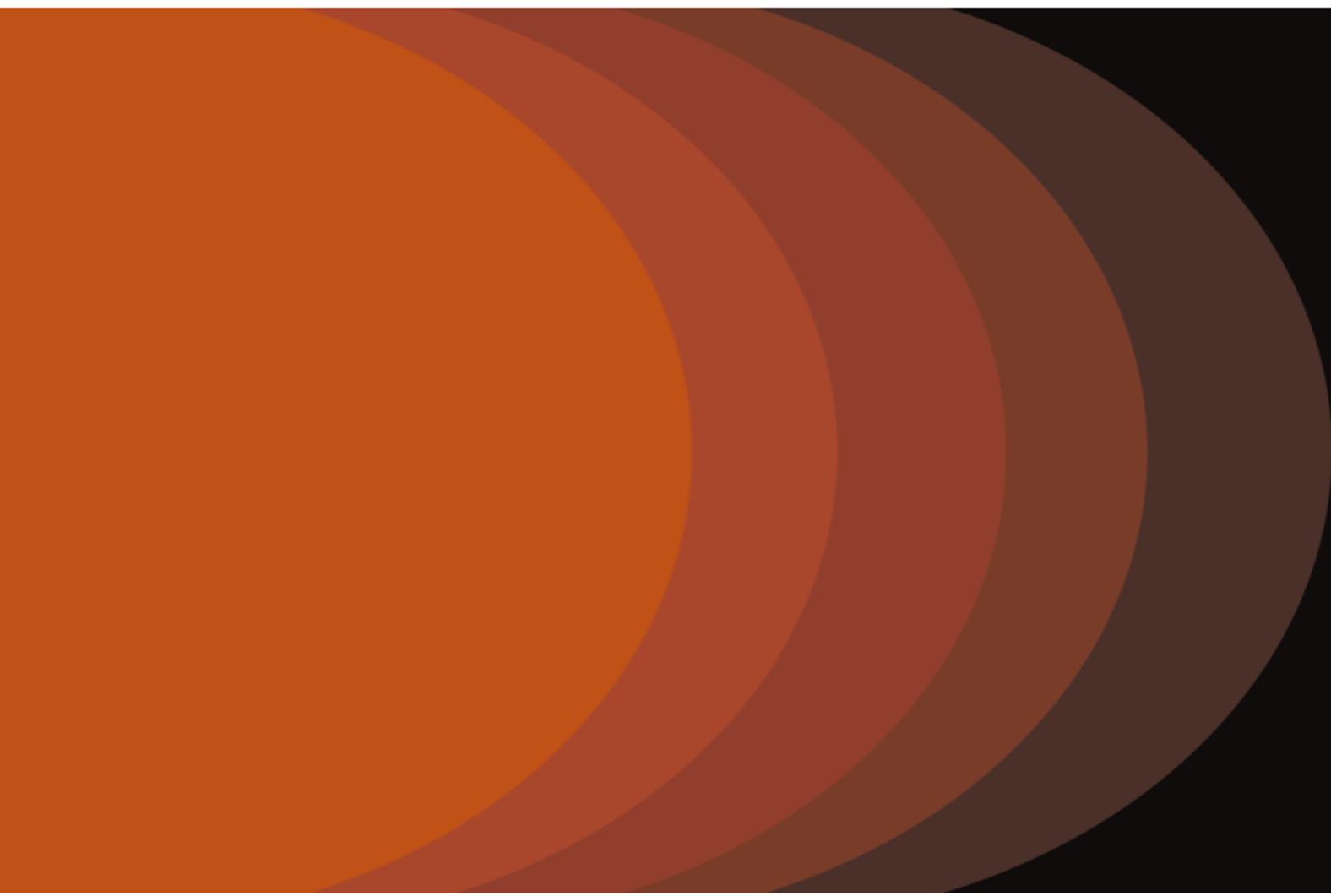




Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in
Wirral

HM Inspectorate of Probation, October 2021



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Acknowledgements

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Pauline Burke, supported by a team of inspectors and colleagues from across the Inspectorate. We would like to thank all those who helped plan and took part in the inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

HM 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.

We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice and use our data and information to encourage high-quality services. We are independent of government and speak independently.

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This publication is available for download at:
www.justiceinspectories.gov.uk/hmiprobation

Published by:

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

Follow us on Twitter [@hmiprobation](#)

ISBN: 978-1-914478-33-8

Foreword

This inspection is part of our programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. Overall, Wirral YJS was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was rated separately as 'Requires improvement'.

The inspection found a good service, with strengths clearly evident across the planning, implementation and delivery for both court and out-of-court disposals. The service has an excellent understanding of desistance, and work to promote this was evident. However, improvements were required in the assessment of the child's safety and wellbeing, and in the identification of the risks the child may pose to others. Clearer analysis and improved contingency planning were considered necessary to manage and mitigate these risks.

Wirral YJS's arrangements for information and facilities, and staffing are good; however, its governance and leadership, and its partnerships and services were rated as 'Requires improvement'.

Over the past year, there has been a focused effort on raising the profile of the service and improving the strategic responsibilities of the management board. A lack of focus on the educational needs of YJS children is now being addressed and we found a renewed energy and commitment to making sustained improvements.

There is a good framework in place to support work with children who are displaying harmful sexual behaviour. However, the provision for YJS children to access speech, language and communication interventions is limited.

The inspection found that work with victims is fragmented and, although they are contacted by the service, there is little capacity to allow for developing their engagement. The service has a draft resettlement policy which includes the implementation of a resettlement panel. This guidance was welcomed by staff and resettlement training has been arranged.

This is an organisation that is keen to learn and open to reviews from other areas to help improve its practice. We found that staff are offered the opportunity for development through their roles as champions in specific areas of practice, training is prioritised and practitioners are encouraged to be creative in their work with children and families.

In this report, we make a number of recommendations which we hope will enable Wirral to make the improvements needed to deliver a high-quality service for children.



Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Wirral Youth Justice Service		Score	23/36
Overall rating		Good	
1. Organisational delivery			
1.1 Governance and leadership		Requires improvement	
1.2 Staff		Good	
1.3 Partnerships and services		Requires improvement	
1.4 Information and facilities		Good	
2. Court disposals			
2.1 Assessment		Requires improvement	
2.2 Planning		Outstanding	
2.3 Implementation and delivery		Outstanding	
2.4 Reviewing		Outstanding	
3. Out-of-court disposals			
3.1 Assessment		Requires improvement	
3.2 Planning		Good	
3.3 Implementation and delivery		Good	
3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision		Good	
4. Resettlement			
4.1 Resettlement policy and provision		Requires improvement	

Executive summary

Overall, Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) is rated as '**Good**'. This rating has been determined by inspecting the YJS in three areas of its work, referred to as 'domains'. We inspect against 12 core 'standards', shared between the domains. The standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.¹ Published scoring rules generate the overall YJS rating.² We inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision separately and rated this work as 'Requires improvement'. The findings and subsequent ratings in those domains are described below.

Organisational delivery

The YJS arrangements for information and facilities, and staffing are rated as 'Good'. The arrangements for governance and leadership, and partnership and services are rated as 'Requires improvement'.

Since the YJS moved into the children's services division in July 2020, there has been a focused effort on raising the profile of the service and improving the strategic responsibilities of the management board. New members have been recruited at the right strategic level and there has been an investment in ensuring that members understand their roles and responsibilities. There has been a lack of strategic focus on the educational needs of YJS children but, with the appointment of a new assistant director for education, this is being addressed. Management board members are committed to making sure that the needs of YJS children are met appropriately and there is a renewed energy to the board meetings. These are recent developments, however, and we need to see evidence of these improvements being sustained.

Staff indicate that they are comfortable with their workload, receive regular supervision and are offered the opportunity for development through their roles as champions in specific areas of practice – for example, the service has a dyslexia champion. Training is prioritised and staff are encouraged to be creative in their work with children and families. Staff development is evidenced through the service recruiting staff to act up into more senior positions and encouraging staff secondments to partner agencies.

There are appropriate staff seconded to the YJS, and links in place with specialist workers in other agencies to allow access to provision for YJS children. There is a wide range of prevention and early help services available. There is a good framework in place to support work with children who are displaying harmful sexual behaviour; this includes appropriately trained practitioners. There is limited provision for YJS children accessing speech, language and communication interventions, and staff are not trained in identifying these issues. The work with victims is fragmented and, although they are contacted, there is little capacity in the way the provision is

¹ HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards can be found here:
<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

² Each of the 12 standards is scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0 to 36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows: 0–6 = 'Inadequate', 7–18 = 'Requires improvement', 19–30 = 'Good', 31–36 = 'Outstanding'.

set up to allow for developing their engagement. The YJS has a business manager, who provides comprehensive performance reports which allow the YJS to analyse the data and the profiling of the children known to the service.

There is a draft YJS resettlement policy, which was updated as a result of findings from a learning review, and now includes the implementation of a resettlement panel. This guidance was welcomed by staff, and training has been arranged on how to complete the recall process and work with the parole board requirements. There were good links between YJS staff and the custodial establishments, although these had been hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic. Four resettlement cases were seen, and in two of these, gaps were identified in the resettlement practice.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows:

- There has been a focused effort on raising the profile of the service and improving the strategic responsibilities of the management board.
- New management board members have been recruited at the right strategic level and there has been an investment in ensuring that they understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Management oversight of post-court cases is good.
- The YJS has its own performance dashboard, which gives it access to an excellent suite of data.
- Staff development is evidenced through the service recruiting staff to act up into more senior positions and encouraging staff secondments to partner agencies.
- There is a good framework in place to support work with children who are displaying harmful sexual behaviour; this includes appropriately trained practitioners.
- The facilities available to YJS children at the Solar Campus are good and enable access to other agencies.
- There is evidence of the service being an organisation that is keen to learn and open to reviews from other areas to help improve its practice.

But:

- The improvements to the board have been very recent and the momentum of the changes needs to be maintained for the board to continue to develop.
- There has been a lack of strategic focus on the educational needs of YJS children.
- The management oversight of out-of-court disposals needs to improve.
- There is limited provision for YJS children accessing speech, language and communication interventions, and staff are not trained in identifying these issues.
- The work with victims is fragmented and there is little capacity in the way the provision is set up to allow for developing it.

Court disposals

We took a detailed look at five community sentences and two custodial sentences managed by the YJS. We also conducted seven interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery of services; and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect

of work done to address desistance, to keep the child safe, and to keep other people safe.

Our key findings about court disposals are as follows:

- Assessment is outstanding in the area of desistance.
- Case managers provide analysis of offending, which includes understanding the child's diversity needs and their personal circumstances.
- Planning was sufficient in the great majority of cases we inspected on all three aspects of case quality, and case managers consider the child's strengths and protective factors as well as their level of maturity and motivation to change.
- Case managers involve children and their parents or carers in planning interventions, and also ensure that the needs and wishes of victims are considered.
- When planning for the child's safety and wellbeing, their risks are addressed, and other agencies are involved appropriately.
- The concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims are considered when planning to address the risk of harm to others.

But:

- Assessing a child's safety and wellbeing, and their risk of harm to others requires improvement.
- Children's involvement with illegal substances can make them vulnerable to other people, and this needs to be taken into account when assessing their safety and wellbeing. Clearer identification and analysis are required of the risks that the child poses to others, including who is at risk and the nature of that risk.
- Setting out the contingency arrangements to manage a child's safety and wellbeing, and their risk of harm to others needs development.

Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 20 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These were all community resolution cases. We interviewed the case managers in 20 cases.

We examined the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, to keep the child safe and to keep other people safe. The quality of the work undertaken for each factor needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision, to be rated as satisfactory.

We also inspected the quality of policy and provision for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews.

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

- Assessment analysed sufficiently how to support the child's desistance in 13 out of the 20 cases, and how to keep others safe in 14 of the 20 cases.
- Case managers consider the child's strengths and protective factors, and their level of maturity, ability and motivation to change.

- Where a victim has been identified, their needs and wishes are taken into account and the views of parents or carers are considered as part of the assessment.
- Case managers set out the opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services following completion of the out-of-court disposal work.
- Implementation and delivery of services was sufficient in 18 out of the 20 cases we inspected in the areas of desistance and risk of harm to others, and in 14 out of 20 cases when relating to a child's safety and wellbeing.
- Staff are focused on developing and maintaining a good working relationship with children and families, and encourage and enable the child's compliance with the work.
- There is a Merseyside-wide out-of-court disposal policy in place and the YJS has written its own local guidance for staff.

But:

- Assessing a child's safety and wellbeing requires improvement as the potential risks to the child need to be identified and analysed.
- Information from other agencies must be included, when relevant, in order to help inform the risk assessment process.
- For both safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others, setting out the contingency arrangements to manage risk needs development.
- The involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe needs to be better coordinated.

Resettlement

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews. To illustrate that work, we inspected four cases managed by the YJS that had received a custodial sentence.

Our key findings about resettlement work are as follows:

- There is a draft resettlement policy in place which includes the implementation of a resettlement panel.
- There are good links between the YJS staff and caseworkers in the custodial establishments.
- Pre-Covid-19, partner agencies which provide services as part of the child's resettlement would visit children in the custodial establishments.
- Training on resettlement has been arranged for staff.

But:

- Good-quality accommodation is difficult to find for children leaving custody.
- Education, training and employment opportunities were lacking for the children in two of the resettlement cases.
- In one case, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services assessment completed by the custodial establishment had not been actioned in the community following the child's release.

Recommendations

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

The chair of the management board should:

1. work with management board members, so that they understand their role, and the function, data and performance of the YJS, to enable them to advocate on behalf of children known to the service.

The youth justice service management board should:

2. make sure that all children known to the YJS receive their statutory entitlement to education, and access to high-quality education and training services which are matched to their needs
3. ensure that provision is in place to identify the speech, language and communication needs of children known to the YJS
4. review the service to victims so that their wishes and needs are fully captured and, where appropriate, their engagement informs individual case management.

The youth justice service manager should:

5. improve the quality of management oversight in out-of-court disposal work.

Background

Youth offending teams (YOTs) supervise children aged 10 to 18 who have been sentenced by a court, or who have come to the attention of the police because of their offending behaviour but have not been charged – instead, they were dealt with out of court. HM Inspectorate of Probation inspects both these aspects of youth offending services.

YOTs are statutory partnerships, and they are multidisciplinary, to 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 Probation Service and local health services.³ Most YOTs are based within local authorities, although this can vary.

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). The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) provides some funding to YOTs. It also monitors their performance and issues guidance to them about how things are to be done.

Wirral is a metropolitan borough of Merseyside in north-west England. Within an area of approximately 60 square miles, the borough contains individual wards which are among some of the wealthiest in the country, as well as some of the poorest. The population is 324,000, including approximately 30,158 children (aged 10 to 17). The population is predominantly white British (90 per cent) but significant ethnic minority groups exist, particularly Irish, Chinese and Polish. Almost two-thirds of the population lives within the eastern urban area, where levels of deprivation are higher. Birkenhead is the largest town within the borough, historically built around the maritime trades associated with the Mersey Docklands. The decline of this industry left a legacy of white working-class boys with reduced opportunities and aspirations. It was ranked 77th out of 326 of the local authority areas on the Indices of Deprivation scale (IMD 2019).⁴

In July 2020, Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) moved from the council's neighbourhood directorate into the children's services directorate. Previous to this move, the YJS was part of the council's police-led community safety structures. While these structures put a strong focus on justice, the focus on the child was less effective. Following consideration by the council's senior leadership team, the service was moved to the children, young people and education directorate. The YJS joined the contextual safeguarding service, within the early help and prevention service area. As part of the contextual safeguarding service, the YJS benefits from a dedicated head of service, who oversees Compass (the child exploitation and missing team), detached youth work teams and the complex safeguarding team.

³ The *Crime and Disorder Act (1998)* set out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

⁴ Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Contextual facts

Population information⁵

221	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in Wirral YJS ⁶
207	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in England and Wales
41%	Reoffending rate in Wirral YJS ⁷
39%	Reoffending rate in England and Wales
324,011	Total population Wirral
30,158	Total youth population (10–17 years) in Wirral

Caseload information⁸

Age	10–14 years	15–17 years
Wirral YOS	16%	84%
National average	22%	78%

Race/ethnicity	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
Wirral YOS	96%	4%	0%
Wirral ⁹	97%	3%	0%
National average	69%	28%	3%

Gender	Male	Female
Wirral YOS	87%	13%
National average	85%	15%

⁵ Office for National Statistics. (2020). *UK population estimates, mid-2019*.

⁶ Youth Justice Board. (2021). *First-time entrants, January to December 2019*.

⁷ Ministry of Justice. (2020). *Proven reoffending statistics, January to December 2018*.

⁸ Youth Justice Board. (2021). *Youth justice annual statistics: 2019 to 2020*.

⁹ Data supplied by the YJS.

Additional caseload data¹⁰

All supplied by YOT as standard data.

51	Total current caseload: community sentences
2	Total current caseload in custody
2	Total current caseload on licence
367	Total current caseload: out-of-court disposals

For children subject to court disposals:

Offence types¹¹	%
Violence against the person	43%
Burglary	14%
Robbery	14%
Drug offences	14%
Summary motoring offences	14%

¹⁰ Data supplied by the YJS, reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

¹¹ Data from the cases assessed during this inspection.

1. Organisational delivery

The youth justice service (YJS) arrangements for information and facilities, and staffing are good. The arrangements for governance and leadership, and partnership and services are rated as 'Requires improvement'.

Since the YJS moved to children's services in July 2020, there has been a focused effort on raising the profile of the service and improving the strategic responsibilities of the management board. New members have been recruited at the right strategic level and there has been an investment in ensuring that members understand their roles and responsibilities. There has been a lack of strategic focus on the educational needs of YJS children but, with the appointment of a new assistant director for education, this is being addressed. Management board members are committed to making sure that the needs of YJS children are being met appropriately and there is a renewed energy to the board meetings. These are recent developments, however, and we need to see evidence of these improvements being sustained.

Staff are comfortable with their workload, receive regular supervision and are offered the opportunity for development through their roles as champions in specific areas of practice – for example, the service has a dyslexia champion. Training is prioritised and staff are encouraged to be creative in their work with children and families. Staff development is evidenced through the service recruiting staff to act up into more senior positions and encouraging staff secondments to partner agencies.

The YJS has a business manager, who provides comprehensive performance reports which allow the YJS to analyse the data and the profiling of the children known to the service. There are appropriate staff seconded to the YJS, and links in place with specialist workers in other agencies to allow access to provision for YJS children.

There is a wide range of prevention and early help services available. There is a good framework in place to support work with children who are displaying harmful sexual behaviour; this includes appropriately trained practitioners. However, there is limited provision for YJS children accessing speech, language and communication interventions, and staff are not trained in identifying these issues. The work with victims is fragmented and, although victims are contacted, there is little capacity in the way the provision is set up to allow for developing their engagement.

The service has policies in place and guidance is available for staff. The facilities available to YJS children at the Solar Campus are good and enable them to access other agencies. There is evidence of the service being an organisation that is keen to learn and open to reviews from other areas to help improve its practice. Children's feedback is sought and reported on, and consideration is given to improving their engagement with the service.

Strengths:

- There has been a focused effort on raising the profile of the service and improving the strategic responsibilities of the management board.
- New management board members have been recruited at the right strategic level and there has been investment in ensuring that they understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Management oversight of post-court cases is good.

- The YJS has its own performance dashboard, which gives it access to an excellent suite of data.
- Staff development is evidenced through the service recruiting staff to act up into more senior positions and encouraging staff secondments to partner agencies.
- There is a good framework in place to support work with children who are displaying harmful sexual behaviour; this includes appropriately trained practitioners.
- The facilities available to YJS children at the Solar Campus are good and enable them to access other agencies.
- There is evidence of the service being an organisation that is keen to learn and open to reviews from other areas to help improve its practice.

Areas for improvement:

- The improvements to the board have been very recent and the momentum of the changes needs to be maintained for the board to continue to develop.
- There has been a lack of strategic focus on the educational needs of YJS children.
- The management oversight of out-of-court disposals needs to improve.
- There is limited provision for YJS children accessing speech, language and communication interventions, and staff are not trained in identifying these issues.
- The work with victims is fragmented and there is little capacity in the way the provision is set up to allow for developing it.

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.

Requires improvement

Key data

Total spend in previous financial year	£1,638,569
Total projected budget current for financial year	£1,951,467

In making a judgement about governance and leadership, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

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

The inspection assessed the governance and leadership arrangements as 'Requires improvement'. The assistant director of early help and prevention services became chair of the management board in July 2020. They quickly realised that the YJS needed to be supported and incorporated within the children and family-focused part of the local authority and so ensured that these services were represented on the management board. Under the direction of the assistant director as chair, the YJS management board was reviewed and refreshed, ensuring that its membership includes all statutory partners, as well as some non-statutory agencies. These include the chair of Wirral youth panel of magistrates and a community engagement officer from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Nearly all board members are new and have received an induction into their role. Workshops have been held to help them understand the work of the YJS, and their role and responsibilities as members of the management board. As a result of the YJB national standards self-assessment, board members have been allocated lead roles in specific areas of YJS practice, and a management board strategic lead for diversity has been identified.

In 2020, the YJS submitted its Covid-19 recovery plan to the YJB and has produced its strategic youth justice plan for 2020/2021, which sets the direction and priorities for the service.

The improvements made to the membership, attendance and influence of the management board have happened under the direction of the new board chair since July 2020. The impact of these changes must be sustained if the quality of services for children and families are to continue to be improved.

Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?

The YJS management board has links to other strategic meetings. Issues having an impact on youth offending are prominent on the agendas of other key strategic groups, including the Wirral Safeguarding Children's Partnership, Safer Wirral Partnership Board, Merseyside Criminal Justice Board Youth Performance Improvement Group and the contextual safeguarding committee. The organisational move of the service to the early help and prevention directorate has integrated the YJS into the wider children and family's agenda and raised its profile.

There is a framework in place to monitor the number of Looked After Children known to the YJS. Strategic leaders have plans in place to continue to review the arrangements with children's homes and the police, to ensure that policies and practices do not result in children being criminalised unnecessarily.

The management board is aware that there has been a gap in the provision of mainstream education for YJS children. At the time of the inspection, the board chair was in discussions with the new assistant director for education regarding the appropriate level of education representation on the board. The chair has also scheduled a deep-dive audit into the education profile and experiences of YJS children as a comparison with their peers. It is anticipated that this will be discussed at the management board and will focus negotiations regarding the educational resources that are needed to be put in place for YJS children.

Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?

The service manager has held various roles within the YJS and has been in their current role since 2016. Both the service manager and the team leaders are knowledgeable about youth justice and work well together in supporting the team.

The service manager and the business manager are core members of the management board. The team leaders will attend to present on specific pieces of work. In recent meetings, staff members have been attending the board to present case studies and talk about specific projects.

Although communication from the board is shared through the management and team meetings, there is a gap in the team leaders' knowledge about the strategic direction and priorities for the YJS. For example, there is an operational plan created from the strategic plan, but the team leaders are not involved in its development, although they are allocated actions according to their roles and responsibilities. However, all of the 21 staff members who completed the staff survey said that they are updated on strategic issues, and 86 per cent that they are aware of the activities of the management board and understand its role.

Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the service. Levels of offending have decreased but there has been an increase in children's services contacts regarding mental health, peer-on-peer issues and harmful sexual behaviours. Work across the council has included the delivery of food parcels, provision of free school meals and supply of information technology equipment for vulnerable children. During the pandemic, practitioners have been innovative and developed online methods of engagement, virtual platforms and a multi-agency vulnerable children panel, and launched a dedicated helpline for children.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Key staffing data¹²

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent (FTE))	82
Vacancy rate (total unfilled posts as percentage of total staff headcount)	4%
Average caseload case managers (FTE equivalent) ¹³	10
Average annual working days sickness (all staff)	11.9

In making a judgement about staffing, we take into account the answers to the following five questions:

¹² Data supplied by YJS and reflecting staffing at the time of the inspection announcement.

¹³ Data supplied by YJS, based on staffing and workload at the time of the inspection announcement.

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

Wirral YJS has five teams – an administrative and volunteers team managed by the business manager, and four teams managed by the team leaders. One team leader post has recently been filled and the new recruit is due to start soon. Another team leader has been seconded to the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership and their post has been filled by an acting team leader. The teams include case managers who specialise in specific areas of practice, including harmful sexual behaviour and child-to-adult violence. The service also has a court officer, a volunteer coordinator, a victim worker (half-time and carries a caseload), a seconded police officer and a seconded probation officer.

The YJS has a generic case management model, and staff manage prevention cases, out-of-court disposals and statutory orders. This approach gives managers flexibility when allocating cases, as they can do this according to staff strengths as well as taking into account children's needs.

Managers hold a weekly allocation meeting and use a workload allocation spreadsheet that considers case managers' availability and their current situation. It also considers which staff have been involved with the family previously, so that consistency of workers is prioritised. At the time of the inspection, case managers had approximately 10 cases, although this has been affected by Covid-19 and it is anticipated that this number will rise. In the staff survey, 85 per cent of respondents said that they find their workload or caseload manageable.

There was evidence in the inspected cases that staff do all they can to encourage good engagement and compliance from the child, and that staff and managers alike are child centred and know the children in their care well.

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

The YJS uses a generic caseload model; this requires staff and managers to have an extensive skill set that can be applied to working with prevention cases, out-of-court disposals and statutory orders. This has been a challenge for the service, and all staff have had to learn new skills. Experienced members of staff have been used to help in the development of their peers in specific areas of work.

The YJS has a volunteer and mentoring provision, managed by a full-time volunteer coordinator. Prior to Covid-19, all volunteers received an on-site comprehensive induction which included observing staff, briefings from managers and sessions with partner agencies. Volunteers feel well supported and receive regular supervision and relevant ongoing training. Their roles include chairing referral order panels and providing mentoring services, which incorporate befriending children, delivering one-to-one interventions and helping with transport. The volunteers stated that they receive regular email updates, as well as the service newsletter, and that they feel included as part of the team.

Prior to Covid-19, the service delivered group work programmes, but these are currently suspended, and interventions are delivered on a one-to-one basis. Practitioners can use a range of resources, which include work relating to knife crime, violence and anger management, conflict resolution and the influence of peers. Staff have had to be creative in delivering interventions during Covid-19 and have used 'walk and talk' and 'doorstep' home visits to engage children.

The service has a seconded police officer, who leads on out-of-court disposals, including contacting victims, attending relevant risk panels and acting as the conduit for sharing information and intelligence. It also has a seconded probation officer, who has a caseload of children who are aged 16 and above, and leads on transitions to the probation service. They hold meetings with the child, their parents or carers, and the YJS case manager to explain the process before introducing the new probation officer. There is also a quarterly meeting with the YJS and the probation service managers to monitor transition cases and decide whether or not a child should remain with the YJS.

Child-to-adult violence was identified as a theme in Wirral, after increases in referrals to children's services and calls to the police were noted. The majority of callers were seeking help and support, rather than initiating criminal justice action against their child. In response, two members of Wirral YJS have completed the nationally recognised Non-Violent Resistance training. Taking referrals from the police and working with children's services' 'Integrated Front Door', they are developing a referral pathway to work with parents or carers who are victims of child-to-adult violence.

There is a Wirral YJS court officer, who works alongside court officers from the other four YOTs in the region to service the Merseyside court. Feedback from the court states that:

"Wirral YJS staff are well-prepared and provide timely advice regarding their interactions with children and young people. Their knowledge of the disposals available makes a valuable contribution to the court process, and their expertise is appreciated by the legal advisers and justices at court".

The court lead role is rotated among the managers across the five YOTs and is currently the responsibility of Wirral YJS.

The service encourages staff development actively through offering management opportunities. In addition, a number of staff are seconded to other teams, including a case manager to the child exploitation team and a team leader to the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership. These arrangements help to integrate the work of the YJS into the wider violence and child exploitation agenda, ensuring that information is shared across agencies, and that the appropriate support can be offered to children and families.

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

Staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals. Seconded staff receive supervision, an appraisal from their home agency, and supervision from their YJS line manager. Staff reported feeling supported both by their managers and their peers.

There is an induction process for new staff, with procedures for addressing staff competency. However, induction and training for staff who have joined recently has had to be adapted in line with Covid-19 restrictions. They have had limited access to buildings and face-to-face meetings with their colleagues, although they have been included in all virtual meetings and have completed a number of online training courses to help them to settle into their role.

Management oversight is good; it met the needs of the case in 71 per cent of post-court cases. For out-of-court disposals, however, management oversight met the needs of the case in only 35 per cent of cases and in two of the four resettlement cases. This is an area of practice that needs to improve.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

Training and development needs are identified through supervision and appraisals. Wirral YJS has a training plan in place and staff are encouraged to take up training opportunities. They have access to a mandatory training programme across the children's directorate which includes safeguarding courses. The service is also part of the Merseyside collaborative training group, where refresher and emerging training needs are identified, and courses are commissioned on a regional basis. Recent training courses have included Assessment, Intervention and Moving On (AIM) 3 training, working with trauma and child-to-adult violence.

The YJS has commissioned the Working Towards Enhanced Case Management programme through the Trauma Recovery Model Academy. It started working with this approach in 2020, and at the time of the inspection there were six children on the programme. It is led by the educational psychologist and a team leader. All staff have received training and a number of staff are to be identified to complete the specific training and coaching in case management. The enhanced case management model will not be used with every child, but it is anticipated that the learning and approaches will benefit all children across the service.

Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?

Staff reported feeling very well supported by both Wirral Council and the YJS throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. During the first lockdowns, there were twice-weekly meetings, focusing on giving people space to talk generally, rather than on work matters.

Staff reported receiving praise and appreciation emails from senior leaders, and positive feedback through supervision with their line managers. Recently, a service volunteer mentor won Wirral council's '#bethedifference' recognition award.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Requires improvement

Caseload characteristics

Percentage of current caseload with emotional wellbeing or mental health issues	35%
Percentage of current caseload with substance misuse issues	47%
Percentage of current caseload with learning disability or learning difficulty (special educational needs; speech, language and communication needs; dyslexia; etcetera) or subject to an education, health and care plan	28%
Percentage of current caseload with a child-in-need plan or child protection plan, or 'Looked After Children'	39%
Percentage of current caseload in a pupil referral unit, alternative education, on reduced timetables or not in education, training or employment	26%

In making a judgement about partnerships and services, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

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

The YJS has its own dashboard, which gives it access to an excellent suite of data. Comprehensive management performance reports are provided for the management board and include national and local indicators, and very detailed profiling and analysis of children known to the service. The service has management and team meetings, where performance data is shared with all staff.

The performance of the YJS is monitored across the partnership and the performance reports are shared with other partners, including the Safer Wirral Partnership Board and the Merseyside Criminal Justice Board Youth Performance Improvement Group.

Performance regarding the number of first-time entrants is disappointingly above the national average. However, there is evidence of work being done to analyse and monitor the performance, both in out-of-court disposals and post-court orders.

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

By moving into the contextual safeguarding service, which is part of early help and prevention services, the YJS has enhanced its partnership arrangements with early childhood services, the family matters service, schools and community services, and community-based youth and family support. The contextual safeguarding service

includes the YJS as well as the complex investigations team, detached youth work, and child exploitation and missing services.

Through the family matters service, there is an 'edge of care' team, which supports families with children going missing, helping parents to put appropriate boundaries and routines in place. It also works in conjunction with Catch 22 and Compass teams, and provides interventions, alongside the YJS, on child-to-adult violence. The YJS has a worker seconded to Compass, which works with children experiencing exploitation, missing from home or who are at risk. The seconded worker takes part in the YJS risk and safety and wellbeing (RSW) meetings, where attendees agree on the joint work that will take place and decide who is best placed to lead on the interventions.

The YJS has access to the criminal justice and liaison team, which provides the liaison and diversion scheme in the custody suite. A specific member of this team is linked to the service and attends the out-of-court disposal panel, completes mental health assessments and helps with referrals to mainstream services.

The service has a good relationship with staff in the local children's homes, and staff from residential placements will attend relevant meetings at the YJS. In June 2021, 10 per cent of the YJS out-of-court disposals and post-court orders cohort were Looked After Children. The Criminal Justice Board Youth Improvement Group monitors the number of Looked After Children, to ensure that they are not prosecuted unnecessarily.

A YJS team leader attends the children-in-custody scrutiny panel, which is chaired by the police and reviews all children at the point of arrest. Data is shared on the number of arrests, the child's arrival time in custody, and national concordat issues on how children are accommodated. The partnership acknowledges that there is a gap in accessing accommodation, and this is being reviewed by all Merseyside YOTs. For Wirral YJS, when accommodation is an issue, staff can escalate their concerns to the service manager and there is a housing representative on the management board. The service has had to be creative in finding accommodation, and on occasion has funded temporary provision for children.

The victim work provided by the YJS is the responsibility of two different workers. The seconded police officer contacts victims of out-of-court disposals, and the victim worker (who also carries a caseload) contacts the victims of statutory orders. The views of victims are heard at the various panels and they can influence the type of reparation that is agreed. It was acknowledged that few victims engage, although some are happy to be kept updated with the progress that the child is making on their disposal or order. The framework around this area of work is fragmented, and although the workers do all they can to contact victims and keep them informed, there is little capacity for developing methods of engagement with victims.

The service has a specialist sessional worker who manages the delivery of reparation. Projects include a workshop, named by children as 'The Shed', where products such as bird boxes and hedgehog houses are made and then passed on to animal rescue charities. There is also an art project making crime reduction posters. Reparation can be carried out on an individual basis or, pre-Covid-19, in group sessions.

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

Health provision to the YJS is good and there is a seconded educational psychologist who leads on the enhanced case management programme. She is also involved in providing psychological advice for education, health and care plan assessments, and offering consultations with YJS practitioners. There is also a specialist nurse, who completes a health needs assessment, and a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) worker, seconded for three days a week, who works with children displaying moderate to severe mental health difficulties. The YJS can access provision for children's emotional, mental health and wellbeing needs through other organisations, including the Open Door Charity, St Giles Trust and Oomoo (a newly commissioned service for Looked After Children).

Although a learning styles questionnaire is completed with children, it was disappointing to see that there is no screening to identify speech, language and communication needs. The service expects that staff will consult the educational psychologist if they think that the child needs an assessment in this area. However, staff have not received the necessary training to enable them to identify these needs in a child.

A Career Connect (formerly Connexions) worker is seconded to the YJS for three days a week and is active in motivating children and finding education, training and employment opportunities. In year 11, children at risk of becoming not in education, training or employment are offered further support, interventions and advice.

However, the YJS does not have a specific education worker, and a number of children are not in mainstream school but in alternative provision. It is not clear what work has been done with schools to help maintain children known to the YJS in mainstream provision. The management board is reviewing this situation, and a new assistant director for education has recently started in post, with negotiations about board representation and operational provision taking place.

For YJS children who have substance misuse issues, there is a seconded substance misuse worker employed by the YJS who works with children requiring intensive tier 3 interventions. Tier 2 substance misuse support is carried out by a sessional worker from Response, which is the local authority drug and alcohol service.

Through inspection meetings, staff reported that their relationship with children's social care services is good. YJS staff are invited to, and attend, all meetings regarding children in need, children on a child protection plan and Looked After Children.

The service has invested in the structure to work with children displaying harmful sexual behaviour and there is an excellent provision available. The harmful sexual behaviour team takes referrals through children's services' 'Integrated Front Door'. The team members are all AIM3 trained, and initially a social worker is allocated to all cases to help the family and the school with safety plans. There is a weekly meeting to discuss allocation and ongoing cases. There is no pressure to time limit the work with the children, and the cases remain open as long as is necessary to complete the interventions. The harmful sexual behaviour team also delivers training and briefings to schools and other partners.

Wirral Council has an innovative approach to contextual safeguarding. The head of service for contextual safeguarding has oversight of the YJS and direct line

management responsibility for the YJS service manager; leads the Wirral Safeguarding Partnership and the contextual safeguarding committee; and has developed the safer adolescent strategy. They also chair the multi-agency child exploitation (MACE) panel and link into Merseyside and regional forums for child exploitation, county lines and wider contextual safeguarding developments. The MACE meeting is held fortnightly, and a YJS team leader is a core member.

All high risk of harm, reoffending, and safety and wellbeing cases are referred to the YJS RSW meeting, which is chaired by the YJS service manager. The YJS police officer attends, as do YJS specialist staff if they are involved with the child and their family. Other agencies are invited as required. All cases discussed at these meetings are monitored through a risk register, which is updated regularly.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

As part of the inspection process, children are invited to participate in a text survey, and those whose cases are inspected are offered the opportunity to speak to an inspector, to give their feedback.

For the text survey, 12 children returned the survey, with 11 rating the YJS as eight or more out of 10 (with 10 being 'fantastic').

An inspector spoke to five children, and they all knew the aims of the YJS and felt that their workers had the right skills to do the work.

One child said:

"My YJS worker has helped me over the years. I tell him a lot. He has supported me with going to court, being in a police station and drove to see me when I lived out of area. He texts me to check in and see how things are".

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.

Good

In making a judgement about information and facilities, we take into account the answers to the following four questions:

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

The YJS has a range of policies and guidance which cover all the Merseyside YOTs. This collaboration across the five local authorities means that there is a consistent approach to relevant safeguarding policies and procedures. There are also Wirral YJS-specific policies and guidance in place which are accessible to staff. All staff are kept up to date with any changes in guidance through emails and team meetings.

Information-sharing protocols are in place across the partnership and there is evidence of a shared understanding of their application. There is an escalation process for all partners, to help in challenging another agency, and this is used by the YJS. Staff reported feeling supported by managers when raising concerns.

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

The YJS base is at the Solar Campus, where the service is co-located with the 'Integrated Front Door', early help and prevention, Compass, police community support officers and youth workers. There are workshop facilities, a pool room and private meeting spaces. As the service has adopted the 'Working Towards Enhanced Case Management' model, some of the rooms at the Solar Campus are being renovated to make them more child friendly and take account of a trauma-informed approach. Staff can also access an art centre to see children, if needed. Both offices are easily accessible for children and families. It is envisaged that staff will balance their time between working in the office accommodation available and home working as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

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

Information sharing is promoted by YJS staff having access to the children's social care system, and relevant partners having access to the YJS case management system. There are limitations to accessing police and health records, but this is managed through information sharing agreements.

The YJS case management system enables performance management data to be produced. As a result of Covid-19, all staff, including those who are normally office based, were issued with laptop computers and mobile phones.

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

The YJS has a monitoring system in place for quality assuring work. All assessments are countersigned, and feedback is given to practitioners. Audits are completed by team leaders, who use benchmarking meetings to help with ensuring the consistency of practice. The quality assurance tool was redesigned in 2020 and is used by case managers and their managers, with the outcome of audits being discussed in supervision sessions.

Thematic audits based on the youth justice plan's priority areas are also completed on a quarterly basis. The findings from these audits are fed back to staff through the practice development sessions.

The service promotes a learning culture for all staff. It recently commissioned a peer review by another YOT, to look at their practice and procedures for managing custodial cases after further offences led to licences being recalled. Learning reviews are also undertaken with the Wirral Safeguarding Partnership and there is evidence that the YJS learns from the outcomes of other areas' inspections, to improve practice.

In 2020, Merseyside youth advisers and the Wirral Youth Voice Group teamed up to complete a consultation and peer-led research project on children's experiences of violence. The Wirral Youth Voice Group also gathers feedback from children, using 'Survey Monkey' at the end of their YJS intervention, and this is presented to the management board. The service has written a child-friendly version of the youth justice strategic plan.

Diversity

Throughout our standards, we expect a personalised and responsive approach for all children, which includes taking account of their diversity and protected characteristics. Those factors may influence our judgements in specific standards. Here, we present an overall summary of the approach to diversity that we found in this YOT.

The population of Wirral is 90 per cent white; 96 per cent of children who are cautioned or sentenced are white and very few children who identify as black, Asian and minority ethnic become known to the YJS. Black, Asian and minority ethnic children are over-represented in the YJS according to the local population, but the numbers involved are very small. The YJS uses the YJB disproportionality toolkit and the management board strategic lead for diversity is kept updated.

The diversity of staff at the YJS includes four per cent of the workforce who are black, Asian or minority ethnic, 69 per cent who are female, five per cent with a declared disability and 48 per cent with other protected characteristics. For children known to the YJS, 35 per cent were assessed as having emotional mental health and wellbeing concerns and 28 per cent have a learning disability, learning difficulty or an education, health and care plan in place.

Wirral YJS has equality objectives in place to help it to deliver on its vision, and uses the management board performance report to identify themes linked to protected characteristics such as, gender, ethnicity and disability.

There is training planned for working with LGBTQ+ children, and the YJS has good links with The Hive, which runs a 'Work It Out' group (a LGBTQ+ programme). St Giles Trust also provides culturally matched mentors for children.

2. Court disposals

We took a detailed look at five community sentences and two custodial sentences managed by the YJS. We also conducted seven interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery of services; and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, keeping the child safe and keeping other people safe.

When assessing cases, we have ratings boundaries which determine the overall rating which is applied. Over 80 per cent of cases met all our requirements for assessing, planning, service delivery and reviewing for desistance, leading to a judgement of 'Outstanding' in this area of work. Similarly, a judgement of 'Outstanding' was given to planning, service delivery and reviewing for a child's safety and wellbeing, and their risk of harm to others. For assessing a child's safety and wellbeing, and their risk of harm to others, less than 65 per cent of cases met all our standards, leading to our judgement of 'Requires improvement' for these elements of work.

The great majority of assessments were satisfactory in the area of desistance. Case managers provide an analysis of the offending which includes the child's diversity needs and an understanding of their personal circumstances. They take account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and their ability and motivation to change. Assessing a child's safety and wellbeing, and their risk of harm to others requires improvement. Children's involvement with illegal substances can make them vulnerable to other people and this needs to be taken into account when assessing their safety and wellbeing. Similarly, clearer identification and analysis are needed of the risks that the child poses to others, including who is at risk and the nature of that risk.

Six out of the seven cases we inspected were satisfactory for planning in relation to all three areas of desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others. We found that planning takes account of a child's diversity issues and their personal circumstances, and considers their strengths and protective factors, as well as their level of maturity and motivation to change. Case managers involve children and their parents or carers in the planning. They also consider the needs and wishes of victims. When planning for the child's safety and wellbeing, their risks are addressed, and other agencies are involved appropriately. The concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims are considered when planning to address the risk of harm to others, although setting out the contingency arrangements to manage these risks could be improved.

Implementation and delivery of services and reviewing was satisfactory in the great majority of cases in all three areas of desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others. Case managers focus on developing and maintaining an effective relationship with children and their parents or carers. They encourage and enable the child's compliance, and when reviewing they consider the child's motivation, include the involvement of other agencies and adjust the ongoing plan accordingly.

Strengths:

- Assessment of desistance was consistently strong, and this was considered sufficient in all cases.
- Case managers provided an analysis of the offending which included the child's diversity needs and an understanding of their personal circumstances.
- Planning was excellent across desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others, and case managers considered the child's strengths and protective factors, as well as their level of maturity and motivation to change.
- Case managers involved children and their parents or carers in the planning, and also considered the needs and wishes of victims.
- When planning for the child's safety and wellbeing, their risks were addressed, and other agencies were involved appropriately.
- The concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims were considered when planning to address the risk of harm to others.

Areas for improvement:

- Assessing a child's safety and wellbeing, and their risk of harm to others requires improvement.
- Children's involvement with illegal substances can make them vulnerable to other people, and this needs to be considered when assessing their safety and wellbeing.
- Clearer identification and analysis are needed of the risks that the child poses to others, including who is at risk and the nature of that risk.
- Setting out the contingency arrangements to manage a child's safety and wellbeing, and their risk of harm to others needs development.

Work with children sentenced by the courts will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

2.1. Assessment



Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.	Requires improvement
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Our rating¹⁴ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	57%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	57%

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

In all cases inspected, the assessment had sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards, and motivation for, their offending. Staff considered the diversity and wider social context of the child in all cases by using information held by other agencies. In all cases, the assessment focused on the child's strengths and their protective factors, and recognised their level of maturity, ability and motivation to change.

One inspector noted:

"The assessment gives a very good insight into the child's difficult childhood and how that and his current circumstances have contributed to his situation. It gives a detailed analysis of the factors linked to offending and how best to support the child's desistance".

The views of the child were considered in all cases, and those of their parents or carers were included in 57 per cent of cases. The needs and wishes of the victim were taken into account in all of the relevant cases.

The factors that are most related to a child's offending are education, training and employment; substance misuse; and their living arrangements. In all cases, the assessment analysed sufficiently how to address these factors and support desistance.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

In only four of the seven cases, staff identified and analysed the risks to a child's safety and wellbeing. When children were involved with illegal substances, case managers did not consider that this could make them vulnerable to other people and therefore should be taken into account when assessing their safety and wellbeing. In most cases, assessments drew appropriately on assessments or information held by other agencies. In all of the cases, staff had given enough attention to analysing

¹⁴ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

the controls or interventions that best promoted the child's safety and wellbeing. Inspectors judged the safety and wellbeing risk classification as reasonable in all but one case. Overall, the assessment analysed sufficiently how to keep the child safe in just over half of the cases inspected.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

In only three of the seven cases, assessments identified and analysed any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk.

One inspector noted:

"There were a number of sources of information in relation to risk of harm to others, but these were not sufficiently pulled together and analysed in a cohesive way. The rationale for a medium risk of harm was limited and gave insufficient weight to past and current behaviours, and concentrated only on the current offence".

In most cases, however, staff used available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involved other agencies, where appropriate, in the assessments.

Inspectors judged the case manager's assessment of the level of risk of serious harm as reasonable in all but one case. In most cases, the assessment analysed controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child. Overall, as case managers did not identify consistently who is at risk and the nature of that risk, the assessment analysed how to keep other people safe in only 57 per cent (four out of the seven) cases.

2.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

Our rating¹⁵ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	86%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	86%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	86%

¹⁵ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?

Overall, planning supported the child's desistance in all but one of the cases inspected.

This was demonstrated in one case, where the inspector noted:

"Planned interventions are detailed and support desistance well. Joint planning sessions have been undertaken, with positive contributions from partnership agencies. The enhanced case management approach has provided a platform for some positive joint work and an opportunity to specifically tailor plans to meet the child's needs".

In nearly all cases, staff set out the services most likely to support desistance, took account of the child's personal circumstances, and considered the child's strengths and protective factors. Staff considered any diversity issues for the child and took account of their level of maturity, ability and motivation to change in all cases.

In all but one case, there was evidence that the child and their parents or carers had been involved in the planning, and their views taken into account. The needs and wishes of victims were considered in all of the relevant cases.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Overall, planning focused on keeping the child safe in six of the seven cases inspected. In nearly all cases, the risks to a child's safety and wellbeing were addressed, planning outlined the controls and interventions necessary to promote the child's safety and wellbeing, and case managers involved other agencies. Contingency arrangements to manage those risks that were identified were set out in five of the seven cases inspected.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

There was sufficient planning to promote the safety of others in all of the cases inspected, and nearly all cases involved other agencies, where appropriate. Planning to address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims was evident in all of the relevant cases.

Planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people in nearly all cases. However, effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that had been identified were not evident in four out of the relevant seven cases inspected.

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating¹⁶ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?	86%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	86%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	86%

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

Overall, the delivery of services supported the child's desistance in six out of the seven cases inspected. In nearly all cases, the services delivered were those most likely to support desistance, and all cases took account of the diversity issues for the child. The child's strengths and protective factors were built on in all but one case.

In every case, it was clear that staff focused on developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers.

The following comment from an inspector demonstrates this:

"There's excellent engagement by and with the child, who has a history of non-compliance and breach of court orders. This is as a result of the ongoing support of his grandmother and of establishing a good working relationship with his case manager. The case manager reinforced positive behaviours when the child attended for intervention work, and was open and transparent as to what future opportunities could look like if the child continued to comply".

In six out of the seven cases, opportunities to access services post-supervision had been promoted. Enforcement action had not been taken, when it was appropriate, in one case, but in all cases the case manager had encouraged the child's compliance with their court order.

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

The delivery of services to promote the child's safety and wellbeing was evident in nearly all of the cases, and the case manager had coordinated the involvement of other organisations in all of the relevant cases. Overall, the implementation and

¹⁶ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

delivery of services supported the safety of the child effectively in six out of the seven cases inspected.

One inspector noted:

"There is good liaison with social workers and residential placement staff. There is appropriate and effective information sharing between agencies, and the case manager is fully involved with strategy meetings and developing safety plans for other agencies".

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

Services delivered to keep other people safe, by managing and minimising the risk of harm, were evident in five of the seven cases inspected, and in nearly all of the relevant cases, staff had coordinated the involvement of other agencies. The protection of actual and potential victims had been considered in all but one of the relevant cases and, overall, the safety of other people was supported effectively in nearly all cases inspected.

2.4. Reviewing



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

Outstanding

Our rating¹⁷ for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	86%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	100%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	100%

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

Case managers are aware that children's circumstances can change rapidly, and that this can result in an increase, or sometimes decrease, in the likelihood of reoffending, risk of harm to others or risks to their safety and wellbeing.

Reviews resulted in the identification of, and a subsequent response to, changes in the factors linked to desistance in nearly all of the cases inspected. They built on the child's strengths in all but one case and considered their motivation and engagement levels in most of the relevant cases. The review included an analysis of, and a response to, the child's diversity factors in six of the seven cases. The child and their

¹⁷ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

parents or carers had been involved meaningfully in the process, and their views taken into account, in all relevant cases.

In the majority of cases, the review led to changes in the plan of work and, overall, nearly every case inspected focused sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

The quality of reviewing of a child's safety and wellbeing was sufficient in all the cases we looked at (seven out of seven cases), exceeding our 80 per cent boundary threshold to achieve a rating of 'Outstanding'. Case managers identified and responded to changes in their safety and wellbeing in all relevant cases. Case managers had considered information from other agencies in all cases, and the reviewing process had led to the necessary changes in the ongoing plan in all cases where it was appropriate.

This is demonstrated in the case below, where an inspector noted:

"The YJS and the probation service have worked together to review the child's safety and wellbeing, and what ongoing work and support is needed. There has been sufficient reviewing of the child's engagement with interventions and the transition process".

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

In the three relevant cases, the case manager had identified, and responded to, changes in risk. Reviewing was informed by information gathered from other agencies in all relevant cases. In every relevant case, the child and their parents or carers had been involved meaningfully in reviewing the risk of harm to others, and had their views considered. The reviewing process led to necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to manage and minimise these risks in the three relevant cases. Overall, reviewing focused on keeping other people safe in all of the cases inspected.

One inspector noted:

"There's regular reviewing throughout the intervention. A risk management meeting, held prior to and post-release from custody, sets out the progress made by the child, what remains to be done, who will undertake these specific tasks and the necessary contingency arrangements, if required. In doing so, all the necessary services are involved and are evidenced as taking an active part with supporting the child".

3. Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 20 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of 20 community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in all cases.

We examined the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, work to keep the child safe and work to keep other people safe. The quality of the work undertaken for each factor needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision to be rated as satisfactory.

We also inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews.

A judgement of 'Good' was given to the quality of assessment in relation to desistance and a child's risk of harm to others, and for planning and service delivery regarding a child's safety and wellbeing. In this service, over 80 per cent of cases met all our requirements for planning and service delivery for desistance and risk of harm to others, which has led to our judgement of 'Outstanding' in these areas of work.

Professional discretion was applied at the ratings panel to the results of the assessing standard. As the lowest percentage at the key question level was close to the rating boundary, the case data for assessing a child's safety and wellbeing was reviewed. After considering all of the evidence in the round and the views of the lead inspector, the HM Inspectorate of Probation ratings panel agreed that professional discretion should be applied to move the judgement on this standard from 'Inadequate' to 'Requires improvement'.

Assessment was satisfactory in most of the out-of-court cases assessed in the areas of desistance and assessing a child's risk of harm to others. Case managers considered the child's strengths and protective factors, and their level of maturity, ability and motivation to change. Where a victim has been identified, their needs and wishes were taken into account and the views of parents or carers were considered as part of the assessment. Assessing a child's safety and wellbeing requires improvement, as the risks to the child need more analysis, and information from other agencies must be included where relevant.

Planning was rated as outstanding in the areas of desistance and risk of harm to others. Case managers took account of the child's diversity issues, their personal circumstances and their level of motivation to change. Planning set out the opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services following completion of the out-of-court disposal work. Case managers considered the needs and wishes of victims and included the child and parents or carers in the planning process. Planning for the child's safety and wellbeing was good and, in most cases, involved other agencies where appropriate. For both safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others, there could be improvement in setting out the contingency arrangements to manage the risks presented.

Implementation and delivery of services were also outstanding in the areas of desistance and risk of harm to others. Case managers identified the factors that were most likely to support the child's desistance, took account of their diversity issues and involved parents or carers, or significant others. They focused on developing and

maintaining a good working relationship with children and families, and encouraged and enabled the child's compliance with the work. The services delivered in relation to a child's safety and wellbeing were good, although the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe could be better and more coordinated.

There is a Merseyside-wide out-of-court disposal policy in place. The YJS has written its own specific guidance for staff which outlines its local processes and procedures. This guidance includes a menu of options that link the diverse needs of the child and their offending behaviour with the type of out-of-court disposals available. It also includes the process for referring to Operation Inclusion, a deferred prosecution programme which is the YJS alternative to youth conditional cautions. This is led by the police and its intention is to ensure that children are not criminalised unnecessarily. There is an annual meeting between all five Merseyside YOTs and the police, to review the out-of-court disposal policy and share good practice across the region.

Unfortunately, because of the case sample chosen, inspectors did not see any Operation Inclusion cases. In the main, the cases inspected were low-level cannabis triage cases (out of 20 cases, 13 were drugs related, and in 14 this was the child's first out-of-court disposal) which did not require an AssetPlus assessment or a substantial period of intervention.

Strengths:

- Assessment was good and planning was outstanding in the areas of desistance and risk of harm to others.
- Case managers considered the child's strengths and protective factors, and their level of maturity, ability and motivation to change.
- Where a victim had been identified, their needs and wishes were taken into account and the views of parents or carers were considered as part of the assessment.
- Case managers set out the opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services following completion of the out-of-court disposal work.
- Implementation and delivery of services was outstanding in the areas of desistance and risk of harm to others, and good when relating to a child's safety and wellbeing.
- Staff focused on developing and maintaining a good working relationship with children and families, and encouraged and enabled the child's compliance with the work.
- There is a Merseyside-wide out-of-court disposal policy in place and the YJS had written its own local guidance for staff.

Areas for improvement:

- Assessing a child's safety and wellbeing requires improvement as the potential risks to the child need to be identified and analysed.
- Information from other agencies must be included, where relevant, in order to help inform the risk assessment process.
- For both safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others, setting out the contingency arrangements to manage risk needs development.
- The involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe needs to be better coordinated.

Work with children receiving out-of-court disposals will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

3.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

Our rating¹⁸ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	65%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	45%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	70%

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

There was sufficient analysis of offending behaviour in 14 out of the 20 cases. The assessment considered the diversity of the child in 15 out of the 20 cases and took account of their personal circumstances and social context in most cases.

Information from other agencies was included as part of the assessment in 15 of the cases, and case managers considered the child's strengths and protective factors in nearly all (17) cases.

In one case, the inspector noted:

"Information for the assessment is drawn from other services involved in supporting the child. It is positive to see that the case manager considers the number of services

¹⁸ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

involved who are providing support, and of it potentially being too much, given the child's diagnosed learning needs".

Case managers had involved the child and their parents or carers in the assessment and taken their views into account in 18 cases. The child's level of maturity, ability and motivation to change were considered in nearly all of the cases. The needs and wishes of victims had been taken into account in all of the four relevant cases.

The factors in out-of-court disposals that relate most to a child's offending are substance misuse; education, training and employment; mental health; and lifestyle, and in 13 of the 20 cases the assessment analysed sufficiently how to address these factors and support desistance.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

As referred to above, professional discretion was applied to this area of practice. In 10 of the 20 cases, the risk to the child's safety and wellbeing had been identified and analysed appropriately by the case manager. Overall, the assessment was judged to have analysed sufficiently how to keep the child safe in only nine of the 20 cases.

One inspector noted:

"The assessment of the child's safety and wellbeing lacked in analysis. There are several factors that have been identified but not sufficiently analysed".

Another inspector stated:

"The assessment identifies all of the factors that need to be addressed to keep the child safe. However, there is little analysis of them, and some are not clearly linked to the child's safety and wellbeing".

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

In only two out of nine relevant cases, the assessment identified and analysed the risk of harm to others, including who is at risk and the nature of the risk. The case manager had used available sources of information, including other assessments, to inform their own judgement in 13 of the 20 cases. Inspectors judged the case manager's assessment of the level of risk of serious harm to others as reasonable in 17 of the 20 cases.

3.2. Planning



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

Good

Our rating¹⁹ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	80%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	65%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	85%

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

Overall, planning supported the child's desistance sufficiently in 16 of the 20 cases. In 15 of the cases, staff planned the services most likely to support desistance, paying attention to appropriate timescales and sequencing. In nearly all cases, planning addressed diversity issues sufficiently, and in 15 cases staff took account of the child's wider familial and social context. The child's level of maturity and motivation to change were considered by the case manager in nearly every case, and in most cases staff had taken account of the child's strengths and protective factors.

This was demonstrated in the case below, where an inspector noted:

"Planning fully involved the child and parent, was proportionate to the disposal and took account of the child's needs".

Case managers had taken account of opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services for the child after completing their out-of-court disposal in 19 of the 20 cases. Planning was proportionate to the disposal type, which meant that interventions could be completed within the timescales, in all cases.

In nearly all cases, staff had involved the child and their parents or carers in the planning process, and in two out of the three relevant cases the needs and wishes of victims had been considered.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

In 11 out of the relevant 17 cases, planning promoted the safety and wellbeing of the child, but in a third of the relevant cases information from other agencies was not included. Contingency arrangements for any changes to the level of risk were not evident in most cases and, overall, planning focused on keeping the child safe in only 65 per cent of the cases inspected.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Overall, planning that focused on keeping people safe was evident in 17 of the cases inspected. Planning to promote the safety of others by addressing the factors related to the risk of harm to others was evident in three out of the five relevant cases, but planning for contingency arrangements to manage those risks was not identified in

¹⁹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

four out of five cases. Case managers involved other agencies in three-quarters of the relevant cases but planning to address concerns related to actual and potential victims was not evident in two out of the three relevant cases inspected.

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating²⁰ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	90%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	70%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	90%

Does implementation and delivery focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

Overall, support for the child's desistance was evident in 18 of the 20 cases inspected. Interventions to support desistance had been delivered in good time in 19 of the cases. The case manager had accounted for any diversity issues and had considered the social context of the child, involving parents or carers in nearly all cases.

The delivery of the interventions promoted opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services in all but one case. Case managers developed and maintained an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers in 18 of the 20 cases, and they encouraged and enabled the child's compliance in nearly all of the cases.

One inspector noted:

"Sufficient services were delivered to support desistance, and the factors linked to the child's offending were explored with the child and his family. Work has been delivered addressing the risks and dangers of drug use and the consequences of offending. Good efforts are made by the case manager to engage the family in the intervention work".

Does implementation and delivery focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child through service delivery was evident in 11 of the 17 relevant cases, although case managers involved other agencies in keeping children safe in only half of the cases. Overall, service delivery supported the safety of the child in 14 of the 20 cases inspected.

²⁰ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Does implementation and delivery focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

For keeping other people safe, case managers had considered the protection of actual and potential victims in four out of the five relevant cases. The services delivered managed and minimised the risk of harm in all five of the relevant cases, and, overall, the safety of other people was supported effectively in 18 out of the 20 cases inspected.

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.

Good

In making a judgement about out-of-court disposal policy and provision, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

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

There is a Merseyside out-of-court disposal policy, agreed between Merseyside police and the five Merseyside YOTs. Wirral YJS has specific guidance that links to its local arrangements and includes an out-of-court disposal menu which outlines what should be considered by case managers when making their proposals for out-of-court disposals.

Wirral YJS was a pilot site for Operation Inclusion, a 12-week programme which has now been rolled out across all YOTs in Merseyside. It is a deferred prosecution scheme, led by the police, which was initially targeted at children who were at risk of, or experiencing, child exploitation. It now has a wider remit and is used for children whose offending is escalating. Police decision-makers make the referral to Operation Inclusion, in an attempt to avoid criminalising children and offer them another chance before they are prosecuted and receive a criminal conviction.

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

The police decision-makers refer the child to the YJS for an out-of-court disposal, and the YJS police officer gathers information which informs the assessment. Case managers use a bespoke assessment tool which focuses on the child's perspective of their own situation and their behaviour. At the end of the document, the case manager analyses the information gathered and assesses the child's safety and wellbeing, as well as risk of harm to others and their likelihood of reoffending.

There is a joint decision-making out-of-court disposal panel, which is chaired by a YJS team leader. The panel includes the YJS team leader, the case manager, the YJS police officer and the criminal justice liaison team worker. Children's social care services do not have a worker as a core member of the panel, but the children's social care database is checked to see if the child or their family are known. If the child or their family is already known, the YJS case manager will contact the social worker and agree the level of support that the child and their family require. This information is included in the assessment, and both agencies will work together to ensure that a collaborative plan is in place.

The risks presented by the child are discussed at the out-of-court disposal panel, which will increase the score if it feels that it is relevant and will call an RSW meeting if required. If an agreement about the appropriate disposal cannot be reached by the panel, there is an escalation process in place. The YJS service manager will discuss the case with the relevant senior police officer to agree a way forward, although this process is rarely used.

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

There is a Merseyside-wide out-of-court disposal meeting, where the operational managers from the five YOTs meet the police to review the policy and practice. There is also an out-of-court scrutiny panel, which includes the Merseyside YOTs, police and magistrates. The magistrates pick the out-of-court cases and review the appropriateness of the disposal and the outcomes for the child. In the main, the magistrates agree with the out-of-court decision that has been reached.

Operation Inclusion was reviewed at the end of the pilot stage and will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership.

4. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision

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

Requires improvement

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews. To illustrate that work, we inspected four cases managed by the YOT that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

Strengths:

- There is a draft resettlement policy in place which includes the implementation of a resettlement panel.
- There were good links between the YJS staff and case workers in custodial establishments.
- Pre-Covid-19, partner agencies which provide services as part of the child's resettlement visited children in custodial establishments.
- Training on resettlement had been arranged for staff.

Areas for improvement:

- Good-quality accommodation is difficult to find for children leaving custody.
- Education, training and employment opportunities were lacking for the children in two of the resettlement cases.
- In one case, the CAMHS assessment completed by the custodial establishment had not been actioned in the community following the child's release.

We gathered evidence for this standard from documents and meetings, and inspected four cases to allow us to illustrate the qualitative standards. We do not provide a separate rating for the quality of work in resettlement cases inspected under this standard. In making a judgement about resettlement policy and provision, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

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

The YJS has a draft resettlement policy, dated June 2021, which builds on two recent serious incidents, national guidelines and HM Inspectorate of Probation standards. Following an incident involving the YJS practice regarding recalling children on licence to custodial establishments, the resettlement policy and guidance have been reviewed, using the results of a learning exercise provided through a peer review. The policy outlines the introduction of a resettlement panel, which will be chaired by the head of service for contextual safeguarding.

YJS staff described good links with the case workers in the custodial establishments. This included receiving timely information about any safeguarding concerns, updates on children receiving adjudications, and as part of their reviews. Prior to Covid-19, other relevant agencies would join the YJS case manager at children's review meetings in the custodial establishments, to help with the transition back into the community. Staff reported that communication with one custodial establishment had been particularly problematic during Covid-19, as they were unable to facilitate video interviews.

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

In two out of the four resettlement cases, there was evidence of sufficient planning and provision being made for suitable accommodation to be in place for the child's release. In the two cases where this was not seen, the clarity regarding the role of children's social care services would have improved the quality of the case.

Planning and provision for education, training and employment was not good enough in two of the cases. One, in particular, lacked any input from the local authority education department, leaving the YJS worker to sort out potential placements. The Everton in the Community programme was seen as extremely positive in engaging children in education, training and employment provision. Prior to Covid-19, representatives from this programme would visit children in the custodial establishments, in order to engage and motivate them prior to their release. The St Giles Trust also offers support to children in custody if they are assessed as being at risk of or involved in child exploitation. Disappointingly, one case which we reviewed had received a CAMHS assessment within the custodial establishment, but the recommendations had not been actioned when the child was released into the community.

There was evidence in all of the resettlement cases that appropriate information had been shared between the custodial establishment and the YJS case manager, and vice versa. There was also a good level of contact between the YJS case manager, the child and their parents or carers prior to the child's release.

At the time of the inspection, there had been no specific training for resettlement work, and staff felt that this was needed. However, the new draft resettlement guidance was welcomed by staff, and training had been arranged on how to complete the recall process and work with the requirements of the parole board.

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

The resettlement policy is still in draft, and at the time of inspection had not yet been signed off or implemented fully. The peer review highlighted the importance of a multi-agency approach to children leaving custodial establishments. This had been embedded in the draft policy; this states that a multi-agency referral form will be completed for children released from custody, which will secure the involvement of children's social care services.

Annexe 1: Methodology

HM Inspectorate of Probation standards

The standards against which we inspect youth offending services are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. These standards are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.²¹

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

Domain one: organisational delivery

The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance, and the assistant director of early help and prevention delivered a presentation covering the following areas:

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

During the main fieldwork phase, we conducted 31 interviews with case managers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. We held various meetings, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and information. In total, we conducted 14 meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.²¹

Domain two: court disposals

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

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

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Sixty per cent of cases selected were those of children who had received out-of-court disposals three to five months earlier. This enabled us

²¹ HM Inspectorate's standards are available here:

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

to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, and implementation and delivery. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

We examined 20 out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set based on the proportion of out-of-court disposal cases in the YJS.

Resettlement

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining four case files and interviewing case managers, in cases where children had received custodial sentences or been released from custodial sentences four to 12 months earlier. This enabled us to gather information to illustrate the impact of resettlement policy and provision on service delivery. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

In some areas of this report, data may have been split into smaller sub-samples – for example, male/female cases. Where this is the case, the margin of error for the sub-sample findings may be higher than five.

Annexe 2: Inspection data

In this inspection, we conducted a detailed examination of a sample of seven court disposals and 20 out-of-court disposals. In each of those cases, we inspect against standards regarding assessment, planning and implementation/delivery. For court disposals, we also look at reviewing. For each standard, inspectors answer a number of key questions about different aspects of quality, including whether there was sufficient analysis of the factors related to offending; the extent to which young offenders were involved in assessment and planning; and whether enough was done to assess the level of risk of harm posed, and to manage that risk. We reviewed a further four cases to obtain data to illustrate our findings about resettlement policy and provision.

To score an 'Outstanding' rating for the sections on court disposals or out-of-court disposals, 80 per cent or more of the cases we analyse have to be assessed as sufficient. If between 65 per cent and 79 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then the rating is 'Good' and if between 50 per cent and 64 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then a rating of 'Requires improvement' is applied. Finally, if less than 50 per cent are sufficient, then we rate this as 'Inadequate'. Resettlement cases are not separately rated; the data is for illustrative purposes only.

The rating at the standard level is aligned to the lowest banding at the key question level, recognising that each key question is an integral part of the standard. Therefore, if we rate three key questions as 'Good' and one as 'Inadequate', the overall rating for that standard is 'Inadequate'.

Lowest banding (key question level)	Rating (standard)
Minority: <50%	Inadequate
Too few: 50-64%	Requires improvement
Reasonable majority: 65-79%	Good
Large majority: 80%+	Outstanding 

Additional 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 to 36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows:

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

Domain one standards, the qualitative standard in domain three (standard 3.4) and the resettlement standard (standard 4.1) are judged using predominantly qualitative evidence.

The resettlement standard is rated separately and does not influence the overall YOT rating. We apply a limiting judgement, whereby any YOT that receives an 'Inadequate' rating for the resettlement standard is unable to receive an overall 'Outstanding' rating, regardless of how they are rated against the core standards. Where there are no relevant resettlement cases, we do not apply a rating to resettlement work.

Data from inspected cases:²²

2.1. Assessment (court disposals)	
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?	100%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	100%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	100%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	100%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	100%
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?	100%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	86%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	57%
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?	57%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	71%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	100%

²² Some questions do not apply in all cases.

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?	43%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	71%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	71%

2.2. Planning (court disposals)

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?	86%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	100%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	86%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	86%
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?	100%
f) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims?	86%
g) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	86%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	
a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	86%

b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (for example, child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	86%
c) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	86%
d) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	71%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	100%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	86%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	86%
d) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	86%
e) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	43%

2.3. Implementation and delivery (court disposals)

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?	86%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	100%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	100%
d) Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	86%
e) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	100%

f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to services post-supervision?	86%
g) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	100%
h) Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	0%
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?	86%
b) Is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?	100%
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?	83%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	71%
c) Is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	86%

2. 4. Reviewing (court disposals)

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors linked to desistance?	86%
b) Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	86%
c) Does reviewing include analysis of, and respond to, diversity factors?	86%
d) Does reviewing consider the personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	71%
d) Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	57%

e) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	71%
f) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to support desistance?	86%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing?	100%
b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?	100%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	86%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to risk of harm?	43%
b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	71%
c) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their risk of harm, and their views taken into account?	57%
d) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	43%

3.1. Assessment (out-of-court disposals)	
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?	70%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	75%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	70%

d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	75%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	85%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	40%
g) Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	80%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	20%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	90%
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?	50%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	50%
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?	10%
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?	65%

3.2. Planning (out-of-court disposals)

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?	75%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	85%

c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	75%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	75%
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?	80%
f) Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?	95%
g) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims?	10%
h) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	85%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	
a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	55%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (for example, child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	40%
c) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	35%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	15%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	15%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	5%
d) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	5%

3.3. Implementation and delivery (out-of-court disposals)

Does service delivery 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?	95%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	80%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	80%
d) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	90%
e) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	85%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	95%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	
a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	55%
b) Is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	30%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	
a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	25%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	20%