

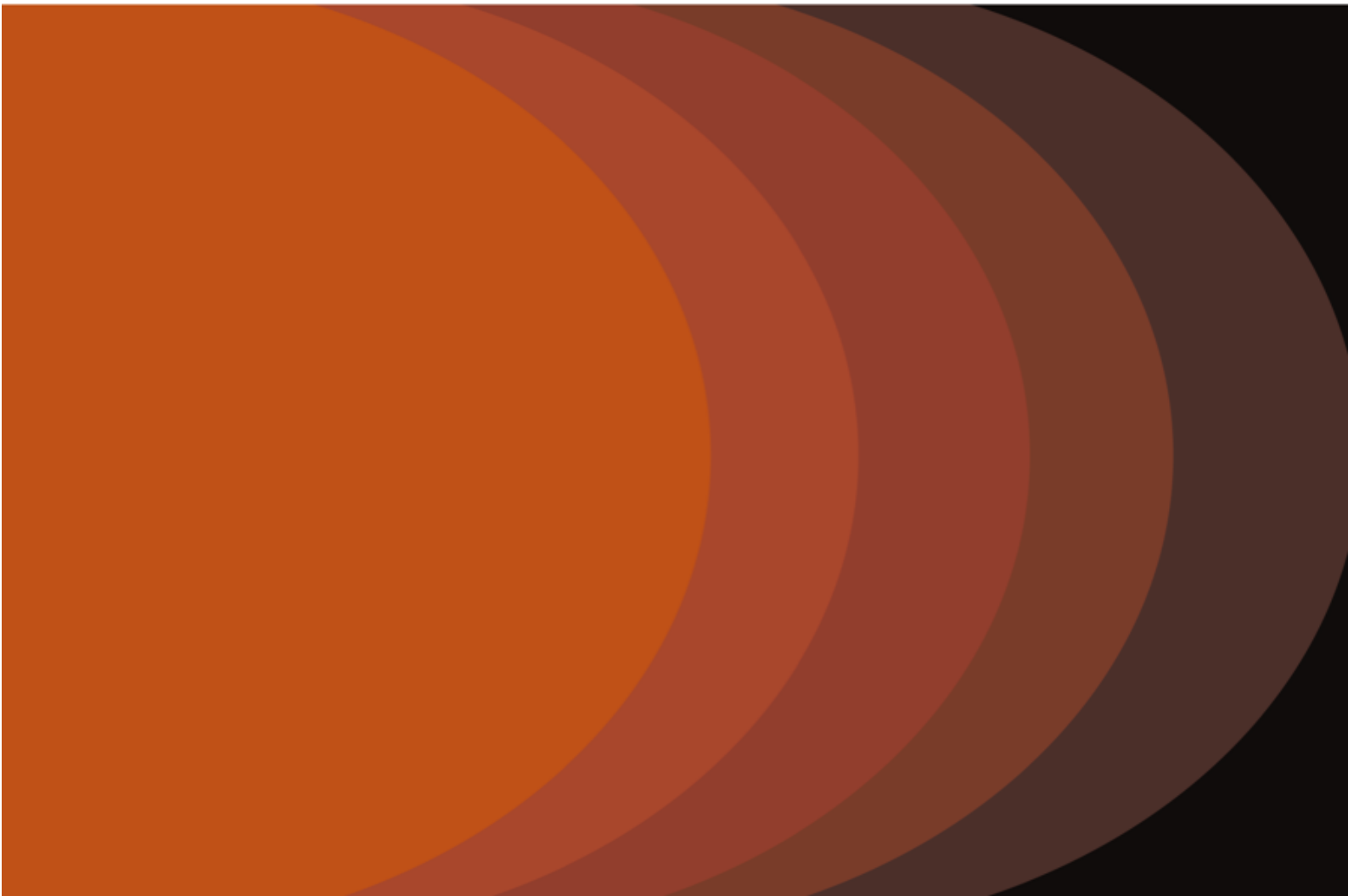


Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate of  
Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in  
**Cardiff**

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HM Inspectorate of Probation, August 2022





Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate of  
Probation



## Acknowledgement

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Mike Lane, supported by a team of inspectors and colleagues from across the Inspectorate. HM Inspectorate of Probation was joined by colleague inspectors from police, health, social care and education. We would like to thank all those who helped plan and took part in the inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

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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 Cardiff Youth Justice Service (YJS) across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. Overall, Cardiff YJS was rated as 'Requires improvement'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Good'.

This was a reinspection of Cardiff, following our previous visit in 2020, when we rated the service as 'Inadequate'. Completed as a joint inspection, alongside our partner inspectorates, we found an improved service. Despite a period of significant challenge and instability, throughout both the Covid-19 pandemic and the implementation of a new YJS organisational structure, the service has made important progress. The appointment of an independent board chair has ensured that the YJS has greater visibility, improved leadership and dedicated resources. Better governance arrangements have ensured that the clear focus of the management board is now on improving outcomes for YJS children.

Although improved in many aspects, not all arrangements with partners and providers are effective and not all of the key policies and guidance are of the required quality for staff to deliver their work. This said, staff morale has improved since the last inspection, workloads are perceived as manageable and the frequency of supervision is improving.

In the court disposal cases we inspected, supporting desistance was the strongest area of work. Of note was the consistent promotion of opportunities for community integration for YJS children, including access to services post-supervision. However, our case inspections highlighted shortfalls in the quality of work undertaken to address the safety and wellbeing needs of the child, and the risk of harm that some children posed to others. Out-of-court disposal casework scores and ratings had improved significantly since our last inspection, particularly for planning and delivery. We were also pleased to see good-quality work in relation to resettlement practice, supported by attention from the YJS management board. However, management oversight of both court disposal and out-of-court disposal work did not consistently promote high-quality casework practice and this is an area that requires development.

Within their overall rating of 'Requires improvement', there is much to commend Cardiff YJS and the partnership for. There has been a clear trajectory of progress from our previous inspection and there are stable foundations on which to continue to build a high-quality service. We were encouraged by senior leaders' commitment and awareness of the issues to be addressed and make several recommendations that will enable the YJS to improve further.

















**Justin Russell**  
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

## Ratings

### Cardiff Youth Justice Service

Fieldwork started: March/April 2022

Score 11/36

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

## Executive summary

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Overall, Cardiff Youth Justice Service (YJS) is rated as 'Requires improvement'. This rating has been determined by inspecting the YJS in three areas of its work, referred to as 'domains'. We inspect against 12 core 'standards', shared between the domains. The standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.<sup>1</sup> Published scoring rules generate the overall YJS 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

Following our previous inspection of Cardiff YJS in 2020, we had serious concerns about the effectiveness of organisational delivery. The YJS's governance and leadership, staffing, partnership and services, and information and facilities all failed to meet an acceptable standard.

The YJS's structure did not enable it to provide a high-quality service. There was limited understanding of the challenges facing children supervised by the YJS. Children's needs were not being addressed, and children were unable to access some services in a timely way or at all. Board members were not effective in holding the YJS or its partners to account and did not set strategic direction or priorities for the YJS.

Across both court disposal and out-of-court-disposal work, the quality of assessments and planning, implementation and delivery of services, and reviewing the progress of cases was rated as 'Inadequate'. In part, the poor quality of practice was caused by ineffective management supervision of cases. We, and our partner inspectorates, made a number of recommendations to senior and operational leaders across the YJS partnership, and we were pleased to see progress against many of these recommendations within this reinspection in 2022.

We interviewed the YJS manager and the chair of the management board. We held meetings with other members of the board and key stakeholders, as well as YJS staff and volunteers.

The appointment of the independent board chair in April 2020 has been crucial in allowing the partnership to set a positive agenda for change and improvement. As a result, there is greater clarity about the vision and purpose of the partnership. Governance arrangements have changed, to ensure that the management board is the arena where there is dedicated focus on YJS children. Board members are of appropriate seniority and have the appropriate level of authority to make effective strategic decisions and commit resources.

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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'.

Provision of staff by partnership organisations is sufficient. Staff morale has improved since the last inspection, and they perceive workloads as manageable.

The YJS operational manager has shown resilience and tenacity to implement changes and undertake difficult decisions to move the service forward, but, given the scale of the improvement work required, senior leaders need to ensure that she retains their continued and evident support and backing. The YJS management team, although relatively new, is making a positive impact. However, we were concerned that the current spans of control and service improvement responsibilities are large. The appraisal process is not being used effectively or consistently, although the frequency of supervision has improved in the relatively short period since the new permanent management team was appointed in February 2022.

The YJS has a workforce development strategy, but this requires formal review and completion of an updated workforce development plan. The challenge for the new management team is to ensure that the quality of supervision, reflection, coaching and support improves significantly, and the YJS board should support it in this work.

There is a better understanding of the profile of the YJS cohort, compared with the previous 2020 inspection. The partnership has access to a sufficient volume, range and quality of services, although health provision and pathways require further improvement. Nevertheless, arrangements with many statutory partners and other providers have improved since our last inspection. Not all of the key policies and guidance are of a sufficient quality to enable staff to deliver their work. Again, although improved since our last inspection, there is mixed evidence of performance and quality assurance systems driving improvement, and of learning from audits, inspection and review processes. This is an area where greater consistency is required.

The YJS has been through a period of restructure, in response to the findings from our previous inspection. This restructure, alongside the challenges presented by Covid-19 and lockdown, mean that the YJS has experienced a period of instability and significant challenge. The impact of this was evident in some of the cases assessed during the period of our inspection. However, senior leaders were candid and fully committed to the challenge to continue their improvement journey, and were sighted on the key challenges and risks to the service.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows:

- The YJS has a clear vision and strategy. The independent YJS board chair is well respected, visible and has driven the YJS board.
- Commitment and resourcing from the Cardiff Council Chief Executive Officer and political leaders has been evident, along with support to manage and resolve some challenging human resources issues prior to implementing the new YJS structure.
- The partnership has structured and clarified its governance arrangements and lines of accountability. The board is well attended, with board members who are committed, and of sufficient seniority. Links to other strategic boards are evident.
- The YJS operational manager has overseen and driven a change in culture and has shown resilience and tenacity to move the service forward.
- The YJS has a range of partnership and seconded staff – including police officers, a probation officer, an education, training and employment (ETE)

worker, a health worker (art therapist), a harmful sexual behaviour worker and a substance misuse worker.

- Practitioner workloads are reported as manageable and there is a sufficient training offer for staff.

But:

- The board sub-committee needs to regain momentum, knowledge and commitment – we found inconsistent evidence of join-up between strategic and operational leadership and activity.
- YJS management team turnover has impacted on the quality and scrutiny of case management practice. Current middle manager spans of control and service improvement responsibilities are too large.
- There is a lack of strategic and operational clarity of the full range of health provision available to the YJS, and pathways for YJS children are difficult to access, delayed and/or unclear.
- Many staff have not had an appraisal and supervision processes have only been regular in the last two to three months.
- Although many policies have been reviewed and signed off by the board and its sub-committee, some have lacked the necessary scrutiny and contain significant shortfalls and inaccuracies.
- There are gaps in analysis of key data to support understanding of outcomes and to shape future service delivery.

### **Court disposals**

We took a detailed look at 12 community sentences and one custodial sentence managed by the YJS. We also conducted nine interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment, planning, implementation and delivery of services, and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, to keep the child safe and to keep other people safe.

Our key findings about court disposals are as follows:

- Court disposal work was strengths based, with a consistent level of involvement of children and their parents or carers in all aspects of casework.
- Implementation and delivery to address desistance, and safety and wellbeing was rated as 'Good'.
- There was good evidence of planning for subsequent community integration/other services post-YJS involvement.
- Practitioners worked hard and flexibly to maintain service provision, despite Covid-19 restrictions.

But:

- Assessments lacked quality and analysis, specifically in relation to safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others.
- Planning to address desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others was poor, not aligned with that of other agencies and did not address contingency arrangements.



- Across all aspects of court disposal casework, attention to children’s diversity needs was variable in quality.
- Victim and restorative justice work was inconsistent within the cases inspected.
- Reviewing of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others was weak and lacked consistent input from the agencies involved, and ongoing plans were not adjusted when necessary.
- Management oversight of court disposal casework was extremely poor.

Compared with the 2020 inspection, we saw improved case inspection scores across all but one of the rated standards for court disposal work, and in the court disposal cases inspected; supporting desistance was the strongest area of work. However, our case inspections highlighted shortfalls in the quality of work undertaken to address the safety and wellbeing needs of the child, and the risk of harm that some children posed to others. Many of these children lived complex lives, and their offences had been committed in the context of wider worrying behaviour and adverse experiences. Greater attention and scrutiny are required in relation to the work undertaken with these children.

For assessment, eight out of thirteen met our requirements for desistance. However, only six out of thirteen cases were sufficient in relation to safety and wellbeing, and just three out of thirteen cases met our requirements to address the risk of harm to others. This led to our judgement of ‘Inadequate’ for this element of work. In most instances, assessments were strengths based and involved children and their parents or carers. Although inspectors agreed with classifications of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others in a majority of cases, assessments lacked quality and did not draw sufficiently on additional sources of information from other agencies to inform a reasoned analysis.

Planning was rated as ‘Inadequate’, as less than 50 per cent of cases were sufficient across all aspects of this work. Within the inspected cases, planning consistently lacked alignment with other agencies’ plans and did not set out the necessary controls and interventions in many of those cases where there were safeguarding or public protection considerations. In particular, the quality of contingency planning was poor.

Implementation and delivery was the strongest element of work within court disposals. The service worked well to deliver services to support desistance, and safety and wellbeing, and these met our expectations in a majority of the 13 cases. However, delivery of services to address risk of harm to others was sufficient in only eight out of thirteen cases, which drove the overall rating for this standard to ‘Requires improvement’. Despite the constraints brought by Covid-19, YJS staff worked flexibly and used their knowledge and skills well to build relationships with families and take a strengths-based approach to meeting children’s needs. It was evident that service delivery promoted opportunities for community integration for YJS children, including access to services post-supervision.

Reviewing of work to address desistance met our standards in seven out of thirteen cases; however, reviewing of work to keep the child safe was sufficient in only six of the cases. For managing the safety of others, review was sufficient in just four cases, which led to an overall rating of ‘Inadequate’ for this standard. Reviews of court disposal cases were either not completed or late. Reviewing was often not informed by input from other agencies and did not therefore lead to adjustments to the plan of work with the child, or to address the relevant risks and needs of the case.

Across all aspects of casework, we found a variable quality of practice in addressing a child's diversity, alongside inconsistent work in relation to victim and restorative justice work within the inspected cases. Management oversight of court disposal casework was extremely poor, being deemed sufficient in just one out of thirteen cases.

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

We inspected 25 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of three youth conditional cautions, two youth cautions and 20 community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in 18 cases.

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

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

When inspecting cases, we have ratings boundaries that determine the overall rating applied. In Cardiff YJS, over half but less than two-thirds of cases inspected met all our standards for assessment, resulting in a 'Requires improvement' rating for this aspect of work. Assessments were strengths based and proportionate, and a large majority involved input from the child and their parents or carers. Assessment of a child's safety and wellbeing lacked analysis and would benefit from a more consistent inclusion of information from other agencies, where relevant.

Planning for desistance was sufficient in 80 per cent of cases. The overall rating for this standard, however, was driven by fewer cases being sufficient in relation to planning to keep the child safe and for risk of harm to others, resulting in a rating of 'Good'. Planning set out the opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services following completion of the out-of-court disposal work. Involvement of the child and their parents or carers in planning activity was consistently strong. However, for both safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others, there were shortfalls in contingency planning.

Implementation and delivery in relation to desistance was sufficient in over 80 per cent of cases. The overall rating for this standard, however, was driven by fewer cases being sufficient in relation to delivery to keep the child safe and for risk of harm to others, resulting in a rating of 'Good'. Case managers identified the factors that were most likely to support the child's desistance and developed effective working relationships with children and their parents or carers. Delivery of work was timely, proportionate and well sequenced, providing good evidence of planning for subsequent community integration/other services following completion of YJS involvement.

Across assessment, planning and delivery, we found inconsistent practice in addressing a child's diversity, alongside a variable quality of work in relation to victim and restorative justice work within the inspected cases. Management oversight of out-of-court disposal casework was weak, being deemed sufficient in just eight out of twenty five cases. That said, we were pleased to see much improved case inspection scores across all but one of the rated standards for out-of-court-disposal work. Of note was the improvement in the quality of safeguarding and public protection work across assessment, planning and delivery elements.

We rated out-of-court disposal policy and provision as 'Requires improvement'. There is an out-of-court-disposal policy (supported by a bureau process flowchart) which sets out arrangements for decision-making, provision and delivery of out-of-court disposals and prevention/diversion work. However, The YJS out-of-court-disposal policy and the South Wales Police out-of-court-disposal processes and policies were not aligned, which was a shortfall as there were some contradictions in guidance and process.

Since the last inspection, the introduction and implementation of a 'bureau model' in March 2021 has been a significant development. This approach has served to bring a much clearer focus and process to the delivery of out-of-court-disposal work in Cardiff. However, further work is required for the partnership to ensure that the decision-making panel involves all relevant agencies consistently, and that the child fully understands, and can participate more equally in, the process.

Given the significant reduction in first-time entrants, the partnership had limited understanding of how this success might be linked to the work in relation to out-of-court disposals.

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

- There was an out-of-court-disposal policy, which set out arrangements for decision-making, provision and delivery of out-of-court disposals, and prevention/diversion work.
- Planning and delivery of out-of-court disposals was rated as 'Good' across all elements of desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others.
- Out-of-court-disposal work was strengths based and involved children and their parents or carers in a large majority of cases.
- Work undertaken with children on out-of-court disposals was timely and proportionate, with good evidence of planning for subsequent community integration/other services following completion of YJS work.
- There were service level agreements between the YJS and Media Academy Cardiff for the 'Divert' project.
- Children subject to out-of-court disposals and assessed as having high safety and wellbeing needs or presenting a high risk of harm to others were managed through the risk management panel arrangements.

But:

- The YJS out-of-court-disposal policy requires review and is not sufficiently aligned with the South Wales Police out-of-court-disposal processes and policy.
- Contingency planning for safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others was weak.
- Assessment, planning and delivery in relation to some children's diversity needs were inconsistent.
- Victim and restorative justice work were variable in quality.
- Management oversight of out-of-court disposal casework was poor.
- There was insufficient analysis of out-of-court-disposal data to understand why first-time entrant rates had reduced so significantly, and hence a limited understanding of the cohort.

- The joint decision-making panel ('bureau') is police chaired, and although other professionals contribute to a pre-panel discussion, case managers do not attend the panel to present their assessment of the child.

## **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 three cases managed by the YJS that had received a custodial sentence. We rated resettlement as 'Good'.

Our key findings about resettlement work are as follows:

- There is a recently developed, clear resettlement policy, based on principles of constructive resettlement.
- YJS practitioners demonstrated a high level of advocacy for YJS children in custody.
- Provision and partnership working were of good quality across the key pathways of accommodation, ETE and healthcare.
- There is good communication, with positive working relationships, between the YJS and secure estate staff.
- The YJS has specific resettlement workers, who work alongside case managers to ensure a consistent relationship and support the resettlement needs of children in custody.
- The YJS has a resettlement tracker, which provides a case-by-case analysis and monitoring of those children in custody. This serves as a mechanism to ensure that relevant pathways and services are adhered to by all involved partner agencies.

But:

- Not all staff have received specific resettlement training – although there is planned further training within the next year.

## Recommendations

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

### **The Cardiff Youth Justice Service Management Board should:**

1. provide the management team with the necessary support to implement comprehensive quality assurance and workforce development arrangements
2. use the existing disproportionality analysis to develop services further and ensure a more consistent focus on diversity in its casework
3. ensure that the board sub-committee regains momentum, knowledge and commitment to enable consistent join-up between strategic and operational leadership and activity.

### **The Cardiff Youth Justice Service Manager should:**

4. strengthen the quality and consistency of management oversight of practice, to ensure that the quality of safeguarding and public protection work improves
5. improve the quality of assessment, planning and reviewing of post-court work
6. develop and update key policies, procedures and guidance that will enable all staff and partners to deliver high-quality work and respond to the profile and needs of all children supervised by the YJS.

### **Cardiff and Vale Health Board should:**

7. provide clarity to YJS staff on health pathways, to ensure the provision meets the needs of YJS children and is monitored for appropriate access, quality and timeliness.

## 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 (YJB) provides some funding to YOTs. It also monitors their performance and issues guidance to them about how things are to be done.

Cardiff is the largest local authority in Wales. It has also experienced the largest population growth in Wales over the last decade and is projected to grow faster than any other Welsh local authority. Over the next 20 years, Cardiff's population is projected to grow, in absolute numbers, more than the rest of Wales combined.

Cardiff has a population of over 369,202 – of which 32,459 are aged 10 to 17 years (8.8 per cent of the total). It is also by far the most ethnically diverse local authority in Wales: about a fifth of its population is from an ethnic minority, and over 100 languages are spoken in the city. One-third of school children are from an ethnic minority. The current unemployment rate (6.1 per cent) is the second highest across Wales and exceeds both the Welsh and British rates. Analysis undertaken by the YJS indicates that black and other ethnic groups are over-represented in the Cardiff YJS offending population. In addition, when compared with other South Wales YOTs with an over-representation of ethnic minority children in the offending population, the highest disparity was in Cardiff.

Cardiff is one of five cities in the UK to be developing, in partnership with UNICEF UK, as a 'child-friendly city'. This means that there is an aspiration to place the rights of children at the heart of its policies and strategies, and to involve children in decision-making and commit to addressing barriers that limit their lives.

Cardiff Youth Justice Service (YJS) is located within the local authority's children's services directorate. The findings of the previous inspection in 2020 have led to significant work undertaken across the partnership at strategic and operational levels. The YJS management board arrangements and personnel have been reconstituted and the service has undergone a restructure in response to the issues highlighted. This has been a significant challenge while operating within the constraints of Covid-19, and corporate and political support has been crucial in achieving a trajectory of progress.

The Cardiff YJS needs assessment (September 2021) indicates that there are several factors which increase the likelihood of a child in Cardiff being involved with the

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

criminal justice system. These include: being male (84 per cent of all cases are male); being of non-white ethnicity (those of a non-white ethnicity are more than six times more likely to be cautioned or sentenced); living in Cardiff's 'southern arc' (these are areas of higher deprivation, based on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation); involvement with children's services (Looked After Children are six times more likely to be involved in the youth justice system); having a previous sentence or conviction (around 27 per cent of repeat offenders are responsible for over half of arrests); and having issues at home (almost half of the children in the cohort have family members with a history of violence). In addition, the 'NEET' (Not in Education, Employment or Training) rate for children within Cardiff YJS in 2021 was 29 per cent, compared with 2.8 per cent in the general children's population.

In 2020, the Cardiff YJS management board commissioned a health and wellbeing needs analysis (HWBNA) to identify how best to support children in contact with the YJS, as well as their families. This found that many children in contact with Cardiff YJS have complex and co-existing health and wellbeing needs and are made more vulnerable by societal disadvantages. Within this HWBNA, based on completed AssetPlus assessments, the prevalence of substance misuse issues within the YJS cohort was 49 per cent, diagnosed mental health need was 22 per cent, and 38 per cent of cases indicated risk or concern in relation to the child's mental health or emotional wellbeing. The findings of the HWBNA also suggested that there is a considerable need for speech and language provision for children in contact with Cardiff YJS.

Since the previous joint inspection in 2020, there have been reductions across the three YJB key performance indicators of first-time entrants, reoffending and custody. First-time entry and reoffending rates for children in Cardiff are now lower than the England and Wales average, having been higher than this in 2020.

## Contextual facts

### Population information<sup>4</sup>

80	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in Cardiff <sup>5</sup>
167	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in England and Wales
33.3%	Reoffending rate in Cardiff <sup>6</sup>
34.2%	Reoffending rate in England and Wales

369,202	Total population Cardiff
32,459	Total youth population (10–17 years) in Cardiff

### Caseload information<sup>7</sup>

Age	10–14 years	15–17 years
Cardiff YJS	<b>26%</b>	<b>74%</b>
National average	18%	82%

Race/ethnicity <sup>8</sup>	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
Cardiff YJS	<b>67%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>6%</b>
Youth population (10–17 years) in Cardiff <sup>9</sup>	81%	19%	0%

Gender	Male	Female
Cardiff YJS	<b>95%</b>	<b>4%</b>
National average	86%	13%

<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics. (June 2021). *UK population estimates, mid-2020*.

<sup>5</sup> Youth Justice Board. (2022). *First-time entrants, January to December 2020*.

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Proven reoffending statistics, April 2019 to March 2020*.

<sup>7</sup> Youth Justice Board. (2022). *Youth justice annual statistics: 2020 to 2021*.

<sup>8</sup> Data supplied by the YJS.

<sup>9</sup> Census 2011. (10–17-year-old black and minority ethnic population).



### Additional caseload data<sup>10</sup>

<b>63</b>	Total current caseload: community sentences
<b>7</b>	Total current caseload in custody
<b>5</b>	Total current caseload on licence
<b>229</b>	Total current caseload: youth caution; youth conditional caution, community resolution or other out-of-court disposal
<b>23%</b>	Proportion of current caseload subject to court disposal
<b>77%</b>	Proportion of current caseload subject to out-of-court disposal
<b>52%</b>	Percentage of current caseload with child protection plan, child in need plan or 'Looked After Children' plan
<b>67%</b>	Percentage of current caseload aged 16 and under in full-time school
<b>24%</b>	Percentage of children aged 16 and under in a pupil referral unit, alternative education or attending school part-time
<b>31%</b>	Percentage of current caseload aged 17+ not in education, training or employment

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

Offence types <sup>11</sup>	%
Violence against the person	<b>75%</b>
Sexual offence (contact)	<b>6%</b>
Robbery	<b>6%</b>
Arson	<b>6%</b>
Summary motoring offences	<b>6%</b>

<sup>10</sup> Data supplied by the YJS, reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

<sup>11</sup> Data from the cases assessed during this inspection.

# 1. Organisational delivery

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The appointment of the independent board chair in April 2020 has been crucial in allowing the partnership to set a positive agenda for change and improvement. As a result, there is greater clarity about the vision and purpose of the partnership. Governance arrangements have changed, to ensure that the management board is the arena where there is a dedicated focus on youth justice service (YJS) children. Board members are of appropriate seniority and have the appropriate level of authority to make effective strategic decisions and commit resources.

Staff morale has improved since the last inspection. Staff perceive workloads as manageable and that there is a good training offer.

The YJS operational manager has shown resilience and tenacity to implement changes and undertake difficult decisions to move the service forward, but given the scale of the improvement work required, senior leaders need to ensure that she retains their continued and evident support and backing. The YJS management team is relatively new, but current spans of control and service improvement responsibilities are too large. The appraisal process is not being used effectively or consistently, although the frequency of supervision has improved in the relatively short period since the new permanent management team was appointed in February 2022.

The YJS has a workforce development strategy, but this requires formal review and completion of an updated workforce development plan. The challenge for the new management team is to ensure that the quality of supervision, reflection, coaching and support improves significantly, and the YJS board should support it in this work.

There is a better understanding of the profile of the YJS cohort, compared with the previous 2020 inspection. The partnership has access to a sufficient volume, range and quality of services, although health provision and pathways require further improvement. Nevertheless, arrangements with many statutory partners and other providers have improved since our last inspection. Not all of the key policies and guidance are of a sufficient quality to enable staff to deliver their work. Again, although improved since our last inspection, there is mixed evidence of performance and quality assurance systems driving improvement, and of learning from audits, inspection and review processes.

The YJS has been through a period of restructure, in response to the findings from our previous inspection in 2020. This restructure, alongside the challenges presented by Covid-19 and lockdown, mean that the YJS has experienced a period of instability and significant challenge. The impact of this was evident in some of the cases assessed during the period of our inspection. However, senior leaders were candid and fully committed to the challenge to continue their improvement journey and were sighted on the key concerns and risks to the service.

## Strengths

- The YJS has a clear vision and strategy, based on a strategic and operational analysis of the needs of YJS children and an ongoing development plan.
- The independent YJS board chair is well respected and visible, and has driven the YJS management board.

- Commitment and resourcing from the Cardiff Council Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and political leaders have been evident, along with support to manage and resolve some challenging human resources issues prior to implementing the new YJS structure.
- The partnership has structured governance arrangements and lines of accountability. The board is well attended, and board members are committed and of sufficient seniority, with links to other strategic boards evident.
- The YJS operational manager has overseen and driven a change in culture and has shown resilience and tenacity to move the service forward.
- The YJS has a range of partnership and seconded staff – including police, a probation officer, an ETE worker, a health worker (art therapist), a harmful sexual behaviour worker and a substance misuse worker.
- Practitioner workloads are reported as manageable and there is a sufficient training offer for staff.
- Information technology systems allow performance data to be drawn, and the YJS has a dedicated data information officer to gather and prepare data and reports for the YJS board and management team.

### Areas for improvement

- The board sub-committee needs to regain momentum, knowledge and commitment – we found inconsistent evidence of join-up between strategic and operational leadership and activity.
- YJS management team turnover has impacted on the quality and scrutiny of case management practice. Current middle manager spans of control and service improvement responsibilities are too large.
- There is a lack of strategic and operational clarity of the full range of health provision available to the YJS, and pathways for YJS children are difficult to access, delayed and/or unclear.
- Some board members, such as probation, health and housing staff, are new and therefore the board needs to evolve and mature further to ensure consistent advocacy for the work of the YJS.
- Many staff have not had an appraisal, and supervision processes have only been regular in the last two to three months.
- The workforce development strategy requires updating and there is an insufficient audit plan in place and being delivered.
- Some staff lack confidence in their practice around risk of harm and/or safety and wellbeing, and there has been a lack of analysis of the impact of previous training.
- Although many policies have been reviewed and signed off by the board and its sub-committee, some have lacked the necessary scrutiny and contain significant shortfalls and inaccuracies.
- There are shortfalls in the analysis of key data to support an understanding of outcomes and to shape future service delivery.

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

## 1.1. Governance and leadership



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	£2,051,728
Total projected budget current for financial year	£2,256,321

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 appointment of the independent board chair in April 2020 has been crucial in allowing the partnership to set a positive agenda for change and improvement. The board chair is highly experienced and well respected by senior leaders and all grades of staff across the partnership. This has had a galvanising effect on the board and ensured that the YJS has greater visibility, leadership focus and the resources to do its job. We were pleased to see that governance arrangements have changed, to ensure that the management board is the arena where there is dedicated focus on YJS children.

The Cardiff YJS partnership has developed a two-year strategic plan, entitled 'All Our Futures', with a wide range of stakeholders involved, such as board members, staff and children. This clear vision and strategy are underpinned by a comprehensive development plan. The strategy considers diversity, but the inspected casework shows that more focus is needed.

The partnership has set actions against which they can track improvements over time. Many strategic and operational elements have already been achieved, although the board is realistic about the YJS's progress and there are still further areas for improvement.

There is greater clarity about the purpose of the partnership. Governance arrangements have changed to a structure where the board sub-committee holds responsibility for the operational delivery of the plan, while the management board itself sets the strategy and vision, as well as monitoring the performance and organisational health of the YJS. The sub-committee reports to the YJS management board, which in turn reports to the Cardiff City Council Chief Executive, and so to the Cardiff Public Services Board. The advocacy panel (comprising senior leaders such as the Police and Crime Commissioner and the director of the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board) provides strategic support to the Chief Executive in driving the development of youth justice services.

These arrangements have ensured greater accountability and commitment to the work of the YJS. However, inspectors were less confident about the board

sub-committee. Despite some evidence of elements of strategy and practice being well driven by the previous sub-committee chair, the challenge for the partnership is to ensure that the commitment, knowledge and understanding of existing and newer sub-committee members enables the trajectory of progress to be sustained.

We were pleased to see oversight from local councillors, such as the chair of the scrutiny committee and the children's committee lead member. This level of support has been critical. We saw evident commitment to resourcing, alongside support to address complex and challenging human resources issues successfully throughout 2021, which led to the eventual implementation of a new YJS structure. The CEO, board chair, Director of Children's Services, and YJS operational manager estimate that they are six to nine months behind where they expected to be at the time of this inspection. However, their view was that the necessary difficult decisions and actions had to be taken, to provide the foundation for the YJS to improve.

Senior leaders acknowledged a change in culture across the YJS, with further work to do. We agree with this view – particularly in the need to provide ongoing support to frontline staff and practitioners to support their development as individuals and as a collective. The board has introduced quarterly reporting of organisational health check data and we saw evidence of impact through improvements in sickness rates, reduced vacancies and increases in applicants for YJS posts. We also saw more recent increases in the frequency of supervision.

The Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspector commented that children's services are supported by political and corporate commitment to promoting early help, preventive and strengths-based approaches to working with all children and families. The children's services strategy has focused primarily on building resilience within the newly established operational management tier. In recognition of the need to prioritise and improve the quality of YJS services, this has included the appointment of a dedicated YJS operational manager. All staff and managers interviewed recognised this appointment and inclusion into the wider children's services corporate management team as a significant development, in terms of improving the effectiveness of YJS governance arrangements.

Board members are of appropriate seniority and have the appropriate level of authority to make effective strategic decisions and commit resources when required. There are clear terms of reference, board attendance is good and the board consists of experienced members (police, social care and education staff, and a Police and Crime Commissioner's representative), but also some relatively new members (from probation, health and housing services, and the community safety partnership). Board induction processes for these newer members are much improved. All board members are linked to other strategic boards, including the safeguarding children's partnership, local criminal justice board, community safety partnership and health board.

Our previous inspection identified weak management practice and insufficient management capacity as significant contributory factors in the poor performance of Cardiff YJS. Additional resources have been allocated to recruit a full-time operational manager and interim team managers over the last 12 months, prior to the new permanent management team being appointed in February 2022. However, despite these interim measures, there were still significant shortfalls in the quality of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm practice within court disposal cases – much of which had been subject to ineffective management oversight and quality assurance.

We judged that spans of control are large, and that each manager has a high number of direct staff reports, alongside designated responsibilities within the service improvement plan. However, senior leaders recognised the need for further support

to enable the YJS management team to respond to the case management complexities of the YJS cohort.

The YJS has been through a period of instability and turnover since the last inspection, which has impacted on the frequency and quality of supervision, quality assurance and management oversight. This was evident in some of the cases we inspected. The YJS leadership team are still relatively new and the challenge is for them to embed and mature individually and collectively, with key areas of focus being to achieve consistency of approach, benchmarking and quality assurance activity.

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

Senior leaders in children's services could articulate a clear vision for the delivery of high-quality, personalised and responsive services for all children, including those supervised by the YJS. Children's services are supported by political and corporate commitment to promoting early help, preventive and strengths-based approaches to working with all children and families.

Partnership arrangements with children's services actively support effective service delivery and integration with wider services for children. Both YJS and children's services staff were of the view that, generally, there was a good understanding of each other's roles. This was often, but not solely, attributed to the effectiveness of joint attendance at various panels and meetings where children's risks and safety are assessed. However, there was a strong view, held by some children's services staff, that dispersion of the '11+ team' across the new locality structure risks dilution of knowledge and expertise in respect of child exploitation.

Since the last inspection, there have been clearer structures in place for the delivery of YJS education services. The inclusion of a high-level education officer (assistant director for education) on the board, and a youth work manager (achievement) on the board sub-committee, has improved communication and understanding of education issues for children in contact with the YJS. The YJS development strategy reflects high aspirations for children and links to other county-wide policies and strategies, such as the Cardiff Commitment, Cardiff 2030, Child Friendly Cardiff and the youth engagement and progression strategy. However, there has not yet been time for these changes to impact on the work of the YJS case managers or on outcomes for children.

Despite the completion of a strategic health and wellbeing needs analysis of the YJS cohort in 2021, it is a significant concern that senior YJS leaders and YJS staff lacked clarity of the full range of health pathways and provision within the YJS partnership (principally, those 'tier 3' support and services, shared between Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan). The YJS management board should establish whether these resources are sufficient to meet the needs of a complex YJS cohort, and to ensure that arrangements are in place for swift and consistent access to such services.

The Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspector was not confident that approaches to child criminal exploitation are sufficiently embedded force-wide (although this is not reflective of the YJS officers). When placed alongside gaps in terms of health, education and clarification of protocols such as children missing, this suggests that board members do not yet consistently advocate the work of the YJS in their broader roles, and that not all relevant local strategic partnerships give priority to work to support desistance and prevent harm, hindering integration with wider services for children.

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

We were encouraged by the development of some process management frameworks, such as scorecard monitoring, and by closer joint working between the YJS and children's services. However, we were concerned that there were still a number of areas of insufficient case management practice within court disposal cases. Our judgements within the inspected cases highlighted very poor scores in relation to the quality of management oversight.

Senior leaders are sighted on many of the key business challenges and risks. These include: the current service restructure and embedding this, supporting an organisational culture shift, returning to 'business as usual' post-Covid-19, enabling the necessary focus on quality improvement work, and responding to serious youth violence and child criminal exploitation. However, we found shortfalls and insufficient attention to, and scrutiny of, policies – particularly the risk of harm, and safety and wellbeing policy, which contain some significant inaccuracies and refer to obsolete and outdated disposals and assessment tools.

Senior leaders were candid about the challenge to continue their improvement journey and, although a 'work in progress', there was evidence of an improved senior management grip since the last inspection. Other developmental issues have been identified within the sketch strategy for 2022–2024, including disproportionality, children's participation and the need to drive better-quality practice and review workforce development.

The YJS operational manager is experienced in YJS work, but given the scale of the challenge to improve the YJS, the management board needs to ensure that she retains their continued and evident support and backing. Senior leaders and the YJS operational manager have shown resilience and tenacity to implement changes and undertake difficult decisions to move the service forward.

The YJS operational manager is linked in with various fora at her head of service level, which include: serious violence and organised crime groups, high-risk panels, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), the regional safeguarding board, child and adult practice reviews, the community safety partnership sub-group, the safeguarding adolescents from exploitation group, YJB Cymru and the South Wales YOT managers group.

The Estyn inspector reported that the YJS service manager brings energy to the post, understands the importance of engaging and sustaining children in education, and values the work of the local authority youth service and the special skillset that qualified youth workers need, to engage children effectively. She also recognises the challenges and has plans in place to engage schools more effectively to support YJS children.

Cardiff YJS's response to the Covid-19 crisis has been comprehensive and aligned with local emergency delivery responses and risk assessments developed by the local authority. YJS children were RAG-rated (red-amber-green) to enable prioritisation of those children assessed as presenting a high risk of serious harm to others, or having high safety and wellbeing needs, alongside risk assessments for YJS staff. Creative methods of engagement and delivery are employed, including doorstep visits, 'walk and talk', a variation of reparation projects, and use of virtual contacts and multi-agency meetings where appropriate. The YJS partnership is to be commended for its resilience and tenacity in undertaking some challenging, but necessary, strategic and operational service improvement and development work throughout this period.

## 1.2. Staff



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

Requires improvement

### Key staffing data<sup>12</sup>

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent (FTE))	60
Total headcount qualified case managers (FTE) <sup>13</sup>	12.5
Total headcount unqualified case managers (FTE)	7
Vacancy rate (total unfilled posts as percentage of total staff headcount)	3%
Vacancy rate case managers only (total unfilled case manager posts as percentage of total case manager headcount)	5%
Average caseload case managers (FTE equivalent) <sup>14</sup>	8
Average annual working days sickness (all staff)	68
Staff attrition (percentage of all staff leaving in 12-month period)	25%

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?**

Cardiff police have invested in the YJS through the secondment of three police officers, supported by a sergeant, who also has responsibility for the YJS officers in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The YJS education worker has a clear grasp of the new arrangements for supporting children in education, and an extensive knowledge of individual cases and the barriers to education faced by this cohort of children. There are plans for a new education post (seated in the local authority education services) which will mirror the role of the YJS education worker, to ensure more effective communication and a better understanding between the YJS and wider education services. This will enable more efficient placement strategies for individual children involved with the YJS. Recruitment to this post takes place in April 2022.

The YJS has a full-time seconded probation officer. Health provision is via a full-time substance misuse worker, full-time harmful sexual behaviour worker and another health worker (four days per week), who is an art therapist. However, despite the

<sup>12</sup> Data supplied by YJS and reflecting staffing at the time of the inspection announcement.

<sup>13</sup> Qualified case managers are those with a relevant professional social work, youth justice or probation qualification.

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



provision of a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) worker resource of two days per week and a consultant psychiatrist resource of half a day per week, this was not being utilised, as senior leaders and staff were unaware of it and were not familiar with referral pathways.

Staff report their workloads as manageable (including case managers, interventions workers, court and resettlement staff, administrative staff and restorative justice workers). These are managed actively, and this is supported by the staff survey, in which 25 out of 27 respondents said that their workload is manageable.

The YJS has a pool of around 14 volunteers, who mainly undertake work to support referral order panels. After a gap of several months, a volunteer coordinator was appointed recently, and the YJS operational manager has identified volunteer training and development as an area of focus moving forward.

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

Although there is a formal allocations policy, not all staff felt that their skills and/or location are considered in the allocation of work, which over the last 12 months has been more determined by capacity.

We found that some staff lack confidence in their practice around risk of harm and/or safety and wellbeing. Data from the inspected cases indicates a need for further staff training in relation to public protection and safeguarding aspects of case management, as previous training in such areas was not reflected consistently in the quality of casework practice observed by the inspection team.

There is evidence of succession planning, in that members of the current management team have progressed into higher roles. Some staff have been enabled to achieve the Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate (including partnership staff seconded to the YJS).

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

In the staff survey, 25 of the 27 respondents said that the quality of supervision is either 'very good' or 'quite good'. Staff report that improvements have been evident in the last two to three months, since the appointment of the current permanent middle managers. However, prior to this, the instability and turnover of managers had impacted on the quality of supervision and management oversight. Within the inspected cases, we judged the management oversight of court disposal casework as sufficient in just one out of thirteen cases. For out-of-court-disposal cases, management oversight was deemed sufficient in eight out of twenty five cases. Since the last inspection, there has been evident attention corporately to address issues in relation to poor performance.

There is an induction policy and administrative staff support to facilitate induction, which is an improvement on our last inspection. Although it is recognised that the Covid-19 situation has presented challenges, some staff also described variable or insufficient induction – arising primarily from frequent changes in management over the previous 12 months. This is despite additional agency management capacity to support a business-as-usual approach to key functions.

The appraisal process is not being used effectively or consistently, which compromises the development of individual staff to support succession planning. There has been a lack of analysis as to how previous training has impacted on staff,

and greater scrutiny of case management practice around safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm is required. The challenge for the new management team is to ensure that the quality of supervision, reflection, coaching and support improves significantly, so that it will have the required impact on practice.

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

The YJS has a workforce development strategy, but this requires formal review and completion of an updated workforce development plan.

There is a good training offer, and since the last inspection YJS staff (including seconded staff from police, probation and health services) have been able to access a range of training opportunities, such as AssetPlus training, child sexual exploitation, adverse childhood experiences, the National Referral Mechanism (county lines), safeguarding and risk of harm training. They also reported that they have been able to partake in a number of joint training 'masterclasses' on a variety of subject matters with YJS colleagues. Overall, 25 out of 27 respondents to the staff survey felt that their training and development needs are either fully or mostly met.

However, evidence suggests that more is needed to support staff to embed their learning, and the demand on management capacity is a risk to achieving this. The challenge for YJS managers is to ensure that staff have the opportunity to learn from their own practice, which requires time to reflect with managers on what they are doing well and what needs to be better.

Although the YJS police officers have not received formal training on their role, they each have been given the opportunity to shadow the former seconded officers for varying degrees of time. They have been given a handbook, prepared in 2020, entitled 'Police Officer Guidance Manual' – a comprehensive guide on the tasks and responsibilities of a seconded officer. In addition, there is a range of other reference material available, including YJB guidance, out-of-court-disposal procedures and policy, and the YJS range of interventions list.

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

Staff have been consulted on the development of the YJS 'All Our Futures' strategy. There have also been pairing exercises, where staff have been linked with members of the YJS management board, to increase practitioners' awareness of the role and the function of the board.

The board chair updates staff at regular team meetings and briefings as to developments and board activity, but the leadership team needs to ensure that this is not a 'top-down approach'. In the staff survey, 18 out of 27 respondents said that they are often able to provide ideas and challenge to managers.

We noted that some staff feel that there has been more focus on inspection than practice, which raises a challenge to YJS leaders to ensure that they engage collaboratively, in order to enable frontline operational staff to understand the links between their individual practice, the wider service plans and the inspection process. By making this clearer connection and coordinating these elements of strategy and practice expectation, this will enable staff to have a better understanding of what they need to do.

While staff morale has improved since the last inspection, a greater focus on the outcomes and impact on children is necessary to enhance the quality of case management practice.

Inspectors found limited evidence of reward and recognition – despite an overall positive development in organisational culture. In the staff survey, just eight out of 27 respondents said that exceptional work is always recognised. However, 18 out of 19 relevant staff indicated that their diversity needs are met very well or quite well.

The YJS has the necessary policies to support staff safety and wellbeing, including a lone working policy and the recent introduction of the duty manager rota to provide another avenue of support and reassurance to staff. The staff survey revealed that most practitioners feel that the working environment is safe for staff and children. Reparation projects are risk assessed in accordance with guidelines.

### 1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Percentage of current caseload with mental health issues	28%
Percentage of current caseload with substance misuse issues	45%
Percentage of current caseload with a learning disability (IQ under 70) or learning difficulty (such as additional learning needs; speech, language and communication needs; or dyslexia) or subject to individual learning plans	46%

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?**

There is an up-to-date strategic and operational analysis of the YJS cohort, including a YJS needs analysis. This has identified serious youth violence, disproportionality, child criminal exploitation, substance misuse and ETE as key issues in the cohort. However, despite the completion of a strategic health and wellbeing needs analysis of the YJS cohort in 2021, it is a significant concern that senior and operational YJS leaders were unaware of the full range of health provision identified for the YJS.

The YJS arrangements to respond to the needs of Welsh speakers have improved but remain as a work in progress. The education officer has usefully redesigned the information booklet for children, making it more accessible and clearly stating that they can access services through the medium of Welsh. Activity has been undertaken to improve the framework and approach to Welsh-speaking children. We saw evidence of work implemented across the board sub-committee, YJS managers and other grades of staff, to develop a process map, checklist and workplan to improve the YJS offer in this area. Within the inspected cases, the Estyn inspector found that the YJS and ETE agencies could still improve and promote the value of Welsh as an employment skill in Wales, or to encourage learners who could speak Welsh to use this ability.

Although the YJS has progressed since the last inspection, and put in place mechanisms and processes to improve children's access to education, it was too

early to see an impact of changes at case level. There were still only a few positive education outcomes in the cases sampled, despite the diligence of the caseworkers. Despite the improvement in the availability to access data about children, this did not yet stretch to an analysis of how education opportunities have impacted upon offending behaviour or improved life chances.

Analysis had been used to influence service delivery in relation to decommissioning of the junior attendance centre, which YJS leaders had deemed no longer fit for purpose for the needs of the cohort, as interventions were too prescriptive and not sufficiently child friendly. This resourcing has been redirected to support other one-to-one and mentor-type working arrangements to assist complex children within the YJS cohort.

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

There were some gaps in staff's understanding of how to access services for YJS children. In the staff survey, just five out of twenty one relevant staff said that they could 'always' access services.

Although those staff working within the court and resettlement team were positive about the health provision and support that some children receive, this was not consistent across the whole staff group. There was a lack of awareness of the tier 3 support available within the YJS; for example, staff were not aware of the specialist CAMHS nurse. We also found a confused picture regarding open access to CAMHS for all members of YJS staff.

The majority of practitioners described a number of challenges, including difficulties in getting children into the correct area for support, such as CAMHS and speech and language therapy. The Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) inspector found that, in some cases, excessive information is required for a referral to be made to services, and sometimes the caseworkers do not have that level of knowledge about the child, which delays or prevents the progress of the referrals. Inspectors found a consensus among a majority of staff that things are nearly always given back to the caseworkers to deal with, and that access to health services is difficult.

The Estyn inspector found that staff work well with a good range of partners to enable clients to access progression opportunities in relation to ETE. Caseworkers have strengthened their understanding of the range of opportunities available to children. There is good liaison between YJS staff and the college junior apprentice scheme, which supports children under 16 years of age with practical job skills, and social and basic skills.

There are good links with local post-16 education providers, including Cardiff and Vale College, Associated Community Training and employers. The new memorandum of understanding with Media Academy Cardiff (MAC) provides substantially more opportunities (from 50 places to 150) for children to overcome barriers to education and take part in important awareness courses, such as for knife crime and for the safe use of electric scooters. The close relationship between staff based in MAC and those in the YJS has helped in the sharing of information about children and the opportunities available.

Links with organisations such as MAC (with access to other resources) mean that children are able to take advantage of a wider range of activities and support than that available in statutory provision. Children referred to MAC are able to use their creative skills in film and digital composition, which is appealing to them. This takes

place in an accessible, welcoming and child-friendly environment, which gives them access to high-quality equipment and expert teaching.

The YJS has strengthened work with other youth support service teams in Cardiff, such as the 'Stay Safe' street-based team. This has resulted in better links with preventative work in the city centre, closer liaison with transport police and access to wider education activities through, for example, the City Centre Youth Project provision. This work is aimed at supporting children to become more 'life ready' before they are referred into more formal education and training settings.

The presence of a careers representative on the board sub-committee and the placing of a careers worker in the YJS one day a week ensures that close working relationships are maintained between the YJS and the careers service. This arrangement frees up resources to allow case managers to access other, and potentially more relevant, support for children who are not ready for formal education or work.

We found a good breadth of reparation projects – which have been enhanced and developed following the relaxing of Covid-19 restrictions. These include an allotment project, work in local parks, CTS mechanics, food banks and local community-based projects. Despite this, some of the victim and restorative justice work seen within the inspected cases was variable in quality.

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

There is a YJS health referral protocol, which sets out how YJS staff are asked to make referrals to the designated health professional. We were informed that these gatekeeping arrangements act as an important means of establishing whether a referral to health services is suitable and necessary. However, the HIW inspector found that there has been drift and delay in access, provision and intervention for the majority of these children.

Inspection staff were told that it can take time to move through points of engagement with a child and their family (and longer, if a specialist referral to health services at tier 3 is required). Some partnership staff reflected that the many complex historical and current issues and/or traumas experienced by some children can make engagement challenging and lead to delays in the system, owing to service gaps and a lack of resources. Overall, the HIW inspector established that there had been six YJS referrals to CAMHS within the last 18 months, which did not appear reflective of the complexity of the YJS caseload.

The HIW inspector also found evidence of a lack of speech and language therapy referrals and provision when YJS case managers had identified that an initial assessment of needs was required. One of the children had been referred by a caseworker in January 2022 and this had not progressed.

The Estyn inspector found that information sharing between the YJS and the local authority, and the use and analysis of 'live' data on children has improved since the last inspection. Conversations between the inspector and the education officers were open and honest. The education manager takes part in fortnightly meetings with education officers, to rank cases by risk. Communication and lines of accountability across local authority directorates have also improved, and there is better out-of-county liaison with the Looked After Children's team for young people educated other than at school (EOTAS). However, placing Looked After Children,

particularly those out of county, in sustained education settings remains a challenge for the YJS.

Communication and trust with schools is beginning to improve and school staff have been more able to attend risk management panel (RMP) meetings since these went online during the pandemic. Despite the improvement in communication with the local authority education services and schools, several YJS staff felt that many school head teachers are still reluctant to accommodate YJS children. The local authority's extension of EOTAS and flexible education provision has improved the range of opportunities available to children, but those on a reduced timetable are open to considerable risk when not in an education setting.

The CIW inspector observed that the partnership with children's services provides a range of high-quality services and interventions to meet the needs of some, but not all, children. Positively, the YJS staff and wider children's services approach to work with children has been more cohesive than at the time of the previous inspection. All staff share a strengths-based, trauma-informed approach. Case scores have improved in relation to safety and wellbeing issues – although shortfalls were still evident in some of the inspected court disposal cases.

We saw good evidence of a shared approach to referral from the YJS into children's services – evidenced by good-quality multi-agency referral forms on the cases reviewed. We also heard from staff and managers about more permissive arrangements for referring children and families into children's services and YJS preventive and diversion services, thus ensuring more flexible access to interventions to meet relevant need.

YJS and children's services staff expressed concern about the insufficiency of appropriate, good-quality placement and accommodation services for children, leading to them being placed/remaining in unsuitable conditions. We recognise the Housing Gateway as a positive development for 16–18-year-olds, but long waiting times for suitable accommodation are a cause of frustration for staff within the partnership, with few alternatives for the many children for whom this service does not offer an appropriate pathway.

The CIW inspector found confusion among both children's services and YJS staff in relation to responding to missing children. Although a draft protocol was evidenced, the status of this policy is unclear. Staff reported a varied response from police services and there was no clear understanding of roles and responsibilities from any of the partners in relation to conducting 'return home interviews'. The lack of clarity highlights a concern that some children may not be prioritised or may be left at risk.

The police officers are co-located within the YJS building, although the office facility is not suitable for accommodating three officers (the YJS manager was in the process of facilitating a move into the main office following the inspection). The officers are regarded highly, both by peers and the YJS management team. They are committed, dedicated officers who demonstrate (through daily information exchange) a very good knowledge of the children managed by the YJS.

The HMICFRS inspector also found that public protection notices are submitted routinely by local officers when they come into contact with children. Inspectors were made aware of the early help hub initiative that is being rolled out in Cardiff. The aim of the initiative is to provide officers with a more bespoke range of options to support vulnerable people who may not have immediate safeguarding concerns.

The YJS Risk Management Panel is now co-chaired by the YJS operations manager and the children's social care operational manager for wellbeing protection and support. This is an improvement on previous arrangements, in that it is much more structured, has better senior multi-agency participation and hold attendees to account for their actions. However, there could be better coordination and use of a single risk management plan across the various multi-agency risk arenas in which a child may be discussed (such as safeguarding adolescent from exploitation meetings, child protection conferences and Looked After Children reviews).

Transitions have been a focus of the board sub-committee and, although a policy and guidance have been developed, some of the cases inspected suggested some confusion among frontline practitioners about the exact process. Despite this, on the whole, transitions are taking place and relevant information being shared, with handover meetings conducted between the YJS and the new probation officer.

Inspectors saw examples of anecdotal feedback from sentencers about the quality of work from the YJS. This included positive comment on the quality of pre-sentence reports. It was clear that the YJS has an experienced group of staff who have positive relationships with stakeholders in the court arena. This places them in a good position to advocate for, and support, YJS children.

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

The YJS acknowledges that one of its key strategic and operational objectives is to improve its participation work, by capturing the voice of children and their families, and using it to inform service design and delivery.

The Cardiff City Council CEO and the YJS board chair completed two small focus groups with children when developing the YJS 'All Our Futures' strategy. Further consultation was evident in other pockets of work, usually in the form of anecdotal feedback from children and their parents or carers on a case-by-case basis.

The Estyn inspector found that children are included in the interview process for the specialist education post within the local authority, to ensure that their views and perspectives are understood and valued.

The YJS has gathered some feedback from the 'Have Your Say' app and, although lacking in summary analysis, the spreadsheet data provided as part of the YJS's evidence in advance indicated that children are highly positive of the work undertaken by YJS staff, the relationships developed with practitioners and the quality of facilities and interventions.

We found evidence that staff have taken a child-centred approach in the court disposal and out-of-court disposal cases we inspected. We interviewed a small sample of three children or their parents or carers in our fieldwork and were pleased to find that all of them understood the YJS's role and aims. All felt that YJS staff have the right skills to work with the child, and that they had been able to access the right services and support to stay out of trouble.

One child commented about their case manager:

*"She turns-up when she says she will, she's always on-time, she knows what she's talking about and she is always willing to work with me".*

In summary, two out of three respondents rated the YJS's services as 'very good', while one respondent rated them as 'quite good'. Despite the challenges of working during the Covid-19 pandemic, all respondents commented that contact with YJS

staff took place in accessible places that were safe. The YJS partnership and staff are to be commended for this.

One parent stated:

*“Any work the case manager presented it was easy to use. My child was familiar with Microsoft Teams because of college. He felt the material was spot on and it gave him a chance to reflect on his life. My son preferred to be seen at home. The case manager worked around him. Having face to face contact at home helped his worker to have a true sense of where he was at. My son felt that being seen at home was good for him, because at the time (regarding his mind-set) the office would have impacted on him negatively”.*

#### 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.

Requires improvement

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?**

Since the last inspection, the YJS has developed a suite of policies and processes. However, some now require review and there are shortfalls in some key policies – specifically, the risk of harm to others and the safety and wellbeing policy. Although many policies have been reviewed and signed off by the board and its sub-committee, some have lacked the necessary scrutiny to evidence collective ownership across the partnership.

A new memorandum of understanding with the careers service means that children involved with the YJS will still have access to careers advisers when they are ready to take advantage of further education and job opportunities. However, we found that staff did not always understand how to access services from partners, particularly for children requiring specialist support from some health agencies, such as CAMHS, and speech and language therapy.

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

The YJS has its own, co-located base at the John Kane Centre. Recent work has been undertaken to redesign the reception area to make the premises more child friendly, although some staff feel that there is still work to do to improve the layout and ‘feel’.

Referral order panels take place at suitable community venues and locations within the child’s community. The out-of-court-disposal bureau has recently moved from the police station to the YJS, which is more child focused and appropriate.

The YJS has its own allotment, where children can undertake reparation and learn additional skills. Inspectors visited this provision and were impressed with the work



undertaken and the approach taken by staff. Positive feedback was received from children that were attending.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, staff have utilised home visits and other outdoor locations creatively to deliver one-to-one work. However, practitioners highlighted that consideration needs to be given to travel time for staff, given that home visits are undertaken across a wide geographical area.

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

YJS staff have access to ChildView and also to social care systems (such as CareFirst). Seconded staff have access to ChildView, as well as their own agency systems.

The CIW inspector heard that, although the multi-agency safeguarding hub has 'read only' access to CareFirst, there is no established systematic process for children's services to undertake lateral checks with the YJS on all referrals already known to the YJS. In addition, there is no facility to flag YJS involvement in CareFirst. There is therefore no reliable system to ensure that all shared work is identified consistently, in a timely manner. Limitations to CareFirst were recognised by senior leaders, and plans are in place to address this.

All police officers have full access to police ICT systems, with a good working knowledge of them. The police records management system (Niche) has an effective flagging system that is used to good effect by the YJS police officers. This ensures that when a local police officer engages with a young person managed by the YJS, an automatic notification is sent to the YJS police officers.

The Estyn inspector found that, because of the access to the local authority's live data system, the YJS education manager is able to identify the basic skills levels of pre-16 children. However, there is still not enough provision that could support these needs when children are not in full-time education. The basic skills needs of post-16 children are less well known. However, those referred to partner education providers are assessed systematically through the approved Welsh assessment tool and given, or referred for, support where possible. Panel meetings are also beginning to be better at identifying additional learning needs in post-16 children that have not been picked up earlier in the education system.

The YJS is well served by a dedicated full-time data information officer, with a full suite of reports able to be drawn for the YJS board, senior leaders and operational leadership team.

The lead inspector received a demonstration of new software (a power background information application), which had been introduced by the YJS within the last three months. Although still being developed, the application allows the YJS to gather real-time data across several measures and agencies, including the YJS, the police and education staff. This is very promising and will enable the partnership to improve the analysis of the YJS cohort and develop swifter partnership approaches to problem issues and/or areas.

The YJS has also developed a local six-monthly proxy measure of reoffending, given the challenges in the lag of reoffending data from the Ministry of Justice. This data indicated reductions in the reoffending rate among the YJS cohort, from 32 per cent to 23 per cent in the last six months – a reduction mirrored by longer-term trend of the YJB reoffending data.

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

We were pleased to see evidence of progress against the majority of our 14 inspection recommendations. Some had been fully achieved and others were being progressed through the work being undertaken within the development plan and board activity, and proposed through the 2022–2024 sketch strategy.

Data indicates that Cardiff YJS has made some good progress against the national key performance indicators of first-time entrants, reoffending and custody. All had reduced and were under the England and Wales average. These figures are a significant improvement on those found at our previous inspection, but we found limited analysis or understanding of what has driven this improvement and why.

The development of a performance scorecard, which is subsequently fed into the children's services corporate management team, has provided some additional scrutiny and increased the closer shared working between the YJS and children's services. However, as this is a process management tool, this had not yet driven sufficient improvements in core casework within the inspected court disposal cases. An internal quality assurance audit plan and processes need to be re-established and driven by new YJS management team. Given the instability and turnover within the middle management team over the last 12 months, the intended focus on audit has been lost.

The Estyn inspector found that there is no systematic evaluation of whether children's skills have improved during their involvement with the YJS. YJS workers share information about children's education needs well, but case managers have not yet reached the stage where they can use this information well to plan progression routes for children. Staff understood the need to improve children's personal skills in resilience, self-confidence and communication. However, the YJS is still not at the point where it can measure the impact of interventions and resilience courses on children, and to what extent the courses are improving their basic skills and preparing them to sustain and succeed in more formal education activities.

The YJS had undertaken a caseload analysis and identified the need for a dedicated speech, language and communication worker to support staff in dealing with children's needs and to help them prepare documentation that is understandable and accessible to children. We were informed by the YJS operational manager that the SALT role will include a screening assessment of all children open to the YJS and then provide advice to children, families and staff on effective communications.

We were encouraged to see that a national standards review had been undertaken at board level, alongside a board development day to discuss and self-assess against the YJB governance and leadership guidance, published in December 2021. We were also pleased to see that relevant learning reviews or serious case reviews are now discussed at board level and disseminated to staff through briefings and team meetings. An example was given of recent activity to audit and review three high-profile cases within the framework of a serious youth violence audit.

The YJS had undertaken some collaborative work with Dudley Youth Offending Team, which had undertaken a peer audit in February 2022. The YJS had yet to develop a full response to the findings, as further sampling and audit were due at the time it was notified of the current reinspection.

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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 YOT.

The YJS board has utilised the YJB disproportionality toolkit, and analysis has been undertaken. The results of this analysis indicated that:

- black and other ethnic groups are over-represented in the Cardiff YJS offending population
- 'other' ethnic groups make up 13 per cent of the offending population, but only 2.5 per cent of the local population aged 10–17
- black ethnic groups make up nine per cent of the offending population, but only 3.5 per cent of the local population aged 10–17
- children from an 'other' background are 6.2 times, and black children three times, more likely to be cautioned or sentenced than white children
- white ethnic groups are under-represented in the offending population, making up 80 per cent of the local population aged 10–17 but only 67 per cent of the offending population
- there was data missing on the ethnicity of the child in 6.3 per cent of cases in the YJS case management records.

The analysis further highlighted that, of the children who had been cautioned previously, those from a black, Asian and mixed heritage were more likely than white individuals to receive a sentence subsequently. In addition, when compared with other South Wales YOTs with an over-representation of black, Asian and minority ethnic children in the offending population, the highest disparity was in Cardiff.

The Cardiff YJS needs assessment (September 2021) indicates that Looked After Children are six times more likely to be involved in the youth justice system. Girls are under-represented within Cardiff YJS, with four per cent cautioned or sentenced, compared with 13 per cent across England and Wales.

The YJS workforce is not reflective of the ethnic diversity of the population or YJS cohort. Organisational data indicates that 15 per cent of staff are black, Asian and minority ethnic, compared with 23 per cent of the YJS caseload. However, proportionality was addressed better for Welsh speakers, with work undertaken to improve the framework and approach to Welsh-speaking children. We saw evidence of work undertaken across the board sub-committee, YJS managers and other grades of staff, to develop a process map, checklist and workplan to improve the YJS offer in this area. This includes ensuring the matching of YJS Welsh-speaking administrative, case management and leadership staff to Welsh-speaking children. As with other elements of performance improvement work identified throughout this inspection, the challenge is to ensure that this continues to be developed and driven forward by the leadership team.

Some key policies (such as the out-of-court-disposal policy) lack specific focus on disproportionality, and we saw limited evidence of specific services tailored or evaluated in relation to diversity.

Inspection case data indicates inconsistency of practice regarding the diversity needs of children within both court disposals and out-of-court disposals. We judged that diversity is addressed insufficiently across assessment, planning and review. Greater emphasis and understanding of diversity are also required during service delivery and interventions. During our fieldwork meetings with senior leaders and stakeholders, they acknowledged an awareness of the need for diversity training for staff, including cultural competence training.

As a result of their strategic analysis, disproportionality and diversity are identified by senior leaders as a key strategic priority for the new YJS strategy 2022–2024. The YJS developed the current draft disproportionality policy in February 2022, with strategic workshops undertaken to inform feedback and dissemination. However, this activity is acknowledged by the YJS management board as a 'work in progress'.

## 2. Court disposals

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We took a detailed look at 12 community sentences and one custodial sentence managed by the YJS. We also conducted nine interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment, planning, implementation and delivery of services, and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, keeping the child safe and keeping other people safe.

When children receive a court disposal, we expect to see the service maximise the likelihood of successful outcomes by addressing desistance factors, effectively engaging with children and their parents or carers, and responding to relevant diversity factors. We also expect to see children being kept safe, and their safety and wellbeing needs being addressed. Finally, we expect everything reasonable to be done to manage the risk of harm posed by children who have offended. This should be through high-quality assessment and planning, and the delivery of appropriate interventions, effective management oversight, ongoing review of the work undertaken and partnership working across all statutory and voluntary agencies.

In the Cardiff YJS's court disposal cases inspected, supporting desistance was the most sufficient area of work. Our case inspections highlighted shortfalls in the quality of work undertaken to address the safety and wellbeing needs of the child, and the risk of harm that some children posed to others. Many of these children lived complex lives, and their offences had been committed in the context of wider worrying behaviour and adverse experiences. This said, compared with the 2020 inspection, we saw improved case inspection scores across all but one of the rated standards for court disposal work.

For assessment, eight out of thirteen met our requirements for desistance. However, only six out of thirteen cases were sufficient in relation safety and wellbeing, and just three out of thirteen cases met our requirements to address the risk of harm to others. This led to our judgement of 'Inadequate' for this element of work. In most instances, assessments were strengths based and involved children and their parents or carers. Although inspectors agreed with classifications of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others in a majority of cases, assessments lacked quality and did not draw sufficiently on sources of information from other agencies to inform a reasoned analysis.

Planning was rated as 'Inadequate', as less than 50 per cent of cases were sufficient across all aspects of this work. Within the inspected cases, planning consistently lacked alignment with other agencies' plans, and did not set out the necessary controls and interventions in many of those cases where there were safeguarding or public protection considerations. In particular, the quality of contingency planning was poor.

Implementation and delivery was the strongest element of work within court disposals. The service worked well to implement and deliver services to support desistance, and safety and wellbeing, meeting our expectations in a majority of the 13 cases. However, delivery of services to address risk of harm to others was sufficient in eight cases, which drove the overall rating for this standard to 'Requires improvement'. Despite the constraints brought by Covid-19, YJS staff worked flexibly and used their knowledge and skills well to build relationships with families and take a strengths-based approach to meeting children's needs. It was evident that service

delivery promoted opportunities for community integration for YJS children, including access to services post-supervision.

Reviewing of work to address desistance met our standards in seven out of thirteen cases; however, reviewing of work to keep the child safe was sufficient in only six out of thirteen cases. For managing safety of others, review was sufficient in just four out of thirteen cases, which led to an overall rating of 'Inadequate' for this standard. Reviews of court disposal cases were either not completed or late. Reviewing was often not informed by input from other agencies and did not therefore lead to adjustments to the plan of work with the child, or to address the relevant risks and needs of the case.

Across all aspects of casework, we found a variable quality of practice in addressing a child's diversity, alongside inconsistent work in relation to victim and restorative justice work within the inspected cases. Management oversight of out-of-court disposal casework was extremely poor, being deemed sufficient in just one out of thirteen cases.

### Strengths

- Court disposal work was strengths based, with a consistent level of involvement of children and their parents or carers in all aspects of casework.
- Implementation and delivery to address desistance and safety and wellbeing was rated as 'Good'.
- There was good evidence of planning for subsequent community integration/other services post-YJS involvement.
- Practitioners worked hard and flexibly to maintain service provision, despite Covid-19 restrictions.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessments lacked quality and analysis, specifically in relation to safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others.
- Planning to address desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others was poor, not aligned with that of other agencies and did not address contingency arrangements.
- Across all aspects of court disposal casework, attention to some children's diversity needs was variable in quality.
- Victim and restorative justice work were inconsistent within the cases inspected.
- Reviewing of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others was weak, lacked consistent input from the agencies involved and did not adjust ongoing plans where necessary.
- Management oversight of court disposal casework was extremely poor.

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?	62%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	46%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	<b>23%</b>

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

Assessment to support desistance was judged sufficient in eight out of the thirteen inspected cases. Analysis of diversity was inconsistent and met our requirements in seven out of thirteen cases. Despite this, YJS case managers ensured that children and their parents or carers were central to the assessment process in the majority of cases. In 11 out of thirteen cases, sufficient attention was given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change.

A key strength was the consideration of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context. This was evident in 12 of the 13 cases inspected. However, the victim's needs and wishes were considered in just over half of the relevant cases, limiting opportunities for restorative justice.

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

Assessments of safety and wellbeing were inconsistent and, in some of the cases inspected, underestimated factors and issues that impacted on the child's safety and wellbeing. Although we judged that the correct classification of safety and wellbeing was applied in 11 out of the 13 cases, assessments of safety and wellbeing lacked reasoned analysis and indicated that some staff lacked confidence in assessing this area of work. In seven of the cases, staff sufficiently identified and analysed the risks to a child's safety and wellbeing and drew appropriately on assessments or information held by other agencies. Staff analysed the controls or interventions that best promoted the child's safety and wellbeing in just over half of the inspected cases.

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

Assessment of a child's risk of harm to others was poor. In just four out of the thirteen cases, assessments identified and analysed any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who was at risk, and the nature of that risk. Case managers used available sources of information and involved other agencies, where appropriate, in less than half of the inspected cases. They considered controls and

<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 Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm to others posed by the child in just four cases. Although inspectors agreed with the level of classification of risk of harm to others in a majority of cases, there was a lack of reasoned analysis and drawing together of information to inform judgements or risk classification. Previous and current behaviour was not considered systematically, and there was a lack of an investigative approach in some of the inspected cases.

An inspector noted:

*“The assessment would have benefited from a clearer analysis of the impact of the offence, in terms of the harm caused to the victim and likely impact of any future events. There is information relating to past police incidents that indicate harm-related behaviour, including common assault, which should have been considered in the judgement. Risks of domestic assaults to family members was not considered, despite historical police information showing evidence of this behaviour”.*

## 2.2. Planning



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

Inadequate

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?	46%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>23%</b>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	<b>23%</b>

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

Planning to support the child or young person's desistance was sufficient in six out of thirteen cases. A minority of plans set out the services most likely to support desistance, and less than half of cases saw the YJS take account of the child's diversity. Planning took sufficient account of strengths and protective factors in eight out of thirteen cases, while factors relating to the wider social and familial context were sufficiently planned for in a majority of cases. Of the cases with an identifiable victim, planning considered their views in just under half. The child and their parents or carers were meaningfully involved in nine of the cases inspected.

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

Planning to promote the child's safety and wellbeing was addressed in just over half of the inspected cases. Plans did not set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child in eight of the 13 cases and sufficiently involved other agencies in seven cases. Inspectors found shortfalls in the

<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.



quality of contingency planning for safety and wellbeing. This is important, as there should be a clear plan of action in the event of risk to the child either increasing or decreasing. In a large majority of the 13 cases, contingency plans were too vague and did not clearly set out adequate actions or responses to be taken if, and when, circumstances changed. Overall, planning focused on keeping the child safe in just less than a quarter of the cases inspected.

An inspector commented:

*“Planning for safety and wellbeing was weak. The planning documentation itself was far too vague, brief and unspecific, with little evidence of sufficient join-up with the child protection plan and other actions/plans from the CMASM [child multi-agency safeguarding meeting] and the risk management panel arena. Contingency planning was minimal, generic and, again, did not specify the range of actions to be taken and by whom”.*

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

The quality of planning to keep other people safe was rated as ‘Inadequate’. There was sufficient planning to promote the safety of others in six out of the thirteen cases inspected, with just over half of the cases involving other agencies, where appropriate. Planning to address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims was evident in only four of the inspected cases.

Planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote other people’s safety in less than one-third of the cases. Circumstances in a child’s life, however, can change quickly. Case managers need to consider the potential for change in each case, so that, should concerns escalate, they are prepared and more likely to respond effectively. Inspectors found that contingency planning lacked clarity about specific actions to keep others safe, resulting in just two out of thirteen cases being judged sufficient in this aspect of work. Overall, planning for managing risk of harm to others met our requirements in only three out of the inspected cases.

## 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?	77%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	69%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	<b>62%</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 Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

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

Implementation and delivery to support desistance was strong. It was clear in 11 out of 13 cases that the case managers took a strengths-based approach to their work. The YJS had access to a range of specialist staff and other resources to deliver suitable and innovative interventions to children, which would be even further improved when health pathways are better developed. Inspectors found that, in most cases, the YJS delivered the services most likely to support desistance. It was evident in all but one case that staff focused on developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers.

In just under half of the inspected cases, service delivery did not sufficiently reflect the child's diversity. However, the wider familial and social context of the child was considered in 10 out of the 13 cases. Inspectors were pleased to find that implementation and service delivery promoted opportunities for community integration, including access to services post-supervision, in 12 out of the inspected cases.

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

Case managers kept a sufficient focus on safety and wellbeing, which was promoted in nine out of thirteen cases. The YJS worked consistently with a range of agencies and organisations to deliver well-coordinated packages of support. This was evident in nine out of thirteen relevant cases inspected. We also found clear arrangements to support Looked After Children, and those who were open to social care, criminally exploited or had substance misuse issues.

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

In eight out of thirteen relevant cases, implementation and delivery of services effectively supported the safety of other people. However, work to promote victims' safety and maximise opportunities for restorative justice was more variable, with just less than half of those relevant cases deemed sufficient. Alongside this, opportunities to involve different agencies in managing the risk of harm to others were judged as sufficient in eight out of thirteen cases.

## **2.4. Reviewing**



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

Inadequate

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?	54%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	46%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	<b>31%</b>

<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.

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

Reviewing of progress to support the child's desistance was inconsistent, and sufficient in just over half of the cases. In most instances, the YJS's responsiveness to changing circumstances helped to maintain children's engagement and ensured that the work delivered was effective and meaningful. We found that children and their parents or carers were meaningfully involved in their assessment in nine out of thirteen cases. However, in other elements, such as consideration of the child's diversity, there were shortfalls, and just four out of eleven relevant cases were deemed sufficient. Reviewing led to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to support desistance in only half of the relevant twelve cases.

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

The quality of reviews of children's safety and wellbeing were considered an area for development. Case managers identified and responded to changes in safety and wellbeing in only half of the relevant cases. Information from other agencies was gathered or considered in seven out of thirteen cases, and the reviewing process had led to the necessary changes or adjustments in the ongoing plan in just five out of twelve relevant cases. Overall, reviewing focused sufficiently on keeping the child safe in just less than half of the cases we inspected.

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

Reviews of risk of harm to others were weak. In a majority of relevant cases, the case manager had not identified, or responded to, changes in risk, and less than half of the thirteen cases had not sufficiently taken account of information from other agencies. Only one-third of those 12 relevant cases saw the reviewing process led to necessary adjustments to the ongoing plan of work to manage and minimise these risks. Overall, reviewing focused on keeping other people safe in just four out of thirteen relevant cases.

### 3. Out-of-court disposals

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We inspected 25 cases managed by the YOT that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of three youth conditional cautions, two youth cautions and 20 community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in 18 cases.

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

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

When children receive an out-of-court disposal, we expect to see the service maximise the likelihood of successful outcomes by addressing desistance factors, engaging effectively with children and their parents or carers, and responding to relevant diversity factors. We also expect to see children being kept safe, and their safety and wellbeing needs being addressed. Finally, we expect everything reasonable to be done to manage the risk of harm posed by children who have offended. This should be through high-quality assessment and planning, with the delivery of appropriate interventions, effective leadership and management, and good joint decision-making and partnership working across all statutory and voluntary agencies.

When inspecting cases, we have ratings boundaries that determine the overall rating applied. In Cardiff YJS, over half but less than two-thirds of cases inspected met all our standards for assessment, resulting in a 'Requires improvement' rating for this aspect of work. We found that assessments were strengths based and proportionate, and a large majority involved input from the child and their parents or carers. Assessment of a child's safety and wellbeing was sufficient in just over half of cases and could be further improved through better analysis and a more consistent inclusion of information from other agencies, where relevant.

Planning was rated as 'Good'. It set out the opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services following completion of the out-of-court disposal work. Involvement of the child and their parents or carers in planning activity was consistently strong. However, for both safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others, there could be improvement in setting out the contingency arrangements to manage the risks presented. Nevertheless, there was satisfactory evidence of joint planning in the out-of-court disposal cases inspected, which involved other agencies where appropriate.

Implementation and delivery was rated as 'Good'. Case managers identified the factors that were most likely to support the child's desistance and focused sufficiently on developing and maintaining effective working relationships with children and their parents or carers. Delivery of work was timely, proportionate and well sequenced, providing good evidence of planning for subsequent community integration/other services following completion of YJS involvement.

Across assessment, planning and delivery, we found inconsistent practice in addressing a child's diversity, alongside a variable quality of work in relation to victim and restorative justice work within the inspected cases. Management oversight of

out-of-court disposal casework was weak, being deemed sufficient in just eight out of twenty five cases. Despite this, we were pleased to see much improved case inspection scores across all but one of the rated standards for out-of-court-disposal work. Of particular note was the improvement in the quality of safeguarding and public protection work across assessment, planning and delivery elements.

We rated out-of-court disposal policy and provision as 'Requires improvement'. There was an out-of-court disposal policy (supported by a bureau process flowchart) which set out arrangements for decision-making, provision and delivery of out-of-court disposals and prevention/diversion work. However, The YJS out-of-court-disposal policy and the South Wales Police out-of-court-disposal processes and policies were not aligned, which was a shortfall as there were some contradictions in guidance and process.

Cardiff YJS operates a 'two-fold' out-of-court diversion offer, dependent upon risk, need and previous service involvement. Since the last inspection, the introduction and implementation of a 'bureau model' in March 2021 had been a significant development. This approach has served to bring a much clearer focus and process to the delivery of out-of-court-disposal work in Cardiff, particularly since the last inspection in 2020. However, further work was required for the partnership to ensure that the decision-making panel consistently involved all relevant agencies, and that the child fully understood, and could participate more effectively in, the process.

Although there had been a significant reduction in first-time entrants, the partnership had limited understanding of how this success might be linked to the work in relation to out-of-court disposals. Likewise, minimal attention and consideration had been given to diversity issues within the out-of-court-disposal policy.

### Strengths

- There was an out-of-court-disposal policy, which set out arrangements for decision-making, provision and delivery of out-of-court disposals and prevention/diversion work.
- Planning and delivery of out-of-court-disposal was rated as 'Outstanding' for desistance and 'Good' across the elements of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others.
- Out-of-court-disposal work was strengths based and involved children and parents in a large majority of cases.
- Work undertaken with children on out-of-court disposals was timely and proportionate, with good evidence of planning for subsequent community integration/other services following completion of YJS work.
- There were service level agreements between the YJS and MAC for the 'Divert' project.
- Children subject to out-of-court disposals and assessed as having high safety and wellbeing needs or presenting a high risk of harm to others were managed through the RMP arrangements.

## Areas for improvement

- The YJS out-of-court-disposal policy required review and was not sufficiently aligned with the South Wales Police out-of-court-disposal processes and policy.
- Contingency planning for safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others was weak.
- Assessment, planning and delivery in relation to some children's diversity needs were inconsistent.
- Victim and restorative justice work were variable in quality.
- Management oversight of out-of-court disposal casework was weak.
- There was insufficient analysis of out-of-court-disposal data to understand why first-time entrant rates had reduced so significantly, and hence a limited understanding of the cohort.
- The joint decision-making panel ('bureau') is police chaired, and although other professionals contributed to a pre-panel discussion, case managers did not routinely attend the panel with their assessment of the child.

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

### 3.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

Our 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?	64%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	<b>52%</b>
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	64%

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

In 16 out of 25 inspected cases, we found that assessments sufficiently analysed how to support children's desistance. In a large majority of cases, the assessment was completed with meaningful input from children and their parents or carers. Staff also focused on understanding the offending behaviour from the child's perspective, in order to analyse their motivation, attitude and sense of responsibility. However, diversity factors were considered sufficiently in just 10 out of the 25 cases. We found

<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 Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

variable consideration of opportunities for restorative justice, with 10 out of 19 relevant cases deemed sufficient. Just over half of relevant cases saw assessments lacking attention to any structural barriers facing the child.

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


Although inspectors agreed with the safety and wellbeing risk classification in most cases, assessment of a child’s safety and wellbeing was inconsistent and deemed sufficient in just over half. We found that case managers drew on other sources of information in 13 out of 25 cases.

An inspector commented:

*“Although classification of safety and wellbeing is correctly high, the written assessments lack a reasoned analysis of the rationale for the high risk, with key details covered too briefly. For example, comments such as ‘child has a number of ACEs’ [adverse childhood experiences] but not specifying what these were. Numerous other issues were evident, including changes of placements, special educational needs, negative peers, disrupted education. This was in addition to those briefly highlighted, such as criminal exploitation, Looked After Child status and submission of NRM [National Referral Mechanism]. Written assessment documentation contains insufficient detail from the range of information available from social care, with many sections just having one or two lines written”.*

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

In 13 out of 20 relevant cases, the assessment identified and analysed the risk of harm to others, including who is at risk and the nature of the risk. The case manager had used available sources of information, including other assessments, to inform their own judgement in two-thirds of cases. Inspectors judged the case manager’s assessment of the level of risk of serious harm to others as reasonable in 18 of the 25 cases.

<b>3.2. Planning</b>	
Planning is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.	Good

Our rating<sup>20</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% ‘Yes’
Does planning focus on supporting the child’s desistance?	80%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>68%</b>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	72%

<sup>20</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.

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

Planning to support desistance was sufficient in a majority of cases. Case managers took an inclusive approach, and in 20 out of 25 cases they developed their plans with the children and their parents or carers. However, planning work in relation to diversity was less consistent, being deemed sufficient in just less than half of cases.

The work planned was proportionate in a large majority of the cases inspected and could be achieved within the timescale of the out-of-court disposal. In 21 out of 25 cases, staff included action on all the key areas and services to support desistance, with appropriate sequencing. In most cases, planning for the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change was evident, as was the planning to reinforce and develop the child's protective factors.

The main desistance factors identified included: ETE, lifestyle, substance misuse and resilience. Case managers struck a good balance between interventions to support desistance and the need to complete specific offending behaviour work. However, planning to address the needs and wishes of victims was more variable, being judged as sufficient in 10 out of 18 relevant cases.

In 23 out of 25 cases, planning focused on supporting access to universal services to promote community integration, which supported effective exit planning and ongoing support.

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

In most relevant cases, there was sufficient planning to keep children safe. When this was done well, there was evident multi-agency working. In 13 out of 19 relevant cases, YJS planning was aligned with other plans.

Overall, planning focused sufficiently on keeping the child safe in 17 out of 25 cases. Circumstances in a child's life, however, can change quickly. Case managers need to consider the potential for change in each case, so that, should concerns escalate, they are prepared and more likely to respond effectively. We recognise the need for proportionate planning in out-of-court disposals, where interventions may be brief, but would have expected to see more detailed contingency planning in some of the cases we inspected. This is important, as there should be a clear plan of action in the event of risk to the child either increasing or decreasing. We found contingency planning for safety and wellbeing to be sufficient in only eight of the 20 relevant cases.

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

In 12 out of 17 relevant cases, planning focused sufficiently on keeping people safe, and case managers involved other agencies in their planning processes in most relevant cases. Children subject to out-of-court disposals and assessed as presenting a high risk of harm to others were managed through the YJS RMP arrangements. However, we found that planning addressed specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims in just over half of relevant cases.

As with safety and wellbeing, contingency planning to manage public protection is important and there should be a clear plan of action in the event of the child's risk of harm to others either increasing or decreasing. We found contingency planning for risk of harm to others to be sufficient in only five of the 16 relevant cases.



### 3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

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

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	88%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	<b>72%</b>
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	76%

#### Does service delivery focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

Implementation and delivery to support the child's desistance was satisfactory in the great majority of cases. Inspectors found a high level of engagement from children, which reflected the proactive approach of staff. Case managers focused sufficiently on developing and maintaining effective working relationships with children and their parents or carers in 23 of the 25 cases, while in a large majority of cases staff encouraged and enabled the child's compliance with the work of the YJS.

The services most likely to support desistance were delivered in a majority of cases, with case managers paying sufficient attention to sequencing and the available timescales. However, service delivery was inconsistent in relation to diversity issues, being sufficient in just 11 out of 25 relevant cases. Delivery of work was timely and proportionate, with 22 out of 25 cases providing good evidence of planning for subsequent community integration/other services following completion of YJS involvement. Service delivery reflected the wider familial and social context of the child in 21 out of 25 cases.

An inspector commented:

*"Delivery for desistance was proportionate and reflective of the individual needs and circumstances of the child. A timely referral was made to substance misuse services, and a brief intervention completed. The case manager also made a referral to Careers Wales, but the child had already then sourced independent employment with a family member. There was consistent evidence of the case manager delivering planned YJS appointments and offending behaviour sessions around the child's employment, with regular parental contact supporting the work undertaken".*

#### Does service delivery focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child through service delivery was evident in 18 of the 23 relevant cases, with case managers involving other agencies in keeping children safe in most relevant cases. Overall, service delivery supported the

<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.

safety of the child in 18 of the 25 cases inspected, which was a significant improvement on Cardiff YJS's 2020 inspection.

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

For keeping other people safe, case managers had considered the protection of actual and potential victims in 13 out of 18 relevant cases. The services delivered managed and minimised the risk of harm in most relevant cases. Overall, the safety of other people was supported effectively in 19 out of the 25 cases inspected, which enabled us to judge that progress was evident in this area of work since the last inspection.

### **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 questions:

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

There was an out-of-court-disposal policy (supported by a bureau process flowchart) which set out arrangements for decision-making, provision and delivery of out-of-court disposals, and prevention/diversion work. However, The YJS out-of-court-disposal policy and the South Wales Police out-of-court-disposal processes and policies were not aligned, which was a shortfall as there were some contradictions in guidance and process.

Cardiff YJS operated a 'two-fold' out-of-court diversion offer, dependent upon risk, need and previous service involvement. Since the last inspection, the introduction and implementation of a 'bureau model' in March 2021 had been a significant development. The YJS held meetings on a Tuesday and a Friday to allocate any police notification F11 forms that had been submitted during the week. At this point, there was consideration of whether lower-level and lower-gravity offences would be allocated to 'Divert' for preventative work, rather than going through the formal bureau process.

All cases, except for serious offences referred to the Crown Prosecution Service, were referred by the officer in the case to the YJS for a decision on the most appropriate outcome. Cases deemed suitable for a youth restorative disposal were referred to the Divert team, which used a bespoke 'brief assessment tool' for those relevant lower-level cases and delivered any interventions deemed appropriate. However, a full AssetPlus was completed for higher-risk cases.

For those cases heard at the bureau, the assessment had to be completed within 20 days. The case was allocated to a YJS case manager, who had responsibility for meeting the child and completing an AssetPlus assessment. A report was also completed for the panel.

Once an assessment and report were complete, the case was referred to the multi-agency pre-bureau meeting, made up of the police sergeant, YJS manager, victim officer, community volunteer, and substance misuse, education and healthcare

representatives. Following submissions from these partners, the police sergeant, YJS manager, child and their parents or carers, and community volunteer had a meeting, where the voice of the child was heard, prior to the outcome being decided upon. However, inspectors felt that it would have been beneficial to have the case manager present when the child attended the panel, so that it felt less adversarial and ensured that the child fully understood, and could participate effectively in, the process. The full range of outcomes were available, ranging from no further action through to a charge to court. Most outcomes were complemented by an intervention.

YJS police officers communicated regularly with wider force colleagues, to ensure that they were aware of the out-of-court-disposal process and diversion offer. YJS police officers double-checked police systems daily, to ensure that they were sighted on any potential out-of-court disposals, and acted in an advisory role to neighbourhood policing team colleagues. This ensured that YJS children did not slip through the net, and that the YJS could engage with relevant or eligible children. YJS police officers were planning a series of visits to neighbourhood policing teams to raise awareness, upskill and develop further communication on the work of the YJS.

The management of risk to others, and safety and wellbeing for out-of-court disposal cases sat within the service's wider policies for these areas. For cases assessed as high risk in any of the domains of harm, safety and wellbeing, or reoffending, they were referred to, and managed through, the Cardiff YJS RMP process; therefore, they received the same oversight and process as post-court cases when in this forum.

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

The process and expectation were that the YJS case manager captured the contribution and view of partner agencies in their report. Social workers, for example, were not involved directly in the decision-making at the bureau panel itself, but they could outline the needs of the child in the pre-bureau meeting, which informed the overall decision. There was no attendance from partners at the panel, but their views and assessment were considered.

There was a pre-bureau meeting, where the professionals met to consider the report. The bureau involved the YJS, South Wales Police, the community volunteer, and the child and their parents or carers. Decision-making local guidance stated that there had to be a good balance with the views of the community member before the decision was finalised.

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

The out-of-court-disposal policy was acknowledged by the YJS operational manager as requiring review. There had been recent changes in practice, such as moving the panel from the police station to the YJS building (following the end of Covid-19 restrictions), and this had not been updated.

There was no understanding of how the reduction in first-time entrants might have been linked to the work in relation to out-of-court disposals. There had not been a notable increase in the use of out-of-court disposals, so this raised questions about where these children had gone.

As part of the wider approach to prevention and diversion, street restorative justice interventions were monitored by the police, and support could be offered to children when there were safeguarding concerns. We were also informed that 'Outcome 22' had been used in a few cases.

There had been drift in some cases but, generally, the police were keen to get the investigation completed, so that there were not many delays in cases coming to the bureau.

There was no evidence of involvement from children or their parents or carers in the review of out-of-court-disposal provision. Likewise, minimal attention and consideration had been given to diversity issues.

## 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 three cases managed by the YJS that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows:

#### Strengths

- There was a recently developed, clear resettlement policy, based on principles of constructive resettlement.
- YJS practitioners demonstrated a high level of advocacy for YJS children in custody.
- Provision and partnership working were of good quality across the key pathways of accommodation, ETE and healthcare.
- There was good communication, with positive working relationships, between the YJS and secure estate staff.
- The YJS had specific resettlement workers, who worked alongside case managers to ensure a consistent relationship and support the resettlement needs of children in custody.
- The YJS had a resettlement tracker, which provided a case-by-case analysis and monitoring of those children in custody. This served as a mechanism to ensure that relevant pathways and services were adhered to by all involved partner agencies.

#### Areas for improvement

- Not all staff had received specific resettlement training – although there was planned further training within the next year.

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

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

Cardiff YJS had a resettlement policy that set out actions and timescales in relation to children who were sentenced to custody. This policy sat alongside Cardiff case

management practice guidance, which outlined that once a child entered custody, they would be allocated a youth justice case manager and linked to a youth justice resettlement worker. The policy set clear expectations and actions for all aspects of resettlement activity (both before and after release), and focused on planning across the seven pathways, which included accommodation, ETE, healthcare and contact with the child's family or carers. This included understanding the needs of the whole family, and considering key areas of sentence planning and delivery, such as visits, use of release on temporary licence, transitions and children with special educational needs.

The assessment of risk and subsequent release planning was considered in the directions for completing AssetPlus. These also set out the framework under which a child's risk should be managed. In addition, the policy ensured that staff were directed to complementary policies (such as safeguarding, joint work with children's social care, and the youth justice service risk of harm, and safety and wellbeing policy), which together specified the actions for cases that were managed locally within Cardiff YJS RMP arrangements, or which met the criteria for MAPPA and integrated offender management.

Although the policy did not directly address diversity needs, it detailed a clear framework for delivering work within the principles of constructive resettlement and supporting a child's identity shift. These services provided individualised interventions and a high level of support to children with complex needs. The policy would have been further improved by reflecting on how it would address issues of diversity and disproportionality within the YJS cohort, and by using feedback and children's participation to shape it further.

The YJS had introduced the policy only recently, in February 2022, although key elements had been implemented informally before this. Staff were aware of its implementation, through discussion at team meetings and development forums.

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

Resettlement provision was based on a constructive resettlement approach, supported by services providing a high level of support and bespoke interventions. The YJS benefited from a skilled and experienced group of staff who covered court, remand, bail support and custody. They had developed a relationship-based approach to resettlement work with fellow professionals, which ensured that they could access relevant pathways and interventions in most instances. These workers also had a strong focus on enabling family contact – which was reflected in all three cases we inspected.

Within the relevant resettlement cases, inspectors saw evidence of advocacy in relation to the placement of YJS children. One of the children was subject to a section 91 custodial sentence, and his case was to be heard at a parole meeting prior to his release on a concurrent detention and training order licence, so planning for both was being done in tandem. Two addresses were secured about five weeks prior to release and the child had the chance to pick the one he wanted. The second child had been a Looked After Child when he entered custody, so the YJS and social worker always knew that he would need accommodation. Subsequently, a placement out of area was found and he agreed to go. However, it was noted by the inspector that this placement had been identified only days before the child was due for his early release, despite the YJS raising this case in the newly formed resettlement panel in the three months prior to release.

In two out of the three inspected cases, ETE needs were addressed sufficiently. Of note was the work undertaken with a child serving a long sentence. Although not due for release for several years, the YJS still advocated and ensured that ETE issues were addressed. The child had undertaken ETE courses while on remand – including in psychology, cookery and barbering. Following sentence and transition to an adult prison, the child was employed as a barber, attended the gym, and was due to enrol on a psychology degree course.

Again, in two out of three cases, healthcare needs were addressed sufficiently. In one case, the child was seen by healthcare staff at HMYOI Parc, concerning his withdrawal from heroin. As he had no confirmed address until days before his release, it was not possible to link him with adult substance misuse services prior to release. Once he was released, he was using again within a very short time.

The staff survey indicated that half (four out of eight) of those relevant staff had received specific resettlement training. This was identified as an area of priority and development within the YJS leadership team and there were plans to roll out further training in the next year.

Resettlement provision paid sufficient attention to keeping children safe. YJS staff and managers described strong relationships with both Hillside, the local secure children's home, and Parc, the nearest YOI, allowing accessible visits and proactive involvement in RMP meetings. The designated YJS manager for resettlement described good communication with counterpart managers within social care safeguarding and the leaving care team – which was echoed by the link social care manager and described as "impressive" from her perspective. All three cases were Looked After Children and we found that the work to respond to their diversity needs was sufficient in every case.

Within the resettlement practitioners meeting, we heard that HMYOI Parc had a designated link worker, who supported transition from custody to the community through visits to children who had been released from custody recently. We saw evidence of this in one of the inspected cases.

In relation to keeping others safe, all three cases saw sufficient evidence of joint work and information sharing – again, supported through RMP and/or MAPPA procedures. The RMP process considered licences, to ensure that the partnership agreed to licence conditions. This then fed into custody planning meetings. We were informed that all current children in custody were managed through the RMP process.

In all the three inspected resettlement cases, victim work was sufficient. This covered a range of activity, such as the use of additional licence conditions, liaison with the Probation Service victim liaison officer and clear, swift information-sharing, to ensure appropriate enforcement and recall action when required.

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

The formal resettlement policy had been introduced only recently, in February 2022. It was based on the principles of constructive resettlement, and a review of the informal practices within the team and national standards guidance in relation to effective resettlement practice. The board sub-committee had undertaken key work

in the development and implementation of the resettlement policy, which had then gone to the YJS management board for further scrutiny and approval.

We were encouraged to see that the YJS management board had developed a resettlement tracker, which allowed the custody cohort of the YJS to be identified at case level, yet tracked to ensure that the necessary work was being undertaken to timescales, to key points within the sentence, and that the coordination of services involved with the child was effective.



## 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>22</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 justice service submitted evidence in advance. In addition, the Chief Executive Officer of Cardiff Council and the independent Cardiff YJS management board chair and the YJS operational manager delivered a presentation covering the following areas:

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

During the main fieldwork phase, we conducted 27 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 22 meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations and staff. Additional evidence was gathered by our partner inspectors through interviews, meetings and observations. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.<sup>23</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 13 court disposals. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of five), and we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

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<sup>22</sup> HM Inspectorate's standards are available here: <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>.

### **Domain three: out-of-court disposals**

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Sixty per cent of cases selected were those of children who had received out-of-court disposals three to five months earlier. This enabled us 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 25 out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set based on the proportion of out-of-court disposal cases in the YJS.

### **Resettlement**

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining three 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 13 court disposals and 25 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 three 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 for each standard is aligned to the banding at the key question level where the lowest proportion of cases were judged to be sufficient, as we believe 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 (proportion of cases judged to be sufficient 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>24</sup>**

<b>2.1. Assessment (court disposals)</b>	
<b>Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?</b>	
a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	77%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	54%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	92%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	77%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	77%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	77%
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?	85%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	54%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	77%
<b>Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?</b>	
a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	54%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	54%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	54%

<sup>24</sup> Some questions do not apply in all cases.

<b>Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?</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?	31%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	46%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	31%

## 2.2. Planning (court disposals)

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

a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	38%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	46%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	69%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	62%
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?	62%
f) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims?	46%
g) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	69%

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

a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	54%
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?	54%
c) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	38%
d) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	23%

<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>	
a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	46%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	54%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	31%
d) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	31%
e) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	15%

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

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

a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	69%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	54%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	77%
d) Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	85%
e) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	92%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to services post-supervision?	92%
g) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	85%
h) Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	23%

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

a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	69%
b) Is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?	69%

<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?</b>	
a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	62%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	46%
c) Is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	62%

<b>2. 4. Reviewing (court disposals)</b>	
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?</b>	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors linked to desistance?	69%
b) Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	69%
c) Does reviewing include analysis of, and respond to, diversity factors?	33%
d) Does reviewing consider the personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	69%
d) Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	69%
e) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	69%
f) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to support desistance?	46%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?</b>	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing?	46%
b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?	54%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	38%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to risk of harm?	31%

b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	46%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan all of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	31%

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

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

a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's acknowledgement of responsibility for, attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	84%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	40%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	80%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	60%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	80%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	48%
g) Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	76%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	40%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	88%

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

a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	56%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	52%

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

a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	52%
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?	67%



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

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

a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	84%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	48%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	84%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	84%
e) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	80%
f) Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?	92%
g) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims?	40%
h) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	80%

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

a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	64%
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?	52%
c) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	32%

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

a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	48%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	40%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	35%
d) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	20%

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

#### Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?

a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	80%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	44%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	84%
d) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	92%
e) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	88%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	88%

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

a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	72%
b) Is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	63%

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

a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	52%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	54%