



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in

Lincolnshire

HM Inspectorate of Probation, April 2023



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Foreword

This inspection is part of our programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Lincolnshire YOS across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work.

Overall, Lincolnshire YOS was rated as 'Outstanding'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Good'.

Our inspection of the YOS identified a cohesive and integrated approach to working positively with children. Strong strategic and operational partnerships support staff in the delivery of work with children, and we found this reflected in high-quality practice, particularly across all elements of assessment, planning, delivery, and review within court disposals.

Lincolnshire's leadership and governance arrangements are a strength. The YOS management board sets a well communicated clear vision and strategy, and strategic partnership arrangements are mature and collaborative. Board members have sufficient seniority to make decisions and commit resources from their own agencies. They model positive behaviours of partnership working, and this is reflected in their operational staff's work with children.

YOS staff and senior leaders have a shared commitment to ensuring that children receive the most appropriate services and interventions. We were particularly impressed by in-depth understanding of the issues and challenges facing YOS children, predicated on the strong use of data and evaluation from internal and external sources and reports. The breadth of targeted, specialist, and mainstream services ensures that partners collaborate closely and share responsibility for addressing children's complex needs.

Although underpinned by clear evidence-based policy and provision arrangements, improvements were required in some of the specific areas of out-of-court disposal work inspected, particularly in ensuring consistency of case management in relation to the safety and wellbeing of a small number of YOS children. Management oversight and quality assurance of this element of out-of-court disposal work also needs to be more consistent.















Lincolnshire YOS is a well-led and well-managed service. There is an open and receptive learning culture, which enables motivated staff to achieve positive outcomes for children within the YOS cohort. Their overall rating of 'Outstanding' is reflective of the sustained efforts and commitment of senior leaders and operational staff across the partnership over a number of years.



Justin Russell

HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Lincolnshire Youth Offending Service Fieldwork started January 2023		Score 31/36
Overall rating		Outstanding 
1. Organisational delivery		
1.1	Governance and leadership	Outstanding 
1.2	Staff	Good 
1.3	Partnerships and services	Good 
1.4	Information and facilities	Outstanding 
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	Good 
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Good 
3.4	Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	Outstanding 
4. Resettlement¹		
4.1	Resettlement policy and provision	Good 

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

Recommendations

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

Lincolnshire Youth Offending Service should:

1. ensure consistency of safety and wellbeing casework in out-of-court disposals, across all the YOS locality teams
2. ensure effective management oversight of all out-of-court disposal practice
3. improve arrangements and provision to increase the number of children in education, employment or training (NEET) within the YOS cohort
4. work to ensure that the staff and volunteer ethnicity profile properly reflects the cohort of YOS children.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Lincolnshire Youth Offending Service (YOS) over a period of a week, beginning 09 January 2023. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began between 10 January 2022 and 04 November 2022; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 10 January 2022 and 04 November 2022; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between 10 January 2022 and 04 November 2022. We also conducted 42 interviews with case managers.

In 2016 Lincolnshire YOS moved from the finance and public protection directorate of the county council into the children's services directorate. In 2019, Lincolnshire children services radically redesigned its approach to working with adolescents. The creation of Future4Me (F4Me) was founded upon research, previous learning, and feedback from children, parents and carers, as well as practitioners' experiences. It established a practice framework that fits the profile of need for children presenting with complex behaviours and risk factors. F4Me is an umbrella service, under which key aspects of service delivery are brought together, including Lincolnshire YOS and a range of other statutory and third sector partners and organisations.

The partnership faces service delivery challenges because of the rural nature of Lincolnshire and has undertaken work to understand and map the different demographics of each of its four localities. The profile of work within the YOS has changed since 2017, with out-of-court disposals providing the bulk of the work undertaken (a ratio of approximately 30 per cent court disposals to 70 per cent out-of-court disposals). The prevalent offence types for the YOS cohort were for violence or aggression.

There was a clear consistency between what senior leaders, operational managers, and YOS frontline practitioners identified as the challenges and issues for the cohort. These included: emotional wellbeing and childhood trauma; substance misuse; special educational need; criminal exploitation; and employment, training, and education issues.

YOS organisational data indicates an over-representation of females (23 per cent) within the overall caseload. The partnership has identified that black and minority ethnic children are not over-represented in the YOS cohort – 9.7 per cent are from an ethnic minority compared to 15.6 per cent in the wider children's population. Cared-for children comprise 13.2 per cent of the YOS cohort and are over-represented, being higher than the national average of two per cent.

The latest Youth Justice Board (YJB) data reveals an overall reduction of first-time entrants to the criminal justice system in Lincolnshire from 2017 to a current figure of 111 (July 2021 to June 2022). This is well below the regional East Midlands rate of 169 and the current England and Wales rate of 144. Historically, reoffending rates have been high in Lincolnshire, which the partnership has identified as attributable to a small but complex cohort of children. As such, the data shows an overall increase in these rates since 2018. However, the YOS management board has analysed this data and produced a coordinated strategic and operational plan in response.

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YOS and conducted 13 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.

Outstanding

Strengths:

- There is a clear vision and strategy, which is well communicated across the partnership. The YOS vision sits within a wider vulnerable adolescent strategy and is evidence-based.
- The positioning of the YOS with other teams in the wider 'Future4Me' adolescent service structure provides enhanced service delivery opportunities and supports organisational resilience.
- The board chair is very knowledgeable and holds board members to account for their individual and collective actions.
- Board members regularly attend and actively participate in board meetings. They advocate for YOS children and have sufficient seniority to make decisions and commit resources from their own agencies.
- The board is part of a network of partnership arrangements that work across Lincolnshire. YOS board members provide strategic links to other partnership forums, such as the safeguarding children's partnership, community safety partnership, local criminal justice board, and violence reduction partnership.
- Partnership arrangements are mature and collaborative, with excellent use of data to inform strategic decisions and demonstrate impact on YOS children. Board members model positive behaviours of partnership working which is reflected in the work of the staff with children.
- There is a culture of support and challenge within the board, with shared responsibility across strategic partners for addressing the complex needs of YOS children and vulnerable adolescents.
- All board members have received an appropriate induction and clear terms of reference are in place. Board members have participated in additional training and development days where required.
- The YOS head of service is well respected across the partnership and has links with a range of local and regional strategic groups and forums.
- There are strong links and mutual trust between the head of service, operational managers, and the board. The board is sighted on the quality of practice.

- The YOS has been successful in obtaining funding from various sources to develop innovative and creative approaches and projects.
- The management board and the YOS service manager have a good understanding of the service's business risks and have appropriate mitigations in place.
- Senior leaders and managers have established a strong learning culture. They have an open and reflective style, empowering staff to make decisions and providing them with good support and training.
- Staff report that links with the YOS management board are good. Board members are visible and have utilised opportunities to engage with frontline staff through a range of activities. There are high levels of connectedness, strategically and operationally.
- Team managers have designated lead responsibilities and sit on relevant multi-agency operational groups. Partnership managers describe mature and collaborative relationships with their YOS counterparts.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Strengths:

- The YOS actively manages workloads. Two new case managers have been recruited in response to increases in caseload for out-of-court disposals. The staff survey indicated that a large majority of practitioners felt their workload was manageable.
- Allocation of cases prioritises a consistency of case manager and recognises the individual diverse needs of children.
- Staffing and workforce development are high priorities for YOS managers, with a good focus on staff's wellbeing. There is a positive learning culture and evident reward and recognition arrangements.
- The operational management team is stable, experienced, and from a range of safeguarding or criminal justice/YOS backgrounds. Spans of control and the number of direct staff reports are felt to be manageable.
- Practitioners and managers benefit from a comprehensive workforce development strategy. The staff survey indicated that 100 per cent of the 28 respondents felt their training and development needs were met.
- The YOS actively encourages opportunities for staff to complete external qualifications as a route to becoming a YOS officer, such as Social work apprenticeships and the Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate. Various leadership courses are available for staff becoming YOS practice supervisors or managers.
- Staff reported that they had received a full induction, with opportunities for shadowing, training, peer support, and learning across the YOS and the wider adolescent service. This enabled them to understand how teams and services worked together.
- The workforce has the full range of skills, knowledge, and experience to develop trusting and supportive relationships with children and families. Staff are very motivated and spoke of their pride in working for the YOS.
- Staff reported that supervision is regular, purposeful, and beneficial. Group and joint supervision are used effectively, enabling a reflective and considered approach to the management of complex cases. Management oversight of court disposal casework was sufficient in 16 out of 18 cases.
- Within the staff survey, 17 out of 21 relevant staff felt their most recent appraisal was valuable
- Succession planning has been evident throughout the YOS. Several staff had progressed from early help to YOS roles and from practitioner to management roles.

Areas for improvement:

- There is inconsistency of safety and wellbeing casework in out-of-court disposals across the YOS locality teams. Management oversight of such work varies between localities. The YOS leaders need to understand if this is attributable to variations in approaches to practice.
- The ethnicity of staff and volunteers is not representative of the YOS cohort.

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:

- There is an in-depth understanding of the characteristics of the children in the YOS cohort.
- Children can swiftly access a range of services and support, with specific pathways for universal, targeted, and specialist provision.
- Workers across all roles collaborate well, facilitate children's engagement effectively, and foster positive relationships with children.
- The YOS has a full-time police officer, full-time probation officer, and a range of seconded and commissioned staffing arrangements – including education, training and employment (ETE) mentors, youth workers, and supported accommodation staff.
- Health provision for YOS children is strong. The complex needs team (shared across the F4Me service) has a range of staff, consisting of three psychologists (including clinical and forensic) and two Speech and Language Therapists, alongside access to substance misuse services through a commissioned arrangement.
- Children benefit from a case formulation approach to support their identified needs and risks.
- The partnership has a broad range of one-to-one and group interventions. The 'Status' and 'Filter' groupwork programmes afford a gendered approach to delivery of interventions.
- Partnership work for school-age YOS children has had an impact in reducing the number of school exclusions.
- There are clear arrangements for joint working between the YOS and children's services.
- The YOS contributes to a variety of internal and external multi-agency operational groups and panels for children deemed to present a high risk of harm to others or a high level of safety and wellbeing concerns.
- Partnership managers have a good understanding of the specialist work their staff undertake with YOS children and there is regular supervision, joint oversight, and communication with relevant YOS team managers.
- Arrangements to support victims and delivery of restorative justice work have resulted in positive outcomes.
- Sentencers expressed confidence in the quality of YOS court work, and the relationships between YOS court staff and children.

Areas for improvement:

- Staffing and delivery of reparation is recognised as an ongoing area of development by YOS leaders.
- 40 per cent of relevant children in the YOS cohort are not in appropriate education, training or employment and this needs to be improved.

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.

Outstanding

Strengths:

- The YOS has a suite of policies and procedures, which are regularly reviewed and updated when necessary, with consideration of diversity evident throughout.
- Referral pathways are clear and there are service level agreements and joint working protocols between the YOS and key partners, such as health, education, and other third-sector projects and services.
- The YOS is co-located with other teams (across a range of venues and localities) as part of the wider adolescent service, which enables effective joint working and communication.
- Inspectors visited a local children's centre and youth centre as part of the fieldwork. We found that these buildings allow strong joint working, which helps staff to build professional relationships and a better understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities. The premises are accessible to children and families, child-friendly, and provide a safe space for staff from all the different agencies. Work also takes place across Lincolnshire in community hubs and venues, alongside home visits to children.
- All 29 respondents to the staff survey (100 per cent) felt that the delivery environments were safe for both staff and YOS children.
- The workforce described ICT systems as reliable and facilitate high-quality work and exchange of information with partners where required.
- The production of management information is strong, and it is used operationally and strategically to shape the delivery of work across the YOS partnership.
- Processes for learning lessons are well developed across the partnership. Critical learning reviews are shared at board level and disseminated to staff through various arrangements and meetings.
- The YOS uses data to help it secure funding for additional bespoke projects.
- A range of internal audits are undertaken to inform practice development.
- External arrangements are evident between key stakeholders such as the YJB, Department for Education (DfE), and University of Lincoln to enable innovation and evaluation of YOS services.

Areas for improvement:

- The YOS has a quality assurance framework and policy in place. However, it needs to ensure that these are applied more consistently across out-of-court disposal cases.
- The YOS captures feedback from children and families in various ways, but this could be further developed and coordinated.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The YOS management board incorporates the view of children into the local strategy. In the current YOS strategic plan, children's participation is a key objective and priority. The views of more than 50 children were sought as part of the evaluation of Future4Me, and this demonstrated that 93 per cent of the children surveyed believed that they had been supported throughout their interventions and that their futures were more positive as a result. Additionally, 90 per cent of those children would recommend the service to their peers.

Future4Me continues to work closely with the Lincolnshire Youth Commission, which was established on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner to capture the voice of children on police, crime, and community safety in Lincolnshire. Future4Me has been able to ensure that a broad section of children have the opportunity to input, but also that children with lived experience of the youth justice system are able to feed in their views.

The YOS has reviewed a range of documents and procedures to share and communicate them with children and families. The YOS is one of a small number currently part of a DfE pilot and has been given YJB dispensation to depart from the use of AssetPlus as the main assessment tool in favour of 'Aspire'. This assessment tool is designed to enable the practitioner to share the content of the assessment with the child and family more effectively, and is worded in language that aims to be child-first and understandable to children and families.

The YOS 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 31 children and 19 children replied, 18 completed the survey fully.

When asked how they rated the service they had received from the YOS, five responded with a score of 10 out of 10, four with nine out of 10, four with eight out of 10 and four with seven out of 10. One child scored six out of 10 and one scored five out of 10. Positive responses included:

"I really felt like I had someone to talk to and they really listen to what I had to say."

"Because the members are really friendly and very understanding they listen and don't judge."

Eighteen people responded to the question on how much the YOS had helped either themselves or (if they were a parent) their child to stay out of trouble. One child said:

"Keeps me thinking about my actions and what could happen, and keeps me away from trouble – as I don't want to be in trouble."

Two children responded to our telephone contact and were complimentary about the service received. They felt that their YOS workers had the right skills to do the work and said that they have been able to access the right services and support to help them stay out of trouble.

Diversity

The YOS management board has demonstrated evidence of work to address diversity and disproportionality. Overall, this has been consistent and is explicitly highlighted as a strategic priority in the current YOS strategic plan and the operational action plan it covers.

In the inspected court disposal and out-of-court disposal cases, we judged that YOS practitioners were effective in taking account of the children's diversity needs in their assessments, planning, delivery, and review within their casework.

Although the rate of girls cautioned or sentenced is identical to the national figure of 13 per cent of the total YOS cohort, YOS organisational data indicates that 23 per cent of the overall caseload, including prevention and out-of-court disposals, are female. The partnership has identified that black and minority ethnic children are not over-represented in the YOS cohort. Organisational data indicates that 9.7 per cent of the YOT cohort are from an ethnic minority, compared to 15.6 per cent in the wider children's population.

Cared-for children comprise 13.2 per cent of the YOS cohort and are over-represented, being higher than the national average of two per cent. In response to this disproportionality, the head of corporate parenting was brought on to the board in October 2022. Organisational data indicates that 46.5 per cent of the YOS cohort have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or an education, health and care plan (EHCP). This is identified as an over-representation compared to the general children's population. Embedding knowledge of SEND and linking it to the understanding and interventions regarding offending behaviour have resulted in Future4Me being awarded the SEND Quality Mark in 2022.

There is a good understanding of the make-up of the community by region and the different ethnic profiles of children by area, which helps to identify disproportionality and over-representation. Following learning from a previous rapid review, it has been made easier for frontline staff to access interpreter services.

The YOS links operationally into various support groups and organisations within the community and third sector – including LGBTQ+, faith groups, and a young farmers' group (established across the partnership following data indicating high rates of suicide within this group). The YOS also accesses a youth centre in Boston, where there is a multi-national eastern European community, and there has been outreach work with children from Afghanistan who have resettled in the Lincolnshire area.

Through the Lincolnshire children's services current corporate people's strategy, staff highlighted they can access various support/focus groups across the local authority in relation to protected characteristics. Diversity training is evident through mandatory training and additional specialist training on SEND, LGBTQ+, and inclusion. Although strong, this could be further enhanced through cultural competence training.

Ethnic minority groups are minimally represented among the service staff and this is an area where recruitment could be improved. Organisational data indicates that 2.9 per cent of staff are from an ethnic minority group, and that 75 per cent of staff are female. In the staff survey, 21 of the 23 staff with a diversity need felt their need was met very well.

Given that Lincolnshire is a rural county with limited public transport, the YOS has challenges with service delivery and access to intervention and positive activities. However, it has utilised a pool of volunteer drivers to help children access services and is currently recruiting to cover vacancies for these.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 16 community sentences and two custodial sentences 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?	94%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	83%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	94%

Assessment of desistance factors was strong. Staff gained a thorough understanding of children and their wider familial and social contexts. Practitioners spoke of how case formulation helps with the consideration of diversity and the individual needs of children. In all but one case, they achieved this by liaising effectively with partner agencies to access information and by ensuring that children, and their parents or carers, were central to the assessment process. Assessment of victims' needs and wishes was sufficient in every relevant case, which supported and enhanced opportunities for restorative justice. In all the inspected cases, we saw a strengths-based approach and high levels of attention given to understanding the child's maturity, ability and motivation to change, and the likelihood of engaging with the court disposal.

Assessment of a child's safety and wellbeing included information from other agencies in a large majority of cases. The YOS had access to the children's social care case management system and could complete checks on past and present contact.

Assessment work should provide an analysis of how other people will be kept safe when there are signs that the child could present a risk of harm to others. We saw consistent evidence of this in court disposal cases. Case managers drew together current and historical issues or behaviours, which in turn resulted in balanced and well-reasoned assessments. In every case, inspectors saw evidence that case managers had used information from other agencies and sources, all of which informed active and effective risk management.

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?	94%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	94%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	94%

Planning to support the child's desistance was a strength in a large majority of the inspected cases and was strengths-based in all but one case, enabling children and their parents or carers to be fully involved. Inspectors were pleased to see strong joint planning between YOS case managers and a range of other agencies and professionals. This enabled case managers to identify and sequence interventions. In all cases, planning was proportionate to the court disposal and took sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability, and motivation to change. Planning activity considered the needs and wishes of victims in all but one relevant case, which maximised opportunities for restorative justice work. We saw instances where children continued to be supported by the wider Future4Me adolescent service and other mainstream, targeted, and specialist services after their court disposal had ended.

Planning to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child was strong and clearly informed by other agencies, such as social care. This led to the necessary controls and interventions being put in place to address the issues in all but one case. Inspectors found some variability in the quality of contingency plans for safety and wellbeing in half of the cases. This is important, as there should be a clear plan of action if the risk to a child were to either increase or decrease. Contingency plans did not always clearly set out adequate actions or responses to be taken if, or when, circumstances changed. However, overall, we judged that planning focused sufficiently on keeping the child safe in all but one case.

In all but one case, planning focused sufficiently on keeping people safe, and practitioners involved other agencies in their planning processes in every relevant case. In a large majority of cases, planning addressed specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims. Contingency planning was inconsistent and deemed sufficient in less than two-thirds of cases. Within the complex YOS cohort, circumstances in a child's life can change quickly. Case managers need to consider the potential for change in each case, so that, should concerns escalate, they are prepared and more likely to respond effectively.

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?	100%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	89%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	94%

Within the delivery of court disposal casework, it was clear that case managers took a strengths-based approach to their work. As part of the wider Future4Me adolescent service, the YOS had access to a wide range of specialist staff and other resources to deliver well-coordinated and innovative interventions to children. The YOS speech language therapist provided examples of where various legal documents (such as licences or court orders) had been translated to easy-read versions to aid their understanding of conditions and expectations. There was a high level of engagement and compliance with interventions, and case managers were tenacious in gaining the trust of children and their parents or carers. We saw consistent evidence of work by a broad range of staff from mainstream, targeted, and specialist services that had led to positive outcomes for many YOS children. Practitioners matched interventions to children's needs and learning styles and took account of their diversity in every inspected case.

Where there were issues concerning safety and wellbeing, we found clear multi-agency arrangements to support children who were looked after, open to social care, or criminally exploited, or who had emotional wellbeing or substance misuse issues. The YOS consistently worked with a range of agencies and organisations to deliver well-coordinated packages of support. Case managers advocated on behalf of children and made timely referrals to specialist and mainstream services, such as social care, substance misuse, and the complex needs health team.

In keeping other people safe, case managers had considered the protection of actual and potential victims in their delivery of all relevant inspected court disposal cases. Managing risk of harm often involved developing a better understanding of the victim's perspective, as well as intelligence from police and other professionals. In all but one of those relevant cases, inspectors judged that the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm was sufficiently well coordinated. Internal risk management meeting arrangements were used well when required.

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.

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?	89%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	94%

Reviewing of progress to support the child's desistance was strong. In every relevant case, a written review of desistance was completed, leading to necessary adjustments in the plan of work in all of them. This responsiveness to changing circumstances helped to maintain children's engagement and ensured that the work delivered was effective and meaningful. Reviewing continued to focus sufficiently on building on the child's strengths, enhancing protective factors, and assessing motivation and engagement levels in every relevant case. Importantly, we found that children and their parents or carers were meaningfully involved in their assessment in all relevant cases.

Reviewing identified and responded to changes in factors relating to safety and wellbeing, and we saw examples where YOS risk management meetings ensured a coordinated partnership approach to addressing the issues to keep the child safe. Many of the children supervised by the YOS had complex lives, and their circumstances could change rapidly. Inspectors found that reviews led to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work in a large majority of relevant cases. There were evident links to multi-agency safeguarding arenas, alongside the use of joint review between the child, parent or carer. Joint supervision between YOS practitioners and relevant professionals was evident in many of the inspected cases, with a written review of safety and wellbeing completed in every relevant case.

Reviewing was informed by the necessary input from other agencies to manage the risk of harm posed to others. Inspectors found that case managers consistently completed written reviews, which were supported through the activity of the YOS risk management panel. We saw reciprocal sharing of intelligence with the police, and strong relationships between a range of partnership services. As a result, public protection issues were well managed through activity that included changes to reporting, increased structure and allocation of resource, and use of positive activities.

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 26 cases managed by the YOS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of four youth conditional cautions and 22 community resolutions. Lincolnshire YOS refer to these community resolutions as 'youth restorative interventions'. We interviewed the case managers in 22 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?	88%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	73%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	73%

Assessment of desistance factors was strong in the inspected cases. Staff focused on understanding the offending behaviour from the child's perspective, in order to analyse their motivation, attitude, and sense of responsibility. This led to a sufficient analysis of offending behaviour in a significant majority of the inspected cases. Assessments routinely drew on information from multiple sources to gain the best understanding of a child's circumstances, familial and social context, and history. Particular attention was provided to the diversity needs of the child – often informed by a case formulation approach. We were pleased to see a strengths-based approach to assessment, alongside the involvement of the child and their parents or carers in the assessment in all but one case. The needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice, were considered in a large majority of cases.

Assessment of a child's safety and wellbeing consistently included information from other agencies. In many cases, we agreed with the safety and wellbeing classification. However, we judged that assessment of a child's safety and wellbeing could be further improved by more clearly identifying and analysing the full range of factors which impact on the safety and wellbeing of the child.

Assessments included information from key agencies in a large majority of cases. However, they did not consistently identify and analyse all relevant factors when considering who was likely to be at risk from the child's behaviour, internal and external controls, and the nature and imminence of any risk occurring.

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.

Good

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

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	96%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	77%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	92%

Planning for desistance was strengths-based, well sequenced, and involved other agencies. Case managers considered victims' wishes and were responsive to the child's diversity needs, and social and familial context, and they took an inclusive approach. Their involvement of children and their parent or carers in plans was excellent. They took full account of the family's needs as well as the child's aspirations and interests. The work planned was proportionate in a significant majority of the cases inspected and could be achieved within the timescale of the out-of-court disposal. In a large majority of cases, planning for the child's levels of maturity, ability, and motivation to change was evident. Similarly, planning consistently focused on supporting access to universal services to promote community integration following the completion of the out-of-court-disposal.

In a majority of cases, there was sufficient planning to keep children safe. When this was done well, there was strong multi-agency working, aligning the YOS plan with other plans. Overall, planning focused sufficiently on keeping the child safe in just over three-quarters of the inspected cases. Circumstances in a child's life can change quickly. Case managers need to consider the potential for change in each case so that, should concerns escalate, they are prepared and more likely to respond effectively. We recognise the need for proportionate planning in out-of-court disposals, where interventions may be brief, but would have expected to see more detailed contingency planning in some of the cases we inspected.

In a large majority of relevant cases, planning focused sufficiently on keeping people safe, and case managers involved other agencies in their planning processes in many of those cases. Similarly, in all of these cases, planning addressed specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims. As with safety and wellbeing, contingency planning to manage public protection is important, and there should be a clear plan of action in the event of the child's risk of harm to others either increasing or decreasing. Inspectors found some inconsistency in contingency planning for risk of harm to others.

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?	88%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	69%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	88%

The involvement of other agencies across the wider Future4Me adolescent service was evident and well-coordinated. Delivery of services to support children's desistance was strong and built on the assessments and plans made. There was a high level of engagement and compliance with interventions, which were mainly voluntary. Case managers worked hard to gain the trust of children and their parents or carers. We saw consistent evidence of work by a broad range of staff from mainstream, targeted, and specialist services that had led to positive outcomes for many YOS children. Practitioners matched interventions to children's needs and learning styles, while their diversity needs and other commitments were addressed in all but one of the inspected cases.

Where there were issues concerning safety and wellbeing, we found clear multi-agency arrangements to support children who were looked after, open to social care, or criminally exploited, or who had emotional wellbeing or substance misuse issues. The access to specialist therapeutic input from a range of staff in the complex needs health team (including a clinical psychologist and a speech language therapist) supported interventions and case formulation work for the more complex children within the cohort. Although we saw some good work by the case managers and other specialist workers in the YOS, there was some inconsistency in involvement and coordination of other agencies in keeping the child safe. Overall, however, inspectors judged that service delivery supported the safety of the child effectively in a majority of cases.

Services were sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm in a large majority of cases. Managing risk of harm often involved developing a better understanding of the victim's perspective, using a number of restorative justice techniques, as well as intelligence from police and other community projects and professionals. There were also good examples of interventions to improve understanding of the dangers and consequences of knife crime, alongside programmes addressing healthy relationships and aggressive behaviour through a gendered approach. Inspectors judged that the case manager paid attention to the protection of actual and potential victims in a large majority of the relevant cases.

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.

Outstanding

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:

- There is a clear out-of-court disposal policy, which sets out regional and local arrangements for decision-making, provision, and delivery. The policy details how diversity and disproportionality are to be addressed.
- The out-of-court disposal policy is supplemented by process and guidance notes and links to complementary policies. These set the distinction between prevention work, community resolutions, and formal out-of-court disposals.
- Referrals to the joint decision-making panel are timely. The panel includes representatives from children's social care and early help services; this ensures that all options for addressing the children's safety and wellbeing are considered. The joint decision-making panel also considers harmful sexual behaviour cases which may not be charged to court.
- There are clear arrangements for escalating and resolving differences when these occurred. There is also a Lincolnshire out-of-court disposal scrutiny panel that the YOS manager attends.
- There is a strong and varied prevention offer. The YOS is proactive in engaging children and families before they receive an out-of-court disposal.
- All interventions and services for children on statutory orders are also available to those receiving an out-of-court disposal.
- Out-of-court disposal cases that are assessed as either high risk of harm or safety and wellbeing receive the same risk management meeting process as post-court cases.
- Children and families continued to receive support from the wider Future4Me adolescent service after their out-of-court disposal ended. Arrangements are in place to capture and collate the views of children completing an out-of-court disposal.
- The YOS partnership uses internal and external evaluation to demonstrate the impact of the out-of-court disposal joint decision-making panel and revises its approach where necessary. Board members and other stakeholders have utilised opportunities to observe the out-of-court disposal joint decision-making panel to understand how it works.

Areas for improvement:

- The granularity of data on out-of-court disposals and reoffending could be refined to provide further evidence of ongoing impact.
- The YOS partnership should continue with ongoing work to implement 'Outcome 22' in Lincolnshire.

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

Strengths:

- There is a clear resettlement policy, based on principles of constructive resettlement and identity shift. It explicitly references diversity, equality, and inclusion.
- The resettlement policy is also accompanied by practice guidance and clear direction to complementary policies and guidance (including safety and wellbeing and risk of harm policies). This ensures staff and partners have a thorough understanding of their role in resettlement work with YOS children.
- There is a clear remand strategy, which sets out partnership expectations, roles, and responsibilities. YOS board minutes evidence a reduction in remands over the last 12 months.
- Information-sharing and communication between the YOS and the secure estate is strong, reciprocal, and swift.
- YOS partner staff (such as the education mentors, substance misuse workers, youth workers, and complex needs health team practitioners) work well with their counterparts in the secure estate, which leads to continuity of relationships and interventions for children.
- There are clear and accessible referral and intervention pathways in key areas such as accommodation, ETE, and health.
- We saw case examples of effective work with secure estate mentors from different establishments who continued to work with some children in the community following their release from custody.
- YOS resettlement practice promoted strong contact between case managers, the child and their parents/carers in all cases inspected.
- The YOS had commenced work with the local secure children's home (Lincoln) to enhance working relationships and improve awareness of roles and responsibilities. This led to the development of an underpinning joint working protocol between the organisations.
- Staff had received resettlement training within the YOS workforce development plan as a rolling schedule of inputs for new and existing staff.
- There was good management of public protection through casework activity and via additional internal and multi-agency risk management meetings.
- The YOS speech language therapist provided examples of where children's licences had been translated into easy-read versions to aid their understanding of conditions and expectations.

- The YOS had conducted an independent audit of a small number of resettlement cases, which highlighted good practice and areas for further development.
- We saw some individual feedback from children about resettlement provision.

Areas for improvement:

- Attention to safety and well-being needs to be more consistent in a small number of resettlement cases, including use of escalation to managers where required.
- The use of release on temporary licence (ROTL) and mobility needs to be developed and used more in resettlement cases.

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.](#)