



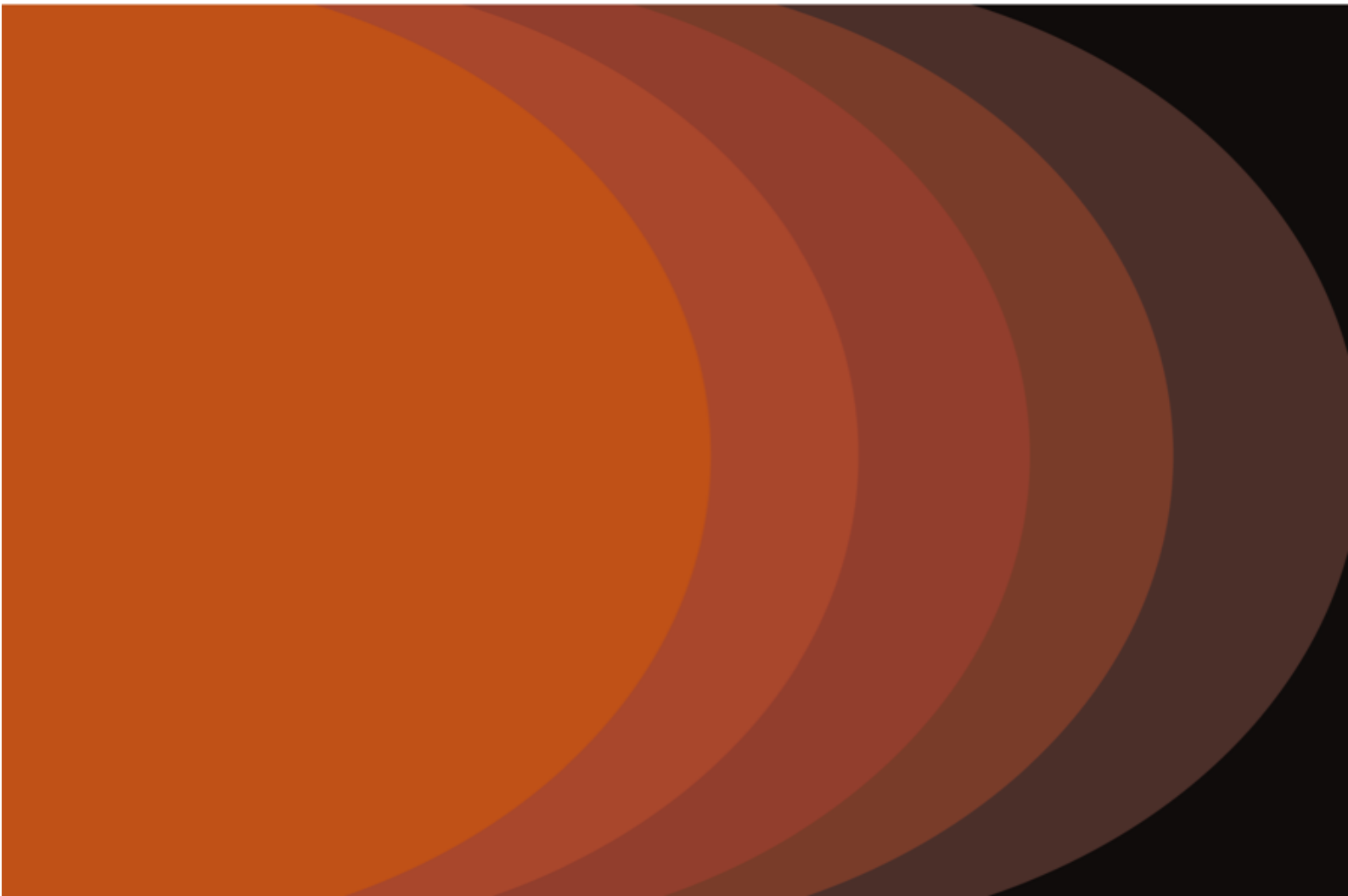
HM Inspectorate  
of Probation

A joint inspection of youth justice services in

# Nottinghamshire YJS

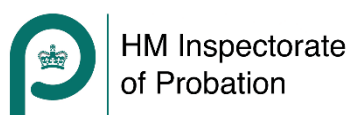
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HM Inspectorate of Probation, January 2024



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## Acknowledgements

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## Foreword

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This inspection is part of our programme of youth justice service (YJS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Nottinghamshire 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.

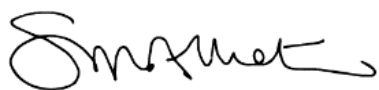
Overall, Nottinghamshire YJS was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Outstanding'.

The independent youth justice partnership board chair has been leading the board for the last 12 months and demonstrates a depth of knowledge regarding youth justice issues. They have a clear vision for the development of the board and recognise the areas the board needs to improve and prioritise. Board members have appropriate links to other strategic forums and the board receives and utilises comprehensive operational reports. However, an improved system for sharing data and information across the partnership is needed to ensure that the appropriate services for YJS children are available which meet their specific needs. This will also assist board members to better hold each other to account regarding the services provided.

There is strong partnership work with children's social care and substance misuse services, and children are supported to remain in appropriate education, training and employment. However, healthcare partners have recognised that children's health needs are not being met consistently, especially their emotional and mental health and wellbeing needs, and their speech, language and communication needs. Nottinghamshire police acknowledge the need to review their secondment arrangements with the YJS, to ensure the police staff are appropriately deployed and utilised, and recognise the need to better monitor out-of-court disposal decision making, to ensure the necessary referral to, and use of, the joint panel.

The YJS does not have a diversity strategy and identifies that this area of work needs further development. It is committed to improving its understanding of diversity and disproportionality and understands the need to implement a framework which supports staff in recognising children's protected characteristics and delivering a range of interventions that reflect these.

Resettlement practice was a strength. We found an embedded multi-agency approach committed to ensuring all children's resettlement needs were met. For out-of-court disposals we found consistently high-quality work to assess, plan and deliver interventions, particularly in relation to children's desistance. However, the quality of work to manage children's risk of harm to others, and the management oversight in post court cases needs to improve. We found motivated, positive and passionate staff, committed to achieving the best for the children they work with, it was pleasing to see plans being co-produced with children, and staff who did all they could to encourage children's engagement.



**Sue McAllister**

Interim HM Chief Inspector of Probation

## Ratings

**Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Service**  
Fieldwork started October 2023

**Score 19/36**

**Overall rating**

**Good**



### 1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

**Requires improvement**



1.2 Staff

**Good**



1.3 Partnerships and services

**Good**



1.4 Information and facilities

**Good**



### 2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

**Inadequate**



2.2 Planning

**Requires improvement**



2.3 Implementation and delivery

**Requires improvement**



2.4 Reviewing

**Requires improvement**



### 3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

**Good**



3.2 Planning

**Outstanding**



3.3 Implementation and delivery

**Good**



3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

**Good**



### 4. Resettlement<sup>1</sup>

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

**Outstanding**



<sup>1</sup> The rating for resettlement does not influence the overall YJS rating.

## Recommendations

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

### **The Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Partnership Board chair should:**

1. ensure that the membership of the Youth Justice Partnership Board is consistent, that representatives have the right level of seniority to drive the service, and ensure it meets the needs of YJS children.

### **The Nottinghamshire Youth Justice Partnership Board should:**

2. establish data and information sharing mechanisms across the partnership which enable effective needs analysis and ensures the right services are in place for YJS children
3. develop and implement a diversity strategy and framework to support staff in assessing and delivering interventions that reflect children's protected characteristics.

### **Nottinghamshire Police and the Youth Justice Partnership Board should:**

4. review the police secondment arrangements to the YJS to ensure police staff are appropriately utilised and deployed
5. monitor how out-of-court disposal decisions are made to ensure that the joint decision-making panel is used when appropriate.

### **Nottinghamshire healthcare partners should:**

6. make sure that provision for YJS children meets their emotional, mental health and wellbeing, and speech, language and communication needs.

### **The YJS service manager should:**

7. improve the quality of post-court case work and management oversight to ensure that staff have a good understanding of the risk of harm a child can pose to others.

## Background

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We conducted fieldwork in Nottinghamshire YJS over a period of two weeks, beginning on 02 October 2023. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began, out-of-court disposals were delivered, and resettlement cases were sentenced or released between 03 October 2022 and 28 July 2023. We also conducted 43 interviews with case managers.

Nottinghamshire is a county in the East Midlands of England. The YJS operates over the county's seven districts, ranging from the conurbations around Nottingham City, to urban centres and rural community settings in the north of the county. Levels of deprivation in Nottinghamshire are comparable with England, however there are communities with both some of the highest and lowest levels of deprivation in the country. Nottinghamshire Police operate across both Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City which is covered by a different Youth Justice Service.

Nottinghamshire YJS is part of the local authority's children and family's department and sits alongside early help. The group manager reports to the Director for Care, Help and Protection, who oversees children's social care. The service benefits from being included in wider departmental improvement plans, which have focused on programmes to address child neglect and domestic abuse. The service director for resources, commissioning and partnerships is the chair of the Youth Justice Partnership Board and provides independent oversight and scrutiny.

The service manager is supported by a development manager and four team managers, who lead the three locality teams, and the interventions team. There are 71 staff including partnership and seconded staff and access to 30 volunteers, shared with a neighbouring YJS who work across Nottinghamshire. In September 2023, 53 post-court interventions and 83 out-of-court disposals were open. The service also manages prevention cases, and the YJS offers a number of diversion options for children, including Turnaround and the My Future voluntary support programme. This can be a stand-alone programme of work or used in conjunction with a family being involved with children's social care or the family service and is for children who have not received a formal police outcome but may be displaying behaviours that indicate they are vulnerable or are at risk of offending or criminal exploitation.

The YJS has access to a comprehensive suite of data across post-court orders and out-of-court disposals, analysis of which has led to deep-dive reports. These included reports on disproportionality and diversity workstreams and substance misuse provision. Using the Youth Justice Board's definition of serious violence, in the last 12 months the YJS has seen a decrease in the number of serious violence offences that have been committed by children. Data shows that, in the past year the majority of serious youth violence offences is related to offences of robbery, with the second greatest being violence, then drug offences.

Analysis of YJS performance data shows that the number of first-time entrants (FTE) to the formal youth justice system is below the average for the region and for England and Wales. The proportion of children who reoffend and how frequently they reoffend is lower than the average for England and Wales. Whilst the number of first-time entrants has fallen, the current FTE rate is plateauing at a similar rate to the previous year. Data shows that children in Nottinghamshire are becoming FTEs later into their childhood than those nationally. This could be an indication that efforts to divert younger children from the criminal justice system are proving to be effective.

## Domain one: Organisational delivery

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

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows.

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### 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 youth justice partnership board is chaired by the service director for commissioning and resources, who is independent from the YJS structure. He has been the chair for 12 months and has a clear vision for the development of the board.
- There is a comprehensive board induction pack, supported by meetings with the service manager and chair of the board. Board members are expected to observe areas of practice.
- The board receives high-quality information on the service's performance, progress on past plans, and learning from audits and inspection reports, as well as other deep-dive thematic reports and national performance.
- Board members have recently been given lead areas that they are expected to report on. The intention is that this will assist in encouraging accountability.
- The YJS is well represented across strategic and operational partnership forums.
- Board membership includes all statutory partners and a YJS staff representative to help with communication between the board and staff.
- The youth justice plan was developed through consultation with board members, staff and children.
- Each board meeting starts with hearing feedback from a child on a topic relevant to the Boards agenda to remind the members of the purpose of the meeting.
- Feedback from children and families is reported to the board on a regular basis and informs policies and practice.
- The YJS has a stable and experienced leadership team. Managers lead on specific areas of practice and their responsibilities are clear.
- Members of the management team attend the board and present reports based on their lead areas.
- The YJS and the partnership have a strong child-first vision and ethos.

- The YJS has a disproportionality policy and action plan, which is monitored by the board. An annual disproportionality report is produced.
- There is an advanced practitioner who leads on monitoring disproportionality and diversity. The board has recommended that the YJS should follow the journey of black and minority ethnic children to identify areas for learning, which will be discussed within the partnership.
- The service is committed to continuous improvement and commissioned a review of practice, which has supported it in identifying areas for development.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Board members need to better understand the YJS’s vision and potential risks to the service, so that they can help mitigate these as well as contribute to setting its future priorities.
- There is limited evidence of board members holding each other to account and challenging partner agencies on specific issues or the resources they provide.
- The board has recognised that there is currently limited provision to meet children’s emotional and mental health needs and speech, language and communication provision. At the time of the inspection, there was still no specific provision for this cohort of children.
- The service does not have a diversity strategy and acknowledges that this area of work requires further development. It is committed to improving its understanding of diversity and disproportionality and should consider implementing a framework to support staff in assessing children’s protected characteristics and delivering interventions that reflect these.
- From a strategic perspective, the board needs to better monitor the police’s approach to dealing with children who receive out-of-court disposals outside joint decision-making arrangements.
- The board had not been effective in challenging the police secondment arrangements to the YJS, which do not follow the Youth Justice Board or National Police Chief’s guidance. The partnership needs to improve its understanding of data to ensure that it appropriately analyses the needs of YJS children and provides relevant services.

**1.2. Staff**



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

Good

**Strengths:**

- Staff were happy, positive and motivated in their work. They reported feeling supported by their managers and their peers.
- The management team works well together to support staff, and staff feel confident approaching managers for advice and guidance.



- There is a flexible approach to allocation of work, which ensures that the workload is equitable across the team. Allocation also considers case managers' previous involvement with the family, so that consistency is prioritised.
- Staff and managers take a child-first approach and know their children well. They do all they can to encourage good engagement with children and their families. They will advocate for children and challenge other agencies when appropriate, to ensure that children's needs are being met.
- Staff receive regular and purposeful monthly supervision, and seconded staff receive supervision and support from both their home agency and their YJS line manager.
- Staff access reflective group supervision, and there is joint supervision of YJS and children's social care staff when they are co-working a case.
- There is a thorough induction process for new staff, and procedures for addressing staff competency.
- The YJS has a comprehensive staff training and development plan, and staff feel encouraged to look for and access training opportunities.
- Staff have good access to health training, which includes training on trauma and speech and language needs. Staff said that they felt confident in completing initial health screenings, and this was evident in the inspected cases.
- The YJS actively encourages staff development. It offers management opportunities within the service and supports staff to complete external qualifications.
- Staff across the partnership work collaboratively, and joint working is prioritised.
- Managers recognise good practice in monthly emails, and staff receive praise and appreciation during supervision with their line managers. Staff are encouraged to share positive news in team meetings.
- In the staff survey, all respondents said that exceptional work is 'sometimes' or 'always' recognised.

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

- The management of the YJS volunteers had recently moved to a commissioned service and arrangements were still being put in place. Inspectors found that volunteers were not aware of the service's objectives, were not integrated into the service and had not received any individual or group oversight.
- Inconsistencies in quality assurance and management oversight were evident in the post court cases inspected. Inspectors judged that 10 out of 18 cases (56 per cent) had received insufficient management oversight. The quality of assessing, planning, delivering interventions and reviewing needs to improve to ensure that staff have a good understanding of the risk of harm that a child can pose to others.

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## 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:

- The YJS has access to a comprehensive suite of data that informs deep-dive and thematic reports.
- YJS children assessed as medium risk or above are discussed at case management meetings and, if appropriate, the multi-agency youth violence and criminal exploitation panel.
- The YJS has a good mentoring scheme that works with children who are linked to youth violence and child criminal exploitation. Interventions are delivered in the evenings and at weekends, either one to one or in groups.
- Feedback from court staff indicated that the standard of reports is very high. YJS staff are knowledgeable about individual children and there is a good working relationship between the court and the service.
- There is a strong offer for victims through Remedi, which contacts victims to highlight the restorative justice opportunities available. This includes updates on how the child is progressing, signposting to other support services if necessary, obtaining the victim's views about licence conditions, and providing a letter of explanation, mediation, face-to-face meetings, or reparation.
- The service to victims is monitored and quality assured. It includes a review of how safe victims feel and how satisfied they are with the criminal justice system when their involvement ends.
- Reparation sessions are tailored to the child's needs. They are offered to all children open to the YJS to encourage them to get involved in positive activities.
- A seconded probation officer leads on transitions, and there is a thorough process in place that educates professionals and supports young people. When young people aged over 18 come to the attention of the Probation Service, contact is made with the YJS to check whether the young person has previously been known to them.
- The YJS has an education, training and employment team that provides effective specialist support and guidance for case managers, schools and partners.
- Education providers are responsive to the needs of YJS children, and partnership working has helped to build schools' capacity to manage YJS children and retain them in learning.
- The partnership acknowledges that more could be done to support children when they transition from primary to secondary education and that, in a small number of schools, there had been unnecessary exclusions because the school did not act quickly enough to alert other agencies. There is a comprehensive range of partnership forums that work collectively to tackle

exclusions, challenge and support schools and ease YJS children's access to further education. The personal approach taken by alternative education providers supports the needs of many YJS children well. This provision could be further improved by focusing on reintegrating children back into mainstream schools.

- Change Grow Live has a link worker who provides substance misuse services and works closely with the YJS case managers. All children are screened for substance use as part of the assessment process, and there is a consultation and referral processes in place with Change Grow Live. They also have a tracking system to monitor all children, even if they do not consent, so that they can continue to liaise with the YJS to see if support could be offered at a further stage.
- There are no seconded child and adolescent mental health workers in the YJS; however, Head2Head is commissioned to work with children who are on a youth conditional caution or a statutory court order. It also carries out harmful sexual behaviour work and offers interventions and consultancy to case managers.
- The YJS has a primary care nurse, although this post is currently vacant. Interim measures are in place for any healthcare needs, and the YJS has access to link nurses in each locality.
- Healthcare staff are persistent in building relationships with children to help them to access health services. Good inter-agency working helps to identify whether children have any unmet health needs.
- YJS staff work effectively with social workers and ensure that interventions delivered in partnership with children's social care match the children's individual needs. They conduct regular reviews of their interventions to ensure they remain effective.
- YJS and children's social care professionals receive joint case supervision that focuses on good practice and the progress being made. They also receive effective joint training and professional development. Recommendations from national and regional case reviews, however, are not sufficiently contextualised to help staff make changes to their practice.
- The YJS has a good relationship with the local neighbourhood police officers and the Integrated Offender Management team. The YJS has seconded police staff, a police community support officer and a police staff member responsible for children in care.
- The YJS is continuing to develop its services for girls and remains committed to providing girls with a female case manager unless they request otherwise.
- A steering group oversees work to reduce the over-representation of looked-after children and care leavers. An audit was completed over a 12-month period of first-time entrants to the youth justice system who are looked after, or a care leaver to identify any practice learning areas.
- The partnership recognises that interventions to address the disproportionate representation of certain groups are in their early stages. It is developing partnership services to meet the needs of girls, those with mixed heritage and those who identify as LGBTQ+.

### Areas for improvement:

- There is no specific speech, language and communication provision for YJS children, and children who engage with the YJS on a voluntary basis are not consistently having their emotional and mental health needs met. However, healthcare partners have been proactive in putting effective interim measures in place. At the time of the inspection, they had secured additional funding and were developing relevant services for YJS children.
- Although there is a timely response from police staff to requests for intelligence, they do not routinely attend case management meetings. The YJS does not benefit from the skills that police officers can bring, which extend further than just the supply of intelligence. Police staff have received minimal police training and their understanding of multi-agency public protection arrangements is limited. Police staff stated that too much of their time is committed to preparing case files. The police force was reviewing this at the time of the inspection. It was pleasing to see that the police recognised these issues and were undertaking a full review of policing provision to the YJS.

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## 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:

- Disproportionality is addressed in policies, and a full range of policies and guidance are in place. These are understood by staff and reviewed regularly.
- Information-sharing protocols are in place and understood across the partnership.
- There is an escalation process for all partners to help in challenging other agencies, and staff felt supported by managers to raise concerns.
- The YJS covers a large geographical area and uses buildings that are accessible, safe and suitable for children and families. Staff also saw children at venues around the area, including youth centres, schools and children's centres, and through home visits.
- The case management system enables the service to produce data on performance.
- YJS police staff have access to police and YJS IT systems.
- There is a participation lead, who ensures that children are involved in developing service delivery.
- The YJS has a quality assurance framework in place. Cases are audited on a regular basis and findings are reported to the management board.
- The YJS is involved in multi-agency audits and takes part in multi-agency learning reviews.

- The YJS reviews cases when serious incidents occur and learns from the outcomes of inspections to help improve practice.

**Areas for improvement:**

- The service should review its agile working model to ensure that expectations about staff being present in offices are consistent across each team and that there are opportunities for partnership staff to integrate with YJS staff.
- Although there is a flag facility on the police IT system to identify children who are managed by the YJS, the YJS police staff did not use it. This system would automatically notify YJS police staff when a child comes into contact with the police, which would improve intelligence-sharing across the agencies.

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

The YJS has a team manager who is the participation lead and focuses on involving children in developing service delivery. There is a regular participation group, which includes children who have been involved with the YJS and have indicated a willingness to contribute to service development. The participation group is consulted on areas of practice identified by the management team. The participation lead gives feedback to the management team so that they can include children's views in any decisions about service developments.

The service contacts all children whose case has been chosen for an audit or learning review, to ask them about their experience of working with the YJS. Their comments form part of the quality assurance process. The service has also launched an online platform to capture feedback from children and their parents and carers at the end of their contact with the YJS. This feedback is collated and discussed at the YJS managers meeting to identify any potential changes to service delivery that need to be made.

The YJS contacted, on our behalf, children who had open cases at the time of the inspection, to gain their consent for a text survey. We delivered the survey independently to the seven children who consented, and four children replied.

When asked how they rated the service they had received from the YJS, three responded, with a score of 10 out of 10. One child said about their worker:

*"They really do care."*

When asked how the YJS had helped them stay out of trouble, one child said:

*"They try and keep you focused with lots of support."*

Inspectors also spoke to four children and one parent. All knew what the YJS was aiming to do, and all felt that their YJS workers had the right skills to do the work.

One child, talking about their case manager, said:

*"My worker was really good. They listened a lot. Sometimes I just need to say stuff and they would let me. That's the only person who has done that. I always felt comfortable with my YJS worker. They have a way of helping you to get through the order."*

Another child commented:

*"My worker helped me think about my education, listened to what I would like to do and then helped me get to there. I'm now on a course and go to college. I'm really enjoying it and know my worker helped me get into the right mind set for it."*

## Diversity

In Nottinghamshire, when comparing the offending population with the general population of those aged 10–17, white children are under-represented, and ethnic minority children are over-represented. White children make up 85 per cent of the offending population and 90 per cent of the 10–17 population. Ethnic minority children make up 15 per cent of the offending population and 10 per cent of children aged 10–17. The most over-represented ethnic group is mixed heritage children; they make up eight per cent of the offending population and five per cent of the 10–17 population.

The YJS caseload at the time of the inspection consisted of 136 open interventions, of which 15.4 per cent involved black, Asian or minority ethnic children. As this group makes up eight per cent of the local population, this is an over-representation in the YJS cohort.

The YJS ethnic disparity data for 2020/2021 for both Nottinghamshire YJS and Nottingham City YJS showed that black children were 4.2 times more likely to be cautioned or sentenced than white children. Mixed heritage children were 3.4 times more likely. This is, however, an improved picture compared with the previous year. In the year ending March 2022, mixed heritage children were 1.9 times more likely to be cautioned or sentenced than white children.

An advanced practitioner monitors disproportionality and diversity. The board has recommended that the youth justice journey of children from black and minority ethnic groups is monitored by the service to identify any areas for learning which will be discussed within the partnership.

Girls made up 19.1 per cent of the YJS caseload at time of the inspection. They account for 14 per cent of first-time entrants to the youth justice system, which is a reduction from previous years and in line with national levels. The service is taking a closer look at girls who are entering the service and is working on raising awareness of how unconscious bias can affect decision-making and may lead to girls receiving disproportionate outcomes for violent offences.

The YJS is continuing to develop its services for girls, and is committed to providing girls with a female case manager. Case managers are encouraged to build effective relationships with girls and consider individualised ways of working creatively with them. The service has also been raising awareness of neurodiversity in girls and hopes for an increase in the number of girls known to the YJS who are diagnosed earlier.

Of the 109 children who were first time entrants in 2022/2023, 29 were involved with children's social care. While this is slightly fewer than the previous year's figure of 33, it shows the continuing importance of information-sharing and joint work between the YJS and children's social care. The YJS has established a steering group to oversee this work. An audit was completed over a 12-month period of first-time entrants to the youth justice system who are looked after, or a care leaver to identify any areas for improving practice across the partnership.

At the time of inspection, of the 136 open interventions, 39 per cent of the children had substance misuse issues; 44.9 per cent had emotional, mental health and wellbeing concerns; and 45.6 per cent had a learning disability or learning difficulty, or were subject to an education, health and care plan. Of the children in care on the

caseload at the time of the inspection, 14 per cent were children looked after who were living within the YJS area.

The YJS has various monitoring systems for reviewing children with diverse needs. However, it does not have a cohesive diversity strategy, and acknowledges that further development is needed. The YJS is committed to improving its understanding of diversity and disproportionality. It should consider implementing a framework to support staff in assessing children's protected characteristics and delivering interventions that reflect these. This would enable staff to be confident in asking appropriate questions about a child's lived experiences.



## Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 19 community sentences managed by the YJS. There were no custodial sentences in the sample.

### 2.1. Assessment



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

Inadequate

Our rating<sup>2</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	95%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	63%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	<b>37%</b>

The inspection found that assessment activity was consistently strong across children's desistance. To help identify children's desistance factors, case managers had accessed a range of sources from partner agencies and offered an appropriate analysis of children's attitudes towards, or reasons for, their offending. Case managers focused on children's strengths and their motivation to change, and involved children and their parents or carers in the assessment. They analysed children's diversity needs and, in nearly all relevant cases, considered the needs and wishes of victims.

In most cases, the case manager had identified and sufficiently analysed the potential risks to the child's safety and wellbeing. They used information from other agencies to inform their assessments. There was a clear written record of children's wellbeing and how to keep them safe.

However, children were not having their health needs assessed consistently, and there were missed opportunities to engage children and provide health related support.

In assessing children's risk of harm to others, although case managers accessed information from other agencies, including past behaviours and convictions, they did not use this consistently to analyse the level of the risk of harm presented by the child. The YJS takes an approach to assessment that avoids labelling children by their past behaviours and convictions, so that these incidents do not follow the child through every assessment and affect their future. It is vital, however, as part of this approach that relevant previous behaviours are assessed and considered as part of the risk assessment process, to make sure they are not the start of a pattern of behaviour. Inspectors found that staff did not clearly evidence why they had excluded children's relevant risky previous behaviours and convictions in their current risk analysis, and that the intention to avoid labelling children had resulted in some relevant previous behaviours being missed or inappropriately discounted.

<sup>2</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

In most cases, the assessment did not clearly identify and analyse who was at risk and the nature of that risk. In some instances, we found the risks that children posed to others were known, but not fully considered or analysed. In particular, the level of risk was considered in isolation to the current offence and the influence of other factors including previous assaults and other past behaviours were sometimes omitted. By not considering previous triggers to the use of violence, assessments missed some key actions, including how risk to others, including potential victims would be considered and addressed.

## 2.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

Our rating<sup>3</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	68%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	68%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	<b>58%</b>

The service prioritised allocating cases to case managers who had already worked with the child and their family. Planning for the child's interventions evidenced that the case manager knew the child well, considered their personal circumstances, and understood their motivations and strengths. However, inspectors noted that, for referral orders, panel members received limited information about the child. This made it difficult for them to ensure that the referral order contract was meeting the child's needs.

In most cases, planning was linked to the child's assessed desistance factors. Children's diversity needs were included appropriately in the planning of services. Case managers took the views of parents and carers into consideration as part of the planning process. Education, training and employment workers considered the child's ability to take part in education, training and employment opportunities and, where necessary, advocated for the child to ensure their needs were being met. Change Grow Live had processes for working with children with needs related to substance use and engaged children well. Victims' wishes were considered consistently, which provided opportunities for restorative justice.

Planning to keep children safe involved other agencies. Multi-agency meetings were used regularly to make sure information was shared and all agencies were up to date with the child's circumstances. There was joint supervision between case managers and social workers on co-worked cases, to ensure that agency roles were clear, and progress was being made. In most cases, practitioners planned for the interventions that were needed to support children and manage the risk to their safety and wellbeing.

<sup>3</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

Planning promoted the safety of other people and involved other agencies in only half of the cases, and it was not clear how it addressed the safety of specific victims. Contingency planning to address escalating concerns about a child’s safety and wellbeing and the safety of other people was not sufficiently detailed or relevant to the child’s specific circumstances in enough cases.

## 2.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.	Requires improvement
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Our rating<sup>4</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child’s desistance?	84%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	74%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	<b>63%</b>

There was evidence of staff using trauma-informed interventions that showed they understood the needs of the child. Their approach encouraged good engagement with children and families.

Case managers were involved in multi-agency discussions and meetings to ensure that provision was in place for the child when their involvement with the YJS ended. This included using the excellent youth service provision, as well as reparation activities to help the child to build relationships and facilitate community integration. Education, training and employment staff and case managers worked with schools to ensure that children were supported to stay in the provision that best meet their needs. All cases demonstrated the priority that case managers gave to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers to support desistance. The interventions delivered were innovative and tailored to help motivate children. They built on the case manager’s understanding of the child, their strengths, and their ability to engage.

In most cases, interventions were identified to manage the child’s safety and wellbeing. Although the involvement of other agencies in helping to keep children safe was not evident in all cases, there were some examples of joint work with partner agencies, including substance misuse services, the youth service and children’s social care. Head2Head offered a service for children on youth conditional cautions and post court orders only. Although case managers felt confident in assessing children’s emotional, mental health and wellbeing needs they were aware that provision to meet children’s needs was limited. The YJS had worked with health partners to ensure arrangements were in place to address children’s needs and provide the right provision for them and their families, despite not having seconded staff or specific identified provision for YJS children.

<sup>4</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

The protection of actual and potential victims was considered consistently in most cases. There was a multi-agency approach across agencies to monitor the risks, and the communication and information-sharing between the YJS police staff and case managers was timely. However, the delivery of services and interventions in relation to the child’s risk of harm to others needed strengthening. The YJS police staff did not consistently attend the case management meetings, and they did not use the flag on the police system that would notify them when a YJS child comes into contact with the police. This meant that opportunities were missed to share ‘real time’ intelligence or information and ensure that all professionals were updated, and the child’s risk was being appropriately managed.

## 2.4. Reviewing



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

Requires improvement

Our rating<sup>5</sup> for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child’s desistance?	74%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>63%</b>
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	<b>63%</b>

Reviews were completed at key points in the order, and in most cases there was an ongoing review of desistance factors as the order progressed. It was pleasing that case managers continued to build on children’s strengths and consider changes in their personal circumstances. There was evidence that the focus of interventions changed if needed, and in most cases the child’s plan was adjusted when necessary. The reviews considered the child’s motivation appropriately as the order progressed, and the child and their parents or carers continued to be involved in the reviewing process. Reviews for older children who were going to transition to the Probation Service set out a clear and thorough process that was both educational and supportive for the young people involved.

Reviews of both the safety and wellbeing of children and the safety of other people needed strengthening in the cases inspected. Case managers did not consistently identify new risks that were emerging and review the potential impact of these on the level of risk posed by the child. They did however include information from other agencies in their reviews and used the case management meeting to help them manage any changing concerns or escalations in the risk to children. There was evidence that the focus of interventions changed if needed, although not all case managers adjusted the child’s ongoing plan in line with the reviewing process.

<sup>5</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

## Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 29 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of five youth conditional cautions, two youth cautions, 18 community resolutions and four other disposals. We interviewed the case managers in 24 cases.

### 3.1. Assessment



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

Good

Our rating<sup>6</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	97%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	83%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	<b>66%</b>

The YJS uses its own assessment tool, and inspectors noted that the quality of assessment activity of children subject to an out-of-court disposal was stronger than for those children on post court orders.

To help identify children's desistance factors, case managers accessed a range of sources from partner agencies and offered an appropriate analysis of children's attitudes towards, or reasons for, their offending. They focused on children's strengths and their motivation to change. Case managers involved children and their parents or carers in assessment activity, and in nearly all of the relevant cases they considered the needs and wishes of victims. Assessment activity took account of the child's diversity and outlined any barriers to children accessing services to meet their needs.

In most of the cases inspected, the case manager had sufficiently analysed the potential risks to children's safety and wellbeing. They used information from other agencies to inform their assessments, considered the child's experience of trauma and took into account their contextual safeguarding needs. Case managers completed a speech, language and communication screening and stated that they felt confident in assessing children's health needs, although they were aware that health provision for children subject to an out-of-court disposal was limited.

In nearly all cases information from other agencies was used to inform the assessment. However, similar to the inspected post court cases risks to others were not identified and analysed appropriately in too many relevant cases. Consideration was not consistently given to triggers and motivating factors in the child's past

<sup>6</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

behaviours to reflect the current level of risk posed by the child. This included previous concerns regarding a child’s harmful sexual behaviour, involvement in anti-social behaviour and past links to violent incidents. Case managers need to recognise wider risks to other people and analyse children’s potential future harmful behaviour more appropriately.

## 3.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>7</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child’s desistance?	90%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>86%</b>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	<b>86%</b>

Planning addressed the child’s desistance factors, and case managers took account of children’s diversity needs. They co-produced plans with children, included their parents or carers, and made plans proportionate to the type of disposal. They also ensured that planning reflected the wishes and needs of victims. Inspectors saw good examples of case managers engaging children in education, training and employment. As some of the interventions were delivered within a short period, case managers and partner agency staff focused effectively on children’s access to mainstream services and opportunities for community integration after the disposal had ended.

Planning to address children’s safety and wellbeing saw case managers working alongside other agencies, including children’s social care and substance misuse workers. Partnership working was evident in the multi-agency case management meetings, as well as discussions about children’s risks in other forums across the partnership. Although contingency planning could be more consistent, staff were up to date with children’s circumstances and ensured that the information they received was analysed so that their response to the child’s needs was adapted accordingly.

Case managers planned the interventions that were needed to manage the safety of other people in most cases. Planning involved other agencies and addressed the safety of specific victims. Contingency planning to address escalating concerns about the safety of other people could be improved by ensuring that plans are not generic but a response to individual children’s circumstances. Overall, planning focused sufficiently on keeping people safe.

<sup>7</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [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 rating<sup>8</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	86%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	<b>72%</b>
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	76%

Case managers could not access all the services and interventions available for children on court orders for those subject to an out-of-court disposal. This was especially relevant to health provision, although arrangements were in place for children to have any urgent health needs met.

The interventions delivered showed that the case manager had built a strong relationship with the child and had considered their diversity needs in nearly all cases. To help support children's desistance, case managers ensured that interventions were proportionate to the type of disposal. Children engaged well with interventions, which were mainly voluntary, and case managers worked hard to establish effective working relationships with both the children and their parents or carers. In most cases, case managers had considered how children could be linked to mainstream services once their interventions had ended.

The delivery of interventions to support children's safety and wellbeing included working alongside other professionals. In most cases, there was evidence of case managers being creative in both where and how to deliver interventions to meet children's needs. Multi-agency meetings were used to share information so that agencies were up to date with children's circumstances. Case managers were tenacious in ensuring partner agencies provided appropriate provision for children especially regarding their health care needs. They also supported children in accessing services and worked with partnership staff to ensure children remained engaged with the interventions provided. In most of the cases inspected, service delivery and interventions supported children's safety effectively.

In most cases, interventions with children to support the safety of other people were managing and minimising the risk of harm. These included engaging the children in programmes relating to their relationships and emotional regulation, dealing with their anger and sessions focused on hate crime. Case managers, however, need to give more consideration to the protection of potential and actual victims when delivering interventions. Overall, however, the interventions delivered had supported the safety of other people in the majority of the cases inspected.

<sup>8</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

### 3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision



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

Good

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

#### Strengths:

- The YJS has a prevention strategy and a strong prevention offer, including targeted prevention programmes as well as the Turnaround project.
- The service tracks children who are referred for a prevention service and reviews how many go on to become first-time entrants to the youth justice system. These cases are reviewed for future learning.
- The service has a joint out-of-court disposal protocol with the police and a local out-of-court disposal policy.
- On receiving the out-of-court referral the case is allocated to a case manager, the victim officer and education, training and employment workers. The case manager will check to see if the child is known to other agencies.
- Staff understand the process for out-of-court disposals and feel that their assessments influence the outcome for the child.
- There is evidence of joint decision-making, and the rationale for the disposal outcomes are clearly recorded. There is a clear escalation process in place if there are any disagreements at the panel.
- The YJS monitors the reoffending of children subject to out-of-court disposals. It shares this information with the panel members so that they can understand which outcomes are having a positive impact on the rate of reoffending.
- There is a Nottinghamshire scrutiny panel that reviews cases that have gone through the out-of-court disposal process.

#### Areas for improvement:

- There were a small number of cases where the police had given youth conditional cautions to children without referring them to the YJS. The YJS had proactively challenged the police on each occasion, and during the inspection there was a recognition across the partnership that this practice needed to cease with immediate effect.
- Due to capacity issues the case manager does not attend the out-of-court disposal panel. This means that the panel does not hear directly from the worker who has met and talked with the child and their family.
- Children on out-of-court disposals do not have the same opportunities to engage in interventions and services as children on court orders.
- The out-of-court disposal panel does not monitor or review children's progress, and the panel has no quality assurance process to make sure that its decisions are consistent.



## 4.1. Resettlement

### 4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Outstanding

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews. To illustrate that work, we inspected three cases managed by the YJS that had received a custodial sentence.

Our key findings were as follows.

#### Strengths:

- The YJS has a resettlement policy in place, which includes work with children both in custody and after release.
- A representative from Youth Detention Accommodation is on the management board to help the YJS develop policies and practice for children in custody.
- The YJS starts planning for children at risk of custody at the pre-sentence report stage with a multi-agency case management meeting.
- Throughout the child's sentence there is a multi-agency forum that determines the sequencing of work that will take place to address the child's needs, and the agencies' roles and responsibilities.
- The YJS case management meeting monitors transitions between the youth estate and the adult estate, as well as resettlement in the community.
- YJS case managers attend review meetings and regularly visit children in custody in person to maintain and develop their working relationships.
- Staff described communication with the secure estate as effective. Each child is allocated a resettlement worker and there are weekly conversations between the YJS and the establishment.
- Case managers take account of children's diversity needs when considering resettlement provision.
- There is a multi-agency response to identifying children's accommodation needs and each child is aware of their address at least six weeks before release from custody.
- YJS case managers work closely with the child's social worker. This includes joint visits to the establishment and attending review meetings.
- Education, training and employment workers visit the child in custody. In the cases inspected, there was sufficient planning and provision in place to support the child's education, training and employment needs on release.
- Planning and provision to meet the healthcare needs of children in custody were consistently sufficient.

- There has been specific training in resettlement work for both YJS staff and partner agencies.
- The YJS resettlement policy is reviewed and updated each year.

**Area for improvement:**

- The head of service will raise concerns about individual cases with the management board and relevant partners when specific issues need to be escalated. However, board members could develop their understanding of this cohort of children by being updated on individual children's cases. This includes the timeliness of release arrangements, availability of education or training once children are released, and access to necessary healthcare.

## Further information

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The following can be found on our website:

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