and examples of children known to youth justice services receiving little or no education at all. With time on their hands, some children were committing offences during school hours or risked being groomed or enticed into crime.

We found the quality of work to identify and manage risk of harm issues was variable. Overall, we found stronger work for court disposals than out of court disposals. Staff at high-performing services paid good attention to keeping people safe in the assessment, planning, implementation and review of court cases. In quite a few instances, however, we found the assessment of out of court disposals to be poor or lacking in detail; this had a knock-on effect on the planning and delivery of interventions.

We also found significant variation in the way services use out of court disposals. High-performing services used these measures appropriately to divert children and young people who have committed low-level offences away from the formal justice system. Others were too punitive, too lenient or too inconsistent in their use of out of court disposals. We also found no correlation between first-time entrant data and our judgements of the quality of each Youth Offending Team. Judged by our inspection findings, a low first-time entrant rate does not necessarily indicate an effective service. Maybe other measures could help us to better gauge the effectiveness of youth justice services.

We were impressed by the calibre of staff in many services – we rated 17 services either ‘Outstanding’ or ‘Good’ on this aspect. Staff in high-performing services are committed, knowledgeable and devoted to helping children and young people to make better life choices. We found many examples of staff developing strong working relationships with children and young people, and their families. This is to be applauded.

However, staff need more support and guidance on issues of national importance. The majority of services who responded to our survey told us they think knife crime is on the increase – yet there are ongoing issues with sharing information between agencies. Likewise, there is a dearth of national guidance on tackling offending connected to county lines operations. Both knife crime and county lines have a significant impact on individuals, their families and communities, and on society at large. There needs to be greater leadership and direction for youth justice services so they can, in turn, support children and young people to move away from these types of crimes.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone at the services that we have visited over the past year. I appreciate inspections can take up a lot of time and resources in organisations. It is encouraging, therefore, that so many of you have given us positive feedback about your experiences. We hope our inspections have helped you to recognise and celebrate effective professional practice, as well as helping services to focus on areas for improvement.

This has been our first year of inspections using our new standards and ratings. I am delighted that one service – East Riding Youth Offending Service – has achieved a clean sweep of ‘Outstanding’ ratings across all 12 aspects of their work. I think the Inspectorate can do more to highlight and share examples of effective practice; look out for more on this over the coming months.

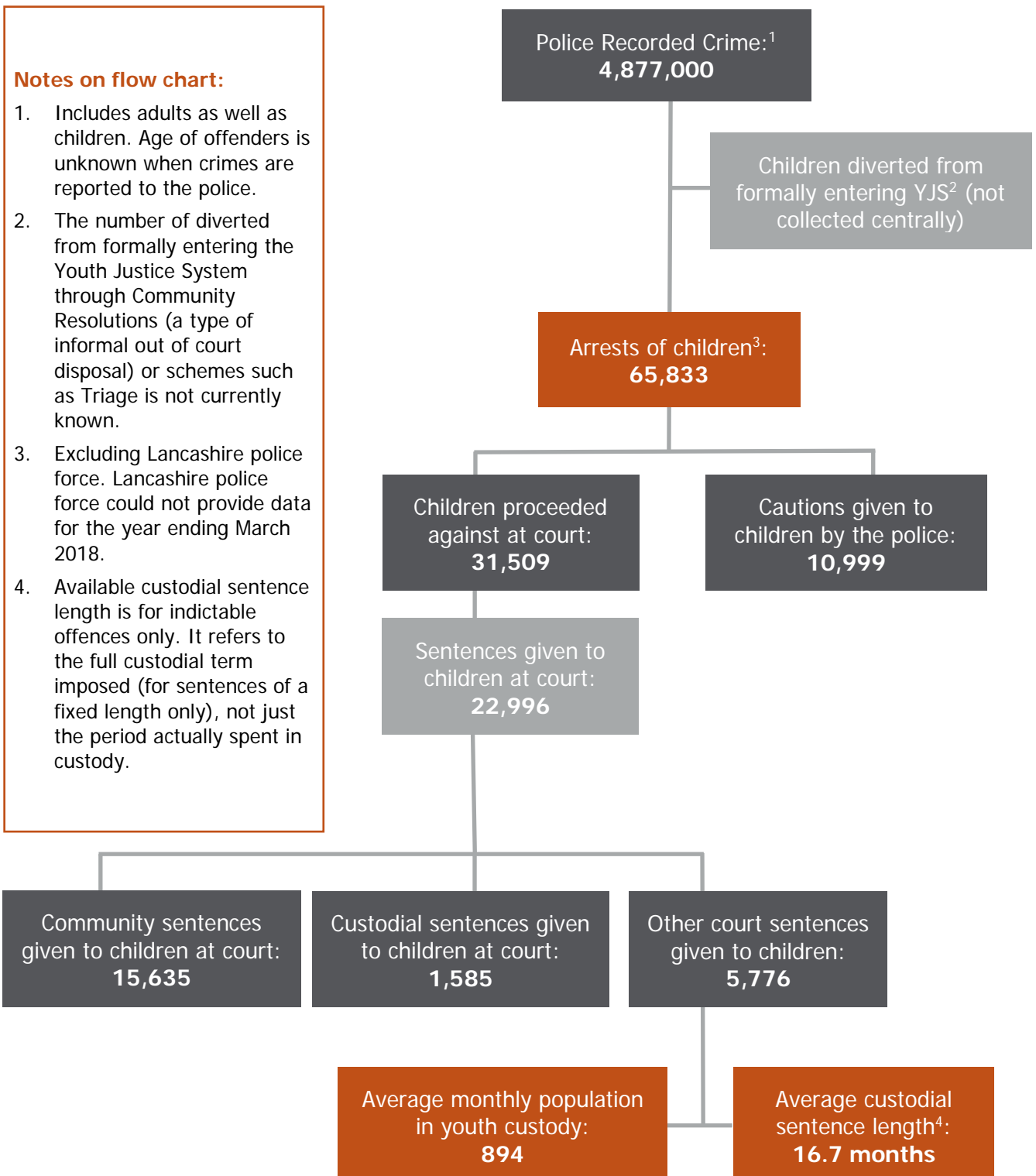
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Russell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Justin Russell

HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Contextual facts

Flows through the Youth Justice System, year ending March 2018 (source: Youth Justice Board/Ministry of Justice)



Our inspections of youth offending services (2018-2019)

Number of reports

20
single inspections
6
joint inspections



Number of inspected cases

791
court disposals
506
out of court disposals



Number of case manager interviews

1,070



Best performing aspects

Leadership
Committed and skilled staff
Better case management of court disposal cases compared to out of court



Worst performing aspects

Strategic education representation on Management Boards
Education provision
Assessment of risk of harm to others and safety and wellbeing in out of court disposals



Selection of quotes from inspected services:

"A full explanation was given regarding the inspection process and how the information provided is used."

"Very professional but with an informal feel. I felt part of the process."

"It was made clear which areas of my work were good so I could continue what I was doing in these areas."

"I enjoyed the experience of being able to be open and frank about my practice and being encouraged to talk about my professional values."

Executive summary

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending service work with adults and children. This report summarises what we have found in our first year of youth inspections; it covers 26 inspections, 20 single and 6 joint inspections, of Youth Offending Teams. While this equates to only 18 per cent of the total number of Youth Offending Teams in England and Wales (n=152) and cannot be considered representative, we have seen a huge variation in quality of service delivery in the areas visited, much greater than we have witnessed in our inspection of adult probation services.

In April 2018 we introduced a new way of inspecting Youth Offending Teams. We now rate the quality of service delivery for each Youth Offending Team against twelve standards of inspection across three domains: organisational delivery; court disposals; and out of court disposals. We also give each Youth Offending Team an overall rating.

Overall, we rated the quality of delivery as 'Outstanding' in three Youth Offending Teams, as 'Good' in twelve, as 'Requires improvement' in eight, and, disappointingly, as 'Inadequate' in three Youth Offending Teams.

Inspection findings

Domain one: Organisational delivery

In the first part of our inspection methodology we look at the leadership of local services and how well they are set up to deliver for the young people they supervise, in terms of staffing, the range of services they provide and their premises, policies and ICT provision.

- **Management Boards and leadership**

In the most effective Youth Offending Teams we found a clear link between the Management Board and the operational service where communication was strong and Board Members and frontline staff had regular contact. Most Youth Offending Teams had a vision or similar statement. These statements had the greatest sense of ownership when they were produced collaboratively by Board Members and staff. In the weakest areas there was little contact between Board Members and staff; in the best areas performance information was well-presented and included both quantitative and qualitative information. Board Members sought explanations and challenged the information presented to them. In the weakest areas the information was poor quality, inconsistent and not understood by Board Members.

The most effective Board Members were active participants in Board meetings, advocated for the work of the Youth Offending Team in their primary role, typically as a senior manager in a partner agency, and developed an understanding of frontline practice.

Across the board we saw recurring issues with a lack of strategic education representation on the Management Board. A particular concern when many children and young people were not getting their statutory entitlement to education.

- **Staffing**

Skilled and committed staff are a critical component of an effective Youth Offending Team. Attracting and retaining high quality staff is challenging for many areas. The most effective Youth Offending Teams had a clear learning culture which ensured that staff had many opportunities to develop. Most staff seen on inspection displayed a commitment to the role. In the strongest Youth Offending Teams that commitment was augmented by a deep knowledge and high levels of skill developed with the support of their organisation. In response to our survey, all staff respondents said that they were comfortable with their caseload/workload.

We also found commonalities in the Youth Offending Teams that were performing less well. Each had gone through a major service restructure prior to our inspection which had resulted in a significant impact on staff and service delivery; there had been a change of Chair less than 12 months before the inspection; and there were existing serious concerns relating to the wider children's services delivery.

- **Services**

The range of services offered to children and young people was greatest where there was investment in strong partnerships with key agencies. We found examples of Youth Offending Teams with an excellent offer of specialist services, particularly in relation to health, and communication, speech and language services, but education provision was disappointing.

Our inspections revealed that too many children and young people do not have access to suitable and sustainable education or training opportunities. In some cases, children being supervised by Youth Offending Teams were getting little more than one hour's education a day, leaving them unoccupied and vulnerable to further offending.

We have asked the Department for Education to work with us to encourage local education teams to engage with YOT Management Boards.

Domain two: Court disposals

Across the 26 inspections covered in this report, our inspectors reviewed the quality of supervision of 791 individual cases dealt with by the youth courts. Each of these cases was assessed against four key standards relating to the quality of initial assessment undertaken, the plans that were drawn up, how well those plans were then delivered and whether and how progress against these plans was reviewed and action taken when the young person's circumstances changed.

As section 2 of this report shows, services tended to score higher in relation to the assessment and planning linked to court ordered cases than for the other standards. Eighteen out of the twenty-six Youth Offending Teams we inspected, for example, were rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' for assessment, whereas only twelve of twenty-six reached this standard for the way they reviewed progress on cases.

- **Risk of harm**

A considerable number of the children and young people receiving a service from Youth Offending Teams present some risk of harm to the public. Analysis of our aggregated data set shows that 90 per cent of the cases we assessed were considered by inspectors to pose either a medium, high or very high risk of harm to others at the start of their court order.

Six per cent of cases were MAPPA¹ eligible and three-quarters of these cases were managed at level one.

Our inspections therefore place a particular emphasis on how well Youth Offending Teams assess and manage the risks that the young people they supervise present to themselves and to others. Assessment of risk of harm to others for court disposal cases was generally good with half of inspected services found to be outstanding. In contrast, planning for risk of harm to others was done less well and we saw mixed performance for implementation and delivery. We judged eleven services as requiring improvement in their review of risk of harm to others.

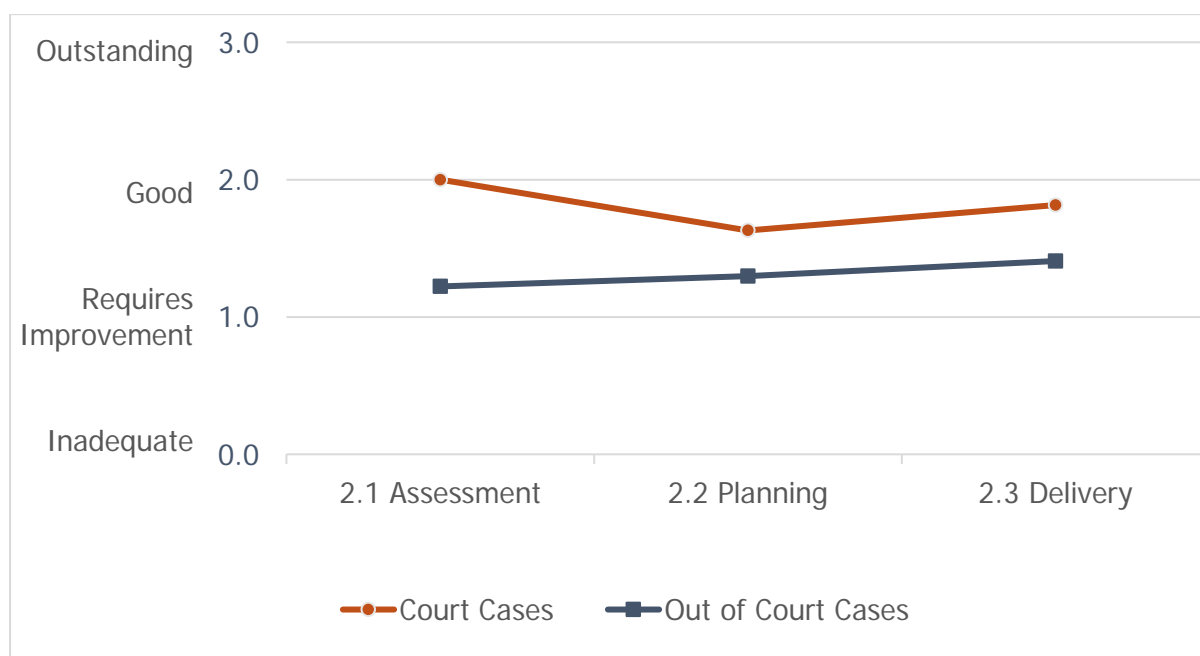
Overall, four services were assessed as outstanding in all aspects of work to manage the risk of harm to others. Strong assessments supported informed plans that drove the delivery of effective interventions, the impact of which was appropriately reviewed.

Domain three: Out of court disposals

An increasing proportion of the cases supervised by Youth Offending Teams are being diverted from the formal justice system and being dealt with through what are known as 'out of court disposals'. Across the 26 inspections summarised in this report we looked at how well services were supervising 506 of these out of court cases.

Judged against the same standards as court cases, on the quality of their assessment, planning, and implementation and delivery, we found a different pattern than for court ordered cases. In particular, the quality of assessment was significantly worse, with only 11 out of 26 services rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' for the quality of their assessment work on these cases, which in turn meant that only a third of the services (nine out of twenty-six) reached this standard for their planning work (see figure below).

Figure 1: Quality of case management for court and out of court disposal cases



¹ MAPPA stands for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements. The role of MAPPA is to protect the public, particularly previous victims of crime, from serious harm by sexual and violent offenders. It is a mechanism through which police, probation and prison services, along with a number of agencies under a duty to co-operate, work together to discharge their statutory duties and protect the public.

Compared to court disposal cases, work to manage the risk of harm to others was done much less well for out of court cases. We found assessment to be inadequate in too many services which impacted the judgements for planning, and implementation and delivery. Some services were outstanding in their assessment of risk of harm for court cases but inadequate in out of court cases - this was largely due to the suitability of the tool they were using for out of court work.

In out of court disposal cases we found that assessments to keep other people safe were also inadequate in a large proportion of services, again the suitability of the assessment tools used impacted on how well assessments were completed in some Youth Offending Teams.

Specific elements of delivery

- **Knife crime**

Knife crime is increasing and is of serious public concern. In summer 2019 we surveyed all Youth Offending Teams in England and Wales to ascertain the following:

- how managers perceived the knife crime problem in their area
- how they were tackling the problem
- what barriers exist to effective action.

Half of the total number of Youth Offending Teams responded. A quarter of Youth Offending Team managers assessed knife crime as a 'major problem' in their area and a majority (59 per cent) felt it was increasing. Overall, a fifth of their caseloads involved knife crime offences and the great majority (85 per cent) of schemes were supervising children who had also been victims of knife crime themselves.

While almost 90 per cent of YOTs told us they were providing knife crime programmes, less than 30 per cent had formally evaluated these. Local efforts are suffering from a lack of national direction.

- **County lines**

It's a similar story for county lines cases. While we have seen evidence of some heroic efforts to tackle the issue in some areas there is a deeply concerning lack of awareness in others. Again, Youth Offending Teams are lacking national direction.

- **Ethnic disproportionality**

Despite the examples of local good practice we observed, there are many more Youth Offending Teams who are not doing enough. Youth Offending Teams need to learn from each other as well as engage effectively with local youth and criminal justice partners to tackle this problem.

- **Resettlement**

During 2018 and 2019 HMI Prisons and HMI Probation undertook a joint thematic inspection of youth resettlement.² This looked at the resettlement planning and outcomes for ten boys in each of the five Young Offender Institutions.

Planning for resettlement while still in custody was found to be wanting and family input limited. We found a number of boys who did not know their release address, and in one case, not until the day of release. It follows that outcomes three months later were poor. In 57 per cent of cases there was still no education provision in place three months after release and 20 per cent of the sample had already been reconvicted within this same time period. Having reported on this before it is disappointing that preparation for resettlement remains an issue.

² Joint thematic inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2019). *Youth resettlement – final report into work in the community*.
<http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cji/inspections/youthresettlementcommunity/>

- **Transitions**

There are multiple transition points in and out of the youth justice system all of which can frustrate efforts to support young people who are already in a vulnerable situation.

Our inspections found that transfer to adult services was not properly supported. Probation staff told us they were not trained in how to manage Detention and Training Orders. There was also a lack of knowledge in adult services about previous youth disposals and how that might impact on the young person's supervision.

Transfer from one Youth Offending Team to another can be last minute with a lack of preparation and information sharing to ensure a smooth transition.

We did, however, see Youth Offending Teams setting up access to mainstream services once the time came for the child or young person to move out of the criminal justice system.

More, however, needs to be done to support children and young people during these key transitions.

Youth Justice: the context

The number of young people officially entering the youth justice system for the first time, that is, those cautioned or convicted of an offence, has been falling year on year for more than ten years. In 2018 there were 14,373 first-time entrants,³ down from 100,464 in 2008 – a remarkable 86 per cent reduction.

Reduced funding, falling caseloads

This welcome fall in the number of young people entering the youth justice system means Youth Offending Team (YOT) statutory caseloads have fallen too. Although this data is not collected centrally, a report conducted on behalf of the MoJ in May 2015⁴ found that over the period 2009-2010 to 2013-2014 the average number of disposals per practitioner (taken as a proxy for statutory caseloads) had reduced from 21 to 11 (a reduction of 48 per cent), against a 20 per cent funding reduction and a 26 per cent drop in staff numbers over the same period.

While the reduction in caseloads seems greater than the funding reduction, raw numbers do not represent the level of support needed by each child or young person. Neither do they reflect the additional work that YOTs do to help divert children and young people away from the youth justice system or prevent them from offending in the first place. Those now entering the system are the most challenging to work with as they have the most complex backgrounds and combination of needs. They are also the individuals who are committing the most serious offences.

The enduring challenges

With this as a backdrop, it is unsurprising that the reoffending rate for under 18s remains high (40.9 per cent within 12 months compared to 28.5 per cent for adult offenders, and higher than the 38.1 per cent for under 18s 10 years ago).⁵

As with first-time entrants, the number of children held in custody has fallen significantly, with the population in May 2019 at 830, down from 2,541 a decade before⁶. Ethnic disproportionality, however, continues to be an increasing issue. The number of black, Asian or minority ethnic young people has exceeded white young people in custody for the first time ever (415 compared to 396 at May 2019) and now makes up 50 per cent of the youth

³ Youth Justice Board. (2019). *Youth Justice statistics: 2017 to 2018: Chapter 2: First-time entrants to the Youth Justice System*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2017-to-2018>.

⁴ Deloitte. (2015). *Youth Offending Team Stocktake*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445641/yot-stocktake-report.pdf.

⁵ Ministry of Justice. (2019). *Proven Reoffending Statistics: April - June 2017: Proven reoffending tables (annual average), January 2017 to March 2017*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/proven-reoffending-statistics-april-to-june-2017>.

⁶ Youth Justice Board. (2019b). *Youth Custody Data: Monthly Youth Custody Report May 2019*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-custody-data>.

custody population (compared to 18 per cent in the general 10-17 population⁷). The recommendations from the Lammy review⁸ endure.

While the overall number of recorded offences has decreased compared to 10 years ago, possession of weapons offences have increased: 4,315 knife and offensive weapon offences were recorded in 2017-2018 and this has been increasing year on year since 2013-2014⁹. Though of little comfort, the figures are not as high as they were in the year ending March 2009, but current trajectories don't look promising.

The government's serious youth violence initiative is a necessary intervention. We are currently working with HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services to scope a joint thematic inspection on this topic. We hope the inspection will find some progress being made to successfully reduce this senseless phenomenon.

Getting the measures of success right

As the number of young people being supervised by the YOTs because of a caution or conviction has substantially reduced over the years, both YOTs and the police have refocused their resources on diverting young people away from the youth justice system. Our own analysis of our case sample data from the last year of inspections shows that in some YOTs these diversion cases now outnumber their statutory cases (14 of the 24 YOTs inspected at the time of analysis had equivalently more out of court disposal cases on their books than court disposal cases. Across these 24, the overall ratio was higher for out of court disposals compared to court disposals).

YOTs are not directly funded to carry out this work. This is a tenuous position. The children and young people who are being diverted from the youth justice system are still coming to the attention of the police because of their offending behaviour, but are being dealt with differently to prevent labelling and the other negative impacts of getting involved in the system. Reducing first-time entrant (FTE) rates may not necessarily mean the antisocial or other harmful behaviours are decreasing too.

FTE rates do not tally well with our inspection outcomes either. As the charts (Figures 2 to 4) below show, for the 26 YOTs we have inspected over the past 12 months we find no correlation between the local FTE (or reoffending rates) and our judgement about the quality of the youth offending service. Those services with a low FTE rate are not necessarily delivering the best quality work with those receiving a court or an out of court disposal.^{10 11}

⁷ Office for National Statistics. (2011). Census 2011: DC2101EW - Ethnic group by sex by age. <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/summary.asp?mode=construct&version=0&dataset=651>.

⁸ Lammy, D. (2017). *The Lammy Review: An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice system*. London: Lammy Review. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lammy-review-final-report>.

⁹ Youth Justice Board. (2019c). *Youth Justice statistics: 2017 to 2018: Chapter 4: Proven Offences by children*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2017-to-2018>.

¹⁰ FTE data is available for January to December 2018, while the most recent published proven reoffending statistics are for the October 2016 to September 2017 cohort (with a one-year follow-up period).

¹¹ The charts set out the relationship between these statistics (decreases being positive) and our overall inspection scores (increases being positive).¹¹ The R-squared statistic indicates how close the data are to the fitted regression lines – the closer to 1.0, the better the fit of the line. As can be seen the relationships are weak.

Figure 2: Correlation between FTEs and inspection ratings

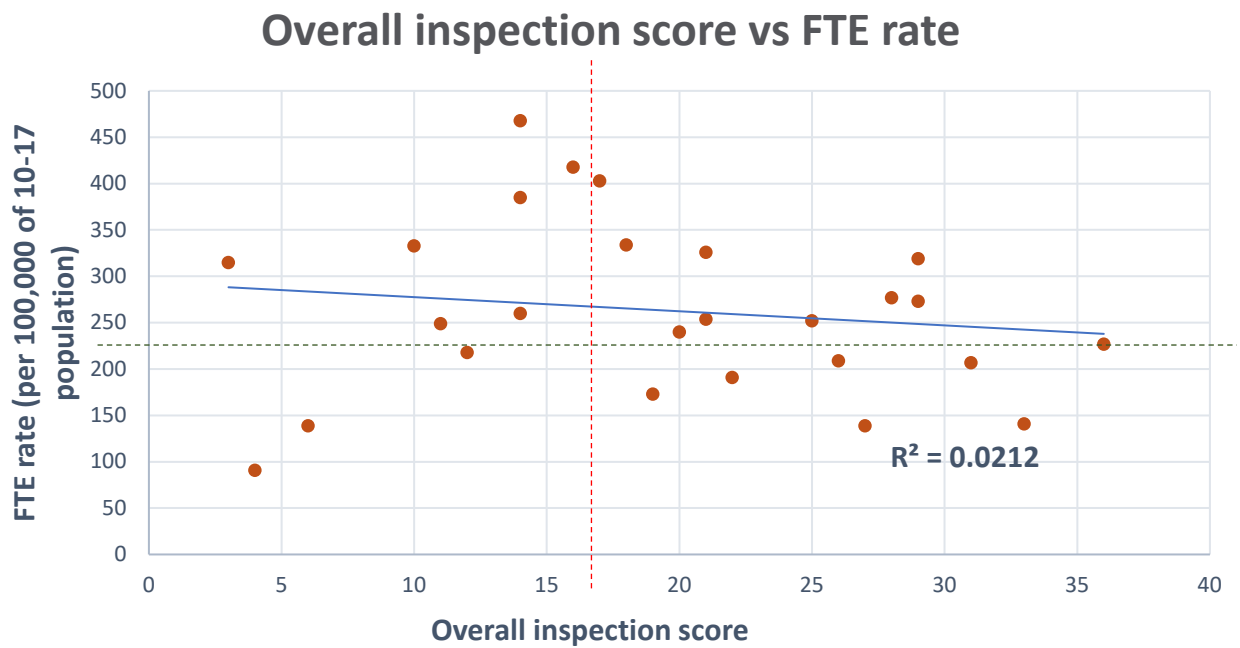


Figure 3: Correlation between reoffending rate and inspection ratings

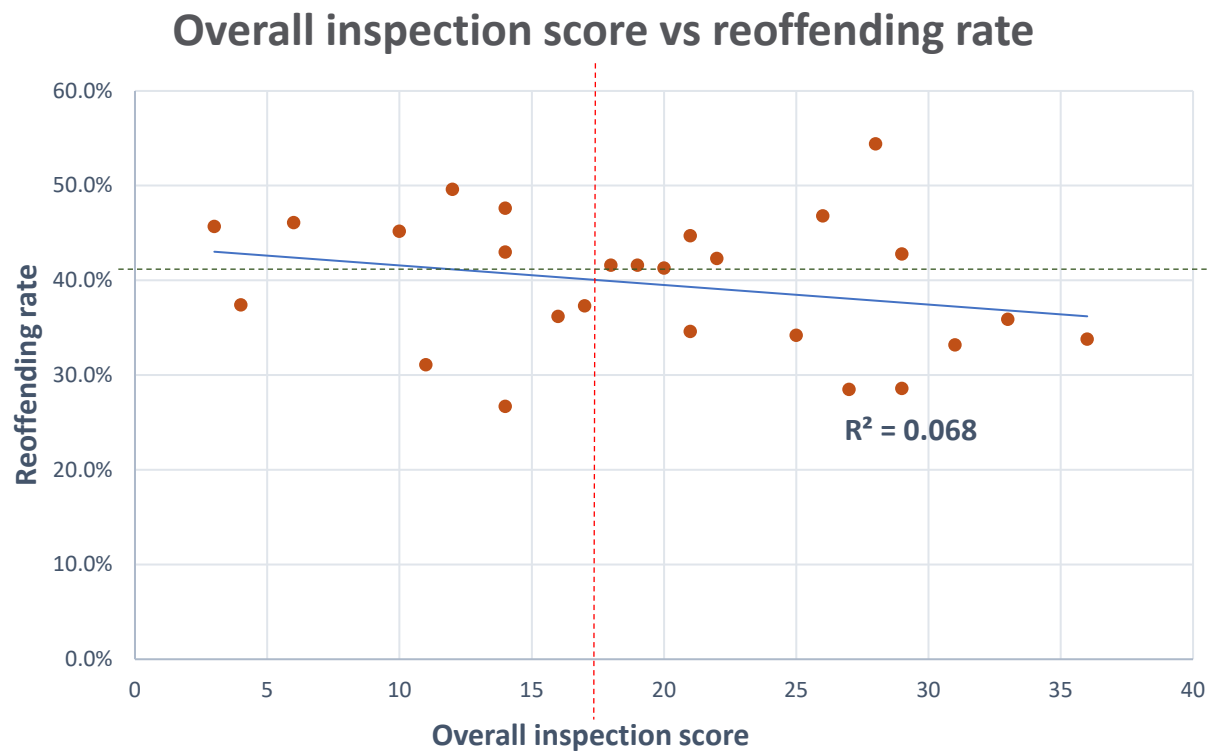
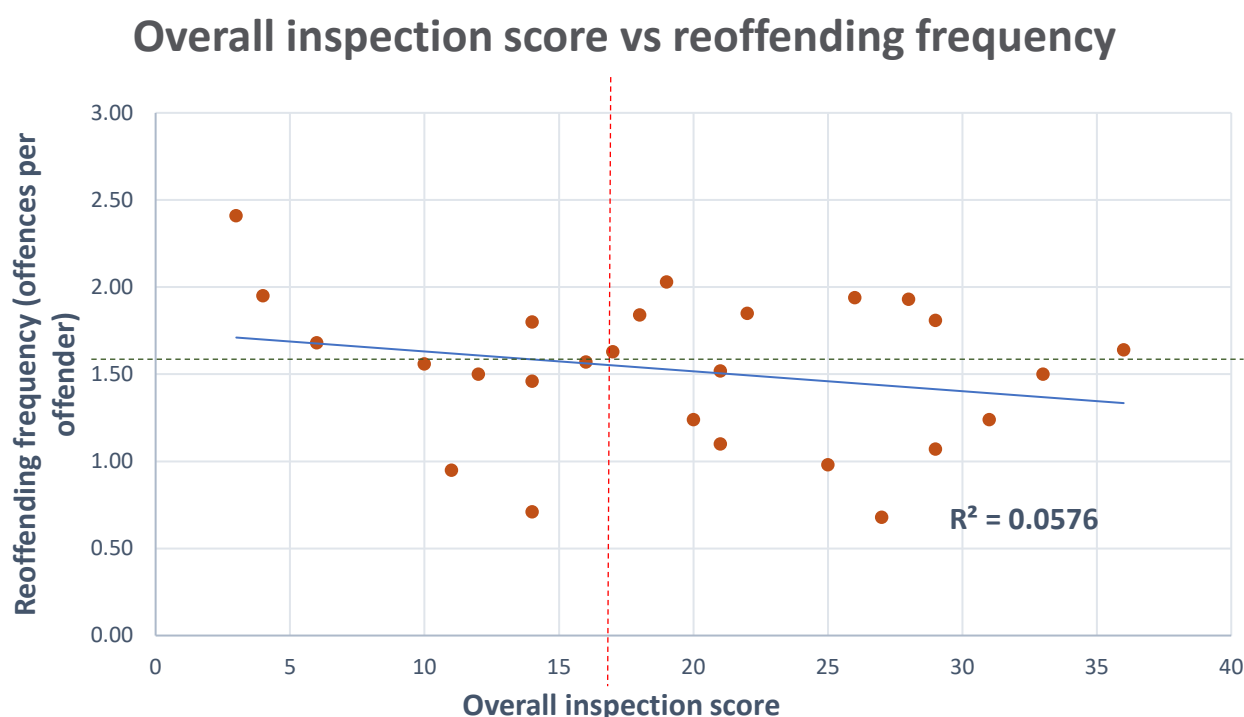


Figure 4: Correlation between offending frequency and inspection ratings



It seems that the current national performance measures may be telling us more about variations in police and CPS charging practice than about the performance or quality of local YOT teams.

The lack of national guidance on how to work with children and young people 'out of court' results in an inconsistent approach across the country. This does children and young people a disservice. It is important that children and young people receive the intensive support and supervision they might need from a YOT, irrespective of their route into the system.

We think the time is right to look at broader measures that better reflect the underlying level of harm being caused (and suffered) by young people. A new basket of measures might include things like hospital A&E admissions for assaults (for instance, NHS data¹² shows there has been a 76 per cent increase in knife hospital admissions for under 18s between 2013-2014 and 2017-2018) or drug overdoses; referrals to children's social services or CAMHS over concerns about violence or inappropriate sexual behaviour; school stats on knife/ drugs possession and so on. We look forward to starting this conversation with key partners.

What happens beyond 18 years of age?

We also question whether the youth justice system is configured to support the right age range to deliver positive and enduring outcomes. Neuroscience research evidence has shown that the brain continues to mature well into the mid-20s.¹³

¹² NHS Digital. (2019). Hospital admissions for assault by sharp object. <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/find-data-and-publications/supplementary-information/2019-supplementary-information-files/ae-attendances/hospital-admissions-for-assault-by-sharp-object>.

¹³ Transition to Adulthood. (2018). *Sentencing young adults – making the case for sentencing principles for young adults*. https://www.t2a.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Sentencing-Young-Adults_Web.pdf.

The youth justice system is deliberately configured to provide more intensive support to those recognised as still developing and in need of direct care, supervision and support. The adult system assumes a level of self-efficacy that the research suggests is not commonly present among those in or exiting the youth justice system at the age of 18.

Commentators¹⁴ have long called for recognition of 18 to 25-year-olds as a distinct group with specific needs. Indeed, the Justice Select Committee called for the same in 2016.¹⁵ We know from inspections by ourselves and HMI Prisons¹⁶, that transition from the youth to the adult system is a cliff edge. The adult system offers less frequent contact and support, provides fewer targeted interventions, such as speech and language or CAMHs, and is built on a more punitive model. This is an especially difficult time for young people and is not always managed well by the services involved. Maybe it is time to look again, and with some urgency, at what the literature tells us about promoting positive outcomes for those between 18 and 25 years of age, including whether Youth Offending Teams, given their falling caseloads (which are now very significantly less than for adult probation services), should be given a role in supporting this slightly older age group.

¹⁴ Howard League for Penal Reform and Transition to Adulthood. (2017). *Judging Maturity: Exploring the role of maturity in the sentencing of young adults*. <https://howardleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Judging-maturity.pdf>.

¹⁵ Justice Select Committee. (2016). *Young adults in criminal justice system: change in policy needed*. <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/justice-committee/news-parliament-20151/young-adults-criminal-justice-system-report-launch-16-17/>

¹⁶ HMI Probation and HMI Prisons. (2012). *Transitions: an inspection of the transition arrangements from youth to adult services in the criminal justice system*. <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/prisons/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/04/cji-transitions-thematic.pdf>.

Inspection methodology

In spring 2018 we introduced changes to the way we inspect. We began to inspect Youth Offending Teams against a new set of published standards. This new set of inspection standards reflect the high-level expectations government and the public have of YOTs. They are grounded in evidence, learning and experience and are focused on quality of delivery. Without good quality inputs (such as professional staff and comprehensive services) and activities (such as case assessment and effective interventions) YOTs are less likely to meet their aims.

The inspection standards framework is summarised in the diagram below and is described in further detail on our website.¹⁷ Our approach to inspecting YOTs involves us focusing on three aspects of delivery which we call domains.

Figure 5: Inspection domains and standards

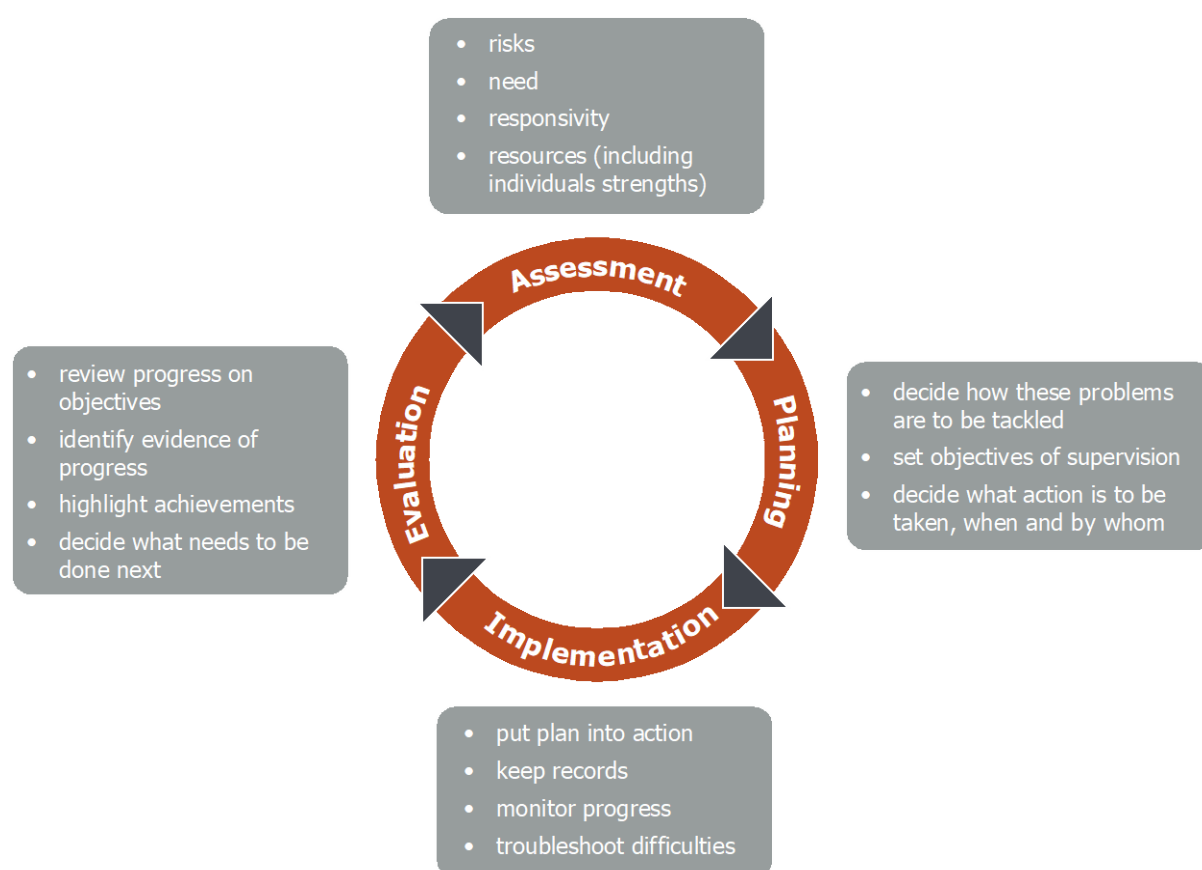


¹⁷ HMI Probation. (2018). *Standards for inspecting youth offending services*.
<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/04/Youth-offending-standards-March-18-final.pdf>.

Domain one (organisational delivery) covers how well the organisation is led, managed and set up.

Domains two and three cover the quality of work in individual cases. Domain two focuses on court disposals and domain three focuses on out of court disposals. Domains two and three cover the enduring expectations of YOTs: supporting desistance, protecting the public and keeping the child or young person safe. The service delivery standards in both domains are based upon the well-established and recognised ASPIRE model for case supervision (Assessment, Sentence Planning, Implementation, Review and Evaluation).

Figure 6: The ASPIRE model



How we judge performance

We rate performance against all of the four standards in each domain (as shown above). For each standard on domains two and three we ask up to three key questions about the quality of supervision and inspectors record what percentage of the cases they review are satisfactory against these questions. In the domains each key question is integral to effective case delivery, and sufficient attention needs to be given to all of them. The rating for the standard is, therefore determined by the key question which generates the lowest percentage score in terms of the proportion of cases meeting that criteria Our standards also include a 'hurdle' that all inspected bodies must pass; where there is insufficient assessment of child safeguarding issues there must be an insufficient judgement for assessment of harm.

Ratings at the standard level enable providers of YOTs to see clearly where they are performing well and where they can improve.

Each YOT is given an overall rating on a four-point scale: 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Requires improvement' and 'Inadequate'. The scores from the individual standards are aggregated to produce the overall rating. Scoring rules are used to generate the overall YOT rating. Each of the 12 standards are scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; and 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0-36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows:

- 0-6 = 'Inadequate'
- 7-18 = 'Requires improvement'
- 19-30 = 'Good'
- 31-36 = 'Outstanding'.

We give an overall rating for each YOT as we believe that a composite rating for each inspection drives improvements where needed. An overall rating provides a measure of the quality of youth offending services, complementing any output and outcome measures established by government.

The standards and ratings were developed over a twelve-month period, through workshops and consultations with stakeholders, academics and providers. On the whole, they were well-received and have been largely accepted as the benchmark for quality practice in service delivery.

Our inspection coverage

There are 152 YOTs in England and Wales. We select services for inspection based on recent data about their performance and on a random basis, to ensure a good cross-section of delivery. We anticipate inspecting all YOTs over a four-year period. Some YOTs will be inspected on a shorter timeframe based on their previous inspection findings. In 2019-2020 we will be developing our approach to follow-up for services rated 'Inadequate'. We will also apply a bespoke approach to inspecting small YOTs to ensure a proportionate approach to inspection.

In this first year of our new inspection programme we have inspected 26 Youth Offending Teams (see Annex 4 for a full list). Based on risk assessment, six of these inspections were deemed to require joint inspections with specialist inspectors from the police, health, social care and learning and skills sectors. Together we examine the work of the youth offending partnership.

We also contribute to the programme of Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) led by Ofsted. These are specifically focused on child safeguarding but each series carries a different focus, such as criminal exploitation and sexual abuse in the family environment. There were eight JTAs reported on in the last year (2018-2019).

The table overleaf summarises the findings for each of the 26 inspections, including a detailed breakdown of how each of the 12 standards was rated.

Youth offending services inspection ratings and scores table



Service inspected	Published	Overall rating	Composite score	1. Operational delivery				2. Court disposals				3. Out-of-court disposals			
				1.1 Governance and leadership	1.2 Staff	1.3 Partnerships and services	1.4 Information and facilities	2.1 Assessment	2.2 Planning	2.3 Implementation and delivery	2.4 Reviewing	3.1 Assessment	3.2 Planning	3.3 Implementation and delivery	3.4 Joint working
East Riding YOS	16/05/2019		36												
Essex YOS	06/12/2018		33												
Hertfordshire YOS	20/09/2018		31												
Sheffield YJS	08/08/2019		29												
South Tees YOS	20/06/2019		29												
Warwickshire YJS	07/12/2018		27												
Wrexham YJS	28/03/2019		27												
Wandsworth YOS	14/03/2019		26												
Hounslow YOS	31/01/2019		25												
Lancashire YJS (Joint)	25/07/2019		22												
Oldham YJS	04/04/2019		21												
Liverpool YOS (Joint)	14/06/2019		21												
Sandwell YOT	01/11/2018		20												
Hampshire YOS	06/09/2018		19												
Derby YOS	23/08/2018		19												
Bristol YOT	27/09/2018		17												
Manchester YJS (Joint)	01/02/2019		16												
Dudley YOS	27/06/2019		15												
Barking and Dagenham YOS (Joint)	20/12/2018		14												
Lambeth YOS (Joint)	25/04/2019		14												
Sefton YOT	09/05/2019		12												
Walsall YJS	27/06/2019		11												
Newham YOT	13/09/2019		10												
Western Bay YJS (Joint)	28/03/2019		6												
Surrey TYS	22/08/2019		4												
Blackpool YOT	18/12/2018		3												

What characterises an outstanding or inadequate YOT?

We have observed the full continuum of service quality in the YOTs we have inspected in the last year, ranging from 'Outstanding' through to 'Inadequate'. Our standards¹⁸ and rating characteristics¹⁹ provide the baseline for 'what good looks like', and we would refer readers to them to get a clear view on what is expected of providers, but the description below brings these to life based on what we found in the YOTs we rated as 'Outstanding'. Similarly, we have described what presents an 'Inadequate' YOT based on the findings from our first year of inspections.

Our ratings for court disposals and out of court disposals are driven by the results of our inspection of individual cases. We inspect cases by interrogating the full case records, and interviewing the relevant case manager.

For each standard, the rating is aligned to the key question generating the lowest proportion of positive responses, recognising that each of the key questions is an integral part of each standard.

1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

Outstanding YOT	Inadequate YOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Focus from strategic leaders is clear and well-understood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lack of a clear vision and strategy with little focus on service delivery.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Combined leadership through strategic leaders and operational managers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Management Board is ineffective – lack of understanding of Board Member roles.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Board Members clear on their roles and advocate for the YOT.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Board Members do not advocate for YOT in own services so barriers remain.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Board understanding of the profile and level of need of children and their families and a commitment from the partnership to give access to the right services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Board does not have a good understanding of the needs of children and so cannot assess whether they have access to the right services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Strategic links to other forums which leads to prioritisation of youth justice issues such as child criminal exploitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Inadequate mechanisms to assess quality of services and lack of sight across issues such as safety and wellbeing and public protection.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ongoing support after the intervention has ended.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Attendance at Boards not consistent and representation not at right level.

¹⁸ HMI Probation. (2018). *Standards for inspecting youth offending services*.

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/04/Youth-offending-standards-March-18-final.pdf>.

¹⁹ HMI Probation. (2018). *Youth offending services inspection domain one characteristics*.

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/05/Youth-Domain-One-rating-characteristics-March-18-final.pdf>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly motivated staff and effective management that operationalise the strategy and youth justice plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too much focus on national KPIs rather than local data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders that listen to staff and staff that are empowered to improve their work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff not asked for views.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning and collaboration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management has no clear plan as to how to deliver vision and strategy.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough done to tackle poor delivery.

1.2 Staff

Outstanding YOT	Inadequate YOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff have the right range of skills, knowledge and experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restructures that impact staff morale and role clarity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cases allocated to appropriately qualified and skilled staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of support for staff that feel they do not have the skills and knowledge to deliver high quality services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workloads monitored and manageable – staff have time to develop good relationships with children and young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No active monitoring of staffing levels and no effective workforce planning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes in place to cover staff absence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantial or frequent periods of staff shortages resulting in high levels of stress for those who remain.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture of continuous learning - comprehensive training plans, including for volunteers, and staff feeling involved in their development and practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training plans not in place and little evidence of learning, self-evaluation and reflective practice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High levels of staff satisfaction and pride in their work and commitment to delivering positive outcomes for children and young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of accountability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up-to-date staff appraisals and regular supervision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient management oversight and unclear expectations.

1.3 Partnership and services

Outstanding YOT	Inadequate YOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of a wide range of recent and reliable information to understand the characteristics and desistance needs of the children and young people in the locality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited understanding of children and young people's needs – not enough attention given to local data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anticipation of future demands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to anticipate or respond to future demands.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy to access services that meet the diverse and specific needs of children and young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs not being addressed, including gaps in specialist services, barriers to delivery or services badly coordinated.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning and improvement driven by quality assurance and robust evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No quality assurance or evaluation leading to shortfalls in provision or deterioration in quality.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-developed and integrated services for children and young people with multiple and complex needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No processes to review or evaluate the suitability, use, or effectiveness of services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent multiagency work and satisfied partners and stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships underdeveloped.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion and advice on understanding the needs of children and young people to help partners deliver. 	

1.4 Information and facilities

Outstanding YOT	Inadequate YOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies and procedures up-to-date and accessible to staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaps in policies and guidance impacting on delivery of a quality service.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint working protocols in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICT arrangements not supporting critical information transfer.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable and accessible premises that are attractive and safe for young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited monitoring of performance trends.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICT supports good working practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views of children and young people not captured or acted on.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good analysis of performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No learning from others sought or acted on.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good examples of service development involving children and young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of recognition of seriousness of issues raised.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority on learning and improving as an organisation. 	

Our ratings for court disposals and out of court disposals are driven by the results of our inspection of individual cases. We inspect cases by interrogating the full case records, and interviewing the relevant case manager.

For each standard, the rating is aligned to the key question generating the lowest proportion of positive responses, recognising that each of the key questions is an integral part of each standard.

Table 1: Ratings based on case sample proportions

Percentage of cases	Rating (standard)
Minority: <50%	Inadequate
Too few: 50-64%	Requires improvement
Reasonable majority: 65-79%	Good
Large majority: 80%+	Outstanding ☆

For example, implementation and delivery are rated as 'Outstanding' when there is a sufficient focus in all three key questions (engagement, desistance and keeping other people safe) across a 'large majority' (80 per cent+) of the cases examined. But if the banding is a 'reasonable majority' (65-79 per cent) for one of the three key questions, then we rate implementation and delivery as 'Good' rather than 'Outstanding'.

We are looking for the following when we inspect individual cases:

Assessment

- Assessment is well-informed, paying particular attention to the wider familial and societal context, engaging parents/carers as appropriate.
- It identifies factors linked to desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risks to others, as well as strengths and protective factors.
- Assessment generates a holistic picture of the child or young person and the interactions between factors. It is important that a sufficiently comprehensive analysis of the different factors affecting the child or young person's life is conducted.
- A wide range of information sources is used, including previous records and assessments and, in appropriate cases, information gained from other agencies or people who know the child or young person.
- Engaging the child or young person in the process of assessment provides the opportunity for them to feel listened to, meaningfully involved and supported in working out what they want to achieve.

Planning

- There is a strong connection between assessment and planning, with the planning process specifying what is to be done about the needs and risks identified.
- Planning is set in the wider context for the child or young person, involving significant others as appropriate. Key practitioners working across different agencies are involved where necessary, making appropriate links to other work which may be ongoing in these agencies.
- Objectives are specific and measurable. They are also achievable and realistic, setting out clear timescales.

- Practitioners make efforts to engage the child or young person and help them to set goals.
- The language in the plan is clear and easily understood, and avoids phrases which can label the child or young person in a way which confirms an offending identity.

Implementation and delivery

- The child or young person experiences an integrated approach, with relationships, interventions, and services combining to address their individual risks and needs.
- Service delivery reflects the wider familial and social context of the child or young person, and sufficient emphasis is placed on building on strengths and enhancing protective factors.
- Positive, non-judgemental and trusting relationships between practitioners and the child or young person are absolutely key here.

Good practice example

We have given East Riding YOS an overall rating of 'Outstanding'. We also awarded the YOS 'Outstanding' ratings for every one of the 12 individual aspects of work that we inspected. This is the first time that either a youth offending or probation service has achieved full marks across the board.

It was evident there has been a steady and continued commitment to reflecting on and improving practice across the service and the partnership. There is an investment in the YOS from senior leaders and a shared understanding of the needs of children and young people across the partnership. The connections between practice and strategy were strong which meant that strategic priorities were appropriate, relevant and implemented. There is ongoing investment in the recruitment, retention and training of good quality staff who had high aspirations for children and young people, and the service. This resulted in a highly motivated team who worked in creative and innovative ways to engage children and young people; their ideas were welcomed and supported by managers. Ongoing support was offered to all families by the Youth Family Support Service (YFS), the work between the YOS and the YFS was embedded meaning that exit planning and transitions were smooth and well-planned. The YOS used learning from thematic inspection reports and other YOSs as a base for developing their practice and this was especially evident in the out of court disposal processes which we noted as an exemplar of good practice. We felt this was a 'learning organisation' that welcomed feedback and new ideas.

What really set this service apart, was the quality of management oversight. Managers set clear expectations, supported their staff and held them to account. The oversight from managers made a clear difference to the quality of the case management and quality assurance was used well – it was impressive.

The children and young people YOTs work with

There is very little demographic information on the children and young people cautioned or convicted included in the youth justice annual statistics. However, the tables/figures below detail the information we have collected from the 791 court disposal cases and the 506 out of court disposal cases²⁰ we inspected in the last year. The case sample shows that the out of court disposal cases are:

- more likely to be female
- younger
- less likely to have Looked After Child status
- have fewer previous sanctions.

Table 2: Case sample demographics

Gender	Court disposals	O OCD
Male	694 (89%)	427 (80%)
Female	89 (11%)	105 (20%)
Age		
< 10	0	0
10-11	1 (0%)	17 (3%)
12-14	60 (8%)	184 (35%)
15-16	277 (35%)	205 (39%)
17	233 (30%)	118 (22%)
18	213 (27%)	5 (1%)
Ethnicity		
White	548 (70%)	401 (75%)
Black and Minority Ethnic	217 (28%)	115 (22%)
Other	11 (1%)	8 (2%)
Not clearly recorded	8 (1%)	8 (2%)
Looked After Child		
Yes	201 (27%)	43 (9%)
No	546 (73%)	468 (91%)
Disability		
Yes	218 (29%)	105 (21%)
No	470 (62%)	311 (61%)
Not clearly recorded	73 (10%)	95 (19%)

Of those with a disability, learning disability and mental illness were the most common in both samples. For instance, the proportion of children and young people identified with a learning disability across both samples combined was 13 per cent. Just over 40 per cent of

²⁰ Missing data has been excluded so not all totals will add up to 791 or 506

children and young people with a disability in both samples were considered to be impacted by it 'a lot'.

The largest proportion of children and young people received a court disposal for a violence against the person offence (46 per cent). Interestingly, it was the same for the out of court cases (43 per cent).

There is much more we could know about the children and young people who are on the YOTs' current caseload. There is a wealth of research evidence that suggests children and young people who are known to the youth justice system have already experienced multiple traumas in their lives. It would be advantageous to map any changes in the experiences of the children and young people working with the YOT to corroborate (or otherwise) the belief that the smaller cohort has now become much more complex and difficult to work with.

The Enhanced Case Management approach,²¹ based on a trauma-informed methodology developed by the YJB in Wales in partnership with specialists (and beginning to be adopted by some YOTs in England), seeks to recognise and address this. Their initial analysis of the children and young people who were the most prolific offenders in touch with Welsh YOTs revealed the following:

- 48 per cent have witnessed family violence
- 55 per cent had been abused or neglected
- 62 per cent were dealing with trauma
- 79 per cent were in touch with social services
- 81 per cent had no qualifications
- 95 per cent had substance misuse issues.

If this can be extrapolated to represent the kinds of children and young people that YOTs across England and Wales are working with, it is clear their challenges are greater than tackling offending behaviour alone.

The latest annual vulnerability report from the Children's Commissioner²² suggests that the number of children and young people at risk because of a vulnerable family background is increasing, with more than half of those estimated as vulnerable receiving little or no support from statutory services. Knowing that these vulnerabilities are risk factors for offending, there is a real risk that these problems will become increasingly apparent downstream. This potentially puts the successes of the youth justice system in peril.

²¹ Welsh Centre for Crime and Social Justice, and the Youth Justice Board. (2014). Enhanced case management. <https://wccsj.ac.uk/hwb-doeth/images/documents/ECM/ECMa.pdf>.

²² Children's Commissioner. (2019). *Childhood vulnerability in England 2019*. <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/childhood-vulnerability-in-england-2019/>.

















Our key inspection findings

Domain 1: Organisational delivery

Effective youth offending services should have:

			
Good governance and strong collaborative leaders	Committed and skilled staff	Great partnerships and services	Detailed records and good facilities

How we rated youth offending services on:

Leadership & Governance			
 Outstanding 3 services	 Good 14 services	 Requires improvement 6 services	 Inadequate 3 services
Staff			
 Outstanding 4 services	 Good 13 services	 Requires improvement 6 services	 Inadequate 3 services
Partnerships & Services			
 Outstanding 2 services	 Good 12 services	 Requires improvement 11 services	 Inadequate 1 service
Information & Facilities			
 Outstanding 4 services	 Good 12 services	 Requires improvement 7 services	 Inadequate 3 services

The governance and leadership of the YOT should include a clear local vision and strategy for the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people.

Most of the YOTs inspected formed part of the Local Authority Children's Services division and were either a team in their own right or were integrated with the early help service. There was no one model that benefited the YOT more than another, although, being positioned closer to early help did seem to aid integration.

Management Boards

All YOTs have a Management Board to oversee the youth justice work though sometimes these Boards are merged with either community safety or early help. For example, in Wandsworth, the YOT Management Board had merged with the Community Safety Partnership Board to become the Community Safety Partnership and YOT Board which was chaired by the Chief Executive. In Warwickshire, the Management Board was called the Chief Officers' Board and this reflected the strategic position that its members held in their own agencies and their ability to commit resources to the YJS.

Although many Management Boards spent time developing the strategic vision for YOTs, it was disappointing to note that YOT staff, and this included managers in some organisations, were not always aware of the activities of the Management Board and how it impacted upon their work. In over half of the inspected areas there was a notable gap between the Management Board and the staff, with neither fully understanding each other's roles and responsibilities. A number of reports, stated that the interaction between the YOT Management Board, the management team and frontline staff needed to improve, in order for everyone to understand the priorities for the YOT, and how these influence operational delivery.

Most inspections found that the YOT Head of Service had other strategic responsibilities alongside the youth justice remit. This included, prevention work, targeted early help, children missing from home and substance misuse.

Inspectors found that the impact of the Board was influenced by the Chair's knowledge of youth justice and the engagement of partners. In Lambeth, for example, the Board appointed an independent Chair and their extensive knowledge of youth justice had enabled partners to understand their role on the Board and how their own agencies could support the work of the YOT. It is recognised, however, that an independent Chair does not always have the influence or power to affect change in individual agencies.

Concerns around education

There was a notable lack of sufficiently strategic education representatives on some Boards which was unsatisfactory as many YOTs' performance in the area of ETE needed improving. In eight out of twenty-six inspections that there was no education representative on the Management Board. Seventeen out of twenty-six reports raised concerns about the quality of education, training and employment provision. A number were concerned that children were not receiving their statutory entitlement to education, whereas others raised the issue of the lack of quality provision for those post school age. In a number of reports there was a concern for both pre- and post-16 ETE provision. As a result, improving ETE provision featured in the main recommendations for many of the YOTs inspected in the last year.

Our analysis shows that even where YOTs identified children with education or training needs, insufficient went on to undertake any relevant activity.

Table 3: Education need and access

	No of cases	Those with identified ETE need	Those who undertook activity
Court cases	791	482 (61%)	360 (715%)
Out of court cases	506	204 (40%)	135 (66%)

In a few cases, we found children received education amounting to just an hour per day – this left them unoccupied when they were vulnerable and more likely to reoffend. In one area, we found staff had resorted to teaching children who had been excluded because there were no suitable alternatives. While the intent was laudable we do not consider this appropriate when staff do not have the skills, training and knowledge to do this work well.

NPS and CRC representation was also inconsistent. Very few Boards had a CRC representative and NPS representation was sporadic, though this was usually due to staffing issues. Non-statutory partners did sit on some Boards and these included representatives from court, Police and Crime Commissioners, fire and rescue service and housing.

Health representatives provided some good examples of how, as Board Members, they can contribute to the YOT. In some areas, for example Dudley, the completion of a health needs assessment had led to an increase in the health provision for the children and young people known to the YOT. In 10 of the 26 reports completed it was noted that the YOT had a strong health provision which could include, CAMHS workers, access to psychologists, nurses, speech and language therapists, and substance misuse workers. In the small number of reports that highlighted poor health services, this was usually in relation to access to CAMHS services.

Inspections found that in most areas, issues that have an impact on youth offending are prominent on the agendas of other key strategic groups, including the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, the Health and Wellbeing Board, and Community Safety Boards.

All YOT Management Boards received performance reports, and most included a mixture of local and national indicators. Just over half of the reports noted that the Management Board received good performance information, although sometimes this was too focused on a few national key performance indicators, that is, the number of first-time entrants, reoffending rates and number of children and young people in custody. Other performance information, such as that relating to health or education, was not always considered nor used by the wider partnership to analyse the specific needs of children known to the YOT. We made recommendations to improve the functioning of the Management Board in nine of our inspections.

Partnership working

Inspections found that effective operational work varied across the YOTs and was poorer where key partnership staff were missing. YOTs need to ensure that to maintain resources from partner agencies they must invest the time to provide evidence of the impact that specific areas of expertise bring to their service. For example, in one YOT there was no probation officer and the YOT had been carrying this vacant post for some time. In another there was no education worker and no education representative on the Board. By contrast, in Sandwell, children and young people had timely access to an impressive range of services, provided by both partner agencies and commissioned services. In the main, most YOTs had access to police officers, probation officers, substance misuse workers and health workers. Some YOTs had access to speech, language and communication workers, although very few had used this service to ensure that their documentation, such as leaflets, plans and contracts, were child-friendly.

Feedback from the courts was mainly positive and indicated that YOT staff provide a good advocacy service for children and families, and communicate well with courts. In Hounslow, staff are particularly proactive and will speak to magistrates before the young person appears to explain if the child has any learning needs, or behavioural traits, that they should take into consideration in the courtroom setting.

Domain 2: Court disposals

Effective practice includes:

			
Analytical and tailored assessments	Robust plans that involve young people and families	High-quality and coordinated services	Progress reviews that involve young people and families

How we rated youth offending services on:

Assessment			
★ Outstanding 11 services	● Good 7 services	● Requires improvement 6 services	● Inadequate 2 services
Planning			
★ Outstanding 9 services	● Good 5 services	● Requires improvement 6 services	● Inadequate 6 services
Implementation & Delivery			
★ Outstanding 7 services	● Good 9 services	● Requires improvement 8 services	● Inadequate 2 services
Reviewing			
★ Outstanding 6 services	● Good 6 services	● Requires improvement 10 services	● Inadequate 4 services

A child or young person's involvement with the YOT can range from three months to three years depending on what order or disposal they are subject to (though this could be a lot longer for the more serious offences that carry a lengthy custodial sentence). Caseloads can range across different YOTs depending on whether they carry statutory cases only or whether they also include early intervention or prevention cases. In our view the ideal number of cases is around 12 to 15 per case manager, as most children and young people who are known to the YOT will have complex issues that need to be addressed. The amount of time that a case manager will spend with a child or young person will depend on the order or disposal that they are subject to. For example, on an Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme the child or young person will be seen at least five times per week, on a Referral Order it may only be once a fortnight. The timeframes also depend upon the level of risk that the child or young person poses in terms of their reoffending, risk of harm to others and their own safety and wellbeing.

The YOT worker will conduct detailed assessments on everyone they supervise at the beginning of supervision, involving the child or young person and their parent/carer to look

at all the underlying factors that might be driving their offending and the risk the child or young person may present to themselves and the public. This will also include information from other agencies that know the child or young person and their family, for example, schools, children's social care and the police.

From the assessment, a plan is agreed with the child or young person and their parents/carers. This plan can include both individual and groupwork sessions and will involve specialist provision, for example, substance misuse work, victim interventions, offending behaviour programmes. The plan will also support the child or young person in relation to any adverse childhood experiences and their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

The plan should be reviewed with the child or young person and their parents/carers whenever a significant event occurs so the assessment is updated. It should also be updated when actions have been completed or changed so that the child or young person can see the progress they are making.

Inspection of the case sample

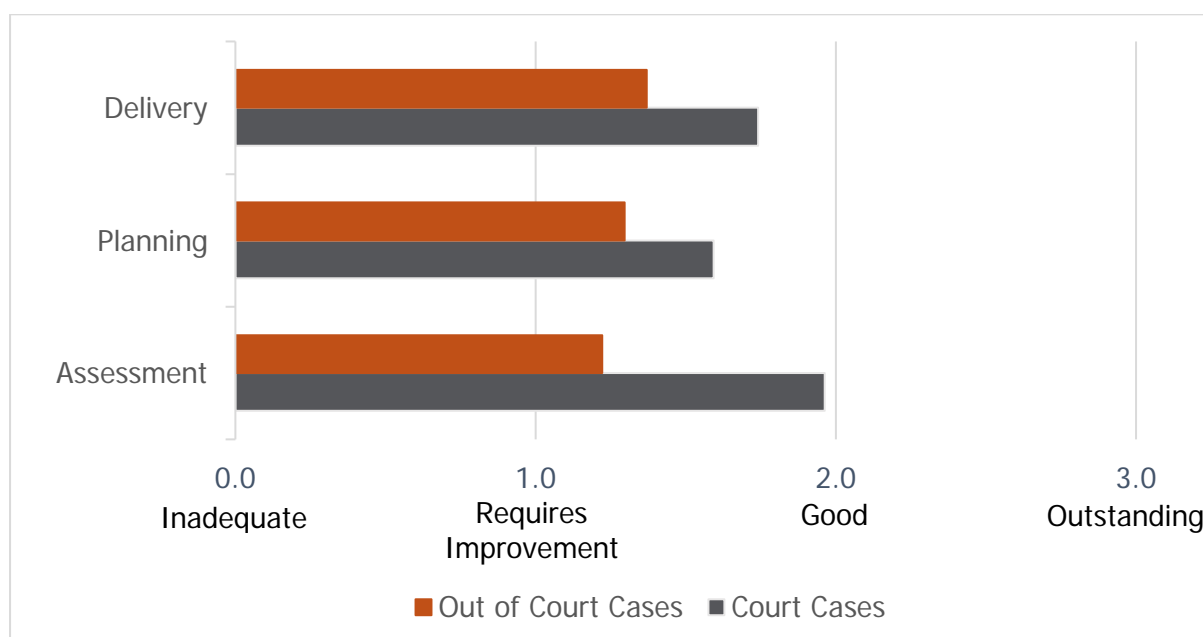
Outstanding court and out of court cases are characterised by:

- assessments that draw from a full range of sources, and analyse that information in the context of the young person's life. They acknowledge and build on the strengths of the young person, but also link into the wider aspects of the young person's life, such as family, education and leisure.
- planning that recognises the safety and wellbeing of the young person and the risk they may present to others
- interventions identified and delivered that build on the young person's strengths, and are adapted to meet their needs.

Inadequate court and out of court cases are characterised by:

- assessments that do not draw on all available information
- planning not being responsive to changes of the young person's circumstances
- intervention not being delivered in a way that meets the young person's needs
- little done to keep the public, or the young person, safe.

Figure 7: Quality of case management for court and out of court disposal cases



Across the four standards we inspect against, inspectors found better performance in relation to the initial assessment of new cases (18 out of 26 services were 'Good' or 'Outstanding') than ongoing review (12 out of 26 'Good' or 'Outstanding' and four 'Inadequate').

Risk of harm

Our inspectors take a particular interest in how well services are managing the risk of harm presented by the young person to other people

- **Assessment**

Overall, we found the quality of assessment of the risk of harm to others to be good. In most cases, assessments gave sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s, and opportunities for restorative justice (RJ) were considered. Assessments clearly identified and analysed any risk of harm to others posed by the child or young person, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk in about three-quarters of cases. Equally, in most cases, assessments analysed what controls and interventions would best manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child or young person. Assessments (78 per cent) drew sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involvement of other agencies where appropriate.

We found that where services had a designated victim worker, this area of practice tended to be stronger.

- **Planning**

We found planning focused sufficiently on keeping people safe in two-thirds of cases and attention was paid to the needs and wishes of the victim. In nearly three-quarters of cases planning was strengthened by the involvement of other agencies, where it was appropriate. Planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people in 71 per cent of cases but did not always set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that had been identified.

- **Implementation and delivery**

Overall, the implementation and delivery of services was judged to effectively support the safety of other people in 71 per cent of cases. Sufficient attention was given to the protection of actual and potential victims in 64 per cent of relevant cases. Staff and inspectors judged there to be adequate services available to assist in managing and minimising the risk of harm to others in most cases. Other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm and interventions were sufficiently well coordinated in 73 per cent of cases. Enforcement action was taken appropriately in 83 per cent of relevant cases.

- **Reviewing**

Overall, we judged the reviewing process focussed sufficiently on keeping other people safe in 66 per cent of cases.

Reviewing identified and responded to changes in factors related to risk of harm in 68 per cent of cases. The child or young person and their parents/carers were meaningfully involved in reviewing their risk of harm, and had their views considered in 65 per cent of cases. Reviewing was informed by relevant input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm in 72 per cent of cases. Disappointingly, reviewing did not always lead to necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm. We found this to be done well enough in only 68 per cent of cases.

Conclusion

In 13 of 26 services inspected, assessment of risk to others for court disposal cases was found to be outstanding. Planning for risk to others was done less well, with seven services identified as requiring improvement. Implementation and delivery in this area was assessed as inadequate in three of the twenty-six services inspected and eight were identified as outstanding. We judged eleven services as requiring improvement in their review of risk of harm to others; six were outstanding. Four services were assessed as outstanding in all aspects of work to manage the risk of harm to others. Strong assessments supported informed plans that drove the delivery of effective interventions, the impact of which was appropriately reviewed.

Good practice example

Adam is a young person who was 17 years old when he was made the subject of a 12-month Referral Order in February 2018 for offences including two matters of Burglary of a Dwelling committed in November and December 2017 and Receiving Stolen Goods committed in November 2017. He also had 21 offences Taken into Consideration.

Adam, along with his older brother, had been adopted at an early age and had demonstrated concerning behaviours related to his emotional and mental health. His older brother was known to the YOT as he had a prolific offending history for matters of a similar nature. Adam started experimenting with Class A drugs at the same time he started offending. Consequently, he was asked to leave the family home and ended up in supported accommodation arranged by the case manager.

The case manager had written the pre-sentence report (PSR) and undertaken a comprehensive assessment identifying a number of desistance factors. A plan was formulated to address the immediate concerns for the young person and focussed mainly on family mediation and raising his awareness of the impact of crime on victims.

At the start of the intervention, Adam returned home and along with the family, there were plans for him to move to another borough. During this move the YOT delivered the interventions at his home address. They also facilitated a restorative justice (RJ) conference where initially Adam divulged that he did not care about the impact on the victim but then disclosed during the conference that he was sorry for what he did and apologised directly to the victim.


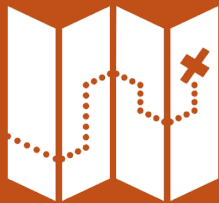
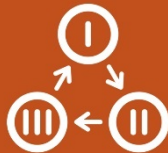

Poor practice example

Malachi is a 15-year-old young person who received a Youth conditional caution (YCC) for being carried in a motor vehicle without the owner's consent. The AssetPlus record was initially opened two weeks before the YCC was given but contains very little information and is mostly blank. The main documents were not uploaded onto ChildView (a case recording system). There was evidence of a self-assessment form being completed but none of this information was included in the planning process. A panel meeting directed that an assessment needed to be completed but this was never actioned and there was no management oversight at any point to check what needed doing. What took place was limited to attendance at football training and an induction into a gym. There were a couple of sessions scheduled when victim work was due to take place but no evidence of anything being carried out.

The whole input lacked structure or oversight and little consideration was given to involve the young person and their carer in the decision-making process or analysis of their current circumstances.

Domain 3: Out of court disposals

Effective practice includes:

			
Analytical and tailored assessments	Robust plans that involve young people and families	High-quality and coordinated services	Joint working with the police

How we rated youth offending services on:

Assessment			
★ Outstanding 6 services	● Good 5 services	● Requires improvement 5 services	● Inadequate 10 services
Planning			
★ Outstanding 7 services	● Good 2 services	● Requires improvement 10 services	● Inadequate 7 services
Implementation & Delivery			
★ Outstanding 5 services	● Good 7 services	● Requires improvement 8 services	● Inadequate 6 services
Joint working			
★ Outstanding 8 services	● Good 9 services	● Requires improvement 6 services	● Inadequate 3 services

Assessing the quality of out of court disposal (OoCD) cases

An increasingly important part of the work done by YOTs and the police is with children who have committed a low-level offence that can be dealt with without going to court. These are offences where it is not in the interest of the child or of justice to prosecute them. YOTs work with an increasing number of these children and indeed, in some YOTs, the proportion of out of court disposal cases exceeds the number of cases being supervised as a result of court orders.

There are two types of out of court disposals, the first type counts as a first-time entrant in the criminal justice system, and these are Youth Conditional Cautions and Youth Cautions. These are both nationally recognised formal outcomes, although they remain a diversion from court. The second type of out of court disposal has a greater variance across the

country, with a range of names, such as triage or community resolution, and differing policies and processes associated with them. These outcomes do not count as a first-time entrant and do not appear on a PNC check.

HMI Probation conducted a thematic inspection on Out of court Disposals with HMI Constabulary (published in March 2018) and our out of court standards were informed by this thematic inspection²³. To get a full picture of the overall quality of YOT supervision our new programme of youth inspections, includes a sample of out of court disposal cases, a change which was widely supported.

Work to divert children who have become known to the police from entering the youth justice system is commonly recognised to be a success story. It is difficult to prove the success empirically though, since there is little systematic monitoring of its effectiveness, beyond knowing that the number of new entrants to the youth justice system has fallen considerably and consistently over many years. It is also the case that out of court disposal schemes vary greatly across England and Wales both in the degree of and quality of the partnership and joint decision making between the Police and the YOT. They also differ in terms of the number of out of court disposals given to children and young people in different services, and the scope.

Some areas inspected could provide the offending rate for these out of court disposals but this information is not routinely collected, or used for the development of future interventions, or the targeting of resources.

There is a wide variance across the country in the number of alternative disposals a child can have before entering the formal youth justice system. For example, in one YOT we found there was a policy of limiting a child to only one of these outcomes, while in another YOT there was no limit, with decisions being based on what was considered to be in the best interests of the child. We found an example of one child receiving seven of these disposals. In other areas there was no formalised policy and in one YOT there was confusion amongst both police and the YOT as to how many of these disposals a child could receive. However, as the table below shows, generally the children and young people in receipt of out of court disposals were those with no, or very few, previous sanctions.

Table 4: Number of previous disposals for court and out of court cases

No of previous sanctions	Court disposals	OoCD
0	69 (12 per cent)	360 (74 per cent)
1	164 (28 per cent)	77 (16 per cent)
2-5	255 (44 per cent)	46 (10 per cent)
6-10	63 (11 per cent)	1 (0 per cent)
11-20	25 (4 per cent)	0
20+	5 (1 per cent)	0

There is a mixed understanding of the legal status of these out of court disposals and also of the requirement on the child to engage with the intervention. They cannot be referred to uniformly as voluntary interventions, as in some YOT areas failure to engage in the intervention will result in a more formal sanction, such as a caution, or referral to court. In

²³ HMI Probation and HMI Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. (2018). *Out of court disposal work in youth offending teams*. <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cjji/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/03/Out-of-court-disposal-work-in-youth-offending-teams-reportb.pdf>

other areas the matter is closed to the police at the point of the delivery of the disposal and any intervention that follows that is entirely on a voluntary basis by the young person. There is clearly a postcode lottery in the way YOTs handle out of court cases and the resultant outcomes for the children involved. We would support development of a national approach to the decision making and scope of out of court disposal schemes.

Risk of harm

Risk of harm work was done less well in out of court cases.

- **Assessment**

Overall, assessments sufficiently analysed how to keep other people safe in just 61 per cent of cases. Assessments clearly identified and analysed any risk of harm to others posed by the child or young person in 56 per cent of cases inspected. Assessment drew sufficiently on available sources of information, including any other assessments that had been completed, and other evidence of behaviour by the child or young person in only 65 per cent of cases. In many cases we found that assessments focussed only on the offence that had resulted in the out of court disposal which impacted on the quality of risk assessments. Assessment gave sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s, and opportunities for restorative justice in 66 per cent of cases.

- **Planning**

Planning focused sufficiently on keeping people safe in 64 per cent of cases. We found in just over a third of the cases inspected that planning did not give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s. Planning involved or referenced other agencies where appropriate in 70 per cent of cases. Contingency planning was done well enough in less than half of cases. It was not clear what would be done if circumstances and/or risk of harm levels changed.

- **Implementation and delivery**

The implementation and delivery of services effectively supported the safety of other people in 66 per cent of cases with sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims. In the majority of cases both YOT staff and inspectors felt that services that were required to effectively manage the risk of harm to others were available. However, these were not always used or co-ordinated effectively. Overall, the delivered services sufficiently managed and minimised the risk of harm in 68 per cent of cases.

Conclusion

Compared to court disposal cases, work to manage the risk of harm to others was done much less well for out of court cases. We found assessment to be 'Inadequate' in 10 services. Five of the thirteen that scored 'Outstanding' in the assessment of risk of harm to others in court cases, also scored 'Outstanding' on assessment of risk of harm in the out of court disposal sample. Some services were 'Outstanding' in their assessment of risk of harm for court cases but 'Inadequate' in out of court cases - this was largely due to the suitability of the assessment tool they were using for out of court work (see section on Assessing risk of harm and safeguarding in out of court disposal cases).

In out of court cases we found that assessments to keep other people safe were 'Inadequate' in 10 services, again the suitability of the assessment tools used impacted on how well assessments were completed in some YOTs.

Summary view from case analysis: safety and wellbeing

As well as reviewing risks to others, assessment should clearly identify and analyse the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person themselves, while planning, and implementation and delivery should promote and address any issues raised.

Many of the children and young people receiving a service from YOTs are vulnerable. Of the 791 court cases reviewed across all inspections, inspectors judged that less than 10 per cent were low risk in respect of safety and wellbeing at the commencement of their order. The remainder were classified as medium, high or very high.

For those young people receiving out of court disposals, a higher proportion were identified by inspectors as having low safety and wellbeing risk factors although this group still made up only a third of the sample.

The quality of work to identify and respond to safety and wellbeing factors across those YOTs inspected so far varies widely. The highest scoring YOT assessed and analysed safety and wellbeing factors effectively in 96 per cent of their cases. The lowest scoring YOT undertook an effective assessment of safety and wellbeing in just 42 per cent of cases. Overall, assessments sufficiently analysed how to keep the child or young person safe in three-quarters of cases we inspected.

For out of court disposal cases we found that the proportion of cases where work to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person is of sufficient quality is lower across each stage of the case from assessment to planning to implementation and delivery.

Some common characteristics of those who assessed safety and wellbeing well

Good practice example

Nick was 16 years old when he received a six-month Referral Order for the offence of Common Assault. Assessment identifies him as a high risk to others and high in relation to safety and wellbeing. He has a long history of aggressive outbursts which involve the use of a knife. This has happened in the presence of peers at school and towards care staff.

Planning includes a focus on offence-related work and the Challenging Crime Thinking Programme has been delivered to try and address this, helping Nick to develop different ways to avoid getting involved in violence. He is a Looked After Child who receives weekly support from a social worker, he is seen weekly by his case manager, and there is a lot of effort and focus on engaging him with purposeful activities. He has taken part in gardening and graffiti projects and is currently on a Princes Trust course aimed at building his motivation to engage with longer-term education opportunities. His wellbeing is a focus of supervision given he has previously self-harmed. There is appropriate engagement with CAMHS and currently there is evidence to suggest he is enjoying an improved sense of wellbeing. He remains in a 1:1 placement and this is a settled arrangement. The case manager has a good level of contact with the care workers and there is good evidence of regular communication between agencies.

- **Effectiveness of planning in relation to risk**

Of those cases where other agencies were involved, the work was sufficiently well-coordinated in three-quarters of cases. In many areas there were multi-agency information sharing and planning meetings focussing on the most complex cases. These were often themed around criminal or sexual exploitation. YOTs were generally active participants in these meetings. In the JTAI programme we found a mixed picture in terms of YOT involvement in strategy meetings which are held when a new child protection concern comes to light. In the best performing areas, the YOT was brought into the discussions typically involving children's services and the police but in some areas YOTs were marginal to decision making despite holding important information about the child or young person.

- **Reviewing risk; dealing with changing circumstances**

Circumstances can quickly change in children and young people's lives and so the safety and wellbeing aspects of their assessment and plan must be kept under review. Most YOTs had panel or similar arrangements for their highest risk cases where a range of professionals came together to review plans and interventions. Of the relevant cases reviewed, there were changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing in 72 per cent of cases. Most children and young people had involvement from other agencies in their lives and the YOT involved those agencies in the review process in nearly three-quarters of cases. Written reviews were completed in three-quarters of cases and adjustments were made to plans in two-thirds of cases. Overall, reviewing focussed on keeping the child or young person safe in two-thirds of cases.

Good practice example

Billy is a 15-year-old male on a Referral Order for Assaults against residential staff and Criminal Damage. The assessment is excellent and really seeks to understand the factors underpinning presenting behaviour, including his experience of childhood and being in care. He has PTSD and anxiety which presents itself in harmful behaviour to others and himself.

The Panel Plan and Looked After Child Plan both included targets to improve independence and stay safe. Billy is a young man who was isolating himself and withdrawing by making his world smaller and smaller to protect himself. He experienced physical abuse and neglect as a child and was exhibiting behaviours harmful to himself and others. At the start of the Referral Order he had not been out of his residential placement for some time. He identified boxing as an interest and the YOT worker suggested she drive and they attend together. Billy had a real mistrust of adults. Initially the YOT worker encouraged him to look at her car from the window of his room and then gradually over time he sat in her car. There was a staged approach to building up trust and making progress at a pace he was comfortable with before he met his YOT worker at the boxing club and was introduced to the coach.

Poor practice example

Reece was sentenced to a six-month Referral Order for two counts of Possession of Class B and C drugs and Possession of a Bladed Article. The Asset assessment was not sufficient, including no analysis for the weapons offence, nor were the sources of information, such as CPS documents considered or even available. The risk of harm assessment did not consider all the contributing risk factors and safety and wellbeing factors were not sufficiently analysed, including emotional health, parental substance misuse and low self-esteem. There was insufficient contact with the young person and the case manager only saw the young person twice throughout the order, the first time a month after the order had started. There is no evidence of delivery of interventions other than two substance misuse sessions and completion of the reparation hours. There was no management oversight recorded throughout the order and no evidence of partnership work other than the substance misuse work. Positively, the young person completed his order and did not reoffend.

Key aspects of delivery

Knife crime

Knife crime, and serious youth violence generally, is of heightened public and political concern following a 34 per cent year on year increase in homicides caused by knives (2016-2017 to 2017-2018)²⁴. Such tragedies have been reflected in other statistics: there has been a 42 per cent increase in police recorded knife crime since 2010-2011 and a 37 per cent increase since 2013-2014 in hospitalisations caused by knife crime. The NHS data confirms that the rise in knife crime is real and not driven by increased police focus and activity.

Knife crime offences involve the use or threat of use of a knife or bladed object or the possession, concealment or transportation of such a weapon.

Knives are the most common form of weapon carried by young people in England and Wales as they are cheap, portable and easy to obtain.

YOTs are vital to reducing knife crime and protecting young people from violence. Their strategic position as a partner with schools and community groups can help spread awareness of and resilience to carrying weapons.

We surveyed YOTs in England and Wales during the summer of 2019 to ascertain:

- how YOT managers perceived the knife crime problem in their area
- how they were tackling the problem
- what barriers exist to effective action.

We were also keen to discover examples of promising interventions and effective practice.

Seventy-six YOTs (50 per cent) responded to our survey. Responses tended to be from urban areas where knife crime is more severe but we have responses from every region of

²⁴ Office for National Statistics. (2019). Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2018. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/homicideinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018#highest-number-of-sharp-instrument-homicides-seen-in-year-ending-march-2018>

England and from Wales. Our survey is the best current guide to what YOTs are doing to protect society from knife crime.

Headline findings

- A quarter of YOT managers (26 per cent) assessed knife crime as a major problem in their area; 58 per cent considered knife crime to be a moderate problem; 16 per cent considered knife crime to be a low-level problem.
- Those YOTs located in major urban areas were much more likely than others to be facing a major knife crime problem.
- The majority of YOT managers (59 per cent) believed that knife crime was increasing. Almost a third (29 per cent) believed that knife crime levels were staying the same. Few (7 per cent) believed that knife crime was decreasing or did not know (5 per cent).
- Those YOTs facing a 'moderate' knife crime problem were more likely to report the problem was increasing.
- For those who were able to report these data (n=68), on average, a fifth of YOT statutory cases involved knife crime offences. There was considerable variation across the areas from none currently to 60 per cent of all cases.
- Most YOTs (59 per cent) were providing services for non-statutory cases (those not on court orders or YOI licences) involved or at risk of becoming involved in knife crime.
- The great majority of YOTs (85 per cent) were supervising children who have themselves been victims of knife crime.
- Three-quarters of YOTs (75 per cent) had knife crime as a specific priority within their business plan.
- The great majority of YOTs (88 per cent) were providing knife crime intervention programmes. Few YOTs (29 per cent) had formally evaluated those interventions.
- Around half of YOTs (46 per cent) had provided knife crime training for their staff members.
- Around half of YOTs (52 per cent) had policies, procedures or facilities to protect staff and visitors from those who may be carrying weapons.
- Few YOTs (15 per cent) were employing or commissioning specialist workers (such as clinical psychologists or mentors) for knife crime interventions.

Sharing intelligence and partnerships

YOTs were generally well embedded in local strategic partnerships citing information sharing arrangements and joint work to help tackle this problem with the police, education, health and children's services, and wider community groups.

We were told of some notable examples of partnership work. For example, a YOT in the North West was developing a programme with their education authority for children who had been excluded from school. Research has consistently demonstrated that non-attendance from school is a key risk factor and so these children would clearly benefit from awareness sessions on the law and harmful consequences of knife crime.

London YOTs are coordinating with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime on the London-wide Knife Crime Strategy. A London YOT shared with us an impressive plan covering all

aspects including governance, identification of risky individuals, interventions and community mobilisation. Each element of the plan identified actions, timescales and a responsible manager.

Non-statutory work

Crime prevention is a key function of YOTs. Most YOTs (59 per cent) were providing services to 'non-statutory' cases that were involved in knife crime or considered to be at risk of becoming involved. These are cases where the young person is not on a court order but has been referred to the YOT for support because they are vulnerable to becoming involved in crime.

A notable example was a YOT in the Midlands which was working with two major charities to identify local knife crime hotspots and provide mentoring for children identified as at risk within those areas. The programme triaged the children into lower and higher risk groups with appropriate intensity of intervention and also trained YOT workers and other partners in risk identification using a screening tool for vulnerability and criminal exploitation.

Interventions – targeted and universal

Almost nine in ten YOTs were delivering in-house or commissioned interventions to those children involved in or at risk of involvement in knife crime. Typically knife crime interventions are designed to be delivered to a group of six to eight young people or in a one-to-one session if more appropriate. Psychology-based interactive groupwork may incorporate art, music, group discussion and often watching filmed scenarios as a means of thinking through the choices and consequences made by the actors.

Several YOTs are working with the youth social action charity Street Doctors who are healthcare practitioners, often medical students. Street Doctors teach life-saving first aid skills for knife and other serious assaults and use this 'teachable moment' to raise awareness of the legal and health consequences of knife crime, especially the message that there are no safe places in the body to inflict a knife injury.

Two YOTs had delivered awareness sessions to over 1,000 schoolchildren aimed at increasing their resilience to carrying weapons.

A few YOTs employed specialists, such as clinical psychologists, to work with those involved with knife crime. Two YOTs had jointly commissioned a clinical psychologist focusing upon those involved or at risk of involvement in gang-related violence.

Two London YOTs had developed a trauma-informed approach to the issue involving specialist training for their staff in recognising trauma symptoms and resisting re-traumatisation. The approach was being evaluated by a university team.

Another London YOT had developed a family group conference process to bring together relatives of rival gang members to develop a plan to bring peace to their community.

Less than a third of YOTs (29 per cent) had conducted formal evaluations of their interventions. Agencies must take care that their work is based upon sound evidence.

Barriers to countering knife crime

Many YOTs reported barriers to effective work to curb knife crime. The main obstacle was insufficient and/or short-term funding for programmes. A London YOT noted that funding streams were allocated to the police for enforcement but not directly to them to work on prevention and diversion.

A further concern was the lack of guidance from central government on what is effective in working with knife crime perpetrators or those at risk. There is, however, an evidence base for practitioners to draw upon, for example the World Health Organisation published a major review in 2015²⁵ and the public health model in Glasgow has been validated.²⁶

YOTs should be provided with an accessible and practical knife crime briefing to assist them in planning their response to knife crime.

We are dismayed that some YOTs were experiencing difficulties in sharing information and intelligence with police, schools, local authorities and other partners. Senior leaders in these agencies should ensure that lawful information sharing protocols and guidance are available to enable practitioners to do their job. Again, model templates would be welcome.

Despite these barriers, our survey revealed a positive picture of commitment and innovation from YOTs in countering the threat of knife crime to young people in our communities.

County lines

Definition:

Gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

Our inspections found county lines and associated activity are prevalent across England and Wales. County lines operations typically involve a myriad of criminal activity: gangs, drugs, violence, and criminal and sexual exploitation. Children and vulnerable adults experience and are at risk of very serious harm including: physical injuries, sexual violence, emotional and psychological trauma, and exposure to dangerous or undesirable situations.

Tackling county lines activity requires a multi-agency response and presents a major challenge for criminal justice services today. We cannot underestimate the impact of these operations on children– their families and wider communities.

The response from Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) has been mixed.

Some YOTs are responding well. In Hampshire, we found staff collaborated with police to flag young people involved in county lines activity; the YOT also worked closely with the county council to provide a dedicated service to missing, exploited and trafficked children. In Manchester, the establishment of a Complex Safeguarding Hub provides a multi-agency response to a wide range of issues including gangs and exploitation.

Other YOTs, however, are struggling to meet the challenge. In some cases, YOT staff did not demonstrate an appropriate awareness and understanding of county lines issues and the effect of trauma on children and young people. We think it is important for practitioners to keep up-to-date on areas of professional practice, and major knowledge gaps should be identified and addressed. YOT staff have the potential to spot children and young people who are being groomed or exploited – but only if they recognise the warning signs.

²⁵ World Health Organisation. (2015). *Preventing youth violence: an overview of the evidence*. Geneva: WHO.

²⁶ Williams, D.J., Currie, D., Linden, W., Donnelly, P.D. (2014). *Addressing gang-related violence in Glasgow: A preliminary pragmatic quasi-experimental evaluation of the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV)*. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 19(6).

There is an urgent need for national support and guidance. This will help YOTs to:

- identify children and young people who are involved in county lines activity or who could be potential targets
- develop staff skills and expertise, so they can spot the warning signs of exploitation and support children and young people who have been exploited
- share information and develop responses with partner agencies such as the police and children's social services
- ensure exploited children and young people get the same high-quality support, regardless of where they live in England and Wales.

Cuckooing:

a criminal group takes control of a vulnerable person's home to conduct drug dealing or other criminal enterprises.

Plugging:

where children are forced to insert and carry drugs in their rectum or vagina. This practice is becoming more common and is child sexual abuse.

Runners:

operatives who deliver drugs, weapons and money between locations, watch over drugs and money at safe houses, and sometimes sell drugs directly to users. Runners are often children and young people who have been exploited, allowing more senior gang members to distance themselves from the riskier side of the enterprise.

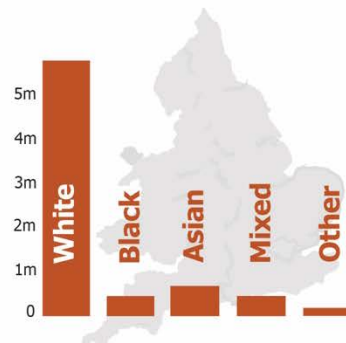
Figure 8 – Ethnic disproportionality

Different stages in the youth justice system where disproportionality occurs (source: [Youth Justice Board](#))

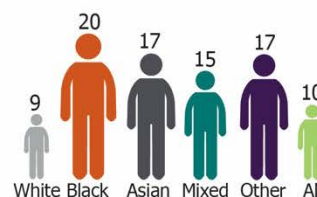


Black children are over **four times** more likely to be arrested than white children

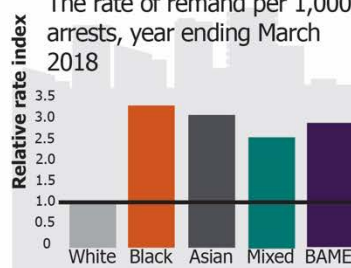
Of all children arrested, white children are more than **twice** as likely to get a caution than black children



The proportion of people living in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods, by ethnicity



The rate of remand per 1,000 arrests, year ending March 2018

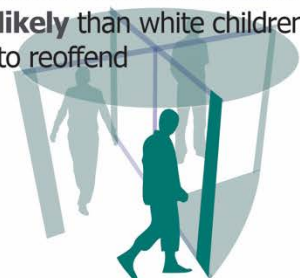


Of all children convicted, BAME children are **twice** as likely to be sentenced to custody

Black pupils are more likely to be **permanently excluded** from school than the rest of the population



BAME children are **more likely** than white children to reoffend



A **quarter** of children in custody are black



It is common knowledge that ethnic disproportionality blights the criminal justice system. David Lammy, in his review of the topic in 2017, highlighted, in particular, the issues this poses to the youth justice system. This has been demonstrated most starkly by the recent custody figures which show that the number of black, Asian and minority ethnic young people outnumber the number of white young people in custody for the first time ever (May 2019 figures). They now make up 50 per cent of the custodial population compared to only 18 per cent in the general population. This compares to 27 per cent of children and young people of a BAME background who received a caution or conviction in 2017-18.²⁷ A proportion that is mirrored in our inspection case sample.

There is no silver bullet to tackling disproportionality. But it is well known that it begins at the point of entry to the system (the Lammy Review did not cover policing). Reversing a trend that has started way down the line can be hard to address but solutions need to be found. Concentrating efforts on prevention are well-worth the investment, but until these initiatives come to fruition the existing problems need an effective response. The multi-agency nature of the Youth Offending Team can be key to driving this.

Eight of the twenty-one single YOT inspections conducted in the first year of the new programme have specifically identified BAME disproportionality as a problem. Our inspections reveal that many YOTs, while recognising they may be the unwilling recipients of this ethnic disproportionality, are ill-equipped to deal with it. We did, however, find some examples of good practice.

In Essex YOS we found evidence of a comprehensive forensic analysis of current offending patterns, profiles of children and young people, and their desistance needs. This was understood and used well by the Board and YOS managers. The analysis had identified issues of disproportionality within wider aspects of the youth justice system. A range of actions had been taken in response to this, including a presentation of the analysis and challenges to sentencers, and making diversity and disproportionality a development objective in the YOS. Diversity was also the topic of a deep-dive quality assurance exercise. Inspectors assessed that enough attention had been given to diversity factors in almost all cases that were inspected.

In Sandwell, the Management Board had specific concerns about the over-representation of black and mixed race young males in the youth justice system. 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 has access to a music studio. This has also 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.

Manchester Youth Justice Service had carried out extensive analysis to develop an understanding of how and why there is a disproportionate number of BAME young people being sent to custody. It had also engaged with other criminal justice agencies to develop strategies to reduce this disproportionality.

Wandsworth YOT had black and minority ethnic disproportionality as a locally identified priority. The Community Safety Partnership and YOT Board commissioned a

²⁷Youth Justice Board. (2019). *Youth Justice Statistics 2017/2018*.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/774866/youth_justice_statistics_bulletin_2017_2018.pdf

disproportionality report on the YOT cohort, which addressed issues such as black and minority ethnic young people and school exclusions, stop and search numbers by the police, involvement with services and areas of deprivation. The report also considered whether black and minority ethnic young people were pleading not guilty to offences more often than their white counterparts; something that would exclude them from accessing out of court disposals. The review proposed that a number of services across the early help division identify and address the factors linked to disproportionality at an earlier stage.

Despite the examples of good practice, there were many more who were not doing enough. YOTs need to learn from each other as well as engage effectively with local youth and criminal justice partners to tackle this inherent problem.

Resettlement

During 2018 and 2019 HMI Prisons and HMI Probation undertook a joint thematic inspection of youth resettlement.²⁸ This involved visiting the five Young Offender Institutions (YOI), to look at the resettlement planning and outcomes for ten boys in each establishment.

Inspectors met with caseworkers in custody, reviewed sentence plans and spoke to the boys. The boys were then followed up after three months in the community, where we met their YOT case managers, other professionals involved in the case, and where possible, the boys again.

There is no doubt that the children who receive a custodial sentence are often the most difficult children that YOTs manage. They have commonly breached several community orders or have committed very serious offences. However, too frequently, the resettlement planning was focussed on managing behaviour in the custodial estate and not planning for resettlement in the community on completion of the custodial sentence. There was also very little work completed in the prison to address offending behaviour. Boys were often referred to the range of programmes on offer in the YOI, but for a range of reasons, such as short sentence length or staff shortages, these programmes were not delivered. Often, boys did not know their release address, or where in the country they were being released to, until very shortly before they got out, and in one case, on the day they were released. This is an unacceptable and completely avoidable situation.

In custody

Custodial staff reported they had not had any training in the job role of custody case worker and there was limited input from the range of other professionals in the prison environment. In most cases (55 per cent) parents or carers did not attend the custodial planning meeting. This meant the families had little input into the resettlement plan even though, in most cases, the young person would be returning to the family environment. Families should have an input on what support they may need, as well as potentially risk information in relation to siblings.

There was little planning for education, with education provision in custody stopping on release and a delay of weeks, or months before education was picked up again in the community. In 57 per cent of cases there was no education provision in place three months after the release date. This, again, is unacceptable.

²⁸ Joint thematic inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2019). *Youth resettlement – final report into work in the community*.
<http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cji/inspections/youthresettlementcommunity/>

After release

Outcomes for these boys in the three months follow up was poor, 20 per cent of them had reoffended and another 52 per cent were subject to police investigation.²⁹ Just over 20 per cent of the boys had breached their licence and, in most cases, this was because they had gone missing and their current whereabouts were unknown. However, nearly 80 per cent had had their accommodation needs addressed at the three months follow-up stage.

A number of the cases had been transferred to adult probation services and feedback from staff was that they had received little or no training on managing a Detention and Training Order (DTO)³⁰ licence, with one probation area refusing to accept transfer of these cases because of a lack of training.

Transitions

Children and young people subject to YOT supervision can potentially experience a number of transitions, and those children who are the most risky and/or vulnerable often experience them most frequently.

In the resettlement thematic inspection, a number of the young people moved into adult probation services. In most cases this was not managed well, with probation staff having little knowledge of how to manage a DTO sentence. In some cases the transition happened at the point of release, so while the young person is already experiencing a significant transition from custody to community, they were also required to transition from YOT to adult services.

Young people who have their 18th birthday while in custody become subject to extended licence supervision implemented through the Offender Rehabilitation legislation introduced in 2014.³¹ Most of these cases were transferred to adult services, but probation officers interviewed stated they did not know how to manage a DTO licence and had had little training in this area. It was also true, in the small number of these cases that remained with YOT, that YOT staff had little knowledge of how to manage the extended licence period either.

Young people can be transferred to adult services while subject to any type of court intervention. The transitions protocol is clear that should any transfer take place 'the individual needs will be recognised'.³² In practice, very few Referral Orders are transferred, but there is inconsistency in practice. Some individual YOTs will retain an 18-year-old past their 18th birthday, while others will undertake transfers on nearly all eligible cases.

A number of YOTs have developed a Y2A (Youth to Adult) transition programme (Wrexham, South Tees, Hampshire) where all young people past their 17th birthday complete this programme, either on a one-to-one basis, or as a group intervention. The programme has a

²⁹ Released under investigation, some of these matters related to offences that occurred before the custodial sentence, but we did not collect exact data on this – we will this year.

³⁰ DTOs can last between four months and two years. The first half of a DTO is served in custody, the second half is served in the community.

³¹ *Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014*. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/11/contents/enacted>

³² Youth Justice Board. (2018). Joint national protocol for transitions in England, HMPPS, NPS, YJB. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/703310/Joint_National_Protocol_for_Transitions_in_England_for_PDF_-_Final_version.pdf

focus on preparing the young people for the differences between YOT and adult supervision, and the differences in sentencing in an adult court. While not all these young people will go on to transfer to adult services, this programme is still useful should the young person reoffend after their 18th birthday.

The transition protocol lays out clear expectations for transitioning cases from youth to adult, but there is less guidance available to probation staff on managing those 18-21-year-olds who come directly from court. Probation services say they check on the Police National Computer (PNC) to see if those young people have been previously known to YOTs, but the PNC does not include information about the range of out of court disposals that do not result in a young person becoming a first-time entrant. Potentially this means probation services do not know about the information a YOT holds on a young person who has had YOT intervention following certain out of court disposals.

The Youth Justice Board developed a Y2A portal for smooth information sharing between youth and adult services, but this has been problematic and not fully implemented.

Children and young people can also experience transition from one YOT to another. This occurs most frequently when children who are Looked After by the local authority are placed in another authority. To minimise the impact, 'caretaking' arrangements are put in place, whereby the originating YOT (the home YOT) retains case responsibility for the child or young person while the YOT where the child is placed (the host YOT) has day to day contact with the child or young person.³³

In the resettlement thematic inspection³⁴ these arrangements applied to five per cent of the cases, often with the young people only knowing less than one week before release where they were being placed. This also left the host YOT little time to plan and prepare for the young person's arrival resulting in very little planning taking place for these transitions. This is exacerbated by the difficulty YOTs can have in electronically transferring AssetPlus and case records from one case management system to another (YOTs use different case management systems).

Some YOTs, such as Hampshire, retained good contact with their children who were placed out of their area, while others would instigate the caretaking arrangements, even if the child was placed less than 10 miles away, albeit in a different authority.

A final transition children and young people experience is out of the criminal justice system and into mainstream services in the community. This is referred to as exit planning. In the inspections completed to date it was assessed that 81 per cent of YOTs had considered access to mainstream services for the cases they were supervising.

³³ Youth Justice Board. (2018). *National Protocol for Case Responsibility*.

³⁴ Joint thematic inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2019). *Youth resettlement – final report into work in the community*.
<http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cji/inspections/youthresettlementcommunity/>

Annex 1: Description of a Youth Offending Team

Youth Offending Teams (YOTs)³⁵ work with children and young people, from as young as 10³⁶ up to 18 years of age, that break the law. These children could have been sentenced by a court, or have come to the attention of the police but not been charged. In this case they would have their offending dealt with out of court.

YOTs work with all these young people to try to help them live better lives and ultimately stay away from crime. With this in mind they:

1. help young people at police stations
2. provide support at court
3. supervise young people on a community sentence
4. keep in contact with young people while they're in custody and help them settle back in the community when they leave
5. deliver interventions to help young people make different life choices.

YOTs are statutory partnerships, that is, they must work together by law, and they are multi-disciplinary, so they can deal with the needs of the whole child. They are required to have staff from local authority social care and education services, the police, the National Probation Service and local health services working together to help these young people. Most YOTs are based within local authorities, with some fully integrated into local authority services such as children's services, some have merged across local authority boundaries while others remain standalone. This is determined locally and, in our experience, there is no one model that leads to good inspection outcomes. This is achieved by strong and knowledgeable youth justice leadership delivered through the multi-disciplinary Management Board and YOT management team.

YOT work is governed and shaped by a range of legislation and guidance specific to the youth justice sector (such as the National Standards for Youth Justice) or else applicable across the criminal justice sector (for example Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements guidance).

³⁵ We have used Youth Offending Teams or YOTs as a generic term throughout based on legislative terminology.

³⁶ The age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales.

Annex 2: Types of youth disposals

There are two main types of youth disposals – court and out of court.

1. Court

First tier penalties

These are the most lenient disposals and tend to be reserved for those who have offended for the first time or for less serious offences.

- **Absolute or conditional discharge**

If the court decides that a punishment is not needed then the child or young person can be given an absolute discharge, so all action stops there, or a conditional discharge which means they do not receive any further action as long as they do not offend within a set period. The maximum period a conditional discharge can cover is three years.

- **Referral order**

A referral order is a contract with a youth referral panel made up of three adults (one from the YOT). The young person meets regularly with the panel over the period of the order, which can be between three to twelve months, and will receive help to tackle their offending behaviour and addressing the damage they have caused. These types of orders are only available to those who have offended for the first time.

- **Fine**

The size of the fine depends on the seriousness of the offence and the ability to pay. For those under 16 years it is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to pay.

- **Reparation order**

This is where the court orders the young person to do something that makes amends to the victim or the community.

Community sentences

These are for more serious offences and while less restrictive than a custodial sentence, still require the young person to meet certain requirements.

- **Youth rehabilitation order**

This type of sentence carries certain requirements that the young person must complete within the duration of the order (a maximum of three years). This list is not exhaustive but can include (these can be given in combination):

- curfew requirement
- activity requirement such as education
- local authority residence requirement
- supervision requirement
- mental health requirement
- substance misuse requirement

Custodial sentences

These types of sentences are reserved for the most serious offences. A young person under the age of 18 can be sent to one of three different types of custody:

- Secure children's home
- Secure training centre
- Young offender institution

The type of location is defined by the young person's age, risk and needs.

The guidelines for sentencing children and young people produced by the Sentencing Council provides the detail that sentencers must consider when passing sentence.³⁷

2. Out of court

Not all children and young people who commit a crime will end up in court. In less serious cases, young people will be given an out of court disposal. YOTs will then work with many of these children to reduce the risk of them offending again.

- **Youth conditional caution**
This is a formal notice issued by the police. It 'cautions' the young person not to offend again and explains the possible consequences of doing so. A Youth Conditional Caution carries requirements that the young person must adhere to.
- **Youth caution**
As above but without the requirements.
- **Community resolution**
Professional judgement is used to address the offence in an informal way, often involving the victim.

³⁷ Sentencing Council. (2017). *Sentencing Children and young people: Definitive guideline*. <https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Sentencing-Children-and-Young-People-definitive-guideline-Web.pdf>.

Annex 3: Youth Justice Board

The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) provides YOTs with some of their funding (on average 28 per cent of their overall funding though this can vary from as little as 12 per cent to as much as 70 per cent for individual YOTs and has reduced proportionally over time).³⁸ It also monitors their performance and issues guidance to them about how things are to be done.

The Youth Justice Board continues to maintain oversight of the youth justice system but their role has changed in recent years. The organisation has become more streamlined and the Board has re-focused its efforts to deliver priority programmes, meaning they no longer work directly with YOTs on their response to inspections as part of business as usual. This consequently has had an impact on the work of the Inspectorate.

The YJB used to work in partnership with the YOT to develop the YOT's response to our inspection recommendations. This was a huge help to us, not least as we knew that our recommendations, from both individual inspections and thematics, would be taken seriously and addressed comprehensively, but it also provided us with a single point of contact whom we could approach for an update on progress. As the YJB no longer work with YOTs in the same way, they have stepped away from supporting YOTs in their implementation of our recommendations.

We now work directly with YOTs on their service improvement plans to address our inspection recommendations and are currently considering how we will introduce follow-up activity in response to inadequate inspections. We are also looking to strengthen regional links, with individual inspectors linking with one or two regions to better disseminate learning from inspections. This links with the YJB's sector-led learning approach. We will continue to track our thematic recommendations but will now work directly with the individual owners.

We retain a good working relationship with the YJB and continue to work collegiately, using their oversight intelligence and key performance indicators as considerations when prioritising inspection on a risk basis.

³⁸ Youth Justice Board. (2019). *Youth Justice statistics: 2017 to 2018: Annex F – Resources in YOTs*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2017-to-2018>.

Annex 4: 2018-2019 inspections and map

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Derby (single) | 11. Manchester (joint) | 21. Dudley (single) |
| 2. Hampshire (single) | 12. Wandsworth (single) | 22. Walsall (single) |
| 3. Hertfordshire (single) | 13. Western Bay (joint) | 23. Lancashire (joint) |
| 4. Bristol (single) | 14. Wrexham (single) | 24. Sheffield (single) |
| 5. Sandwell (single) | 15. Oldham (single) | 25. Surrey (single) |
| 6. Essex (single) | 16. Lambeth (joint) | 26. Newham (single) |
| 7. Warwickshire (single) | 17. Sefton (single) | |
| 8. Blackpool (single) | 18. East Ridings (single) | |
| 9. Barking and Dagenham (joint) | 19. Liverpool (joint) | |
| 10. Hounslow (single) | 20. South Tees (single) | |





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