



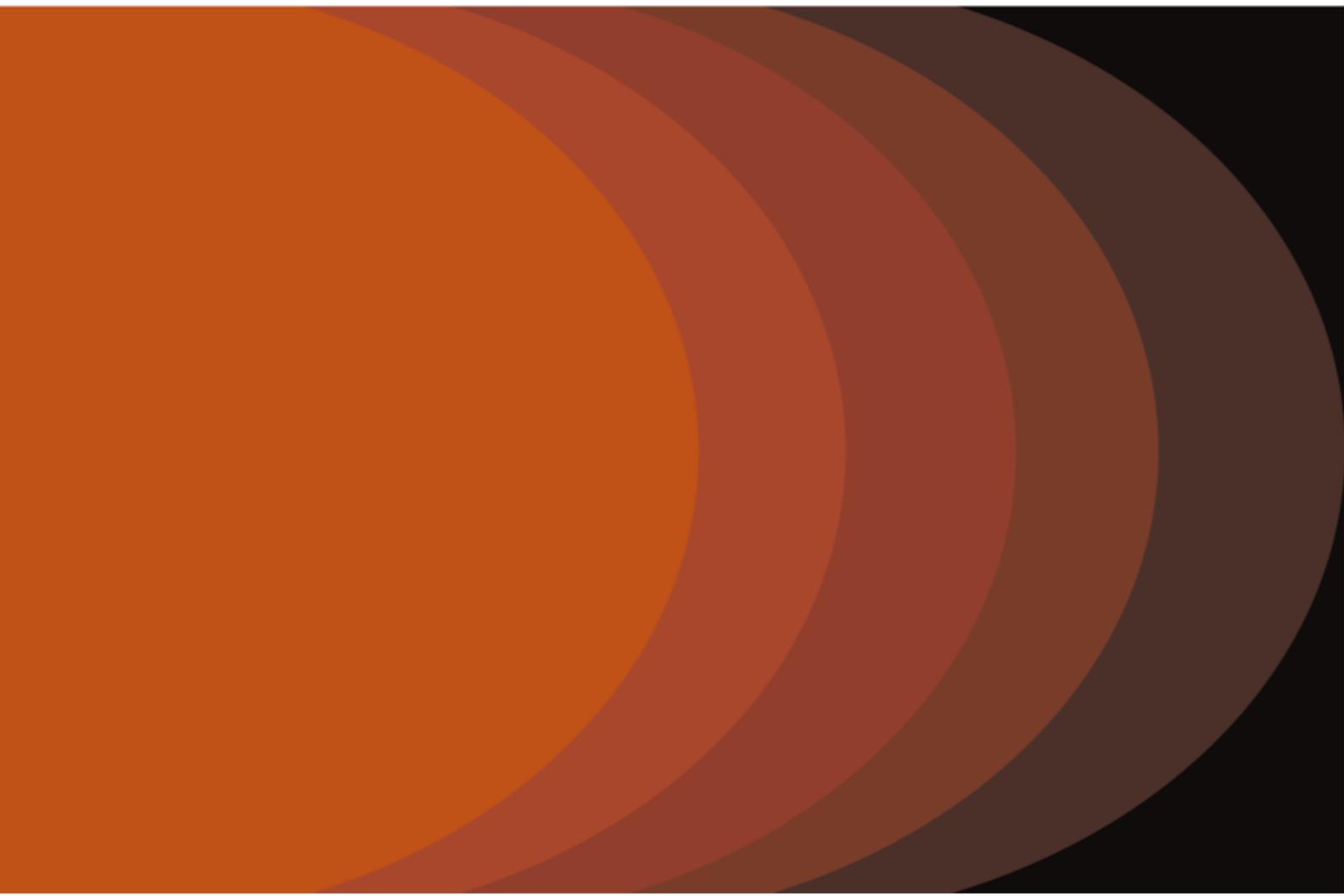
Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate of  
Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in

# Bedfordshire

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HM Inspectorate of Probation, December 2021



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## Foreword

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This inspection is part of our programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Bedfordshire YOS 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, Bedfordshire YOS was rated as 'Requires improvement'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Good'.

We last inspected Bedfordshire YOS in 2014, when we undertook a short quality screening. It has undergone considerable change since then. The Covid-19 pandemic has struck, and this area was particularly badly hit, being a centre for the outbreak of the Delta variant. While in the cases we inspected all children were seen regularly, not all services have resumed normal operations. This meant that this inspection was conducted at a distance, with records reviewed and interviews conducted remotely.

While the area continues to make progress, it still has some way to go to provide a high-quality service for all children they work with, and these results were disappointing. We rated leadership and management as 'Requires improvement'. The management board was reconfigured in 2019, and while its members champion the service, it is not yet fully effective at driving the quality of service delivery. There is room for improvement in communication up and down the organisation.

Staff, partnerships and services, and information and facilities are both rated as 'Good', demonstrating that the YOS has a firm foundation upon which to build improvements in operational delivery. Staff are motivated, they have access to a range of innovative services, and they are supported with good information systems and child-friendly premises. The partnership between the two local authorities is built on good working relationships, with effective integration with children's services in both. There are gaps in relation to probation staff, and services to address speech, language and communication needs. In addition, education, training and employment services are not achieving sufficiently positive outcomes, with too many children remaining not in education, employment or training when their cases close.

Assessment is the significant weakness across court and out-of-court disposals, and is rated as 'Inadequate' in both. Poor assessments feed into deficiencies in planning, which is rated as 'Requires improvement'. With both safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others, there are gaps in planning specific actions to take account of the possibility of risks escalating. Implementation and delivery is better, especially in out-of-court disposals, which now form the majority of YOS cases.

The YOS partnership with the police and children's services has been effective at reducing the number of children entering the formal criminal justice system. Policy and provision for out-of-court disposals is rated as 'Requires improvement', as evaluation and review of the scheme is limited, and governance arrangements require strengthening to ensure that there is robust scrutiny of decisions made. As with many other YOSs, it is concerning to see the over-representation of black and mixed heritage boys in court disposals and custody cases, and I welcome the priority that the YOS is giving to addressing this issue.

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



**Justin Russell**  
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

## Ratings

**Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service** **Score 14/36**

**Overall rating** **Requires improvement** 

### 1. Organisational delivery

1.1	Governance and leadership	<b>Requires improvement</b>	
1.2	Staff	<b>Good</b>	
1.3	Partnerships and services	<b>Good</b>	
1.4	Information and facilities	<b>Good</b>	

### 2. Court disposals

2.1	Assessment	<b>Inadequate</b>	
2.2	Planning	<b>Requires improvement</b>	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	<b>Requires improvement</b>	
2.4	Reviewing	<b>Requires improvement</b>	

### 3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1	Assessment	<b>Inadequate</b>	
3.2	Planning	<b>Requires improvement</b>	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	<b>Good</b>	
3.4	Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>	

### 4. Resettlement

4.1	Resettlement policy and provision	<b>Good</b>	
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## Executive summary

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Overall, Bedfordshire youth offending service (YOS) is rated as 'Requires improvement'. This rating has been determined by inspecting the YOS 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.<sup>1</sup> Published scoring rules generate the overall YOS rating.<sup>2</sup> We inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision separately and rated this work as 'Good'. The findings and subsequent ratings in those domains are described below.

### Organisational delivery

We interviewed 63 individuals across a range of meetings, including staff, volunteers, managers, board members, partnership staff and their managers. Governance and leadership are rated as 'Requires improvement'.

The judgement for governance and leadership must be set against the background of the Covid-19 pandemic and the urgent priorities for managers responding to the changing demands of the moment, and to protect children and staff while safeguarding essential service delivery. However, there is scope for the board and managers to develop and communicate a more compelling vision for the YOS, with a sharper focus on the quality of service delivery. While the board chair is of sufficient seniority, is well engaged and has a good grasp of the YOS work, the absence of a senior probation manager, to attend and contribute resources to the partnership, has been a significant gap. The board has not reviewed its own effectiveness in driving change and improvement.

Most board members advocate for the YOS in their broader roles, take a child-first approach and support integration of work with YOS children in wider services to support desistance and prevent harm. However, local probation managers do not appear to prioritise their role and responsibilities within the partnership arrangements.

The YOS leadership team is not communicating the vision and strategy consistently to staff and stakeholders. Consultation and communication with staff can be improved and greater effort is needed to seek out and welcome constructive challenge and ideas. Not all risks to the service are understood sufficiently by the board and leadership team, and there are gaps in the mitigations and controls in place.

Staffing is rated as 'Good' and staff morale in general is positive. The YOS is well staffed with suitably qualified practitioners and social workers, who are used flexibly to ensure a fair balance of workload in line with skills and experience. The diversity of the workforce is representative of the local population. Workloads are

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<sup>1</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards can be found here:

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

<sup>2</sup> 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'.

manageable. The number of vacancies and level of staff absence through sickness are low.

Staff are motivated and engaged to deliver a high-quality service. Volunteers are suitably trained, but their numbers have reduced during the Covid-19 pandemic and they are now less engaged. Staff are supervised appropriately and there is an effective induction process in place. The appraisal process was halted during the height of the pandemic but has now restarted. Poor performance is identified and addressed appropriately.

The YOS identifies and plans for the learning needs of all staff and provides access to in-service training programmes. There is a culture of learning and improvement.

Partnerships and services are rated as 'Good'. The YOS has a comprehensive range of data available on children's desistance needs, risks, and safety and wellbeing factors, which can be used internally and with partners for targeting service delivery. Local patterns of arrests and sentencing are reviewed for planning service delivery. Analysis of diversity and disproportionality requires updating.

The YOS partnership has access to the majority of specialist and mainstream services required to meet the needs of children. The YOS has commissioned a number of innovative interventions which are designed to engage children effectively, building on strengths and enhancing protective factors. There is a gap in relation to speech, language and communication services.

There are strong links with children's services in both local authorities, and with other partnership services which support the safety and wellbeing of children and manage the risk to others. The YOS ensures that courts are sufficiently aware of the services available, supporting their sentencing decisions.

Information and facilities are rated as 'Good'. The necessary policies and processes are in place to deliver a good service that meets the needs of children. These are communicated to staff and are reviewed regularly.

The YOS's delivery environment is accessible to all staff, and children, especially those in Bedford. Here, they have access to premises that promote a rehabilitative culture which is child friendly and encourages positive interactions while meeting the requirements of safety, security and confidentiality.

The information and communications technology systems support effective and integrated service delivery, with the ability to record and access key information whenever and wherever required. The systems produce the necessary management information, including on diversity, and facilitate its exchange with partners, providers and other key stakeholders.

Performance reporting is good and provides the necessary information to support improvement. Quality assurance systems are in place but are not always effective in driving the required change. Improvement plans are based on evidence and learning from others. The views of children are used to make changes to how services are delivered. Learning from audits is not embedded consistently and not all diversity needs are analysed or responded to.

We identified the following strengths:

- Board members are engaged and champion the work of the YOS.
- Staff morale is good and sickness absence is very low.

- The YOS has sufficient suitably qualified staff, who have reasonable workloads.
- Staff receive regular supervision and support.
- Comprehensive data is available on the needs and risks of children, the disposals they receive and the outcomes of supervision.
- A good range of innovative services is available to meet most needs of children, both internally and through partnership arrangements.
- The delivery environment in the Bedford office is safe and engaging for children.
- There is good provision of suitable and flexible information and communications technology.

But:

- The board needs to develop a sharper focus on the quality of service delivery.
- The board and managers need to develop a clearer vision and strategy, and communicate this effectively to staff and stakeholders to drive improvement of service delivery.
- The diversity strategy should be expanded to cover all protected characteristics, to ensure that the diverse needs of children and staff are addressed fully.
- The board and management lack a comprehensive risk management plan to ensure that all organisational and operational risks are identified and assessed, and mitigations put in place to address them.
- Probation representation on the board at a senior management level is missing, and the absence of an experienced seconded probation officer inhibits effective engagement of children as they transition to adult probation services.
- There are few volunteers available to deliver referral order panels; they are less engaged and are not kept up to date with the work of the YOS.
- There is currently no training plan setting out priorities for staff development.
- There is an absence of effective screening to identify children with speech, language and communication needs, and there is a gap in relation to provision for speech and language therapy.
- While there are employment, training and education services in place, the number of positive outcomes for statutory cases is low.
- The provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services has been inconsistent and arrangements for staffing are insufficiently robust to ensure continuity of service.

## **Court disposals**

We took a detailed look at five community sentences, four of which were referral orders and one a youth rehabilitation order, and one custodial sentence, managed by the YOS. We also conducted four 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, keep the child safe and keep other people safe.

In selecting our case sample, we included all court-ordered cases and those released from custody between 14 December 2020 and 12 March 2021 – in effect, a 100 per cent case sample as there were not enough cases for our usual sample. This reflected the reduction in court throughput due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The ratings for assessment reflect a clear and pressing need to improve the analysis of factors related to desistance, the safety and wellbeing of children, and the risk of harm to others. Where assessment is insufficient, it often follows that planning is insufficient. This is also true of planning; implementation and delivery; and review of services to support the safety and wellbeing of children, all of which require improvement. While there is a range of inter-agency meetings to address issues of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others, the effectiveness of these is not always seen in records of planning and delivery. Practitioners are not always confident in escalating their concerns to managers when they feel that these have not been addressed adequately by other agencies.

The implementation and delivery of services to support desistance is impressive, with a good range of services available, and case managers are skilled at engaging with children and their parents or carers, as well as securing their involvement in appropriate planned interventions. Reviewing is generally effective, although adjustment to plans did not consistently occur following changes in a child's circumstances. This was particularly evident in reviews of plans for the safety and wellbeing of children.

We identified the following strengths:

- There was good use of available information from other agencies to inform assessment, planning and review of cases in most instances.
- Children and their parents or carers were mostly fully involved in assessment, planning and reviewing.
- The needs and wishes of victims were considered routinely when assessing risks and planning interventions.
- Planning of services to support desistance was rated as 'Good', and implementation as 'Outstanding'.
- Staff were good at engaging children and supporting compliance. Enforcement action was taken where appropriate.

But:

- Analysis of factors related to desistance, assessment of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm was poor.
- Assessment of diversity factors was limited, with the result that plans to address these were insufficient.

- There were gaps in planning to address contingencies for increasing concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children, and risk of harm to others.
- Implementation and delivery of services to support the safety and wellbeing of children, and to manage the risk of harm to others, especially known and potential victims, was insufficient.
- Processes for staff to escalate concerns about safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others, where other agencies are involved, needed clarifying and reinforcing.

### **Out-of-court disposals**

We inspected 17 cases managed by the YOS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of two youth conditional cautions, five youth cautions and 10 community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in 12 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, keep the child safe and 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.

There were proportionately more out-of-court than court disposals made during the period we were inspecting. The majority of these were community resolution cases (called 'diversion cases' in Bedfordshire), which do not involve a criminal conviction but do involve assessment and intervention by the YOS.

Identification and analysis of desistance factors were much better for out-of-court disposals than for court disposals, and supported effective planning to address desistance in most cases. These plans were translated into delivery of effective interventions to support desistance, involving a wide range of staff and partnership resources.

Safety and wellbeing assessments under-rated the risks the children were exposed to in too many cases, and it is concerning that this was often not picked up by line managers in their quality assurance activity. Where risks were not fully assessed, this led to plans that failed to address them sufficiently in too many cases. Fortunately, delivery of interventions that promoted safety and wellbeing was better.

There were some deficiencies in the assessment of the children's risk to others, although these were less marked, and risk was under-rated in fewer cases. In most cases, risk plans were appropriate and involved other agencies, although planning for contingencies in the event of risks escalating was weak. Interventions to manage risks to others were positive, and sufficient attention was given to the needs of victims in many cases, with some good examples of restorative justice.

There is a clear out-of-court disposal policy. However, it could be further improved to identify how diverse needs are met, how joint decisions are made as to whether a child should be diverted from court, and to include an escalation process when the panel cannot reach agreement. There is good information exchange between agencies to support effective decision-making; however, there were some cases where children and parents were not interviewed by the YOS or a screening assessment was not completed before a disposal was agreed.

There is good involvement of early help services and the victim worker in agreeing interventions. The triage worker ensures that referrals are made to the multi-agency safeguarding hub and children's services following an initial contact. After allocation of cases to YOS staff, a good range of interventions is provided, following a full AssetPlus assessment.

Evaluation and review of the out-of-court disposal scheme are limited. Governance arrangements require strengthening to ensure that there is robust scrutiny of decisions made and of the outcomes of the scheme, paying attention to issues of diversity and disproportionality.

We identified the following strengths:

- The number of first-time entrants to the criminal justice system was better than the target for this YOS and considerably lower than the national average.
- Full AssetPlus assessments were completed on all allocated cases.
- Involvement of children and parents in assessment and planning following allocation was effective.
- Planning and delivery of restorative justice interventions was good, and the needs and wishes of victims were prioritised in most cases.
- A wide range of services and interventions delivered by staff and partners was available and used to support desistance.
- There was effective information exchange between agencies to inform assessment and decision-making in most cases.
- A range of appropriate agencies was involved in the out-of-court disposal panel, including a victim and restorative justice worker.

But:

- Quality assurance of AssetPlus assessments, including classification of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others, was not effective in enough cases.
- Identification and analysis of risk, and safety and wellbeing factors needed improving.
- Planning for contingencies where a change in circumstances might lead to escalating concerns in relation to safety and wellbeing, or risk of harm to others, was insufficient in too many cases.
- Governance, scrutiny and evaluation of the out-of-court disposal scheme were insufficient.

## **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 two cases managed by the YOS that had received a custodial sentence.

Our key findings about resettlement work were as follows:

- While there is no current resettlement policy, there are arrangements in place, including a risk assessment and safeguarding panel, to make certain

that plans to manage risk and ensure the safety and wellbeing of children on release are sufficient.

- From the cases reviewed and other information received, we judge that suitable and timely accommodation is available for most children leaving custody. There is appropriate and timely access to other services, including education, training and employment services, and healthcare. This is planned for in advance and available for children immediately after leaving custody. Consideration is given to diversity needs. Resettlement provision pays attention to keeping children and other people safe and addressing the needs of victims.
- A resettlement policy is being drafted, and the risk and safeguarding panel has been reviewed to improve release planning. Most resettlement cases are allocated to experienced social workers.
- Good links with children's social care departments in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire local authorities support access to accommodation for resettlement and to avoid remands in custody.
- Mentoring services for children leaving custody, delivered by people with lived experience of the criminal justice system, are available and well used.
- There is a well-resourced intensive supervision and surveillance scheme which provides support daily to children released from custody.

But:

- A comprehensive resettlement policy is not yet available. Without a clear and robust policy framework, there is a danger of inconsistent practice, and the policy needs to build on an analysis of existing data and consultation with children, their parents and carers, and other agencies.
- Formal training for staff taking on responsibility for resettlement cases is lacking.

## Recommendations

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

### **The Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service Board should:**

1. develop individual and collective board members' understanding of the quality of assessment, planning and implementation, and delivery of services in court and out-of-court disposal cases
2. ensure that the out-of-court disposal procedures:
  - a. involve consultation with children and parents in all cases before disposals are agreed
  - b. include a dispute resolution process where there is disagreement about proposed disposals
  - c. include an evaluation process which identifies where there is under- or over-representation of different groups in disposals made
  - d. are reviewed at a scrutiny panel
3. ensure that provision is in place to identify and address the speech, language and communication needs of children known to the YOS
4. review and develop the employment, education and training services provided by the partnership for children over the age of 16, to improve positive outcomes.

### **The Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service Manager should:**

5. improve the quality assurance of assessments in out-of-court and court disposal cases to make them more effective, including a particular focus on the assessment of diversity factors, and safety and wellbeing
6. improve the quality of assessment, planning and review of court disposals, focusing on keeping the child safe and managing the risk of harm to others
7. improve assessment, and planning of work to reduce the risk of harm to others in out-of-court disposal casework
8. strengthen the quality of contingency planning in all YOS cases to address the child's safety and wellbeing, and to manage risk of harm to others.

### **The Probation Service Regional Director for the East of England should:**

9. provide a senior manager to attend the YOS management board and allocate an experienced probation officer to the YOS in line with the national agreement, to ensure that there is effective continuity of service delivery as children transfer to adult services.

## Background

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Youth offending teams (YOTs) work with 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.<sup>3</sup> 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 provides some funding to YOTs. It also monitors their performance and issues guidance to them about how things are to be done.

Bedfordshire Youth Offending Service (YOS) serves the two local authority areas of Bedford Borough Council (1, below) and Central Bedfordshire Council (2, below). These councils became unitary authorities in 2009 following local government reorganisation in Bedfordshire, with Luton (3, below) to the south becoming a separate unitary authority with its own YOT. Bedford Borough to the north has a population of 174,687 (2020 mid-year estimate) and is centred on the town of Bedford and surrounding villages. Central Bedfordshire covers a large rural area and a number of villages and towns, the largest of which is Dunstable. It has a population of around 294,096 (2020 mid-year estimate). The youth and Crown courts are in Luton.



The YOS has its own dedicated premises in Bedford and has access to facilities in various Central Bedfordshire Council offices.

In 2018/2019, there was an experiment with a pan-Bedfordshire strategic YOS management board with an independent chair, and two local accountability

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<sup>3</sup> The *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* set out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

meetings, one for each YOS. It was concluded, however, that this strategic board was not needed, as there were various other strategic groupings across Bedfordshire which could coordinate related activity, and at that point the Bedfordshire YOS board took on its current form.

Bedford Borough Council hosts the YOS and employs the staff. It provides youth offending services to Central Bedfordshire Council under a service level agreement. The split of core funding is 51 per cent to Bedford Borough and 49 per cent to Central Bedfordshire. The service sits within the children's services of both local authorities. The manager for youth offending is a senior officer within each children's service and attends both management meetings to present or contribute to the overall children's services agenda. He also has monthly meetings with Bedford's interim Director of Children's Services (who is the chair of the YOS board), along with the team manager and information manager. The manager meets the Chief Officer for Children's Services from Bedford and the practice manager from Central Bedfordshire Council weekly.

The overall crime rate in Bedford is higher than the average across England, while that in Central Bedfordshire is lower than the national average. In Bedford, 20 per cent of people have no qualifications; Central Bedfordshire has a slightly lower level, 19 per cent, compared with 22 per cent across England. Forty per cent of people between the ages of 16 and 74 are in full-time employment in Bedford, compared with 44 per cent in Central Bedfordshire and the England average of 39 per cent.

Children under the age of 19 years make up 25.3 per cent of the population of Bedford, and 44.8 per cent of schoolchildren are from a black, Asian and minority ethnic group. The health and wellbeing of children in Bedford is generally similar to that in England overall. The level of child poverty is worse than the England average, with 18.4 per cent of children aged under 16 years living in poverty.<sup>4</sup>

Children under the age of 19 years make up 23.8 per cent of the population of Central Bedfordshire, with 17.1 per cent of schoolchildren from a minority ethnic group. The health and wellbeing of children in Central Bedfordshire is generally better than in England overall. The level of child poverty is better than the England average, with 11.3 per cent of children aged under 16 years living in poverty.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Public Health England Child Health Profile Bedford, 2019

<sup>5</sup> Public Health England Child Health Profile Central Bedfordshire, 2019

## Contextual facts

### Population information<sup>6</sup>

<b>117</b>	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in Bedfordshire YOS <sup>7</sup>
<b>167</b>	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in England and Wales
<b>37.8%</b>	Reoffending rate in Bedfordshire YOS <sup>8</sup>
<b>35.6%</b>	Reoffending rate in England and Wales
<b>468,783</b>	Total population Bedfordshire
<b>45,532</b>	Total youth population (10–17 years) in Bedfordshire

### Caseload information<sup>9</sup>

Age	10–14 years	15–17 years
Bedfordshire YOS	<b>12%</b>	<b>88%</b>
National average	22%	78%

Race/ethnicity	White	Black, Asian and minority ethnic	Unknown
Bedfordshire YOS <sup>10</sup>	<b>65%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Local area age 10–17	85%	15%	

Gender	Male	Female
Bedfordshire YOS	<b>84%</b>	<b>16%</b>
National average	85%	15%

<sup>6</sup> Office for National Statistics. (2021). *UK population estimates, mid-2020*.

<sup>7</sup> Youth Justice Board. (2021). *First-time entrants, January to December 2020*.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2021). *Proven reoffending statistics, October 2018 to September 2019*.

<sup>9</sup> Youth Justice Board. (2021). *Youth justice annual statistics: 2019 to 2020*.

<sup>10</sup> Data supplied by the YOS.

### Additional caseload data<sup>11</sup>

<b>23</b>	Total current caseload: community sentences
<b>3</b>	Total current caseload in custody
<b>2</b>	Total current caseload on licence
<b>37</b>	Total current caseload: out-of-court disposals
<b>43%</b>	Proportion of current caseload subject to court disposal
<b>57%</b>	Proportion of current caseload subject to out-of-court disposal
<b>26%</b>	Proportion of all the current caseload in a pupil referral unit, alternative education, on reduced timetable or not in education, training or employment in August 2021
<b>48%</b>	Proportion of statutory cases and those with youth conditional cautions that were not in education, training or employment at the point of case closure in 2020/2021
<b>28%</b>	Proportion of current caseload with child in need plan, child protection plan or Looked After Child plan
<b>11%</b>	Proportion of cases with statutory orders that are Looked After Children

### For children subject to court disposals (including resettlement case):

Offence types <sup>12</sup>	%
Violence against the person	38%
Burglary	13%
Robbery	25%
Summary motoring offences	13%
Indictable motoring offences	13%

<sup>11</sup> Data supplied by the YOS, reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement in August 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Data from the cases assessed during this inspection.

# 1. Organisational delivery

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Governance and leadership are rated as 'Requires improvement'. While this judgement must be set against the background of the Covid-19 pandemic and the urgent priorities for managers responding to the changing demands of the moment, there are areas for improvement, not related to the pandemic, that require attention.

There is scope for the board and managers to develop and communicate a more compelling vision for the Youth Offending Service (YOS) and with a sharper focus on the quality of service delivery. While the board chair is of sufficient seniority, is well engaged and has a good grasp of the YOS work, the absence of a senior probation manager, to attend and contribute resources to the partnership, has been a significant gap. Local probation managers do not appear to prioritise their role and responsibilities within the partnership arrangements.

Most board members advocate for the YOS in their broader roles, take a child-first approach and support integration of work with YOS children in wider services, to support desistance and prevent harm. However, the board has not reviewed its own effectiveness in driving change and improvement.

The YOS leadership team is not communicating the vision and strategy to staff and stakeholders consistently. Consultation and communication with staff can be improved and greater effort is needed to seek out and welcome constructive challenge and ideas. Not all risks to the service are understood sufficiently by the board and leadership team, and there are gaps in the mitigations and controls in place.

Staffing is rated as 'Good' and staff morale in general seems high. The YOS is well staffed with suitably qualified practitioners and social workers, who are used flexibly to ensure a fair balance of workload in line with skills and experience. The diversity of the workforce is representative of the local population. Workloads are manageable. The number of vacancies and level of staff absence through sickness are low.

Staff are motivated and engaged to deliver a high-quality service. Volunteers have been trained appropriately, but their numbers have reduced during the Covid-19 pandemic and they are now less engaged. Staff are supervised appropriately and there is an effective induction process in place. The appraisal process was halted during the height of the pandemic but has now restarted. Poor performance is identified and addressed appropriately.

The YOS identifies and plans for the learning needs of all staff and provides appropriate access to in-service training programmes. There is a culture of learning and improvement.

Partnerships and services are rated as 'Good'. The YOS has a comprehensive range of data available on children's desistance needs, risks, and safety and wellbeing factors, which can be used internally and with partners for targeting service delivery. Local patterns of arrests and sentencing are reviewed for planning service delivery. Analysis of diversity and disproportionality requires updating.

The YOS partnership has access to the majority of specialist and mainstream services required to meet the needs of children. The YOS has commissioned a number of innovative interventions which are designed to engage children effectively, building

on strengths and enhancing protective factors. However, there is a gap in relation to speech, language and communication services.

There are strong links with children's services in both local authorities, and with other partnership services which support the safety and wellbeing of children and manage the risk to others. The YOS ensures that courts are sufficiently aware of the services available, supporting their sentencing decisions.

Information and facilities are rated as 'Good'. The necessary policies and processes are in place to deliver a good service that meets the needs of children. These are communicated to staff and are reviewed regularly.

The YOS's premises are accessible to all staff, and children, especially those in Bedford, where they have access to premises that promote a rehabilitative culture, which is child friendly and encourages positive interactions while meeting the requirements of safety, security and confidentiality.

The information and communications technology (ICT) systems support effective and integrated service delivery, with the ability to record and access key information whenever and wherever required. The systems produce the necessary management information, including on diversity, and facilitate its exchange with partners, providers and other key stakeholders.

Performance reporting is good and provides the necessary information to support improvement. Improvement plans are based on evidence and learning from others. The views of children are used to make changes to how services are delivered. However, although quality assurance systems are in place, they are not always effective in driving the required change, and learning from audits is not embedded consistently. Not all diversity needs are analysed and responded to.

#### **Strengths:**

- Board members are engaged and champion the work of the YOS.
- Staff morale is good and sickness absence is very low.
- The YOS has sufficient suitably qualified staff, who have reasonable workloads.
- Staff receive regular supervision and support.
- Comprehensive data is available on the needs and risks of children, the disposals they receive and the outcomes of supervision.
- A good range of innovative services are available to meet most needs of children, both internally and through partnership arrangements.
- The delivery environment in the Bedford office is safe and engaging for children.
- There is good provision of suitable and flexible ICT.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- The board needs to develop a sharper focus on the quality of service delivery.
- The board and managers need to develop a clearer vision and strategy, and communicate this effectively to staff and stakeholders to drive improvement of service delivery.

- The diversity strategy should be expanded to cover all protected characteristics, to ensure that the diverse needs of children and staff are addressed fully.
- The board and management lack a comprehensive risk management plan to ensure that all organisational and operational risks are identified and assessed, and mitigations put in place to address them.
- Probation representation on the board at a senior management level is missing, and there has been no probation officer seconded to the YOS for the past year.
- There are few volunteers available to deliver referral order panels; they are less engaged and are not kept up to date with the work of the YOS.
- There is currently no training plan setting out priorities for staff development.
- Staff lack sufficient training in identifying and referring children with speech, language and communication needs, and there is a gap in relation to provision for speech and language therapy.
- While there are employment, training and education services in place, the number of positive outcomes for statutory cases is low.
- The provision of a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) service has been inconsistent and arrangements for staffing are insufficiently robust to ensure continuity of service.

Organisations that are well led and well managed are more likely to achieve their aims. We inspect against four standards.

### 1.1. Governance and leadership



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	£1,333,515
Total projected budget current for financial year	£1,581,280

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 most recent Youth Justice Plan 2021/2022 was devised by the YOS manager and presented to the board; it is unclear what input the board had to the plan, as this is not documented in board minutes. The focus on quality of delivery is directed largely to national standards audits of case files. There is a priority in the current plan to tackle disproportionality and disparities in outcomes for children from minority ethnic backgrounds. However, there are no other specific equality objectives included.

In theory, all statutory partners are represented on the board, but attendance is not always consistent or at the right level. For example, the attendance of a probation manager has been very patchy and not at a senior enough level to be able to commit resources.

The service is delivered by Bedford Borough Council under a service level agreement with Central Bedfordshire Council. Relationships are good and productive; the latter authority is represented on the board by a locality manager for children's services.

The chair of the management board is held at an appropriately senior level by the interim Director of Children's Services for Bedford Borough Council, who demonstrates a good understanding of the work of the YOS. The management board has yet to complete a review and assessment of its effectiveness, or to allocate members to specific areas of delivery to scrutinise the practice of the YOS.

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

Most management board members are well placed to advocate for the work of the YOS in their own organisations and the range of partnerships they are engaged in. For example, the police have used consultation with YOS children in redesigning custody suites. However, the Probation Service has not provided a secondee to the YOS for the past 12 months, nor any funding in lieu.

Both Local Safeguarding Children Boards regard the work of the YOS as a safeguarding priority. A recent review of services for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) took full account of the needs of YOS children who require an education and health care plan (EHCP), and who may be excluded from mainstream education.

The YOS is engaged with the Police and Crime Commissioner, who funds the triage worker, and with the violence and exploitation reduction unit (VERU), which provides mentoring support for children engaged in gang activity. YOS workers attend complex case discussions with staff from both children's service departments; serious youth violence cases are considered by a panel chaired jointly by the police and the YOS manager; and contextual safeguarding panels have developed across Bedfordshire in the past year.

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

The service manager, team manager and information manager all attend board meetings, and other staff may attend to make presentations. Detailed performance reports are presented at each meeting for scrutiny. The service manager, team manager and information manager also meet the board chair monthly.

Although the board received a review of the plan for 2019/2021 in April 2021, demonstrating that many of the actions had been achieved, there is no record of the plan being reviewed by the board during the previous year. It is acknowledged, however, that the main focus during this period was responding to Covid-19. A report on disproportionality was presented in February 2019, which included specific actions relating to addressing disadvantage and discrimination. This included the introduction of a music studio to engage gang-involved children, and the continuation of group work sessions for girls, although the latter initiative subsequently was discontinued.

There is insufficient effective communication of the board’s vision and strategy, as judged by interviews with staff and stakeholders. Some staff were unaware of the latest strategy and some could not remember being consulted about it. Of the staff surveyed, 39 per cent said that their views were not listened to or acted on well. A number commented that communication from managers could be improved and made more consistent.

The YOS does not have a risk register, although the agreement between the two authorities says that one should be in place. Apart from managing the evident risks associated with Covid-19, it is unclear that all key risks have been identified and assessed, and mitigations put in place to manage them. For a year, from March 2020 to April 2021, there was no team manager in place, so the service manager and other staff had to cover for this critical role during a very challenging period.

<b>1.2. Staff</b>	
Staff within the YOT are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.	Good

### Key staffing data<sup>13</sup>

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent (FTE))	36
Total number of case managers (FTE)	12
Case managers with a social work qualification (FTE)	6.5
Vacancy rate (total unfilled posts as percentage of total staff headcount)	5.5% (2)
Average caseload case managers (FTE equivalent) <sup>14</sup>	6
Average annual working days sickness (all staff)	1.34

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

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

The YOS is reasonably well resourced, with an appropriate balance of staff; however, there has not been a probation staff member for 12 months. There are currently two vacancies. There is a good range of specialist staff in post. In addition to seconded police officers, there is a victim contact and restorative justice practitioner, an education, training or employment (ETE) worker, a drug, alcohol and sexual harm worker, a reparation worker and a public health nurse.

Caseloads are reasonable, with approximately six cases per full-time member of staff. Twenty out of 22 staff surveyed said that they have a manageable workload.

<sup>13</sup> Data supplied by YOS and reflecting staffing at the time of the inspection announcement.

<sup>14</sup> Data supplied by YOS, based on staffing and workload at the time of the inspection announcement.

Case allocation takes account of individual staff members' workloads and staff work across out-of-court and post-court work, which gives a good deal of flexibility.

There was a period of four months without a CAMHS nurse before the last incumbent came into post, and there has now been another gap, of several months, while she is on maternity leave and cover is being recruited. While there are arrangements in place for urgent referrals, there has been a gap in service availability at times.

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

There is a good gender balance of staff in the YOS. In addition, almost 17 per cent of the staff come from minority ethnic communities, which is representative of the population covered by the two local authorities.

There is a good balance of social work and youth justice practitioners. Social workers within the YOS hold the higher-risk, complex and custody cases. They also write pre-sentence reports for court. Youth justice practitioners hold a mix of out-of-court disposals and statutory cases. Youth justice support workers hold only out-of-court disposals and support other case managers on statutory cases.

Bedford Borough Council has a policy and process in place for social workers to advance into more senior roles. There are examples of this happening in the YOS, as well as for youth justice practitioners, and for support workers to progress into youth justice practitioner roles.

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

Of the staff surveyed, 86 per cent said that the frequency of support and supervision from their line manager was about right, and 19 out of 23 that the quality of supervision was quite or very good. All but one of the case managers interviewed said that they had received effective management oversight in relation to the cases inspected.

Inspectors judged that management oversight met the needs of the case in 68 per cent of cases inspected. There was plenty of evidence of discussions in supervision and quality assurance of assessments. However, there were gaps in the quality of assessments which the assurance process did not pick up.

There is a comprehensive induction for new staff, with detailed checklists covering the first day and first month that have to be signed off by the staff member, their manager and an allocated 'buddy'. Staff who have come into post since the start of the Covid-19 lockdown commented on the good quality of their induction, even though they have yet to meet many of their colleagues in person.

The appraisal process was in abeyance in 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although this has now restarted, 39 per cent of staff surveyed said that they should have had an appraisal recently, but it had not taken place yet. There is a performance management policy and procedure in place. Managers were aware of this and described how they would support and coach staff to address performance issues before moving on to the formal stages if necessary.

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

The YOS has a sufficient training budget, and each member of staff is consulted about their development needs. Of the staff surveyed, 18 out of 22 confirmed that their training and development needs are mostly or fully met. Case managers are supported to achieve the Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate.

Managers and social work staff are being trained in systemic social work practice, which is a practice model being rolled out across Bedford Borough Council children's services. It is the intention to train all YOS case managers in this, but there is no timetabled plan for it currently. There has been training on trauma-informed practice, but it is unclear how this is being incorporated into a coherent practice model. A number of social workers and practitioners have been trained in Assessment, Intervention & Moving-on (AIM) 3, so that they can co-work cases of harmful sexual behaviour with colleagues from children's social care services. The YOS has yet to set out a formal staff training and development plan.

## Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?

Of the staff surveyed, 52 per cent said that the YOS motivates them to deliver a high-quality service to a great extent, and 35 per cent to some extent. Staff sickness absence rates are very low.

Bedford Borough Council has an employee recognition scheme, Going the Extra Mile, whereby managers have nominated staff for awards. This scheme is currently being reviewed. The last part of each team meeting is used to recognise and compliment staff on good work, and this is recorded in the minutes. Of the staff surveyed, 87 per cent said that exceptional work is always or sometimes recognised.

Volunteers appear to be less engaged. They have not been consulted about whether they would be happy to return to in-person referral order panels and did not appear to know the identity of their key contact in the YOS.

There has been a consistently strong focus on staff safety and wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic and staff have been consulted regularly on their working, to ensure that they are Covid-19 safe.

### 1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Good

### Caseload characteristics

Percentage of current caseload with emotional wellbeing or mental health issues	27%
Percentage of current caseload with substance misuse issues	51%
Percentage of current caseload with learning disability, or learning difficulty or subject to an EHCP	37%

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 YOS completes an AssetPlus assessment on all the children on an out-of-court or statutory order that they work with. This provides a wealth of data that managers can use to plan services, although it is noted this data is not shared with the management board, to facilitate their understanding of the demographics and needs of children on the YOS caseloads. The board does, however, receive a very detailed performance report at each meeting, which covers both national and locally defined measures. This provides detailed information on all cases of first-time entrants in the last quarter, custodial sentences and remands, children who are not in ETE, and referrals for CAMHS and substance misuse services.

An analysis of diversity factors, including Looked After Child status, was last completed in 2019. This was used to commission a recording studio for black youth at risk of involvement in serious organised crime. It is intended to repeat this exercise again in 2021/2022. The YOS also has its own reoffending tracker, which contains up-to-date information on proven reoffending and arrests for all YOS cases that have been cautioned or sentenced and can be used in supervision with staff to prioritise interventions.

Information about YOS children is presented to community safety partnerships, Local Safeguarding Children Boards and children's services performance teams. A 'virtual' group of YOS children completed a six-session project, Welcome to my World, about their experiences and involvement with the YOS.

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

Seventeen of the 20 case managers interviewed said that in these cases they had access to the services needed to support desistance. Inspectors judged that services were available to support desistance in 88 per cent of the cases inspected. A range of innovative interventions are available, including a recording studio, a project to repair bicycles, a lived experience mentor, boxercise and the Tackle Life Pilot Project with Bedford Blues Rugby Club.

While there have been few group programmes run in the current circumstances, there is a range of individual interventions delivered which are linked to the achievement of AQA awards, including a knife crime programme delivered by seconded police officers.

The ETE worker has established a job club in conjunction with Work Pays, and has developed links with a range of colleges, employers and training providers. This work has been challenging, and, while there have been a number of successes, over the past year 44 per cent of children aged 16 years or over who have completed youth conditional cautions or statutory orders were not in ETE at the point of case closure.

A specialist drugs, alcohol and sexual health worker delivers tier two and three interventions, including on-site drug testing and analysis. An advanced practitioner chairs the multi-agency AIM group, which addresses harmful sexual behaviour. All children on statutory orders should be referred to the nurse for a health needs assessment, and she also delivers interventions on sleep, sexual health and regulating emotions. The victim worker provides a range of restorative justice

interventions, including restorative justice conferences. There is a wide range of good reparation projects, and options were developed to enable children to complete projects at home during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The case allocation policy seeks to match children with staff, taking into account certain protected characteristics. There is a recognised gap in the provision of services to address speech, language and communication needs. Discussions are ongoing with the local clinical commissioning group to fill this gap, but staff currently lack sufficient training to screen for these needs and to make appropriate referrals. YOS staff have been involved recently in reviewing the service provided by the lived experience mentor, with a view to clarifying the work they do with the children.

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

The YOS is well embedded in Bedford Borough Council children's services and there is a large amount of co-working on cases, including with the adolescent response team (ART). There is also a strong working relationship with Central Bedfordshire children's social care services and with their youth support team. The YOS refers families to ART for its parenting programmes (such as Who's in Charge?) and undertakes joint work with the team. The YOS works closely with and refers to VERU, which provides mentoring and parenting services.

Where there are issues of potential school exclusion, YOS workers and the ETE worker liaise with early help services, which take the lead in finding solutions. Of the children of school age whose involvement with the YOS finished in the last year, 75 per cent were receiving 25 hours or more of education per week at that point.

The YOS is fully engaged with the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements and the tier two and three panels. While there is currently no probation officer seconded to the YOS, we saw examples of planned handover of children's cases to the Probation Service.

The YOS engages with the youth court through its panel and user groups, and ran open evenings for magistrates prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The chair of the youth panel is satisfied with the quality of pre-sentence reports and the range of sentencing options available to the youth court. However, there is currently no court representative on the management board.

### **Involvement of children and their parents or carers**

We asked the YOS to contact all the children whose cases were current to them, to seek their consent to completing a text survey about their experiences of working with the YOS. Parental agreement was required where the child was under 13 years old. Text surveys were sent out to the 29 children who consented, and 10 replies were received.

We asked the children to rate the YOS on a scale of 1 to 10. Six scored it 10, two scored it 8, one 7.5 and one 6. All comments were positive, including the following:

*"X has helped me so much and still is making me realise there's a lot more to life than getting in trouble, and is now helping me to try find a job 'n' much more".*

*"They were very patient and understanding".*

*“Cause they were really helpful with me and nice and they helped me become friends with Y again”.*

We also asked them to rate, on a scale of 1 to 10: “How much has the YOS helped you to stay out of trouble?” Six of the children scored it 10 again, one scored it 8, one 5 and one 2. Comments included the following:

*“Because they have helped me to find things to do, like finding jobs, and made me realise it's not the right way to go, especially when I want to work with children”.*

*“Because I have now learned to not get into trouble, and I know the consequences”.*

*“They made sure the victim’s family didn't come near me when they were angry”.*

*“Since I have been trying to get a better sleep schedule, I haven't been as irritable as before”.*

*“It was broken down to me where I went wrong, how I can improve and that my mistake isn't going to make me who I am if I move on”.*

*“To have someone to talk to and check advice with”.*

The one parent who responded commented:

*“A few missed appointments but, overall, very lovely team and very helpful”, and on whether their child would stay out of trouble: “Half and half, he's still a teenager at the end of the day”.*

We also asked the YOS to seek the consent of the 25 children whose cases we were inspecting to have a telephone call with an inspector. Seven children consented but after several attempts we only managed to contact one child, and one parent answered.

The child was positive about the work of the YOS and what it was doing with them. They commented:

*“I am seeing X at the moment as Y is off sick. They both have the right skills, and they listen to me. I don't always like to share my feelings though. Sometimes sessions are creative, such as doing work around my family tree, which I found really useful. It opened up lots of conversations with my worker. My worker sees me at my home address, which is good. Although it is sometimes too much when I have been at school all week”.*

Overall, he rated the YOS as very good, and said that he probably would not get in trouble again. The parent of another child who answered the call also rated the YOS as very good, and thought their child probably would not get in trouble again. They commented about the worker:

*“She has done a great good, she has brought Shane out of his shell. The bike activity went really well and safe. They did a great job with my son. It was an isolated incident. Shane wrote a card, but the parents didn't accept it, as part of RJ [restorative justice]”.*

## 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 YOS has a sufficient range of policies and protocols for service delivery, with the exception of a resettlement policy. Policies are available on the intranet; there is a review schedule, and these policies are updated accordingly. Most human resource policies are those of Bedford Borough Council, as most staff are council employees.

Policies and procedures are communicated to staff via daily briefings, team meetings and email, although some staff commented that they sometimes receive too many instructions by email. Half of the staff surveyed said that they understand the policies and procedures that apply to their role very well; the other half said that they understand them quite well. Of staff surveyed who access services from partners and providers, two-thirds said that they always know how to access these services, and one-third that they sometimes do.

An informative quarterly newsletter is produced for children and parents. Information about the YOS online is minimal.

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

The YOS has its own separate premises at Enterprise House, in Bedford. This is an excellent facility which includes an activity room, interview rooms, a bicycle workshop and a music studio. The inside and courtyard areas have been designed in conjunction with YOS children and provide a welcoming environment. The YOS previously had its own offices in Dunstable, but these were lost when funding was reduced. It now has access to spaces in Central Bedfordshire Council's offices in Dunstable and elsewhere, although access to these is restricted at the current time.

Of staff surveyed, 68 per cent said that the environment where they deliver services to children meets the needs of the children to a great extent, while the remaining respondents said that this is true to some extent. Similarly, 73 per cent said that the environment where they deliver services to children is safe for staff and children to a great extent, while the remaining respondents said that this is true to some extent.

During the early phase of the Covid-19 pandemic, the offices were closed and staff worked from home, while maintaining contact with the children. The YOS is still maintaining a bubble system; staff are split into three groups and attend the office one week in every three. The office is now open for staff outside of their bubble to book rooms to see children. Staff continue to undertake face-to-face home visits after a risk assessment is completed.

Reparation projects are delivered across both local authority areas and are carefully risk assessed in line with health and safety regulations, and a health questionnaire is completed before children start work.

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

The YOS has good ICT systems which enable full remote and onsite working, with secure connections to both local authorities' children's social care systems. There are excellent working relationships between the YOS and both local authorities' information technology (IT) departments. Seconded staff also have access to their seconding organisation's systems. Of the staff surveyed, 19 out of 22 said that the IT available to them (for example, laptop computers, Wi-Fi, remote access, the case management system) helps them to deliver high-quality services very well, and the remaining respondents said that it helps them quite well.

Information-sharing protocols are in place with all key agencies, including both local authorities and the police, and there is a good flow of information to support the safety and wellbeing of children and any risk posed to others.

The YOS has a very experienced information manager, who produces good-quality management information reports from the relevant IT systems, including information segmented by gender and race.

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

The YOS has a strong performance culture, with regular detailed reports to management and the board on a range of national and local indicators with the aim of driving improvement. Quality assurance has a strong focus on data quality, gatekeeping reports and AssetPlus countersigning. However, scores for assessment would suggest that AssetPlus countersigning is not always effective in ensuring the quality of assessments. It is unclear how much of the learning from the last Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) national standards audit and an audit against HM Inspectorate of Probation standards has been followed up.

Learning from serious youth violence cases has resulted in the establishment of a serious youth violence board, chaired by the YOS and the police. This has drawn on evidence from national and local reviews to improve information sharing and interventions with children at risk of serious gang involvement.

The Welcome to my World project gathered the perspectives of YOS children to inform service improvement. Feedback from those involved in restorative justice interventions is used to learn and improve practice. While data on the needs of girls is collated, this has yet to result in any specific initiatives to improve service delivery for them. Work continues to be individualised and the previous girls group ceased some time ago.

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## 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 YOS.

Data from the 2011 census shows that 15 per cent of children aged 10–17 years in the area covered by this YOS were from a minority ethnic community. For children who received a caution or court sentence in 2019/2020, 33 per cent were from these communities. Considering the relative rate index, black children are 5.5 times more likely, and those of mixed heritage 3.1 times more likely, to be convicted or cautioned than white children. It is certainly true that there is disproportionality in the criminal justice system in Bedfordshire as far as black and mixed heritage boys are concerned. Black children are more likely to be charged with serious violence or drug offences and less likely to be given a caution. In Bedfordshire, 16 per cent of children cautioned or sentenced are girls, which is close to the national average of 15 per cent.

In the board's youth justice plan for 2019/2021, addressing ethnic disproportionality was a priority, building on a report presented by the YOS manager to the former pan-Bedfordshire YJB in 2019. As a consequence, the YOS established a music studio, to try to engage black youth and to divert those who might become engaged in serious youth violence and gang activity. Addressing disproportionality remains a priority in the most recent plan, with actions including further analysis of data and training staff on understanding the impact of racial injustice. There are no other specific diversity objectives in the plan. The YOS does not have its own diversity strategy or plan which addresses the needs of those from all protected groups, including services to girls, or responding to issues of sexuality and disability. A previous group initiative for girls no longer operates and girls are now seen individually.

There is a good gender balance of staffing in the YOS, with 58 per cent of staff female and 42 per cent male. The proportion of staff drawn from minority ethnic communities is currently 16.6 per cent, which is in line with the local population of the area. There has been no specific training on diversity in the past year. The YOS manager contributed to an online event, 'Do Young Lives Matter in the Criminal Justice System?' Bedford Borough Council has an anti-racist practice group which YOS staff are invited to attend, and consideration is being given to establishing such a group in the YOS team itself.

The YOS case allocation policy takes account of a range of factors, including consideration of matching children with staff in line with their diversity characteristics. Girls are usually matched to female staff. However, staff were often unclear about the reasons for a case being allocated, with the need to balance workloads seemingly the main consideration.

A serious youth violence panel has been established which has a specific focus on identifying black and mixed heritage children who may be at risk of entering the criminal justice system, and diverting them into other services and activities. The YOS has a contract with a minority ethnic mentor with lived experience of gang activity, and other mentoring services are provided through the violence and

exploitation reduction group. There is a significant Gypsy, Roma and traveller community in this area, and inspectors saw an example of how a seconded police officer undertook work with a child in such a way that he gained the confidence of community members.

With staff in Bedford children's services, the YOS recently undertook a collaborative learning discussion on SEND cases known to the YOS. This highlighted gaps in the identification of children with these needs and in the provision of EHCPs, and these are being addressed. Separately, the local authority has produced a report on permanent exclusions of children with SEND needs and is taking actions to reduce the number of such instances. A further collaborative learning discussion is planned in relation to the 'adultification of black boys'. Many black boys enter the criminal justice system at a late stage, and it is recognised that many have previously experienced school exclusion, and that action to address their needs requires attention by partner agencies at an earlier stage.

Of the cases inspected, 29 per cent of out-of-court disposals, 67 per cent of court disposals and both resettlement cases were black or of mixed heritage. The out-of-court disposals policy recognises the need to monitor disproportionality in the operation of the scheme. This needs to be a priority as part of any future evaluation, to see if there are cases of minority ethnic children bypassing the scheme for any reason.

In the cases we inspected, we judged that diversity needs were better assessed and planned for in out-of-court cases than with court disposals. In the court disposal cases, we judged that assessment of diversity factors was insufficient in four of the six cases, which meant that planning to address these issues was also poor.

The YOS has a specific focus on trying to reduce the numbers of black and mixed heritage boys being remanded or receiving custodial sentences. All such cases are scrutinised, to see where remands can be avoided, or improvements made in practice. All pre-sentence reports are completed by an experienced social worker and are gatekept before submission. The YOS continues to deliver a well-resourced intensive supervision and surveillance scheme to support children who may be remanded, as an alternative to custody, or to provide support on a daily basis for children leaving custody.

## 2. Court disposals

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We took a detailed look at five community sentences, four of which were referral orders and one a youth rehabilitation order, and one custodial sentence, managed by the YOS. We also conducted four 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, keep the child safe and keep other people safe.

Of the children whose cases were inspected, two were black, two were of mixed heritage and two were white. Five were boys and one was a girl. One was a Looked After Child.

Assessment was rated as 'Inadequate' overall, as although the rating for assessment of risk of harm was 'Good', and for assessment of safety and wellbeing was 'Requires improvement', that for assessment of desistance was 'Inadequate'.

Planning was rated as 'Requires improvement', as while the rating for planning for desistance was 'Good', for both planning for safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm it was 'Requires improvement'.

Implementation and delivery was also rated as 'Requires improvement', as while the rating for implementation and delivery of services to support desistance was 'Outstanding', for both implementation and delivery of services to support safety and wellbeing, and to manage risk of harm it was 'Requires improvement'.

Reviewing was rated as 'Requires improvement'. While the rating for reviewing desistance was 'Outstanding', for reviewing safety and wellbeing it was 'Requires improvement', and for reviewing risk of harm it was 'Good'.

In selecting our case sample, we included all court-ordered cases and those released from custody between 14 December 2020 and 12 March 2021 – in effect, a 100 per cent case sample as there were not enough cases for our usual sample. This reflected the reduction in court throughput due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The ratings for assessment reflected a clear and pressing need to improve the analysis of factors related to desistance, and the safety and wellbeing of children. Where assessment was insufficient, it often followed that planning was insufficient, and this was true of planning; implementation and delivery; and review of services to support the safety and wellbeing of children, all of which required improvement. While there was a range of inter-agency meetings to address issues of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others, the effectiveness of these structures was not always seen in records of planning and delivery, and practitioners were not always confident in escalating their concerns to managers where they felt they had not been addressed adequately by other agencies.

The implementation and delivery of services to support desistance was impressive, with a good range of services available, and case managers were skilled at engaging with children and their parents or carers, and securing their involvement in appropriate planned interventions. Reviewing was generally effective at taking stock, although adjustment to plans did not always follow, with particular reference to reviews of plans for the safety and wellbeing of children.

### **Strengths:**

- There was good use of available information from other agencies to inform assessment, planning and review of cases in most instances.
- Children and parents were mostly fully involved in assessment, planning and reviewing.
- The needs and wishes of victims were considered routinely when assessing risks and planning interventions.
- Planning of services to support desistance was good and implementation was outstanding.
- Staff were good at engaging children and supporting compliance.
- Enforcement action was taken where appropriate.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Analysis of factors related to desistance, assessment of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm was poor.
- Assessment of diversity factors was limited, with the result that plans to address these were insufficient.
- There were gaps in planning to address contingencies for increasing concerns for the safety and wellbeing of children, and of risk of harm to others.
- Implementation and delivery of services to support the safety and wellbeing of children, and to manage the risk of harm to others, especially known and potential victims, was insufficient.
- Processes for staff escalating concerns about safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others, where other agencies were involved, needed clarifying and reinforcing.

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.

Inadequate

Our rating<sup>15</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	<b>17%</b>
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	50%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	67%

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

In only one of the six cases, inspectors judged that this question was met sufficiently. In half of the cases inspected, insufficient attention was given to the analysis of the child's offending behaviour – for example, the triggers for their offending, motivations and attitudes to offending, previous convictions or why offending had escalated.

On a more positive note, in all cases the child was fully involved, and in all but one case the parents were involved in the assessment, and this drew on information from other agencies. In the majority of cases, attention was given to the needs and wishes of victims.

In four of the six cases, assessment of diversity issues and personal circumstances was poor, as in this example:

#### Poor practice example:

Rose was subject to a four-month referral order following an assault on her mother, when the police were called to the family following an argument. Rose became a Looked After Child following the offence. Rose has suffered significant trauma, having a schizophrenic mother who was prone to alcohol and drug abuse. Rose describes a history of being abused sexually, assaulted and kidnapped by various people. This is noted but not analysed or explored fully during the work with the YOS.

In another instance, the case manager did not believe it necessary to explore with the child or his family his special educational needs and his EHCP, or follow this up with the education authority.

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

Practice, as judged by this measure, was insufficient in three of the six cases inspected. In two of the cases, in light of all the information available, inspectors

<sup>15</sup> 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 Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

judged that the assessed risk to the safety and wellbeing of the child was too low, in one case being assessed as low rather than medium, and in another being medium rather than high.

In only half of the cases did assessments identify and analyse clearly all the risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child, or analyse the controls and interventions that were available to support them. While some factors were identified and analysed, such as risk of exploitation or gang involvement, others were analysed insufficiently, including substance misuse and experience of discrimination within the family.

In four cases, the assessments drew sufficiently on sources of information, including from the police and children's social care services; in others, there were gaps, and it was unclear what information had been exchanged or assessments made, as in this example:

*“The safety and wellbeing assessment identifies a list of concerns, such as reckless behaviour, ongoing disputes with neighbours, and the incarceration of his father and involvement with gangs and gang rivalry, which appears to be too generic. The case manager did identify that there has been intelligence that another young person stated that they wanted to stab Derek, and concerns as to how this would manifest in the community if they were to have contact. In interview, it was stated that there were cross-case discussions at the risk and safeguarding panel; however, there is little evidence, such as minutes of discussions, as to whether the case manager has proactively identified and sourced information from key agencies, such as the police, that would then enable a safety plan to be formulated”.*

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

Inspectors judged that assessment of risk to others was sufficient in four of the six cases and agreed that the assessed risk was reasonable in all but one case. In the latter case, the risk was raised to high on first review. In all but one case, the assessment drew on available information and made a sound assessment, as in this example:

#### **Good practice example:**

Francis is a 17-year-old male convicted for the first time for driving offences. The case manager has, however, recognised the circumstances of the offence as contributing to high risk of potential harm both to safety and wellbeing, and risk to others. There is a strong emphasis on gang activities, with the child open in his disclosure and motives as to why he is attracted to such a lifestyle. The assessment provides a reasonable picture of the risks associated with the individual, setting appropriate targets informed by the child's attitude and parent's involvement.

In half of the cases, however, the assessments failed to identify and analyse sufficiently all the risks to others, or the controls and interventions to minimise the risk of harm presented by the children. These included the risk from a child's illegal driving, or risks to specific victims or a child's family.

## 2.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

Our rating<sup>16</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	67%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>50%</b>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	<b>50%</b>

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

In four of the six cases, planning for desistance was sufficient. Children and parents were meaningfully involved in planning in all but one case. Sufficient services were planned for in all cases, and plans were timely, proportionate and achievable, bearing in mind the sentence of the court. In five of the six cases, the interventions planned were those most likely to support desistance. These included referrals to training, employment and drug services, work on offending behaviour, and the use of a mentor with lived experience from a similar cultural background.

There was appropriate involvement of victim services planned in all but one case, including making apologies and reparation. In the resettlement case, the plan was put in place, including an intensive supervision and surveillance timetable, with just five days' notice because of the child's imminent release.

Planning addressed diversity issues in only two of the cases. In one case, the intervention planned took insufficient account of the individual's learning needs, and in another there was no reference to the provision of services for emotional or mental health support.

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

This aspect of practice was sufficient in only half of the cases. In four cases, there was good liaison with other agencies in developing plans. For instance, in one case there was a good understanding of the children's services plan for a Looked After Child; in another, there was the planned use of an electronic tag to monitor the child's movements, and liaison with other agencies to divert the child from gang involvement.

In four cases, planning for contingencies was weak, as shown here:

#### Poor practice example:

Lawrence is a 17-year-old male, sentenced to a referral order of 12 months for the offence of robbery, where a weapon was alleged to have been used to threaten the victim. The plan lacked any structure and sequencing, with little contingency

<sup>16</sup> 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.

thought. When asked about the child safety plan, the case manager was unable to state its direction or aims to protect the child.

In another case, where there was a threat to the child from gang involvement, there was insufficient consideration of involving other relevant services on the child's release from custody.

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

This aspect of practice was sufficient in half the cases. In all but one case, planning involved other agencies. In the custody case, the plan for release included a condition of no contact with victims and witnesses, use of an electronic tag and referral to the risk and safeguarding panel. However, there were gaps in victim safety planning in two of the five relevant cases.

Planning for contingencies was weak in four cases, and controls and interventions to promote the safety of others were in evidence in just half of the cases, as illustrated here:

#### Poor practice example:

A generic contingency plan is in place for Derek. There is some mention of witness intimidation, but there are no indications as to who these victims are, and how they will be protected. Reference is made to sharing information and intelligence with the police and with his mother when they arise. There is only general consideration given to a referral into social care in the event of an increase in risk; however, based on the presence of very young siblings, this should have been considered. Some mention is given to a referral into the risk and safeguarding panel and the serious youth violence panel, but it is unclear what the functions of these would be in the overall risk management plan.

## 2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Requires improvement

Our rating<sup>17</sup> 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?	83%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	<b>50%</b>
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	<b>50%</b>

<sup>17</sup> 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 Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

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

Inspectors judged that this question was met in five of the six cases considered. Service delivery was timely and proportionate to the sentences imposed. In all cases, the services delivered were those most likely to support desistance, and attention was given to securing the child's compliance. Enforcement action was taken in the two cases where it was appropriate.

There was a good level of engagement with most of the children. In one case, appointments were arranged to accommodate the child's working commitments, and a targeted reparation project made good use of the child's skills, for which he received glowing reports. In another, the case manager discussed with the child his traveller background, his experience of bullying because of this, and the publicity he experienced when his father was incarcerated. The case manager explored with the father's probation officer potential opportunities and suitability for contact with his father, who is currently serving a long prison sentence.

With the child released from custody, there was daily contact with the intensive supervision and surveillance staff, support from a mentor, attendance at a job club, work to address substance misuse, and engagement with a victim awareness programme. There were examples of staff working hard to engage children despite the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, as illustrated here:

### **Good practice example:**

Service delivery was focused around addressing identified factors such as employment, drug use and gang involvement, at the same time managing crisis such as that experienced by the child moving between locations. There is a strong relationship between child, mother and the case manager evidenced in contact entries and interview, with the case manager able to present a clear knowledge of the case, and the child's at times challenging attitude. The case manager does recognise some gaps in delivery, impacted by Covid-19 remote contact and the child's transient lifestyle – namely, the difficulty in sequencing services.

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

There was evidence that the work delivered supported the safety of the child effectively in just three of the six cases. There was good liaison with others, supporting the safety and wellbeing of the child in three of the five cases where this was relevant. This included examples of an effective transfer of a child's case to another YOS when they moved placement, keeping in touch with local services and key individuals as a child moved about, and coordinating the delivery of interventions with a child subject to intensive supervision and surveillance, including input into a complex strategy meeting.

There was an identified gap in services to support the wellbeing of a child with potential speech, language and communication issues, where no screening was undertaken, or consideration given, as to how these needs might be met.

In another case, where there were concerns about a child's engagement in gang activity, there was consideration of a civil order gang injunction to inhibit the child's associations. However, the case manager, frustrated about the perceived inaction of the police to progress this matter, did not escalate their concerns through their line manager. In a third case, due to a breakdown in relationship between a child and his

mother, where the mother was making the child homeless, despite risks to his life, there did not appear to be any social care assessment, or escalation by the YOS about the significant and serious safeguarding concerns.

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

The picture here is similar to concerns about safety and wellbeing, with only half of the cases supporting the safety of other people effectively. In particular, it was judged that sufficient attention was given to protecting actual or potential victims in only two of the five relevant cases. However, the involvement of other agencies was well coordinated in three of the five cases where this was relevant.

There was positive liaison with the receiving YOS and children’s social care services in the case of the child who moved placement, and the restrictive conditions and interventions for the child leaving prison who was high risk proved effective, including referral back to court for a breach of his licence conditions.

In the case of the child with special educational needs whose offending was vehicle related, the accredited intervention delivered by the seconded police officer did not appear to be tailored sufficiently to the child’s understanding and attitude to driving-related offending and peer pressure. In another case, where intelligence was submitted to the police relating to risk concerns, there does not appear to have been any feedback, and it is unclear how the delivery of interventions was enhanced by more strategic oversight of wider group rivalries and concerns about reprisals.

**2.4. Reviewing**



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

Requires improvement

Our rating<sup>18</sup> for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	<b>% 'yes'</b>
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child’s desistance?	83%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>50%</b>
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	67%

**Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child’s desistance?**

Written reviews of desistance were completed in five out of the six cases where inspectors judged they should have been done, and these reviews focused on supporting the child’s desistance. There were, however, some gaps in these reviews. In two cases, more should have been done to involve the child and their parents in the process of review, and in two there should have been an adjustment to the plan of work as a consequence of the review.

<sup>18</sup> 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 Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

The best reviews noted progress made and agreed adjustments, such as the need to revisit engagement with services. A particularly good review built on previous gaps in delivery experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic and was informed by a reassessment of the child's motivation and attitude. The review offered the opportunity to revisit interventions such as employment and gang mentoring, allowing the child to make his own targets and sequencing. This was also seen as an opportunity to introduce restrictions through the court, in this case related to residency and the need to monitor and control his transient lifestyle.

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

While written reviews of safety and wellbeing were completed in all but one case, in half of the cases reviewing was judged insufficient to keep the child safe. In two of the five cases where relevant factors changed, reviewing did not respond to these changes in safety and wellbeing, and did not result in the necessary adjustments to plans.

In one case, changes in accommodation impacted on safety and wellbeing, and there was no review of the circumstances of an assault which left the child unconscious. Reviewing was informed by effective exchange of information between services in only three of the six cases.

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

A written review of risk of harm was completed in all six cases, although a review was not required in two cases, and there was no change in relevant factors in one case. Reviewing was judged to focus sufficiently on keeping others safe in four of the six cases. Children and parents were involved in all cases where reviewing of risk of harm to others was required, and reviews included necessary input from other agencies that were involved in four out of five relevant cases.

In one of the two cases judged insufficient, although there had been regular core meetings following reports of further offending, this had not resulted in the necessary planned adjustments, such as consideration of the imposition of bail conditions. In the other case, the review plan did not take sufficient account of the child being on bail for Section 20 wounding, police intelligence of related gang violence, or concerns that the child might be grooming children from a local school.

### 3. Out-of-court disposals

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We inspected 17 cases managed by the YOS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of two youth conditional cautions, five youth cautions and 10 community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in 12 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, keep the child safe and keep other people safe. The quality of the work undertaken with 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 the policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews.

Twelve of the children whose cases we inspected were white, four were black Caribbean and one was of mixed heritage. Three were girls and 14 were boys. Two of the children were looked after by a local authority.

Assessment was rated as 'Inadequate' overall, as, although the rating for desistance was 'Good', and for assessment of risk of harm to others was 'Requires improvement', assessment of safety and wellbeing was rated as 'Inadequate'. Applying our deficit-based model, we take the lowest rating as the overall rating for assessment.

Planning was rated as 'Requires improvement' overall, as, while the rating for planning to address desistance was 'Good', planning in relation to both safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others was rated as 'Requires improvement'.

Implementation and delivery was rated as 'Good' overall. While the rating for implementation of services to support desistance was 'Outstanding', both implementation and delivery of services to support safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others were rated as 'Good'.

The rating for out-of-court disposal policy and provision was 'Requires improvement'.

There were proportionately more out-of-court disposals than court disposals made during the period we were inspecting, from which we made a selection. The majority of out-of-court disposals were community resolution cases (called 'diversion cases' in Bedfordshire), which do not involve a criminal conviction but do involve assessment and intervention by the YOS.

Identification and analysis of desistance factors were much better for out-of-court disposals than for court disposals, and supported effective planning to address desistance in most cases. These plans were translated into delivery of effective interventions to support desistance, involving a wide range of staff and partnership resources.

Safety and wellbeing assessments under-rated the risks to children in too many cases, and it is concerning that this was often not picked up by line managers in their quality assurance activity. Where risks were not fully assessed, this led to plans that failed to address them sufficiently in too many cases. Fortunately, delivery of interventions that promoted safety and wellbeing was better.

There were some deficiencies in the assessment of risk to others, although these were less marked, and risk was under-rated in fewer cases. In most cases, risk plans

were appropriate and involved other agencies, although planning for contingencies in the event of risks escalating was weak. Interventions to manage risks to others were positive, and sufficient attention was given to the needs of victims in many cases, with some good examples of restorative justice.

There was a clear out-of-court disposal policy. However, it could have been further improved to identify how diverse needs were met, how joint decisions were made as to whether a child should be diverted from court, and to include an escalation process when the panel could not reach agreement. There was good information exchange between agencies to support effective decision-making; however, there were some cases where children and their parents or carers were not interviewed by the YOS or a screening assessment was not completed before a disposal was agreed.

There was good involvement of early help services and the victim worker in agreeing interventions. The triage worker ensured that referrals were made to the multi-agency safeguarding hub and children's services, where needed, following first contact. After allocation of cases to YOS staff, a good range of interventions was provided, following a full AssetPlus assessment.

Evaluation and review of the out-of-court disposal scheme were limited, and governance arrangements required strengthening to ensure that there was robust scrutiny of decisions made and the outcomes of the scheme, paying attention to issues of diversity and disproportionality.

#### **Strengths:**

- The number of first-time entrants to the criminal justice system was better than target and considerably lower than the national average.
- Full AssetPlus assessments were completed on all allocated cases.
- Involvement of children and parents in assessment and planning following allocation was effective.
- Planning and delivery of restorative justice interventions were good, and the needs and wishes of victims were prioritised in most cases.
- A wide range of services and interventions delivered by staff and partners was available and used to support desistance.
- There was effective information exchange between agencies to inform assessment and decision-making in most cases.
- A range of appropriate agencies was involved in the out-of-court disposal panel, including a victim and restorative justice worker.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Quality assurance of AssetPlus assessments, including classification of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others, was not effective in enough cases.
- Identification and analysis of risk, and safety and wellbeing factors needed improving.

- Planning for contingencies where a change in circumstances might lead to escalating concerns in relation to safety and wellbeing, or risk of harm to others, was insufficient in too many cases.
- Governance, scrutiny and evaluation of the out-of-court disposal scheme were insufficient.

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.

Inadequate

Our rating<sup>19</sup> 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?	<b>41%</b>
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	53%

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

Assessment of desistance was generally better with out-of-court disposals than with court sentences and was sufficient in 11 of the 17 cases inspected. In all cases, there was a clear written record of the assessment completed following the panel's decision and allocation using AssetPlus. In the large majority of cases, analysis of diversity issues and personal circumstances was sufficient. Assessments involved children and their parents or carers, utilised information from other agencies, and focused on the child's strengths and protective factors, and their maturity and motivation to change. Attention was paid to the needs and wishes of victims in all relevant cases. The following case was typical of these assessments:

#### Good practice example:

A full AssetPlus was completed, which discusses the circumstances of the offence from the perspectives of both the police officer victim and Melanie. The assessment sums up how Melanie's attitude impacted on her thinking and behaviour. Personal circumstances are discussed, portraying a supportive family environment with no other identified factors, a good school attendance record, with appropriate goals set by both Melanie and her parents. There is a

<sup>19</sup> 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 Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

strength-based approach in the assessment of Melanie, and desistance factors are linked to her offending behaviour.

In the cases where assessment of desistance was judged insufficient, there were gaps in the analysis of the circumstances in which the offences were committed and the underlying factors, such as the nature of alcohol or drug misuse. In the case of one child looked after by a local authority from another area, the case manager did not know why the child was in care or why they were not in mainstream schooling, despite several requests for this information from the home area.

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

It is concerning that in 10 of the 17 cases inspected, assessment of the safety and wellbeing of children was insufficient. Inspectors disagreed with the classification of safety and wellbeing in nine of the cases, judging that six should have been assessed as medium rather than low risk, and three should have been high rather than medium risk. In seven of these cases, inspectors concluded that the case manager's classification of risk was unreasonable, including two where alerts<sup>20</sup> were raised subsequently. Given that these assessments were all countersigned by a line manager, inspectors judged that oversight in these cases was deficient.

In a reasonable majority of cases, the assessments of safety and wellbeing drew on other assessments and sources of information. Much of this information was available to the panel through its screening process. However, where there were gaps, these were often significant, such as understanding the reasons why a child was in care, insufficient detail of children's social care involvement or the contents of an EHCP.

In nine of the 17 cases, the assessment did not clearly identify or analyse risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child. There were gaps in analysing the impact and significance of past trauma, expressions of self-harm and suicidal thoughts, emotional and mental health, substance misuse, risk of criminal exploitation or the circumstances in which a knife was carried. Such deficiencies impact on the subsequent work.

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

Assessment of risk of harm to others was slightly better, but required improvement, with eight of the 17 cases judged insufficient on this key question. Inspectors disagreed with the case manager's classification of risk, which they thought was unreasonable, in three cases; in two cases, they judged that it should be medium rather than low, and in one that it should be high rather than medium. In these cases, inspectors felt that previous incidents of carrying weapons or violent incidents had been given insufficient weight in the assessments.

There was sufficient exchange of information to inform the assessments in 13 of the 17 cases inspected, using information from the police, children's services and schools. In one case, the child was discussed at a VERU meeting, but there were no records of the outcome of the meeting on the file.

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<sup>20</sup> An individual alert encompasses practice, or practice omissions, that require immediate remedial action to be taken (usually by the organisation responsible for the case) to reduce or contain an identifiable, significant and imminent risk.

In six of the 16 cases where it was judged that risk of harm factors applied, there was insufficient identification or analysis of these factors. There were cases where it was unclear who was at risk, what the extent of the risk might be or when the risk might occur, as in the following case:

**Poor practice example:**

While there is some level of analysis present, it is fairly general, inasmuch as the risk of serious harm assessment identifies that 'in the right circumstances, David may become aggressive', and 'I am not confident that David would refrain from resorting to physical violence should an opportunity present itself'. What appears to be missing are the circumstances by which risk to others [is] present, to whom and the analysis as to what is available to mitigate risk. Based on his individual needs, his diagnosis and his experiences, there may be specific circumstances where risk to others may manifest.

**3.2. Planning**



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

Requires improvement

Our rating<sup>21</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	65%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>53%</b>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	59%

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

Planning to support desistance was sufficient in a reasonable majority of cases, building on the assessments that had been completed. In 13 of the 17 cases, sufficient services were planned for, and in 15 cases the planning was proportionate to the disposal, with interventions capable of being completed within the 12 weeks available.

In a reasonable majority of cases, planning involved the child and their parents, set out appropriate services and took into account the personal circumstances and diversity of the child. Plans built on the child's strengths, took account of their maturity and motivation, and identified opportunities for community integration. Sufficient attention was paid to the needs and wishes of victims in all but two of the relevant cases. The following case illustrates such positive practice:

**Good practice example:**

Jane is a 16-year-old female who received a community resolution for a common assault against her mother, which formed part of a pattern of behaviour that started around six years ago. The assessment and planning identified the relevant needs, and the proposed family intervention is going well and is impactful. Exit

<sup>21</sup> 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.

planning has started, with options around ongoing support from CAMHS, and early help and systemic family intervention are identified.

Where planning was judged insufficient, this was because certain key factors were not addressed, such as accommodation, schooling, alcohol and drug misuse, or family dynamics.

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

Planning to keep children safe was sufficient in nine of the 17 cases inspected. Of these, for the 15 cases where such risks were apparent, plans addressed concerns for the child's safety and wellbeing sufficiently in less than half (only seven). There were examples where issues of potential criminal exploitation, escalating drug misuse or the social isolation of a child carer were missing from these plans, which would have impacted on the child's safety and wellbeing.

In just under half of the cases, there was insufficient planning to identify clearly and provide for contingencies where a change in circumstances might lead to risk escalating. In six of the 14 cases where there were evident risks that required the involvement of other agencies, there were insufficient referrals and plans were not well enough aligned. For example, in one case a referral to children's services and CAMHS should have been included in the plan; in other cases, planning should have been more joined up, as illustrated here:

#### **Poor practice example:**

The initial plan references the need to work in collaboration with social care, and that they should be ensuring appropriate safeguarding measures are in place for Kevin, but the case manager has insufficient understanding of the social care plans to ensure that all plans complement each other. Some planning activity is evident from the file, in the form of management oversight and multi-agency meetings which relate to mapping YOS cases and sharing information. However, only one action relating to checking Kevin's National Referral Mechanism (NRM) status is recorded, arising from a complex case meeting regarding a number of young people.

Where planning was judged sufficient, there were positive examples of referrals to CAMHS for assessment of mental health concerns, measures to support a child's return to school, referral to a knife crime programme, assessment of criminal exploitation and restorative justice interventions to reduce tensions.

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

Inspectors judged that planning was sufficient to keep others safe in 10 of the 17 cases, and planning to address risk of harm factors was sufficient in nine of the 14 cases where there were these concerns. Gaps in planning were identified in relation to addressing alcohol misuse, and recognising and addressing triggers for violent behaviour. Planning for contingencies in the event of concerns that risks might be escalating was the weakest area and was judged insufficient in six cases. However, involving other agencies in planning was strong and was sufficient in all but two cases.

The safety and concerns of actual and potential victims were addressed appropriately in eight out of 13 cases where this applied. There were very positive examples of planning and preparation for restorative justice interventions in several cases, in line

with the wishes of victims. However, there were also examples where the needs of victims were not addressed well enough and plans to protect them were insufficient, as in the following case:

**Poor practice example:**

Although planning does address anger issues that John has, I feel that there should have been a greater focus on the protection of the victim, who is not considered in the planning process. The victim is John’s brother, who he has to share a bedroom with. They have a difficult relationship and John is showing no remorse for his behaviour.

**3.3. Implementation and delivery**



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

**Good**

Our rating<sup>22</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	<b>% 'yes'</b>
Does service delivery effectively support the child’s desistance?	88%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	71%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	<b>65%</b>

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

Implementation and delivery of services to support desistance is rated as ‘Outstanding’, with 15 out of 17 cases scored positively. In all cases, sufficient attention was given to encouraging the child’s compliance with the interventions, which in all but two cases were voluntary. In 15 of the cases, the interventions were those most likely to support desistance and they took account of the child’s diversity. In 13 of the cases, intervention took account of the familial and social context of the child, and involved parents and significant others as appropriate. Services delivered addressed emotional and physical health issues, non-violent resistance training for parents, restorative justice and reparation, offence-focused work, liaison with schools, attendance at a job club leading to a college place, and work to address alcohol misuse. There were examples of good practice, as in the following case:

**Good practice example:**

Jake is a 16-year-old whose offences were linked to riding a stolen moped without a licence. This was his first involvement with the YOS. The case manager recognised the impact of the positive delivery of motoring-related interventions by the seconded police officer, not only in terms of Jake’s needs, but also in terms of improving positive relations with the family and associates from a Gypsy/Roma background. The intervention was well received by them. The youth conditional

<sup>22</sup> 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 Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

caution appears to have been successful in identifying Jake's areas of strengths and needs, and reducing his likelihood of reoffending.

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

In 11 of the 16 cases where services were required to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, this was done well. Where this was scored positively, there were examples of involvement in an accredited knife crime programme, addressing issues of criminal exploitation and social isolation, and referrals to CAMHS to access emotional health support. Conversely, there were also examples where interventions to address potential exploitation, drug misuse, a return to school plan, and assessment for attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) were not progressed.

In just over half of the cases where involvement with other agencies was required to keep the child safe, this was well coordinated. There were examples of good engagement with the local authority ART, to address a child's issues of impulsivity and anger, and with children's services and another YOS about a move for a child with his family where there were concerns for their safety. By contrast, there were also two examples where there was difficulty in establishing communication with the home children's service for two Looked After Children, which should have been escalated sooner.

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

Inspectors judged that sufficient services were delivered to manage and minimise the risk for harm to others in nine of the 14 cases where this was relevant. There were several examples of the delivery of positive restorative justice interventions, including letters of apology and a restorative justice conference in a school setting, with the aim of reducing tension and possible retaliation, as in the following case:

#### **Good practice example:**

Simon is a 13-year-old boy who was given a community resolution for causing actual bodily harm. The offence was an impulsive reaction to a situation that had caused embarrassment and there had been no intention to cause harm. Simon and his family engaged well with the YOS. A very successful RJ [restorative justice] conference was held, with both parties and parents benefiting. Simon apologised and the victim acknowledged her part in the incident. There was reassurance from the victim's mother that there would be no problems with victim's older brother, resulting in a significant improvement in Simon's emotional health after the conference. Simon has been able to return to school and has resumed friendship with the victim.

However, in another case of family conflict, restorative justice was not considered, and the case manager did not know where she would get support for family mediation, as the YOS itself does not deliver such a service. There were other examples of where the needs of victims and potential victims appeared to get lost, with the focus being too much on the child subject to the intervention.

### 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.

Requires improvement

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 an out-of-court disposal policy, which is agreed between the YOS, the police, HM Courts and Tribunals Service and the Crown Prosecution Service, and this has been reviewed and updated this year.

There is a triage process, whereby a worker attends police stations to assess children under arrest and to liaise with the officer in the case, who makes the decision as to whether to send the case to the out-of-court disposal panel. The policy references the police gravity scoring matrix as part of the decision-making process in deciding which out-of-court disposal – community resolution, youth caution or youth conditional caution – to pursue.

The policy could be further refined to set out the circumstances in which different out-of-court disposals are agreed. Local authority early help services and the ART are represented on the panel and are part of the decision-making process. The triage worker will refer arrested children to these services at an early stage, where appropriate, irrespective of the decisions that are made subsequently by the police or the panel. The panel is appraised of all relevant information from the police, children's services, the YOS and victim perspectives before coming to a decision, taking into account risk, and safety and wellbeing factors.

The policy recognises the need to ensure that Looked After Children and those from minority ethnic communities are not criminalised disproportionately by entry into the formal criminal justice system, and should be considered for diversion.

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

The panel meets weekly, chaired by a YOS advanced practitioner, attended by seconded police staff, early help services, and triage and victim workers, with information collated and presented by the YOS information officer. Social workers, a substance misuse worker and police officers in the case attend where they have additional information to provide, and often cases are adjourned to enable this to happen. The triage screening is presented in cases where the worker has seen the child. However, in cases of voluntary attendance at the police station for interview, the child and their parents are not seen by the triage worker, and the panel is reliant on information from the police officer and that collated by the YOS information officer. In these cases the panel may on occasions be adjourned to obtain the child's and parent's views before reaching a final decision.

There is no clear escalation process set out for occasions when agreement cannot be reached, and an example was seen where a case was sent back to court for a decision as to whether an out-of-court disposal should be given.

Full AssetPlus assessments are completed following the allocation of cases to YOS staff by the panel, and a full range of interventions is available, delivered by the YOS, seconded police officers or in agreement with early help services. With voluntary interventions, if engagement is proving problematic, cases are returned to the panel to consider alternative approaches.

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

Although the policy has been reviewed recently, this appears to have been a desktop exercise, not based on a full evaluation of how the service is operating. The last proper evaluation was completed in 2018. The local management board receives information on cases of first-time entrants to the criminal justice system at every board meeting, but this does not consider data on those diverted or who receive community resolutions.

There was a recent review of an increasing number of cases being sent for consideration by the courts which had bypassed the panel. This resulted in improvements in training for police officers about the use of out-of-court disposals, and the number of such instances has since reduced.

There has been no involvement of children and parents in reviewing the provision, with the exception of where restorative interventions have been undertaken with the victim worker. The absence of arrangements to scrutinise the decisions made by the panel is an acknowledged gap.

## 4. Resettlement

### 4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Good

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 two cases managed by the YOS that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

While there is no current resettlement policy, there are arrangements in place, including a risk assessment and safeguarding panel, which ensures that plans to manage risk and ensure the safety and wellbeing of children on release are sufficient. However, without a clear and robust policy framework there is a danger of inconsistent practice.

From the cases reviewed and other information received, we judged that suitable and timely accommodation is available for most children leaving custody. There is appropriate and timely access to other services, including ETE and healthcare services. This is planned for in advance, and available for children immediately after leaving custody. Consideration is given to diversity needs. Resettlement provision pays attention to keeping children and other people safe and addressing the needs of victims.

A resettlement policy is being drafted, and the risk and safeguarding panel has been reviewed to improve release planning. However, this work is in the early stages and needs to build on an analysis of existing data and consultation with children, their parents or carers, and other agencies.

#### Strengths:

- Most resettlement cases were allocated to experienced social workers.
- Good links with both children's social care departments supported access to accommodation for resettlement and to avoid remands in custody.
- Mentoring services delivered by people with lived experience of the criminal justice system were available and well used.
- There was a well-resourced intensive supervision and surveillance scheme which provided support daily to children released from custody.

#### Areas for improvement:

- A comprehensive resettlement policy was not yet available.
- Formal training for staff taking on responsibility for resettlement cases was lacking.

We gathered evidence for this standard from documents and meetings, and inspected two cases to allow us to illustrate the qualitative standards. 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 YOS does not have a resettlement policy in place; one is in the process of being drafted. The YOS is currently working to the Youth Justice Standards 2015, with local additional expectations that children serving detention and training orders are visited monthly, those serving longer sentences are visited at least every two months, and that the YOS holds on to cases transitioning to adult probation services until a handover is achieved.

The YOS has a risk assessment and safeguarding panel (RASP), which is expected to review resettlement cases, to ensure that adequate arrangements are in place to reduce risk and consider safety and wellbeing on release, including appropriate licence conditions. There are no specialist resettlement workers and there has been no specific training on resettlement. However, because of their complexity, the majority of these cases are allocated to experienced social workers.

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

Inspectors considered two resettlement cases against this standard, one of which was released on licence and transferred to probation services a few weeks later, and the other was transferred to probation services a few months after sentence.

The social workers have strong links with both children's service departments, which assist with accommodation on release. In one of the inspected cases, the child was released to their parent in an area away from their previous associates, and in the other the child was accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 while awaiting sentence. The Keeping Young People Engaged worker makes contact with children following sentence and engages them in a range of ETE activity on release.

One of the children was black and the other of mixed heritage. Information was translated into the mother's first language in one case, to explain the pre-release and curfew arrangements; in the other, information was shared in the assessment and plans relating to the child's ADHD. In the first case, there was creative use of licence conditions designed to keep the child safe; in the second, planning meetings addressed his vulnerabilities regarding exploitation and gang activities, with a view to supporting probation staff to source appropriate accommodation.

Mentoring services are used to support children on release, delivered by individuals with lived experience of the criminal justice system. A well-resourced intensive supervision and surveillance scheme is available to support children on a daily basis following release, along with electronic monitoring (including electronic tags) where appropriate. The victim worker attends the RASPs to address victim concerns and liaises with the police and the probation victim contact service as appropriate.

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

There is no evidence of regular review of resettlement policy and provision. However, the RASP has been reviewed recently to make it more effective; there is

now an expectation that resettlement cases are referred to it six months prior to release and for the panel to have a specific focus on release planning.

The National Standards Audit 2019/2020 included a review of resettlement cases. There was follow-up action to improve communication with parents and custodial establishments at the point of sentence; however, it is unclear how some of the other shortfalls in practice have been addressed.

The YOS Youth Justice Plan 2021/2022 recognises the over-representation of black and mixed heritage children subject to custodial sentences in Bedfordshire, and there is a priority to examine the data and address this disproportionality in 2021/2020.

## Annexe 1: Methodology

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### 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.<sup>23</sup>

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 Interim Director of Children's Services for Bedford Borough Council and chair of the board delivered a presentation covering the following areas:

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

During the main fieldwork phase, we conducted 16 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 12 meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.<sup>24</sup>

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

#### 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

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<sup>23</sup> HM Inspectorate's standards are available here:  
<https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

who had received out-of-court disposals three to five months earlier. This enabled us 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 17 out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set based on the proportion of out-of-court disposal cases in the YOS.

### **Resettlement**

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining two 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 six court disposals and 17 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 two 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:<sup>25</sup>

<b>2.1. Assessment (court disposals)</b>	
<b>Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	50%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	33%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	33%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	100%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	67%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	17%
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?	67%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	50%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	83%
<b>Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
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?	67%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	50%
<b>Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?</b>	<b>% yes</b>

<sup>25</sup> Some questions do not apply in all cases.

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?	50%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	83%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	50%

## 2.2. Planning (court disposals)

<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	83%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	33%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	67%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	67%
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?	50%
f) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims?	67%
g) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	83%
<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	50%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	67%
c) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	50%

d) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	33%
<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	50%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	83%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	50%
d) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	50%
e) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	33%

### 2.3. Implementation and delivery (court disposals)

<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	100%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	83%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	83%
d) Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	83%
e) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	83%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to services post-supervision?	83%
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?	100%

<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	50%
b) Is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?	50%
<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	50%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	33%
c) Is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	50%

#### 2.4. Reviewing (court disposals)

<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors linked to desistance?	50%
b) Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	67%
c) Does reviewing include analysis of, and respond to, diversity factors?	50%
d) Does reviewing consider the personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	83%
d) Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	67%
e) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	67%
f) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to support desistance?	50%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?</b>	<b>% yes</b>

a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing?	33%
b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?	50%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	33%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to risk of harm?	50%
b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	67%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan all of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	33%

### 3.1. Assessment (out-of-court disposals)

<b>Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's acknowledgement of responsibility for, attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	65%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	82%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	82%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	82%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	88%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	24%
g) Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	82%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	76%

i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	88%
<b>Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	47%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	71%
<b>Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
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?	59%
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?	76%

### 3.2. Planning (out-of-court disposals)

<b>Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	65%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	65%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	71%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	76%
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?	76%
f) Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?	65%
g) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims?	65%

h) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	76%
<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	41%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	47%
c) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	47%
<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	53%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	47%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	47%
d) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	41%

<b>3.3. Implementation and delivery (out-of-court disposals)</b>	
<b>Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	88%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	88%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	76%
d) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	94%
e) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	100%

f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	71%
<b>Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	65%
b) Is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	41%
<b>Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?</b>	<b>% yes</b>
a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	53%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	65%