



Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate of  
Probation

## Inspection standards for youth offending services

May 2021

Effective from July 2021

# 1. Organisational delivery

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## *1.1 Governance and leadership*

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

### **1.1.1 Is there an effective local vision and strategy for the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?**

- a) Does the YOT Management Board set the direction and strategy for the YOT, prioritising the quality of service and adherence to the evidence base?
- b) Does the vision and strategy for the YOT address diversity considerations and set out equality objectives?
- c) Does the YOT Management Board include all statutory partners and non-statutory partners where these would add value?
- d) Are YOT Management Board members active in their attendance and participation, recognising the contribution their own agency makes to the YOT?
- e) Is the Chair of the YOT Management Board well-engaged, with a sufficient understanding of the YOT's work?
- f) Does the YOT Management Board incorporate the views of children into the YOT's local vision and strategy?
- g) Are there effective governance arrangements and clear delivery plans that translate the vision and strategy into effective case supervision?
- h) Is the impact of the strategy on delivery monitored and regularly reviewed?

### **1.1.2 Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?**

- a) Do YOT Management Board members advocate the work of the YOT in their own broader roles?
- b) Do the YOT's partnerships arrangements facilitate the delivery of effective operational work?
- c) Do staff understand their roles and responsibilities within the partnership arrangements, and what they are accountable for?
- d) Does the YOT Management Board take a deliberate, strategic and informed approach to meeting diverse needs?
- e) Do other relevant local strategic partnerships give priority to work to support desistance and prevent harm, supporting integration with wider services for children?

### **1.1.3 Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?**

- a) Does the YOT leadership team provide an effective link to the Management Board?
- b) Does the YOT leadership team effectively communicate the vision and strategy of the YOT to staff and stakeholders?
- c) Does the YOT leadership team successfully deliver and operationalise the vision and strategy?

- d) Does the YOT leadership team fully consider and address issues of responsivity and disproportionality in making decisions on policy and practice?
- e) Does the YOT leadership team promote openness, constructive challenge and ideas?
- f) Are risks to the service sufficiently understood by the leadership team, with appropriate mitigations and controls in place?

## **1.2 Staff**

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

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

- a) Are staffing levels sufficient?
- b) Are staffing levels planned and reviewed to meet the changing demands and case profiles?
- c) Are practitioners' and managers' workloads reasonable, given the profile of the cases and the range of work undertaken?
- d) Are workloads actively managed?
- e) Is there an effective strategy to maintain the quality of delivery during periods of planned and unplanned staff absences?

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

- a) Does the workforce adequately reflect the diversity of the local population and provide the skills to meet diverse needs?
- b) Are cases allocated to staff who are appropriately qualified and/or experienced?
- c) Is there an appropriate strategy in place to identify and develop the potential of individual staff to support succession planning?

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

- a) Do staff receive effective supervision to enhance the quality of work with children?
- b) Is there an effective induction programme for new staff that addresses issues of diversity and is accessible to all?
- c) Is the appraisal process used effectively to ensure that staff are competent to deliver a high-quality service?
- d) Is sufficient attention paid to identifying and addressing poor performance?

### **1.2.4 Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?**

- a) Does the YOT identify and plan for the learning needs of all staff?
- b) Does the YOT provide sufficient access to in-service training to support the delivery of a high-quality service?
- c) Does the YOT promote and value a culture of learning and continuous improvement?

d) Do staff from all backgrounds have equitable access to promotion opportunities, and reward and recognition?

### **1.2.5 Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?**

- a) Are staff motivated to contribute to the delivery of a high-quality service?
- b) Is appropriate attention paid to monitoring and improving staff engagement levels?
- c) Do managers recognise and reward exceptional work?
- d) Is appropriate attention paid to staff safety and wellbeing, and building staff resilience?
- e) Are reasonable adjustments made for staff in accordance with statutory requirements, diversity and personal circumstances?

## **1.3 Partnerships and services**

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

#### **1.3.1 Is there a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of children, used by the YOT to deliver well-targeted services?**

- a) Is there an up-to-date strategic and operational analysis of the desistance needs presented by the children?
- b) Does the analysis pay sufficient attention to factors for safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm?
- c) Does the analysis pay sufficient attention to diversity factors and to issues of disproportionality?
- d) Is there sufficient analysis of local patterns of sentencing and offence types?
- e) Is the analysis used effectively to influence service delivery?
- f) Does the analysis incorporate the views of children and families about the services they receive?

#### **1.3.2 Does the YOT partnership provide the volume, range and quality of services and interventions required to meet the needs of all children?**

- a) Is there access to the right specialist and mainstream services and interventions to meet the desistance needs of children?
- b) Is sufficient attention paid to building on strengths and enhancing protective factors?
- c) Are diversity factors and issues of disproportionality sufficiently addressed in the range of services provided?
- d) Is the quality of services reviewed and evaluated, including a review of the impact on diverse groups, with remedial action taken where required?

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

- a) Are there effective arrangements with partners and providers to support desistance through access to specialist and mainstream services?

- b) Are there effective arrangements with partners and providers to support the safety and wellbeing of children?
- c) Are there effective arrangements with partners and providers to manage the risk of harm to others?
- d) Are there effective arrangements with partners and providers to support the personal circumstances and diversity needs of children?
- e) Are courts made sufficiently aware of the services available to support sentencing options?

#### ***1.4 Information and facilities***

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

##### **1.4.1 Do the policies and guidance in place enable staff to deliver a high-quality service, meeting the needs of all children?**

- a) Are the necessary policies in place that describe and guide effective service delivery?
- b) Are policies and guidance communicated effectively to all those to whom they apply?
- c) Do staff understand how to access the right services from partners and providers?
- d) Are policies and guidance regularly reviewed, paying due regard to diversity issues?
- e) Are YOT processes effectively and regularly reviewed, including considering issues of disproportionality?

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

- a) Does the YOT deliver its work to children in accessible places?
- b) Is the YOT delivery environment a safe place for staff and children?
- c) Does the YOT delivery environment enable staff to undertake appropriate personalised work and engage effectively with children?

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

- a) Do the ICT systems enable staff to plan, deliver and record their work in a timely way, and to access information as required?
- b) Do the ICT arrangements allow access to and exchange of the right information to and from partners, providers and other key stakeholders?
- c) Do the ICT systems support the production of the necessary management information, including diversity information?

##### **1.4.4 Are analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement?**

- a) Do performance and quality assurance systems drive improvement?
- b) Are service improvement plans supported through evaluation and development of the underlying evidence base?
- c) Are processes in place to ensure that the YOT learns from things that go wrong?

- d) Are the views of the children, their parents or carers, and other key stakeholders sought, analysed and used to review and improve the effectiveness of services?
- e) Does the YOT collect and use diversity information to drive improvement?
- f) Where necessary, is action taken promptly and appropriately in response to audit or inspection?
- g) Is learning communicated effectively?

## 2. Court disposals

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### 2.1 Assessment

**Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.**

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

- a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?
- b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?
- c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?
- d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?
- e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?
- f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?
- g) Is enough attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and their likelihood of engaging with the court disposal?
- h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?
- i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?

#### 2.1.2 Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

- a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?
- b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?
- c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?

#### 2.1.3 Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

- a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?
- b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?
- c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?

## **2.2 Planning**

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

### **2.2.1 Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?**

- a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?
- b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?
- c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?
- d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?
- e) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?
- f) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims?
- g) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?

### **2.2.2 Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?**

- a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?
- b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?
- c) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?
- d) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?

### **2.2.3 Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?**

- a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?
- b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?
- c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?
- d) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?
- e) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?



### *2.3 Implementation and delivery*

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

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

- a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?
- b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?
- c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?
- d) Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?
- e) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?
- f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to services post-supervision?
- g) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?
- h) Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?

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

- a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?
- b) Is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?

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

- a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?
- b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?
- c) Is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?

## ***2.4 Reviewing***

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

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

- a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors linked to desistance?
- b) Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?
- c) Does reviewing include analysis of, and respond to, diversity factors?
- d) Does reviewing consider the personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?
- d) Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?
- e) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?
- f) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to support desistance?

### **2.4.2 Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?**

- a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing?
- b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?
- c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?

### **2.4.3 Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?**

- a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to risk of harm?
- b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?
- c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?

## 3. Out-of-court disposals

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### 3.1 Assessment

**Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.**

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

- a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's acknowledgement of responsibility for, attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?
- b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?
- c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?
- d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?
- e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?
- f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?
- g) Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?
- h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?
- i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?

#### 3.1.2 Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

- a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?
- b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?

#### 3.1.3 Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

- a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?
- b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including any other assessments that have been completed, and other evidence of behaviour by the child?

## **3.2 Planning**

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

### **3.2.1 Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?**

- a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?
- b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?
- c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?
- d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?
- e) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?
- f) Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?
- g) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims?
- h) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?

### **3.2.2 Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?**

- a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?
- b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?
- c) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?

### **3.2.3 Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?**

- a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?
- b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?
- c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?
- d) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?

### *3.3 Implementation and delivery*

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

#### **3.3.1 Does service delivery support the child's desistance?**

- a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?
- b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?
- c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?
- d) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?
- e) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?
- f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?

#### **3.3.2 Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?**

- a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?
- b) Is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-utilised and coordinated?

#### **3.3.3 Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?**

- a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?
- b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?

### *3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision*

**There is a high-quality, evidence-based out-of-court disposal service in place that promotes diversion and supports sustainable desistance.**

#### **3.4.1 Is there a policy in place for out-of-court disposal provision that promotes appropriate diversion and supports sustainable desistance?**

- a) Is there a clear, joint protocol in place with the police, setting out a locally agreed out-of-court disposal policy and practice, including joint and defensible decision-making?
- b) Are the out-of-court disposal eligibility criteria clearly defined and appropriately broad to allow for the use of discretion while avoiding inappropriate net-widening?
- c) Does the out-of-court disposal eligibility criteria include an escalation process which avoids the inappropriate overuse of specific disposals?
- d) Does the policy set out the distinct and substantial differences between community resolutions and formal out-of-court disposals?
- e) Are arrangements set out to ensure that children are actively and consistently diverted into the most appropriate care and support services?
- f) Does the out-of-court disposals policy describe how diversity needs will be addressed?
- g) Are arrangements set out to ensure that children are kept safe?
- h) Are arrangements set out to ensure the safety of other people?

#### **3.4.2 Does out-of-court disposal provision promote diversion and support sustainable desistance?**

- a) Is there an out-of-court disposal panel or other suitable means of joint decision-making in place that includes representation from the YOT, police and social care as a minimum?
- b) Does the out-of-court disposal panel or decision-making process support timely and effective diversion?
- c) Is there a clear and effective escalation process in place when the out-of-court disposal panel or decision-making process is unable to achieve consensus?
- d) Are arrangements in place to ensure that out-of-court disposals are consistently applied in a timely and robust manner?
- e) Is a wide range of out-of-court disposal interventions available that are strengths based, future focused and promote positive child outcomes?
- f) Is sufficient attention given to compliance with, and enforcement of, conditions where appropriate?
- g) Does the provision pay sufficient attention to keeping children safe?
- h) Does the provision pay sufficient attention to keeping other people safe?

#### **3.4.3 Are the out-of-court disposal policy and provision regularly assessed and updated to ensure effectiveness and maintain alignment with the evidence base?**

- a) Are the out-of-court disposal policy and provision regularly evaluated and reviewed?
- b) Does evaluation include the use of data and is it informed by necessary input from other agencies involved in delivering the out-of-court disposal service?

- c) Does evaluation include active consideration of diversity issues?
- d) Do evaluation and review identify and respond to changes in the out-of-court disposal evidence base?
- e) Do evaluation and review lead to the necessary adjustments to the out-of-court disposal policy and provision?
- f) Are children and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in the evaluation and review of out-of-court disposal policy and provision?

#### ***4.1 Resettlement policy and provision***

**There is a high-quality, evidence-based resettlement service for children leaving custody.**

##### **4.1.1 Is there a resettlement policy in place that promotes a high-quality, constructive and personalised resettlement service for all children?**

- a) Does the resettlement policy set out the arrangements for the suitable and timely provision of accommodation, education, training and employment, healthcare and other resettlement pathway services?
- b) Does the resettlement policy address structural barriers to effective resettlement enabling pro-social identity development?
- c) Does the resettlement policy describe how diversity needs will be addressed?
- d) Does the resettlement policy advocate an approach to personalised support that is constructive, strengths based and future focused?
- e) Does the resettlement policy set out the arrangements for access to, and exchange of, the right information to and from partners, providers and other key stakeholders?
- f) Does the resettlement policy set out arrangements to ensure that children are kept safe?
- g) Does the resettlement policy set out arrangements to ensure the safety of other people?
- h) Does the resettlement policy address the needs of victims?

##### **4.1.2 Does resettlement provision promote a high-quality, constructive and personalised resettlement service for all children?**

- a) Is suitable and timely accommodation provision available for all children leaving custody?
- b) Is appropriate access to other services, including education, training and employment, and healthcare, available for all children leaving custody?
- c) Is sufficient attention paid to meeting diversity needs in resettlement provision?
- d) Is the approach to resettlement provision evidence based?
- e) Are staff specifically trained to assess, identify, plan for and respond to each child's resettlement needs?
- f) Does resettlement provision pay sufficient attention to keeping children safe?
- g) Does resettlement provision pay sufficient attention to keeping other people safe?
- h) Does resettlement provision address the needs of victims?

##### **4.1.3 Are resettlement policy and provision regularly assessed and updated to ensure effectiveness and maintain alignment with the evidence base?**

- a) Are resettlement policy and provision regularly evaluated and reviewed?
- b) Does evaluation include the use of data and is it informed by necessary input from other agencies involved in delivering elements of resettlement?
- c) Does evaluation include active consideration of diversity issues?



- d) Do evaluation and review identify and respond to changes in the resettlement evidence base?
- e) Do evaluation and review lead to the necessary adjustments to resettlement policy and provision?
- f) Are children and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in the evaluation and review of resettlement policy and provision?