

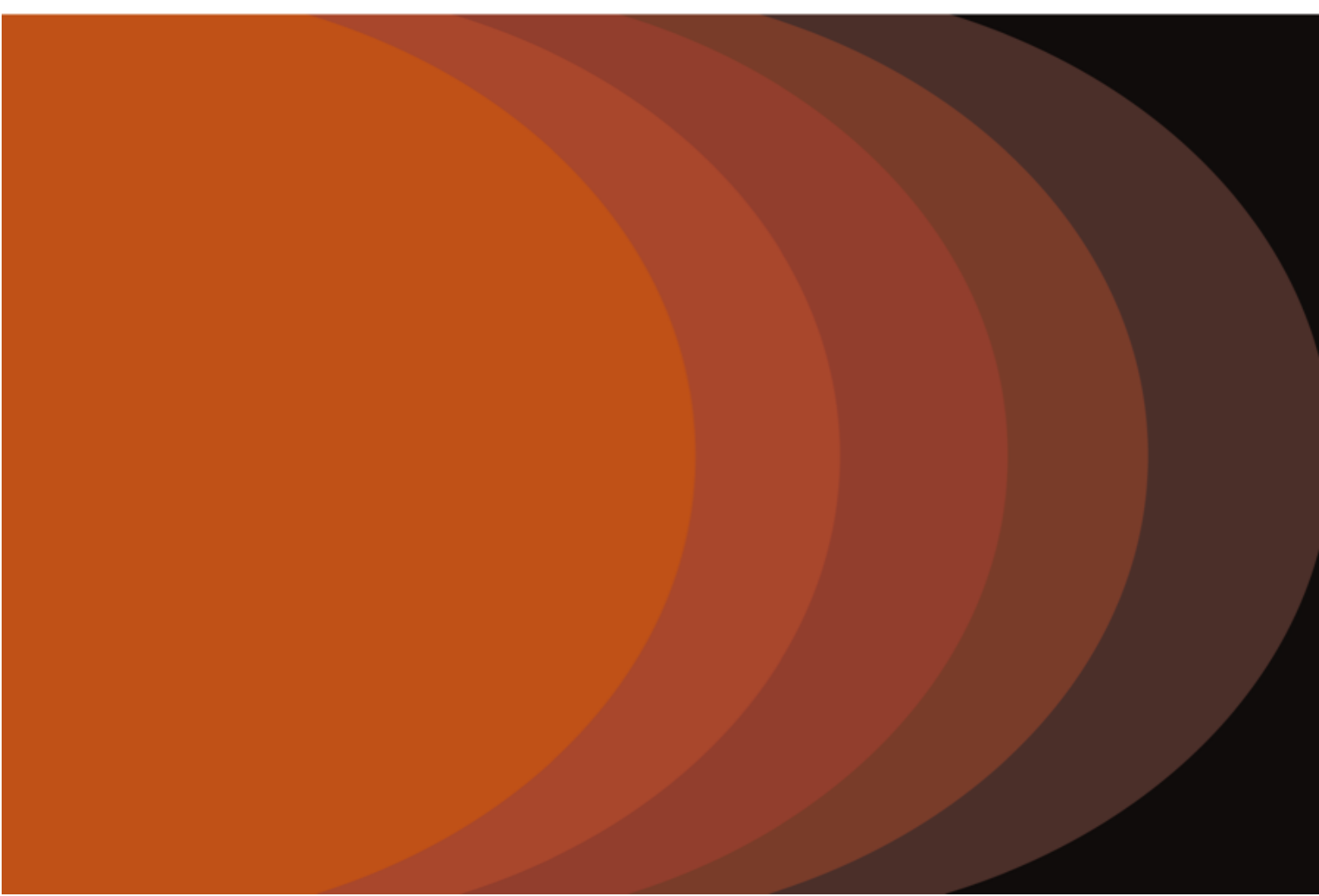


HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in

Havering

HM Inspectorate of Probation, October 2022



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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 Havering 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, Havering YJS was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Good'.

The YJS staff team, together with partner agencies, are delivering holistic interventions that meet a spectrum of needs, and are working hard to engage children in their interventions. Their focus on diversity and the work of the YJS specialist staff, in particular the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and speech and language and parenting support provision, was particularly impressive.

Partnerships and services are an area of strength, as is resettlement work. Resettlement was supported by a policy that sets out how to keep children safe, ensure the safety of other people and meet victims' needs. It takes an individualised approach and is strengths-based.

Planning, service delivery and reviewing in relation to court cases was all rated as 'good', with a strong focus on desistance. However, improvements are required to ensure that the quality of assessment for post-court work and out-of-court disposals is consistently high. Managers should ensure that staff focus equally on desistance, children's safety and wellbeing, and managing the risk of harm to others.

Out-of-court disposal processes require improvement. Not all children are assessed before their disposal is agreed, and children, their parents or carers are not engaged from the outset. This is a missed opportunity to gain the fullest understanding of the child and their circumstances prior to making decisions. The YJS would benefit from reviewing its out-of-court assessment tool and processes for recording information so that it can extract the data it needs to evaluate service delivery. The YJS needs a better understanding of why Black, Asian and minority ethnic children are under-represented among the diversion cohort, but over-represented in statutory disposals.

The Covid-19 pandemic had a severe impact on Havering YJS and the wider local authority, with a significant number of staff being directly affected. As a result of this, as well as staff absences generally and recruitment difficulties, the YJS has been operating against a backdrop of considerable pressure. The management board needs to develop a better awareness of all risks to the delivery of effective youth justice services and put appropriate mitigations in place. Board members also need to better understand the needs of the children involved with the YJS so that they can actively advocate for them in their own services. More needs to be done to ensure that children are receiving the correct education provision and that any special educational needs are addressed.

In this report, we make seven recommendations to improve the work of Havering YJS further. We trust that they will assist the service as it continues to develop.



Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Havering Youth Justice Service
Fieldwork took place in May 2022

Score 20/36

Overall rating

Good



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

Requires improvement



1.2 Staff

Requires improvement



1.3 Partnerships and services

Good



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

Requires improvement



2.2 Planning

Good



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Good



2.4 Reviewing

Good



3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

Requires improvement



3.2 Planning

Outstanding



3.3 Implementation and delivery

Good



3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

Requires improvement



4. Resettlement¹

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

Good



¹ The rating for resettlement does not influence the overall YJS rating.

Recommendations

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 Havering. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth justice services, and better protect the public.

The Havering Youth Justice Service Management Board chair should:

1. make sure board members are aware of their role and responsibilities and secure consistent representation and full engagement from all members
2. use detailed data reports, including information on children who are subject to out-of-court disposals, to scrutinise the YJS's performance and the input of partner agencies in supporting the work of the service.

The Havering Youth Justice Service Management Board should:

3. ensure all children have access to education that is suitable to meet their needs and that any special educational needs are responded to at the earliest opportunity
4. ensure that they understand all risks to the delivery of effective youth justice services and put appropriate mitigations in place that are reviewed regularly.

The Havering Youth Offending Service should:

5. together with police colleagues, review the current out-of-court disposal policy and processes to support the timely assessment of children and their inclusion at the earliest opportunity
6. review the way in which information on out-of-court disposals is recorded so that data on children and their needs can be extracted and used to analyse performance, delivery and disproportionality
7. create consistency in the quality of assessments so that there is an equal focus on desistance, children's safety and wellbeing, and managing the risk of harm to other people.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Havering YJS over a period of a week, beginning on 08 August 2022. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began between 09 August 2021 and 03 June 2022; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 09 August 2021 and 03 June 2022; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between 09 August 2021 and 03 June 2022. We also interviewed 23 case managers. To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance and had 11 meetings, including with staff, volunteers, board members and partnership staff and their managers. For court disposals we took a detailed look at 17 community sentence and one custodial sentence. For out-of-court disposals we inspected 27 cases, which consisted of four youth conditional cautions, two youth cautions and 21 community resolutions.

Havering YJS is part of Havering's Integrated Adolescent Safeguarding and Support (IASS) service, part of Havering children's services. It is a co-located multi-agency team that includes staff from statutory partner agencies; the London Borough of Havering Council (LBH), the Metropolitan Police the National Probation Service (NPS), and North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT), as well as staff who deliver substance misuse interventions and others who focus on serious youth violence and child exploitation.

The London Borough of Havering is in the north east of Outer London. Over the last 10 years its population has increased by 10.4 per cent, from around 237,200 in 2011 to 262,000 in 2021. This is higher than the overall increase for England (6.6 per cent). The last 10 years have also seen an increase of 19.7 per cent in the number of children aged under 15 years in the borough, compared with an England average of five per cent.

In terms of national key performance indicators, Havering has performed well in the proportion of first-time entrants to the youth justice system, with figures below the London average. However, the most recently published YJB data shows that rates of reoffending are slightly higher than the national average, and custody figures are also higher than the median rate for London and England and Wales.

The available data for Havering indicates that girls are not overrepresented in the youth justice system, although locally an increase has recently been recognised by the YJS. Black, Asian and minority ethnic children are overrepresented in the statutory caseload. Triage is the most commonly used out-of-court disposal in Havering, which is the lowest tariff out-of-court disposal. White children are overrepresented in the cohort receiving this intervention, whereas black, Asian and minority ethnic children are more likely to receive the more onerous youth caution or youth conditional caution.

Havering local authority has struggled with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and a number of staff across the partnership have been directly affected. The service has also had significant staffing challenges and difficulties with recruitment, not just in the YJS but across the partnership. This has had an impact on workload and the experience of staff. Addressing this is a priority for children's social care. A children's services restructure is pending, which will aim to address some of these issues.

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.

Requires improvement

Strengths:

- The board chair is knowledgeable about the work of the YJS. Alongside the head of the YJS, they have been working to secure regular attendance from board members, as well as improving data provided to the board.
- The YJS is well supported by partners such as the health service. The violence reduction unit is funding the Lifeline mentoring provision, which we identified as good practice in supporting children transitioning to adult services.
- The leadership team have focused on addressing diversity; for example, they have invested in systemic training and a systemic practitioner post that helps staff to focus on children's individual needs.
- The YJS has recently created an improvement plan. The intention is for this to become the focus of management meetings, and it will be used as a working document to track improvement and progress.

Areas for improvement:

- The board is not effectively monitoring or addressing risks such as staffing challenges and their impact on service delivery. It also does not yet have robust mechanisms in place to monitor delivery of the youth justice plan and the improvement plan.
- Board members have not sufficiently scrutinised the service, so it cannot assure itself that the service is meeting the needs of all YJS children. Key partners do not attend board meetings consistently.
- Leaders do not thoroughly understand the diverse needs of all children. This may, in part, be because some out-of-court work is recorded on social care systems difficult for the YJS to extract detailed data from. The board also does not understand the educational needs of all YJS children and cannot be confident that they are receiving their legal entitlement to education. The YJS does not have an education, training and employment (ETE) worker.
- Quality assurance processes are not robust enough to provide the head of the YJS or the board with sufficient detail about the standard of practice or emerging themes, trends and any gaps that require attention.
- The link between strategic and operational delivery is not always effective. Concerns about practice are not always escalated to the board. Staff do not

always feel able to challenge management decisions and are not confident that when they do raise concerns, managers will respond.

- The assessment tool used for out-of-court disposals does not enable staff to assess safety and wellbeing and risk of harm consistently.

1.2. Staff



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

Requires improvement

Strengths:

- The YJS staff team have maintained a focus on their work despite significant staffing challenges. Case managers and partnership staff work well together.
- Most staff are satisfied with the frequency of their supervision, and the large majority consider the quality of this to be 'good' or 'very good'. Staff who responded to our survey said they are motivated to deliver a quality service, and the majority felt that their training and development needs are met. The majority of staff who should have had an appraisal have had one.
- Staff at all levels have received systemic training in line with the service priorities. Other training includes trauma-informed and restorative practice, and cultural resettlement training, which focuses on culturally competent support. All staff can access the Youth Justice Board's inset training.
- The service has the advantage of access to mentors and youth workers to enable it to meet and respond to a spectrum of children's needs.
- There is a thorough induction process. New members of staff said that they felt fully prepared for their role and the expectations of them.

Areas for improvement:

- There have been ongoing challenges with staff retention and sickness. The response to this has not been well coordinated, resulting in work being managed reactively rather than proactively. The impact of these challenges on staff wellbeing was a theme throughout this inspection
- The systemic therapist post had been vacant since May, however a new worker has been in post since September.
- When staff are covering vacant positions for their learning and development, they have not always been given support to benefit from the opportunity and have often had to undertake new tasks in addition to their existing workload.
- The service has not taken a proactive approach to succession planning which has made it difficult to cover vacancies and staff absence.
- Two-thirds of staff who responded to our survey said that they 'only sometimes' know how to access services from partners and providers. Neither staff nor managers could explain the arrangements for assessing and supervising harmful sexual behaviour cases and not all staff were clear on how to access support for children with learning and educational difficulties.

- In the absence of consistent business support, staff have been undertaking administrative duties, which has added to their workload.
- Case managers we interviewed, viewed the management oversight they received as effective. However, our inspectors viewed it as sufficient in only nine of the 17 relevant court cases and in only 15 of 24 out-of-court cases.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Good

Strengths:

- A range of services are available to meet children's needs, and staff use them well. We saw excellent examples of bespoke interventions, including children receiving mentoring, basketball coaching, and referrals to LGBTQ+ services.
- There is reliable data for post-court cases, youth cautions and youth conditional cautions, as this is easy to extract from ChildView. The information enables the YJS to analyse desistance factors, safety and wellbeing, risk of harm to others and disproportionality.
- The YJS has a good understanding of offending patterns and trends as well as criminal exploitation. Information from the YJS, together with that held by the community safety partnership, has been used to secure funding for projects to address serious youth violence and child exploitation.
- Inspectors were impressed by the work of the YJS specialist staff, in particular the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and speech and language and parenting support provision. The contributions of these staff took a creative and determined approach, which added value to the services for children. We saw evidence of this across the cases we inspected.
- The systemic practitioner role has helped staff to embed the learning from the systemic training into their practice. Staff are fully on board with the approach. The systemic consultation, which take place for all cases, promotes reflective practice and supports effective planning. Culture, diversity, strengths and protective factors, and family history are all considered as part of the process, which sets the foundation for the initial intervention.
- The multi-agency risk management panels give staff the opportunity to exchange information in good time. This helps them to manage concerns about the child's safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others.

Areas for improvement:

- The YJS recognises that it needs to do more to understand the profile of the triage children, as the level of information it can draw from the Early Help database (EHM) does not currently enable it to analyse this cohort.
- There was limited evidence of the views of victims in the inspected cases and inspectors saw few examples of creative reparation projects being delivered.

- There is no suitable provision that creates an effective link between the YJS and the education department to ensure that the school-age children's educational needs and any learning needs are attended to swiftly.

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:

- The service has an up-to-date suite of policies and procedures, and these are understood by the staff to whom they apply.
- The YJS building works well for delivering services to children. Staff feel safe and the environment is child-friendly after being refurbished last year. Partnership staff enjoy attending the YJS building to meet with staff and to see children, and they report that there is a good atmosphere.
- The service now has an allocated analyst, having been without one for several months. The new analyst has been working with the head of service to devise a Power BI dashboard with detailed information on the profile of children and also to create reports on, for example, timeliness of assessments.
- Police and health staff can't access the ChildView system but share information from their own databases. This helps practitioners to understand the wider issues and concerns associated with children.
- A disproportionality working group was established to better understand and learn from the experiences of nine children in custody, some of whom were from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. The findings led to funding for the Ether programme and a mentoring programme.
- The YJS has a process for reporting serious incidents. It undertook rapid reviews after two incidents in 2021/2022 where children sustained fatal injuries. The reviews highlighted the need for better communication with local hospitals, and a data-sharing agreement has since been put in place to address this. Hospital teams have also been given an information pack about available services that they can share with children and their caregivers.

Areas for improvement:

- Staff reported that the IT systems are outdated and slow. They had tablets that were breaking, and laptops that were not adequate to support them in their work. The head of service has responded by using money from the YJS budget to buy new laptops as a short-term measure
- Staff reported that they have been without a printer in the office for some time and that this has had an impact on their work with children. The YJS management team informed us that this is now being addressed as a priority.
- There are issues with IT connectivity at court, and staff can't access the information they need in a timely way.
- Not all policies reference diversity and equality to ensure that processes do not discriminate against certain groups or fail to advance equality.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The YJS aims to focus more on its engagement and participation work. This is to ensure that it collaborates with children and their parents or carers to influence and shape developments in the service. The management board is considering how to take account of children's views at a strategic level. A Havering youth Member of Parliament has recently become a member of the board and, although they have only attended one meeting so far, board members felt that they have added value and brought challenge to discussions. Board members are now considering how the voices of children involved with the YJS can be represented at board level.

The YJS gathers the views of children and their parents or carers through the AssetPlus self-assessment survey, but it does not yet use this information to review and develop youth justice services.

To capture the voice of the child, the YJS has commissioned 'Mind of My Own', an organisation that works collaboratively with children, to create an app can be used to get anonymous feedback from them about the services they have received. The work on this has recently begun.

Before the inspection fieldwork, the YJS contacted, on our behalf, children who had open cases at the time of the inspection, to obtain their consent for a text survey. We delivered the survey independently to the four children who consented, and two replied. They were asked to rate the YJS on a scale of one to 10 to reflect how much they had been helped. One child gave it a 10, and the other rated it nine. One child commented:

“... it has helped me because it has made me see things on a different and wider perspective and making me realise how [offending] don't benefit my future.”

Diversity

For post-court cases, we inspected work delivered to two girls and 16 boys. Ten of the children were white and eight were from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background. Four of the children had a disability.

In out-of-court cases, we inspected the work delivered to 24 boys and three girls. None of the children had received an out-of-court disposal before. Eight had a learning, mental or physical disability. Nineteen of the children were white and seven were from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background. In one case the ethnicity was not recorded. This ethnic disparity requires further exploration to ensure that policies and processes are not disadvantaging Black, Asian and minority ethnic children.

Our inspection found that, in most post court cases, diversity factors were taken into account in the delivery of services to children. It was weaker in out-of-court cases, meeting our standards in two-thirds of cases. Addressing disproportionality is firmly on the strategic agenda. The staff and managers we met with could talk with ease about race and racism and we saw some positive examples of practitioners advocating for children whom they felt may have been treated differently due to their ethnicity.

Every new case is presented to team members and managers and a case discussion is led by a systemic therapist. Consultations help staff to focus on each child's particular needs and circumstances. The case manager receives guidance and ideas on how best to deliver interventions and considers any experiences of discrimination that may have affected the child, and/or any structural barriers that may need to be addressed.

The systemic training that YJS and partnership staff have received has helped them to consider the lived experience of each child and focus on their individual needs. The training covers 'social graces', which promotes actively attending to the cultural background of both the child and the practitioner and examining any biases. Some staff had received culturally informed resettlement training. This has been delivered by the Positive Youth Education project, which delivers a programme to children in Cookham Wood Young Offender Institution.

Data suggests that only two per cent of children in the YJS cohort have been diagnosed with a learning disability; however, this low proportion does not reflect the staff's observations. The common view among YJS and partnership staff is that children's needs are not being identified and addressed before they enter the YJS. Some children have obvious presenting difficulties but have never been assessed for special educational needs. Addressing this once a child enters the youth justice system can be challenging, and a process and pathway need to be established to make sure this can happen swiftly. We were impressed by some of the work done by the YJS speech and language therapist to adapt documents and interventions to make them accessible to children.

Data provided by the YJS indicated that a significant number of school-age children are not in full-time education. The YJS needs to do more to understand any specific needs, challenges or barriers that may be limiting their access to suitable education provision.

Domain two: Court disposals

2.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

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

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	83%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	61%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	78%

The consistency with which case managers paid attention to children's desistance needs was impressive. In the majority of cases, assessments considered and analysed the factors underlying the child's offending and contributing to their behaviour. Practitioners accessed and used information held by other agencies to give them a holistic understanding of the child and their personal circumstances, and to establish a better understanding of their offending behaviour.

In every case, assessments focused on the child's strengths and protective factors and considered how these could be strengthened. The case manager considered motivation and capacity to engage, as well as the child's level of maturity, in the large majority of cases. Children and their parents or carers were meaningfully involved in the assessment process and this promoted positive engagement at the earliest stage.

The standard of work to support children's safety and wellbeing fell short of our expectations in a number of cases. Case managers did not identify all of the issues that might affect children's safety and wellbeing, and there was limited analysis of what needed to be done to address the concerns. In some cases, the case manager did not understand the risks to the child thoroughly enough, because they had not gathered all of the relevant information from other professionals and agencies with knowledge of the child.

Assessment to keep other people safe was sufficient in most of the inspected cases. In the majority of cases, the child's presenting behaviour posed a medium risk of harm to others and in six cases the risk was identified as high. In most cases where concerns had been identified, the assessment considered what controls might be needed to manage the risks and what interventions were required to try and reduce them. Victims' needs and wishes were considered where required.

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.

Good

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

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	89%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	67%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	72%

In line with the quality of assessment of desistance, planning in this area of practice was a strength. Planning supported effective desistance in all but two of the inspected cases. It actively involved children and their parents and carers in the majority of cases, promoting engagement from the outset. Case managers considered diversity issues and how children's strengths could be built upon to help them move on and reduce the risk of any further offending. The social context of the child, their motivation to comply with interventions and their capacity to be able to do this were all taken into account. Planning was proportionate to the sentence, and case managers considered how to sequence the plan so that the right interventions would be delivered at the right time, addressing the most urgent issues and needs first to form a foundation for further work. We saw some good examples of joint agency planning, which was well coordinated to meet a spectrum of needs.

Planning for work to promote the safety and wellbeing of children was the weakest area of planning practice, meeting our standards in two-thirds of cases where concerns were evident. Deficits related to a lack of information-sharing with other agencies and a failure to put the necessary controls and interventions in place to promote children's safety and wellbeing. Contingency planning needs to be strengthened, especially when the child's safety and wellbeing was assessed as medium or high, as it was in the majority of cases.

In 1 of 15 relevant cases, there were concerns about the safety of actual or potential victims and these were taken into account. Contingency planning to manage risk of harm to others is an area that requires strengthening so that action can be taken swiftly if concerns escalate.

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.

Good

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?	83%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	67%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	67%

The delivery of services to support desistance was an area of strength. Work was targeted at the areas that the case manager had identified as impacting on the child's behaviour and offending and focused on building on the child's strengths and harnessing protective factors. It was pleasing to see that the child's personal circumstances and diversity were considered well enough in almost every case. The process of reintegration is critical to desistance, so we were impressed to see that the interventions delivered promoted opportunities for community integration, including access to support when the period of supervision had ended. Case managers worked hard to support children to engage with their court order and involved parents and carers in the process, offering support to them where needs were identified. In the large majority of cases the work delivered was proportionate to the sentence and in five of the seven cases where enforcement action was required this was done in a timely and appropriate way.

Service delivery supported the safety of the child effectively in two-thirds of cases. We found some inconsistencies in the approach to involving other services, but in the majority of cases we assessed it to have been done well enough and considered that it added value to the work delivered to children.

Case managers paid adequate attention to the protection of actual and potential victims in eight of the 14 cases, and this is an area of work that would benefit from review. There was limited evidence of work to consider specific victims; instead, a generic approach to victim issues was applied. The coordination of services to manage risk was not consistent, and this undermined the quality of work in a proportion of the cases. Overall, we considered the work to manage risk of harm to others as being sufficient in two-thirds of cases.

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](#).

2.4. Reviewing



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

Good

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

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	83%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	67%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	72%

In most cases, reviewing identified and responded to changes in the child's circumstances and the factors linked to desistance. In the one custody case we inspected, regular reviews were held in the secure estate and other professionals were invited. The child was given constructive feedback on his progress, and his strengths were noted. The majority of cases were referral orders, and regular reviews were carried out with the child. Their parents or carers were present and meaningfully involved in the process. Reviewing was ongoing and led to adaptations in the work, such as a new referral being made to CAMHS, or an increase in reporting when there were concerns about further offending.

Addressing safety and wellbeing concerns was the weakest area of reviewing. In just over half of the relevant cases no changes were made to the plan of work in response to changes in children's circumstances and risks. For example, a child reported that he was 'sofa-surfing', but this did not prompt a review of his home circumstances or consideration of any increased risk to his safety and wellbeing. In another case, we noted a child was in the same situation, but a swift review was undertaken, and appropriate onward referral made for support. Reviewing was most effective when it included other agencies and when joint actions were agreed and followed through on.

Reviewing did not always result in changes being made to interventions when there was evidence to indicate that this was required where there were risks to others, for example when a child was involved in two violent incidents in custody. However, in the majority of cases, reviewing for risk of harm was sufficient, with risk management panel meetings and referral order reviews prompting timely reviews of both increased risks as well as progress.

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

3.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

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

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	85%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	63%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	52%

Assessing for desistance was an area of strength and was consistently done well. Assessments routinely considered children's needs, and case managers engaged them fully in the assessment process. Case managers considered the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context. Parents were also meaningfully involved in the assessment process, and their views were taken into account. Practitioners used information held by other agencies in just 17 out of 26 cases; this is despite information being shared at the out-of-court disposal panel. This is an area that requires strengthening to ensure that assessments are consistently holistic. Assessments focused on the child's strengths and protective factors. In three-quarters of cases, the case manager paid attention to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change. Diversity was addressed in just over two-thirds of cases. Case managers did not establish the victims' needs and wishes consistently or well enough. This is an area that requires improvement.

The Early Help assessment tool used does not have a specific section for the classification of risk. There is a free text area under 'overall analysis', which mentions the level of risk of reoffending but not the child's safety and wellbeing. Only nine assessments included a classification level of risk to the child's safety and wellbeing. Neither does the assessment tool prompt case managers to consider risk of harm to others, and this meant that much of the work in this area fell below our expected standards. In 13 cases, the case manager did not clearly analyse risks, or set out the nature of the risks and how they should be managed and reduced.

The children receiving out-of-court disposal interventions had significant levels of vulnerability, and this was identified and analysed in just over two-thirds of cases. Although there were good examples of case managers drawing on information held by other agencies to inform assessments, in others there were gaps.

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](#).

3.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁷ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	85%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	81%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	85%

The consistent quality of planning for desistance across the 26 cases we inspected was impressive. Plans were well sequenced. They set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the length of the intervention and what should be prioritised. Case managers considered diversity factors when planning in the majority of cases. For example, they ensured that the delivery of interventions was adapted to take into account a child's attention deficit hyperactivity disorder diagnosis.

We noted that the child and their parents or carers had been involved in the planning process in the majority of cases. Planning addressed a spectrum of needs. It focused on those issues identified in the assessment and included activities to promote positive factors and improve resilience. Exit planning could be strengthened so that it focuses on reintegrating the child to mainstream services before their YJS intervention ends.

In the large majority of cases, there were strengths in planning to support children's safety and wellbeing. Many of the children had experienced trauma, and case managers took this into account when thinking about the delivery of interventions as well as safeguarding. We saw examples of team around the family meetings being held to consider the plan of work, and effective communication between professionals supported timely planning to keep children safe. Contingency planning is an area that requires strengthening so that staff know what to do if there is a change in circumstances. This is especially important given the dynamic nature of risk.

In the majority of cases where we considered the child to pose a risk of harm to other people, we were satisfied that planning to address and manage the concerns was done well enough. The input of other professionals and agencies involved with the child added value to planning for the management of risk. Contingency planning, however, is again an area for improvement, to ensure that plans are in place to respond swiftly to any change in circumstances.

⁷ 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.

Good

Our rating⁸ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	74%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	67%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	74%

Case managers gave sufficient attention to the sequence of interventions and timescales for their delivery. However, the attention given to diversity factors was not consistent across the cases; it was done very well in some but overlooked in others. Case managers did not focus sufficiently on developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers in every case. These findings compare less favourably than the findings for post-court work, which may reflect differences in the processes. Children and their parents are actively involved in the referral order panel process, for example, but they are not engaged from the outset in the out-of-court disposal process.

We would have liked to have seen more thought given to reintegrating children into mainstream services so they could access ongoing support to assist with desistance.

Service delivery promoted the child's safety and wellbeing in 15 of the 24 cases where safeguarding concerns were identified. The involvement of other agencies in managing the safety of children who are subject to out-of-court disposals was inconsistent. This meant that some children received a holistic intervention that met all of their needs and kept them safe, but this was not the case for everyone.

The services delivered to manage and minimise risk of harm were sufficient in 11 out of 17 cases. It was disappointing to find that sufficient attention was given to the protection of actual and potential victims in just half of the cases where it was required. Despite these areas for improvement, we assessed the work delivered to manage the risk of harm to others to be sufficient in three-quarters of the cases we inspected.

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](#).

3.4. 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

Our key findings were as follows:

Strengths:

- In the past 12 months no child who received a triage has reoffended.
- The YJS and the safeguarding team are made aware of all children who receive a community resolution directly from the police, which means they can offer voluntary support if appropriate.
- There is a multi-agency panel in place, which is chaired by the YJS operations manager. The panel includes health representatives, parenting support, a substance misuse worker and the education inclusion officer. If a social worker is involved with the child, they are also invited.
- Although no escalation process is set out in the out-of-court disposal procedure, we did see evidence of cases being escalated and examples of disposals being changed as a result of the YJS's input.
- Children who receive an out-of-court disposal have access to the same broad range of services and support available to children on statutory court orders.

Areas for improvement:

- There is no policy in place between the YJS and the police that sets out the joint approach to out-of-court disposals.
- The current procedure document does not take into account the diversity needs of children or set out how these will be taken into account
- We saw evidence that some of the cases inspected had been escalated, but the process for doing this is not clearly set out. We noted at least one case where we felt it would have been appropriate to deal with an offence of possession of a knife in a less onerous way, given the child's complex vulnerabilities and the compelling assessment provided to the panel by the YJS worker. However, we were informed this was the policy of the Metropolitan police and any challenge or escalation would not be considered.
- For triage cases the child and parent are not met before the disposal is agreed. This is a missed opportunity to promote engagement; to get the child's perspective on the offence, understand their personal circumstances and assess their motivation to comply with any intervention.
- The assessment tool used for triage cases does not prompt case managers to routinely consider issues of safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others.
- The Early Help database does not currently have the relevant fields for recording safety and wellbeing and risk of harm levels or desistance factors. This makes it difficult to analyse the profiles and needs of this group of children, who make up a large percentage of the overall YJS cohort.

4.1. 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. Our key findings were:

Strengths:

- The resettlement policy sets out how to consider strengths and what positive factors might be able to support the child and their journey. It promotes the tailoring of interventions to meet individual needs and encourages practice that is focused on the future.
- Resettlement panels are used to support the effective resettlement of children. Meetings are chaired by the YJS and focus on the seven pathways to resettlement to ensure effective and smooth transitions.
- In all three inspected resettlement cases there was sufficient evidence of planning and provision being made for suitable healthcare for the child's release. There was good information-sharing about the child's health and the swift involvement of the YJS CAMHS worker and speech and language practitioner after release was noted in the two cases where this was required.
- Culturally informed resettlement training has been provided by the Positive Youth Education project, which delivers the 'Most Valuable Player' programme to children in Cookham Wood Young Offender Institution. Three staff received the training, which they described as excellent.

Areas for improvement:

- Resettlement could be improved by the consistent timely provision of accommodation for every child who needs it. Preparing a child for a new placement is a critical element of successful resettlement work and delays in securing a suitable placement can have a negative impact on planning.
- There is limited use of ROTL to promote effective resettlement work and to gradually prepare children for release from custody.
- In one of the three inspected resettlement cases, the work of children's social care in starting the process to secure an accommodation placement was delayed. Resettlement work could be improved if Havering took a more strategic and holistic approach to it across the partnership.

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.](#)