



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in

Hammersmith and Fulham

HM Inspectorate of Probation, October 2022

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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

HM Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending service work with adults and children.

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

Please note that throughout the report the names in the practice examples have been changed to protect the individual's identity.

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Foreword

This inspection is part of our programme of youth justice service (YJS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Hammersmith and Fulham 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, Hammersmith and Fulham YJS was rated as 'Outstanding'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as outstanding.

The service has a clear child-first and systemic approach to working with children and families. It values the views of children and families and has been proactive in seeking these to inform service delivery. This includes routinely gathering feedback from children, parents or carers on their experiences with youth justice, as well as involving them in wider consultation events.

The staff are confident, capable, and passionate, and it was evident that they are dedicated to improving outcomes for children. The service has invested in staff through training and development, and many have been successful in internal promotion. However, the service needs to improve its work with volunteers to ensure that they receive adequate support and training and are being effectively utilised.

The service has impressive arrangements with partners, including the voluntary sector, which gives YJS children access to an extensive range of services and provision. This includes a strong health offer, where YJS children have prompt, in-house access to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), speech and language therapy, clinical practitioners, as well as educational psychology and substance misuse services. Practitioners are aware of the resources available and use these well.

Black and mixed heritage children are overrepresented in the YJS cohort. The service is aware of this and has made addressing it a priority. It has made a promising start and is already seeing better education outcomes for these children. However, work to meet children's diversity needs requires some strengthening. While we saw good examples of work where diversity had been recognised and provision appropriately tailored, this was not consistent across all cases. Policies and processes need to be more specific about how the service intends to meet all children's diverse needs.

Case work was impressive in both court and out-of-court disposals and in resettlement work. Assessments are thorough and analytical, providing detailed insight into the children and families. Plans are co-produced with children and involve other agencies; they balance areas of strength and concerns effectually, and we found an excellent standard of service delivery.



Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Hammersmith and Fulham Youth Justice Service
Fieldwork started July 2022

Score 31/36

Overall rating

Outstanding



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

Good



1.2 Staff

Good



1.3 Partnerships and services

Outstanding



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

Outstanding



2.2 Planning

Outstanding



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding



2.4 Reviewing

Outstanding



3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

Good



3.2 Planning

Outstanding



3.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding



3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

Good



4. Resettlement¹

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

Outstanding



¹ The rating for Resettlement does not influence the overall YOS rating.

Recommendations

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

The Hammersmith and Fulham Youth Justice Service should:

1. review its work arrangements with volunteers to ensure that they are fully supported, used effectively and connected to the service
2. improve communication and escalation routes to ensure that key messages on service delivery and data analysis reach the board and operational staff
3. review policies and guidance to ensure that they set out explicitly how the service intends to meet all diversity needs, particularly where there is disproportionality.

The Youth Crime Prevention Partnership Board (management board) should:

4. continue to work with partners and the YJS to maintain the current health provision for YJS children
5. develop its understanding of YJS children and families, the vision and priorities of the service and potential risks that could impact on delivery.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Hammersmith and Fulham YJS over a period of a week, beginning on 18 July 2022. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence, out-of-court disposals and resettlement cases were delivered between 19 July 2021 and 13 May 2022. We also interviewed 19 case managers.

Hammersmith and Fulham is in west London. It borders Brent, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Wandsworth, Richmond upon Thames, Hounslow and Ealing. The Office for National Statistics recorded the total population as 183,544 in 2021, with children aged 10 to 17 making up 8.2 per cent (15,076). While there are many affluent areas, Hammersmith and Fulham experiences deprivation. In 2019, the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index recorded that 34 per cent of children under the age of 18 were living in poverty.

We last inspected Hammersmith and Fulham in 2015, when it formed part of the West London Tri-borough youth offending service, with Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea. The tri-borough arrangement ended in 2018, and Hammersmith and Fulham established its own youth justice service. The YJS is located in their Children and Young People's Service and alongside Early Help and Social Care. The head of the YJS reports to the operational director. The YJS management team includes the head of service; three deputy service managers (DSM), two senior social workers and a restorative justice lead. The DSMs oversee the out-of-court disposal, community and court teams. In addition, there is a wellbeing team, which includes a speech and language therapist, education psychologist, youth justice liaison and diversion worker, CAMHS worker, a clinical/systemic practitioner, and substance misuse workers.

Hammersmith and Fulham is a diverse area; 50 per cent of children aged 10 to 17 are from black, Asian and minority ethnicities. However, 69 per cent of the YJS cohort are children from these heritages. The YJS is aware of this overrepresentation and is committed to addressing it. Levels of mental ill-health (54 per cent) and substance misuse (73 per cent) are high for YJS children. Only 38 per cent of YJS children of school age are educated in mainstream facilities, and 62 per cent are in alternative provision. However, 90 per cent of children aged over 16 years are in education, training or employment (ETE). The percentage of children on the YJS caseload cared for by the local authority is 19 per cent; 15 per cent are placed outside the YJS area and 4 per cent are placed within it.

The majority of the YJS caseload are boys aged 15 to 17. The most common offences are violence against the person and drugs. Hammersmith and Fulham's first-time entrant rate is lower than the average for London and England and Wales. Although reoffending rates are slightly higher, these numbers have continued to fall every year. The custody rate increased marginally between April 2021 and March 2022. However, there have been significant delays in sentencing due to the pandemic, which have had an impact on this figure.

The Metropolitan Police cover the Hammersmith and Fulham area. The YJS has good links with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC). The borough is affected by exploitation and serious youth violence (SYV). It experienced a peak in SYV in 2018-2019, and the partnership has made addressing this a priority. Positively, no children under 18 have died as a result of violent crime since 2019.

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 14 meetings, including with staff, volunteers, managers, board members, and partnership staff and their managers. Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows.

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.

Good

Strengths:

- The YJS has a vision and strategy for delivering youth justice services. This endorses a child-first and systemic approach.
- The board and YJS have strong links to other strategies and provision. They form an integral part of the Youth Crime Prevention Strategy, and have strong ties with the community safety partnership and local safeguarding boards.
- The service has joint working protocols in place with partners. This includes secondment arrangements to provide in-house services from the police, substance misuse, and speech and language therapy.
- The partnership is innovative and will challenge each other effectively. They have worked well together to secure an extensive range of services and provision. They have good knowledge of existing resources and, where there have been gaps, they have used funding well to commission provisions.
- The management team is visible, cohesive and members work well together. They have clear lines of accountability, and service lead areas are understood by the service.

Areas of improvement

- Key information is not consistently being presented at the board. For example, members did not know that 62 per cent of YJS children of school age were in alternative provision. The partnership needs to scrutinise the demographics of this cohort, in consultation with staff, children, parents, and carers.
- Detailed analysis of outcomes and performance produced by the YJS does not always reach the board, nor is it being disseminated and understood at an operational level.
- The board is not consistently discussing provision and the performance of other services where there will be an impact on the YJS.
- The induction process for board members needs to ensure new members understand the profile of YJS children, and the service's child-first and systemic culture. Not all board members could articulate the YJS's vision and priorities or the needs of the children and families who access the service.
- The probation service cannot second a probation practitioner due to lack of capacity but provide the YJS with financial reimbursement instead. Whilst there is

a process to transition young adults to the probation service, more work is required by both services to ensure all transitions are effective.

- Staff were not confident that concerns that they had escalated were routinely being raised at the board.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Strengths

- Practitioners feel that their workload is manageable, and that cases are evenly distributed. Managers will listen and proactively respond if work becomes unmanageable. Although the service has experienced some difficulties with retaining staff, staffing levels are sufficient to meet its needs.
- The team is confident, knowledgeable, and capable. Cases are allocated to staff who are experienced and equipped to meet the children's needs.
- The YJS invests in its staff and offers opportunities for progression and development. Several practitioners have been promoted to senior roles.
- There is a robust supervision policy in place. Supervision enables staff to discuss and reflect on cases, creates opportunities for personal and professional development, and helps to identify training and learning needs, in addition to reviewing staff welfare.
- In the cases we reviewed, management oversight was effective in 77 per cent of post-court cases and 85 per cent of out-of-court disposal cases.
- There is a joint supervision arrangement with children's social care (CSC). If YJS children are known to CSC, practitioners receive additional supervision from the social worker and their manager.
- Robust quality assurance processes are in place which ensures there is effective oversight and countersignature of assessments and reports.
- There is a comprehensive induction process for new staff, and a strong learning and development ethos, and dedication to training.
- Staff are highly motivated, passionate, and committed to meeting the needs of the children and their families.
- Managers acknowledge exceptional work and staff feel valued.

Areas for improvement:

- Volunteers do not feel valued or encouraged by the service. They are not being fully utilised in their role. They feel disconnected from the YJS and feel that they do not know the team, the services available, or current provision well enough.
- Volunteers are not satisfied with the supervision and support they receive. While all agree that the induction process was thorough, they consider the current training is not meeting their needs, they are omitted from YJS training, and would like the opportunity to further learn and develop.
- None of the managers have had AIM3 management and supervision training.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Outstanding

Strengths:

- The YJS has an up-to-date analysis of the needs of children and a joint strategic needs assessment, including of desistance factors, which enables it to deliver services effectively.
- The YJS uses the views of children, parents, and carers to inform provision.
- There are effective arrangements in place for children and families to access a plethora of specialist and mainstream services. For instance, Queens Park Rangers football club second two workers to the YJS to provide constructive activities and access to a maths tutor.
- The service promotes opportunities for community integration, including access to outreach provision, through the youth crime prevention strategy.
- There is a strong post-16 ETE offer. From 14 years old, children are helped to transition into ETE after school; 90 per cent of over-16s are in ETE.
- YJS children have access to numerous tailored mentoring options,
- The junior attendance centre programme includes employment, money management skills as well as healthy lifestyles, identity and masculinity.
- A parent/carer champion network delivers mentoring and parenting skills.
- The YJS has good relationships with CSC and wider children's services. Weekly multi-agency meetings are held to review children who are moving through the system. This ensures that they receive the right support and step down to an appropriate service.
- The YJS has robust multi-agency risk and safety management processes in place. The partnership takes a proactive approach to working with children who are at risk of exploitation, serious youth violence and gangs. Support and intervention services include Your Choice, Supporting Families Against Youth Crime, and Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation.
- The wellbeing team provides quick access to specialist services, including direct assessment and intervention, and consultations for YJS professionals.
- Inspectors found that children had access to the services they needed to support desistance, keep them safe, and manage risks to others in almost all domain two cases and in most domain three cases that we reviewed.
- Victims who have received restorative justice fed back that the experience had been positive, they felt listened to and the provision met their needs.

Areas for improvement:

- Practitioners were not confident that escalated concerns about school placements were being heard and resolved.

- Although all victims are offered restorative justice, take-up was low, with less than half agreeing to participate.
- The referral order panel process needs reviewing to ensure that more victims participate and to increase the involvement of volunteers in drawing up the contract with children.

1.4. Information and facilities



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

Good

Strengths

- There are a range of policies and procedures guidance in place, these provide clear guidance on service delivery including risk and safety management processes.
- The YJS recently moved to its current location, it has adapted the building to ensure that it is safe for staff and children. A review has been planned and will involve, staff children and families.
- Practitioners have access to sufficient information and communication technology (ICT) and case recording systems to complete their roles.
- The YJS is dedicated to learning and driving service improvement. This was evident in its comprehensive audits and quality assurance (QA) processes, which were carried out frequently. Areas for development are translated into realistic and achievable action plans.
- The YJS's QA framework is embedded in the wider children and young people's service QA framework. The service produces a QA activity report, which is drawn from all audits and QA, including peer reviews, children's feedback and scrutiny panels. This identifies areas of strength and areas for improvement.
- Internal audits are completed, and the head of service and QA manager also carry out bi-monthly audit moderation. Audit activity includes deep dives into cases, observations of practice, and feedback from children and families.

Areas of improvement:

- Several of the policies specify that staff should consider children's diversity needs. However, these would benefit from explicit detail and direction on how the service intends to take account of all protected characteristics.
- Referral order panel meetings are still being held online or hybrid, where the volunteers work remotely. The pandemic has presented difficulties for in-person meetings but given the willingness of volunteers and new facilities in making meetings possible, this needs reviewing as a priority.
- Volunteers say that there can be challenges with some of the online referral order panel meetings, due to connectivity issues, their own IT set-up, and the use of phones by attendees. This can disrupt the panels and make communication difficult.

- Some staff have reservations about the new premises. They feel that the council premises are not child-friendly, and do not allow them to create a hospitable environment tailored to children’s needs.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The service values and seeks the views of children, parents, and carers. It gathers and captures their views in several ways, including through routine consultation events, surveys, audits and feedback. The service can demonstrate how, on numerous occasions, the opinions of children, families and carers have had an impact on service delivery. For instance, following requests from children, the partnership has expanded its mentoring offer.

The perspectives of those who access the services are used to evaluate the YJS’s performance and identify learning. For example, in 2018-2019, the service consulted with parents of children who had committed a first offence and were referred for an out-of-court disposal. Through a series of focus groups with parents, the service developed key learning points, including that professionals should anticipate parents’ feelings of blame, guilt and shame, and potential stigmatisation felt by families from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. It has made changes since this consultation, including to offer support and direct intervention to parents.

To ensure the voices of children, parents and carers are heard, a board member has taken on the role of youth champion. Expectations have been developed to help embed this role. The youth champion works with the YJS’s restorative justice team and the children’s services voice coordinator to provide frequent opportunities to consult children, families and carers. The eventual aim is for children, parents and carers to attend board meetings, and the youth champion will ensure that their voices are heard when they are unable to attend.

The YJS contacted, on our behalf, children who had open cases at the time of the inspection, to gain their consent for a text survey. We delivered the survey independently to the three children who consented, and one child replied. We also spoke to two children who had accessed the service.

In the text survey, children were asked to rate the YJS on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being poor and 10 fantastic.

In the phone interviews, both children felt that they understood what the YJS is trying to achieve. When asked if they thought the staff had the right skills, both responded ‘yes’. One child commented:

“He helped me a lot with school. I was going to be excluded but he got me back in and then helped me look for college places.”

The other child stated:

“He took me to football matches and a bike project where you fix bikes. I also learnt how to fix my bike.”

When asked whether there is anything they would like to change about the YJS, neither made any suggestions. Both were asked what they like most about the YJS, and one child stated:

“The people in YOT are actually alright, no one is really rude.”

Diversity

The service is aware of and understands the disproportionality in the number of YJS children and families who are from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. It has been proactive in addressing this and improving outcomes for children and families. The service has made this a priority area and developed a disproportionality action plan. Progress is being made, including an increase in the proportion of Black and mixed heritage boys in education, from 40 per cent in 2020-2021 to 63 per cent in 2021-2022. The service also uses data from other services, for example police stop and search data to inform its understanding of disproportionality. However, further work with board members is needed to ensure that they understand the impact of disproportionality on children and families. Children's views are also sought through a disproportionality survey. This explores their experiences of discrimination and how they have found working with the YJS. The service intends to repeat this survey and share feedback with the board.

Staff are aware that addressing disproportionality is a priority and understand the overrepresentation in their service. Staff have received training to understand how disproportionality can affect children and families. However, the service needs to strengthen its work to identify, analyse, and plan to address diversity needs in post-court cases, as this was sufficient in only just over half of the cases inspected. This work scored higher in out-of-court disposals, where practitioners had taken diversity needs into account when developing plans. Delivery of work to meet diversity needs requires attention in both post-court and out-of-court cases. Practitioners need to ensure that they are consistently talking to children and families about their diversity needs, the impact of these, and make reasonable adjustments where required.

The workforce is diverse; 46 per cent of staff from are from a Black, Asian, or minority ethnic background. This is slightly lower than the proportion of children from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds in the local population, which is 50 per cent, and much lower than the cohort of YJS children, which is 69 per cent. Female staff make up 63 per cent of the workforce and this provides girls who access the service with the opportunity to work with a female practitioner. The cohort of volunteers is diverse, and the recent recruitment sought to enlist new members to reflect the local community and children they will work with. Of the 11 newly recruited volunteers, 54 per cent are from a Black, Asian, or minority ethnic heritage.

Two members of staff were supported in accessing and completing the Elevate programme. This is a YJB pilot, and offers practitioners from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds a positive action leadership programme.

Through the Ether programme provided by Wipers, YJS children have access to provision specifically for females and children from a Black, Asian, and minority ethnic heritage. This includes a leadership and development programme, where children can explore culture, race and identity, and family history in a safe space.

Several of the policies specify the need to consider diversity. However, more explicit detail and direction on how the service intends to meet all protected characteristics would be beneficial. Procedures could be enhanced through stronger links to the disproportionality action plan or more specific guidance on how the service intends to address these areas.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 11 referral orders and two youth rehabilitation orders managed by the YOS.

2.1. Assessment



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

Outstanding

Our rating² for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	92%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	100%

Assessment of desistance was consistently impressive. It was evident that practitioners were professionally curious; they sought and analysed information held by other services. There was a balanced analysis of strengths, protective factors and areas of concern. Practitioners effectively used case consultations with the clinicians and input from the speech and language therapist and the educational psychologist to enhance their assessments. This enabled a child-centred and systemic approach to assessment, which considered experiences, identity, and voice. Diversity was not considered consistently in the cases we reviewed, and more attention to all protected characteristics would strengthen assessments. However, in cases where diversity needs had been explored, this was thorough, with practitioners analysing the child's learning needs, cultural heritage, and religion.

Assessment to keep the child safe was detailed and thorough. Practitioners were proficient in articulating and analysing potential adverse outcomes. Scrutiny of controls, as well as protective factors, gave them a holistic understanding of the child's safety and any actions required to improve this. Practitioners understood that, where children present risks to others, this can increase their vulnerability, and factored this into their analysis.

Assessment of risk to others is a strength. Practitioners effectively analysed information from other agencies, as well the child's previous behaviours. The nature and context of potential risks had been scrutinised and were clearly identified. Practitioners had considered the impact on potential and future victims, so that they could understand whether possible risks were imminent, and the actions needed to keep people safe.

² 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. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

2.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

Our rating³ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	92%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	100%

Planning to support the child's desistance is co-produced with children, parents or carers. Their views are valued and included in the plan. A child-friendly planning template has been created which enables strengths and protective factors to be a key feature. Practitioners understand the importance of developing factors for desistance, as well as focusing on areas of concern. Where other agencies were involved, planning was collaborative, and work distributed appropriately to avoid duplication. In all cases we found planning to be proportionate and intervention capable of being delivered within the timescale. Practitioners planned for the end of the child's involvement with the YJS from the start, and, where appropriate, explored step-down to other agencies. Practitioners need to improve planning to meet the child's diversity needs. For instance, including interventions that focus on identity, heritage and religion, and clearly recording if reasonable adjustments are needed.

Planning to keep the child safe is impressive. We found that practitioners had thoroughly considered how to keep children safe when they were completing their work with the YJS. For instance, they had scrutinised locations to meet the child, reparation projects and group work, and made adjustments to promote safety. They aligned plans with those of other agencies, and each service was clear about the actions needed to keep the child safe. Practitioners are aware of and used specialist provision well. They had made referrals to and liaised with services such as speech and language therapy and CAMHS. Controls to improve safety had been explored but contingency planning requires development, as we found this to be sufficient in just over half of the cases.

Planning to keep people safe is detailed. The roles of other services in managing risk were clear, for example information-sharing arrangements and attendance at multi-agency meetings. Practitioners had identified external controls, outlining measures to mitigate risks. Interventions to address concerns were identified, including peer relationships and weapons awareness courses. Actual and potential victims had been considered in all required cases, and there was a clear focus on victim safety. Contingency planning needs to be more explicit on the actions and responses required if the level of risk increases would enhance planning.

³ 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. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁴ 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?	85%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	92%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	100%

Practitioners are skilled at developing positive working relationships with children and families. They use a variety of methods to engage children, including home visits, in-person meetings, virtual sessions and phone contact. This has enabled frequent contact that is accessible for children. Practitioners are innovative and creative. They tailored work to the children's interests to encourage participation. For example, they used QPR football club to provide an intervention involving access to football. Delivery is strengths-based, with a focus on community integration. Practitioners are aware of the services available and use them well. For instance, children are referred to mentors, who provide constructive activities and offer support for ETE. Work to meet diversity needs was only sufficient in seven of the 13 cases. Practitioners need to ensure that addressing diversity is integral to their work with children and families.

There are strong multi-agency arrangements in place to keep children safe. Services were well-coordinated and shared the responsibility for managing risk. Practitioners were responsive when risks to the child increased, and made adjustments to keep the child safe, such as changing the locations of sessions. Practitioners understood the risks to children, such as exploitation and serious youth violence. They put interventions and support in place, including working with specialist providers. Case managers were prompt in completing referrals and children had quick access to in-house provision from CAMHS, substance misuse services and the educational psychologist. Inspectors noted that the educational psychologist had been instrumental in supporting children with special educational needs. This included helping the professional network understand the child's needs and the child being diagnosed and receiving an education, health and care plan

Inspectors found that the professional network actively monitored risks to others. Agencies worked well together to share information, and each had a role in keeping others safe. Practitioners worked with children and families to help them to understand the external controls and encourage them to engage with these. Practitioners creatively delivered a range of interventions, including healthy

⁴ 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. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

relationships and weapons awareness. In all the cases where there were actual and potential victims, practitioners paid sufficient attention to promoting their safety.

2.4. Reviewing



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

Our rating⁵ for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	100%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	92%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	100%

In all cases, the practitioner had written a review, and where there had been changes to desistance factors, they had analysed these. Inspectors found that reviewing was an ongoing process, in which the practitioner considered strengths and factors against desistance. In the majority of cases, children and parents were meaningfully involved and their views were incorporated into the review process. Practitioners explored children's progress and levels of motivation and, when required, made adjustments to work. This included tailoring interventions when there been changes.

Reviews to keep the child safe were carried out frequently and involved other services. Inspectors found that reviews had been enhanced by information and assessments from other specialists, including CAMHS. This enabled practitioners to carry out further analysis and develop a better understanding of the child's needs. Multi-agency meetings were held regularly, which supported ongoing review of risks to the child. Professionals contributed to YJS reviews, but they also valued the practitioner's perspective and used this to inform their own assessments. Practitioners understood the dynamic nature of risk and responded when this changed, for example working with agencies to complete the national referral mechanism for exploited children. When the level of risk fell, case managers were confident in appropriately reducing classifications. Children and families were consulted on potential adverse outcomes. In one case, the practitioner took the child's view seriously when they reported feeling unsafe and made appropriate adjustments.

Where risks to other people had changed, formal reviews had been completed in every case. These had been informed by other agencies, and practitioners had used police intelligence appropriately to understand risk. New information was clearly analysed, and this was used to support and justify changes in risk classifications. Where the level of risk changed, practitioners were responsive, worked well with the professional network and adjusted the plan of work.

⁵ 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. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 13 cases that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of four youth conditional cautions, three youth cautions, four community resolutions and two other disposals. We interviewed the case managers in nine cases.

3.1. Assessment



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

Good

Our rating⁶ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	92%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	85%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	77%

Assessment of desistance was consistently strong. In all cases, the practitioner had used information held by other services. The service is piloting a systemic assessment tool for all out-of-court disposals, which was used to good effect. Inspectors found a detailed analysis of strengths and areas of concern providing a balanced assessment of the child. The exploration of the child's familial and social circumstances was impressive, and practitioners understood the impact of early experiences on presenting behaviours. Assessments were enhanced by clinical consultations and, in several cases, this had supported the practitioner in exploring social GRRRAACCEESS⁷. Consideration of diversity needs was stronger in out-of-court disposal cases than in post-court cases. In most cases, the practitioner had explored the child's heritage, sexuality and religion. However, this was not consistent in all cases, and is an area for development.

Practitioners had used a wide range of sources in their assessments of children's safety. In almost all cases there was a written assessment of the child's safety and wellbeing. It was evident that practitioners understood potential adverse outcomes, and, in the majority of cases, they had analysed the nature and context of these. The views of the child and family were taken seriously and responded to when fears or worries were expressed. In most cases, analysis of risks to others was detailed and the practitioner had used information from other sources well. There was a good focus on victims and exploration of their safety. Where cases were insufficient, in one, the analysis did not effectively explore all concerns. In the others, rationales for the classification were not adequately detailed and did not support the judgement.

⁶ 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. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

⁷ The term social GRRRAACCEESS is an acronym that describes aspects of personal and social identity which afford people different levels of power and privilege.

3.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁸ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	92%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	92%

Planning to address desistance was tailored to and co-produced with the children. In all cases, planning was proportionate to the disposal and targets set were achievable within the timeframes. Plans were aligned with other agencies to avoid duplication and help the child and their family to understand the roles of each service. There was a balance of focus on both strengths and areas of concern, and practitioners considered the child's motivation and maturity. In many cases, provision had been put in place to support access to mainstream services, such as working with a peer mentor and helping the child to secure ETE. In many cases diversity needs had been considered. For example, practitioners liaised with the speech and language therapist and educational psychologist for guidance on developing a plan that met the child's needs.

Planning to address children's safety and wellbeing was of consistently high quality. There was strong coordination with other agencies so that plans were aligned, and the role of each service was clear, including attendance at future multi-agency meetings. Inspectors observed good inter-agency work with schools when children had disclosed being bullied. Practitioners had made referrals to specialist services and identified appropriate interventions to mitigate risk.

Consideration of potential and future victims was a consistent strength; this was sufficient in almost every case. Practitioners had put measures in place to protect victims, such as providing alternative means of travel so that the child and victim could avoid contact. Interventions aimed to increase the child's awareness of the impact on victims. Where restorative justice was being completed, the practitioner considered additional controls to promote safety. Relevant agencies were involved in planning to keep others safe; risk management is seen as a shared responsibility of services. Planning included information-sharing arrangements and a commitment to future meetings where risks were to be reviewed.

In planning to keep both the child and others safe, contingency planning was insufficient in the majority of cases. Inspectors found that the systemic assessment tool did not adequately prompt the practitioner to consider the actions required should risks change.

⁸ 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. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁹ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	85%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	100%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	85%

Practitioners are skilled at developing and maintaining positive relationships with children and families. They conducted sessions at the most appropriate times and locations for children, which encouraged engagement. Children accessed a range of services and interventions that addressed areas of concern, including substance misuse and peer relationships. They were also offered numerous opportunities to build on strengths and encourage access to mainstream provision. In almost every case, the delivery of services was proportionate and achievable within the timescales. Practitioners were proactive in challenging other services when they were not meeting the child's needs. In one case, a girl had been referred to a female mentor, who was exploring female football teams for her to attend. In other cases, children from Black, Asian and minority ethnic heritage had been referred to the Ether programme. However, addressing diversity needs was not consistent, and was sufficient in only two-thirds of cases.

Delivery to keep children safe was of consistently high quality and sufficient in every case we reviewed. Planned work was undertaken, and sessions focused on promoting the child's safety. This included the dangers of carrying weapons and exploitation. Practitioners have made good use of specialist services such as CAMHS and speech and language therapy. In one case, strategies provided by the speech and language therapist were shared with professionals and the child's family to support work on safety. Where required, interventions involved a whole-family approach, with different professionals working seamlessly to support the child and family.

In all the inspected cases, the practitioner had paid sufficient attention to the safety of actual and potential victims. They focused on victims' safety and delivered work to raise the child's victim awareness. Practitioners had worked well with other services to manage and monitor risks actively. This included effective information-sharing and undertaking joint appointments. Interventions were well-structured and robust, delivering targeted work to reduce risks. This included sessions on weapons-awareness and emotional regulation.

⁹ 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. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision



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

Good

We also inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews. Our key findings were as follows:

Strengths:

- A joint protocol with the police is in place. This guidance is in line with the child-first and systemic ethos of the service, and states that children will be diverted from the criminal justice system where possible.
- In all cases we reviewed the assessment process was thorough, ambitious, and timely.
- Cases are discussed at a multi-agency decision-making panel; partners are committed to this and attend consistently.
- Intervention is offered for all disposals, and children can access all the YJS services and provision.
- There are robust multi-agency arrangements to manage risks to and from the children.
- The policy and provision are reviewed regularly. Out-of-court disposal cases are quality-assured. Where a case has undergone an audit or quality assurance, feedback and learning are provided.
- The YJS values and uses the experiences of panel members and parents to inform delivery. Panel members are given the opportunity to provide feedback on the process.

Areas for improvement:

- Panel members get an equal vote on the potential disposal, and the outcome is determined by a majority vote. This dilutes responsibility of out-of-court disposals being a YJS and police joint decision.
- Evidence suggests that a child's initial engagement with the assessment process can affect the outcome they receive. If a child is not fully engaging, they are more likely to receive a youth conditional caution.
- Procedures are in place to avoid children eligible for out-of-court disposals being referred to court. However, in our case sample, one child who was eligible for an out-of-disposal received a referral order.
- Analysis of out-of-court disposals is not effectively shared to operational staff. Panel members were not aware of their most successful disposal or levels of reoffending.
- There has been a slight increase in the proportion of Black and mixed heritage children becoming first-time entrants. The service has not yet carried out detailed thematic analysis and scrutiny to understand this overrepresentation.

4.1. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Outstanding

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:

- The resettlement policy is detailed. This outlines timeframes, expectations and responsibilities of the practitioners and managers, including the process for escalating concerns.
- The policy advocates for a personalised, co-produced approach to resettlement, in which the child and their family are central. This embodies the service's wider ethos of child-first and systemic practice.
- Most practitioners who oversee resettlement and remand cases have received specific training. In addition, several have completed training on disproportionality in custody.
- There is a dedicated 0.5 resettlement worker. This provision supports the case manager in focussing on the seven pathways to constructive resettlement. In the cases we reviewed, this work was impressive.
- Resettlement provision was sufficient in all the cases we reviewed. Planning begins quickly and is tailored to the children's needs.
- Before they were released, children knew where they were going to live and had been matched to placements that could meet their needs.
- Children were engaging in education before release, and placements were organised for when they were released.
- Practitioners were proactive in communicating with the child, family, secure estate and professional network. This was effective, and the children were safe and risks to others well managed.
- Resettlement and reducing the number of children in custody are priorities for the service. The policy and provision are reviewed regularly, as are alternatives to custody and bail packages.
- A DSM reviewed the YJS's bail and remand provision over a five-year period. Recommendations were accepted by the partnership and this has improved communication between the service, secure estate and partners and helped to develop more cohesive partnership working.
- The YJS has analysed data to understand remands, custody, and resettlement activity.

Areas for improvement:

- The resettlement guidance sets out the importance of being aware of overrepresentation and disproportionality. However, it would benefit from more explicit detail to help practitioners to understand expectations.
- The role of the resettlement worker is captured in other documents, but it would be useful to include this in the resettlement policy and guidance.

Further information

The following can be found on our website:

- [inspection data, including methodology and contextual facts about the YJS.](#)
- [a glossary of terms used in this report.](#)