

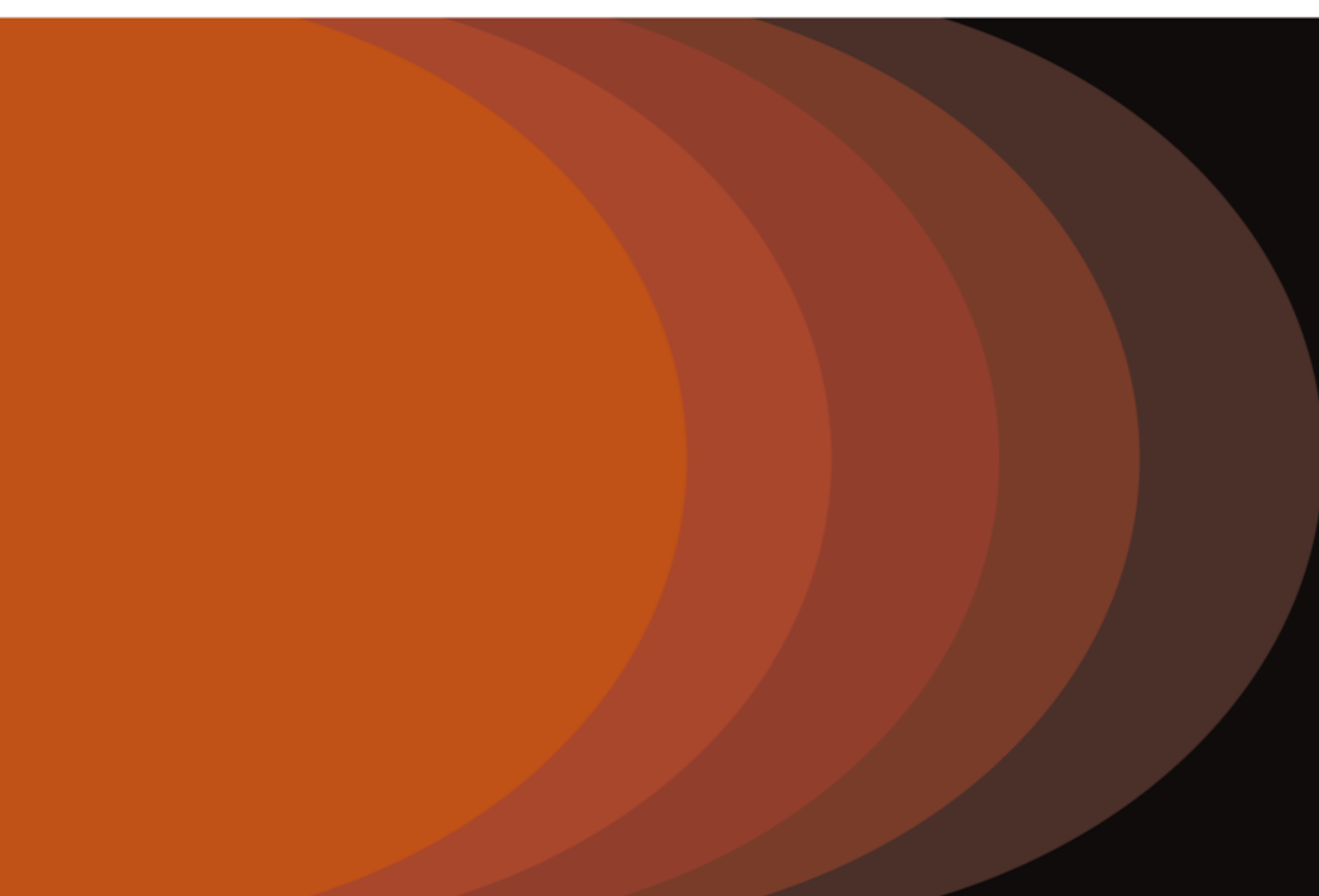


HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in

Isle of Wight YJS

HM Inspectorate of Probation, November 2023



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Foreword

This inspection is part of our programme of youth justice service (YJS) inspections. We have inspected and rated the Isle of Wight YJS (IOWYJS) 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, the service was rated as 'Requires improvement'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Good'. The service has the benefit of an experienced, knowledgeable, and committed chair, who is supported by an energetic, thoughtful, and purposeful management team. However, there needs to be a stronger link between operational practice and strategic oversight, as well as an improved understanding at an operational level of the role of the board and how they influence the vision, strategy and direction of the service. Additionally, the board needs to further develop its strategic approach to meeting children's diverse needs across the full range of protected characteristics of children. Reviewing the manner and frequency in which children's feedback is sought, analysed, and used to inform policy and strategy will assist in ensuring the appropriate services to meet children's needs are identified.

There is a committed and highly motivated staff group, who understand what is needed to support children and who were delivering some quality interventions. However, we found some gaps in practitioners' knowledge, skills or experience, and inconsistencies in the quality of the case practice, across both statutory court work and out-of-court disposals, particularly the quality of work that focused on the safety and wellbeing of children and the risk of harm children might present to other people. We considered the quality of staff supervision and management oversight needed development in order to drive consistently high-quality practice.

There was good access to services for children in relation to substance misuse and mental health, and a clear offer of intervention for parents. However, there is strong evidence that specialist speech and language input is required. This was dealt with by developing case managers' own knowledge and understanding of the children's communication needs. While useful, this does not provide the specialist support often required. It also limits opportunities to recognise and access diagnosis and support for neurodivergent conditions, which are known to be prevalent and often unrecognised in the YJS caseload.

We saw evidence that the case management system does not provide adequate support for the work, either at a strategic or an operational level. We understand that there are plans to address this and we hope that our observations provide some impetus to improve the way the system functions.

We have made seven recommendations for the Hampshire and Isle of Wight management board, which will improve the service delivered to the children engaged with IOWYJS. We are confident that the operational staff, managers, and strategic partners have the commitment, motivation and energy to take on these challenges.

















Sue McAllister
Interim HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Isle of Wight Youth Justice Service
Fieldwork started May 2023

Score 15/36

Overall rating		Requires improvement	
1. Organisational delivery			
1.1	Governance and leadership	Requires improvement	
1.2	Staff	Good	
1.3	Partnerships and services	Requires improvement	
1.4	Information and facilities	Requires improvement	
2. Court disposals			
2.1	Assessment	Requires improvement	
2.2	Planning	Requires improvement	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Good	
2.4	Reviewing	Outstanding	
3. Out-of-court disposals			
3.1	Assessment	Inadequate	
3.2	Planning	Inadequate	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement	
3.4	Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	Good	
4. Resettlement¹			
4.1	Resettlement policy and provision	Good	

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

Recommendations

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

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Youth Justice Service Management Board should:

1. develop and implement strategy and policy that address the diverse needs, across all protected characteristics of the children who come into contact with the youth justice service
2. implement approaches to routinely gathering, collating and analysing the views of children and their parents or carers and utilise this to ensure appropriate services, which meet children's needs, are in place
3. ensure the YJS has sufficient staff (including all statutory staff) with manageable workloads in order to deliver work of a consistently high-quality
4. review partnership arrangements to ensure timely and specialist physical health support and access to services that support and improve the children's physical health
5. improve access to specialist speech and language assessment and intervention for all children working with the YJS.

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Youth Justice Service should:

6. develop and strengthen quality assurance processes and management oversight, to ensure the quality of assessment and planning practice around children's safety and wellbeing and the risk of children causing harm to others improves
7. develop and review the functionality of the case management system to ensure quality information regarding the profile and diverse needs of YJS children and utilise this to inform service planning and provision.

Background

We conducted fieldwork on two occasions in the IOWYJS in the weeks beginning 22 May and 14 August 2023. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began; out-of-court disposals were delivered; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between 23 May 2022 and 17 March 2023. We interviewed 12 case managers.

IOWYJS was established as an independent team in 2011, having previously been part of the Wessex Youth Offending Team. Since 2013 it has been part of the children's services directorate in a partnership between the Isle of Wight Council and Hampshire County Council. Since October 2013, the head of service for Hampshire YOT has assumed line management responsibilities for the IOWYJS operational team. In 2015 the team moved into County Hall to integrate more with colleagues in children's services. This remains the arrangement at the present time.

The children's services directorate includes children and families, and education. The youth justice service is a standalone team within the directorate, with close working relationships between the team and children's services colleagues.

All youth justice operational staff on the IOW are employed by IOW Council. The head of service and the performance and information manager are both employed by Hampshire County Council.

In October 2022, there was a joint management meeting between both Hampshire and the IOW Youth Justice Service Boards. The purpose of this meeting was to consider merging the two boards, as many of the partners represent agencies across both local authorities. This was agreed, and the first board meeting was held on 28 April 2023.

The IOWYJS caseload includes a high proportion of girls (26 per cent).² The community safety team is analysing the reasons for this, and there are specific arrangements in place for delivering interventions for girls. The first-time entrant rate to the criminal justice system has reduced over time but remains higher than that of adjacent authorities and higher than the national average.

The frequency of reoffending is reducing and compares favourably with Hampshire YJS and the average figures for England and Wales. Custodial sentences for children are infrequent: between April 2021 and April 2022, only one child was sentenced to a period of custody; between April 2022 and April 2023, two children received custodial sentences.

² For comparison across the range of YJS activity see: [Youth Justice Statistics: 2021 to 2022 \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2021-to-2022)

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 12 meetings, including with staff, volunteers, managers, board members, and partnership staff and their managers.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows.

1.1. Governance and leadership



The governance and leadership of the YOT supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.

Requires improvement

Strengths:

- The recently combined Hampshire and Isle of Wight Youth Justice Management Board sets out a clear purpose for the YJS's work.
- The approach set out by the board seeks to divert children away from the criminal justice system where possible, limiting harm and supporting children to live crime-free and fulfilling lives. Underpinning the approach are the principles of child-first working.
- The board includes representatives from all statutory partners, and there are examples of services that have been developed as a result of partners' increased understanding of YJS work.
- There is a plan to address the disproportionate representation of black and mixed-heritage children.
- There is an experienced and committed board chair, who is intent on maintaining the profile of Isle of Wight children in the newly merged management board. The chair has an excellent understanding of the YJS's work.
- There is a strong commitment to partnership working with the children engaged with the YJS. This is supported by being physically located close to key partner agencies.
- There is a strong, experienced and appropriately qualified management team to support the delivery of services.

Areas for improvement:

- There is no representation from the voluntary sector on the board. While these are not statutory partners, this sector could add a valuable perspective.
- The board needs to further develop its strategic approach to meeting children's diverse needs. The focus on disproportionality does not currently effectively address the full range of protected characteristics of children. Issues of gender, mental health, learning disability and communication need to be addressed via planned actions developed through the lens of diversity.
- The voice of the child is presented to the board through case summaries and children's perspectives, which are gathered and collated during their contact with the YJS. Children have been represented on staff recruitment panels. However, the

manner in which children's feedback is sought, analysed, and used to inform policy and strategy needs reviewing.

- There needs to be a stronger link between operational practice and strategic oversight. The quality of case work, particularly in out-of-court disposals, needs to be better understood at a strategic (i.e., management board) level, with more strategic input from board members to drive improvements in practice.
- Case management capacity was under strength, and further effort is required to address the staff shortfall. The absence of a seconded probation officer also means that transition cases are not managed as well as they could be.
- The majority of business risks were rated 'high', and the mitigating actions require further development in order to address and reduce this level of risk.
- Operational staff need to have a better understanding of the role of the management board, and how the board influences the direction, vision and strategy of the service.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Strengths:

- This is a lively, interested and committed group of staff who are clear about what needs to be achieved with children.
- Workload is managed through flexible allocation of children's cases; many staff have specialist and case management duties.
- Managers are adept at juggling a caseload that is subject to significant fluctuations over time.
- All staff report that they mostly or fully have the skills and knowledge they need to undertake the work allocated to them.
- There is good access to training for all members of staff, and each has an individual training plan.
- There is significant investment in improving the qualifications of staff, particularly through access to the social work apprenticeship scheme.
- Staff are sensitive to the diverse characteristics of the children and have received relevant briefings and training in relation to speech, language and communication needs (Elklan-accredited speech, language and communication needs training).
- There is a culture of seeking to learn, particularly through multi-agency approaches, which features strongly in the delivery of services.
- Staff supervision is reliable and regular, and the appraisal system is used well.
- There was use of direct observation of service delivery by managers.
- Additional clinical support is available through the senior clinician at the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS).
- The staff group broadly reflects the diversity of the local population.
- Almost all staff members considered that their individual needs were recognised and responded to at least quite well. The managers have a good knowledge of the circumstances of individual staff members, and these are taken into account in the allocation and management of work. Practice meetings are staff-led, and this has led to staff welfare being the first item on the supervision agenda.
- There is a clear focus on the welfare of staff, and most staff feel that managers recognise and reward exceptional work.

Areas for improvement:

- At the time of the inspection there were a significant number of staff absences. A number of staff reported that their workload was challenging and that they considered it too high. Efforts have been made to address the staffing shortfall.
- The current workforce was not sufficiently adept at all aspects of case management to ensure the delivery of consistently high-quality work. We found some gaps in

practitioners' knowledge, skills, or experience, which impacted on the quality of case management and delivery (particularly in assessment and planning).

- The quality of staff supervision and management oversight was not always sufficient in relation to the needs, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm presented by individual children.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Requires improvement

Strengths:

- The board receives comprehensive data, including first-time entrant rates, reoffending figures and the range of criminal justice outcomes for children.
- Data analysis is provided to the board in relation to criminal justice outcomes for protected characteristics, including learning disability, age, gender, and heritage.
- As the Isle of Wight is a relatively small geographical area, co-location and easy access to partner agencies supports multi-disciplinary working.
- Working relationships with the police are strong and positive, with a shared set of 'child-first' principles.
- The group of volunteers engaged in referral panels is well trained, works closely with YJS staff and is actively supported by the dedicated YJS manager.
- Substance misuse work is easily accessible, as the service provider has adopted an 'outreach' model. This has improved engagement and increased the potential for successful interventions.
- There is a clear and well-established approach to working with victims, and a range of restorative justice interventions are delivered.
- There is a clear offer of intervention with parents, both through statutory requirements and on a voluntary basis.
- There is active input from the voluntary sector, through the provision of accommodation services (Phoenix) and the identification of risk of exploitation (Barnardo's).
- There is good access to mental health services, both in-house and through more intensive assessment and intervention, where this is appropriate for the child's needs.
- The education officer actively liaises with schools and other education and training providers. There is a well-developed working relationship with special educational needs colleagues.

Areas for improvement:

- There needs to be greater strategic and operational identification and analysis of the profile and needs of YJS children, to ensure the partnership is delivering well-targeted and effective services. This includes updating the health needs analysis and ensuring all analysis pays sufficient attention to each child's diverse range of needs and characteristics.
- At the time of the inspection there was no seconded probation officer. Because the secondment is part time (0.5 of a post), and there is an acute staff shortage in the probation service, this has been a difficult post to fill. This has impacted on the quality of transitions to adult services, and we found these to be overly complicated. It has been decided that, in lieu of a member of staff, the probation service will make a financial contribution.

- There needs to be a greater focus on ensuring that the partnership provides the volume, range and quality of services to meet the needs of all children. At the time of the inspection there was limited specialist physical health support and intervention for children, and no clear or timely access to specialist speech, language and communication assessment or interventions.
- Partnership working is not systematically reviewed for effectiveness. A greater focus on this would help the YJS to ensure that the right services are available for children at the right time.

1.4. Information and facilities



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

Requires improvement

Strengths:

- Work is underpinned by an extensive suite of policies and procedures, all of which are readily available to staff.
- Policies are up to date and subject to review at appropriate intervals.
- The YJS is co-located with an appropriate range of local authority children's services.
- Relationship-building with children is central to the way that the YJS works. In our survey of staff, most thought that the services are delivered in environments that are safe for staff and children.
- Most work is delivered away from the office base, in homes, schools or community venues suitable for children and their families. The practice of 'walk and talk' sessions with children has been retained since Covid-19.
- There is a well-established quality assurance framework, including team manager reviews across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and regular case audits. The system of assurance includes direct observation of service delivery.
- The YJS learns from incidents where things have gone wrong through formal reviews. It systematically identifies learning for managers, practitioners, and the wider safeguarding children partnership.

Areas for improvement:

- Although there are clear policy statements on disproportionality, these do not encompass the full range of protected characteristics of the children working with the YJS. Policies and guidance need to ensure that staff pay greater regard to children's range of needs and diversity issues.
- During our inspection, we identified issues with the case management system in terms of its functionality in providing necessary management information and in facilitating effective information exchange between the YJS and partners, providers and other key stakeholders. The business risk register identifies the case management system as a high risk to the YJS's work. The YJS has had to put in place special arrangements with the Youth Justice Board to meet its data requirements, and digital connectivity with the secure estate has been challenging.
- Although quality assurance work takes places, we found evidence through our case inspections that it is not consistently improving the quality of service delivery or the overall quality of practice.
- Information about children's diverse needs is not being sufficiently reviewed by the management team or analysed to support staff in improving the service.
- The perspectives of children and their families are not routinely collated or systematically analysed and used to review, inform, and improve services.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

From the board’s perspective, the child’s voice is mainly heard through the assessment, planning, and intervention cycle of delivery. This is underpinned by a child-first approach, which includes collaborating and co-producing the work with the child.

The service recognises that it needs to do more to develop children’s participation and feedback around the service they receive. It is currently reviewing its processes and intends to relaunch the participation group and further develop this offer. The goal is to have a panel of children who have ended their interventions, who can be supported and developed to engage with the service as volunteer consultants. There is an end-of-intervention feedback sheet, which is completed regularly with all children. However, the service needs to develop how it uses the data it obtains, to ensure this is systematically analysed and used to review, inform and improve services.

The service 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 20 children or their parents or carers who consented, and 10 children or their parents or carers replied. We also interviewed two children during the fieldwork week. The responses from children and their parents or carers were very positive about the workers they encountered when engaged with the service.

These are the some of the responses to our questions:

How do you rate your local YJS?

- Parent response:**
10/10
“... the key worker was very kind, respectful and obviously very passionate about making a difference. The worker had a non-judgemental attitude, which put my child at ease. I don't think it was really needed in our case, but I think our child found it a valuable experience. If it helps keep children from getting involved with further crime, it's an invaluable service which needs lots of investment to continue providing it for young people.”
- Child response:**
10/10
“The staff were supportive and helped with any questions I had. Even out of appointment times they were always willing to help.”
- Child response:**
10/10
“They have supported me in a plethora of ways. I feel like I've grown as a person. And always have someone to talk to if I need to.”

How much has the YJS helped you stay out of trouble?

- Child response:**
10/10
“My service works closely with my offending officers, and they together discuss how to help me manage behaviour. If I needed to ask any questions about a behaviour, I would ask my worker and she would explain to me carefully on how to manage that behaviour and what to do if I'm struggling.”
- Child response:**
10/10
“Made me realise it doesn't just impact me but others around me like family and other peoples family's depending on what I've done.”
- Child response:**
10/10
“I think it's good ‘cos it's made me realise that getting in trouble is not worth the hassle.”

Diversity

White children make up 97 per cent of the offending population and this broadly reflects the breakdown of 10- to 17-year-olds on the island. The service has a clear position statement on disproportionate treatment of children from minority ethnic backgrounds. It has set out specific arrangements to minimise the possibility of children being treated in a disproportionate manner, including countersigning assessment work, specific staff training and developing links with community groups.

The breadth of children's diversity, including the incidence of protected characteristics and disproportionality, is not sufficiently considered at a strategic level. We would expect to see more developed understanding and analysis of the needs of children with special educational needs; learning disabilities; education, health, and care plans; and neurodivergent conditions.

In practice, we found that, in some cases, diversity issues were carefully identified and addressed at a delivery level by practitioners working with the children. This was clearly evident in the work the service undertook with children who had received a custodial sentence.

Our findings

- In relation to leadership, we found that the strategic focus on disproportionality does not encompass the range of the children's protected characteristics. Issues of gender, mental health, learning disability and communication are not consistently developed into planned actions through the lens of diversity. In this light, the absence of routine speech and language support is of clear importance.
- The staff group, in respect of backgrounds, broadly reflects the diversity of the local population.
- Almost all staff members considered that their individual needs were recognised and responded to at least quite well. The managers have a good knowledge of the circumstances of individual staff members, and these are taken into account in the allocation and management of work. Practice meetings are staff-led, and this has led to staff welfare being the first item on the supervision agenda.
- The staff induction pack does not refer to the diversity of staff or of children.
- There was evidence of the service improvement to address specific diverse need, for example, the development of a designated intervention for girls entering the criminal justice system. The 'Girls Talk' programme was designed to support girls in managing factors linked to their offending and improve emotional resilience by improving self-esteem, stress management, emotional wellbeing, thinking styles, being assertive, healthy relationships, planning for change and coping with change.
- The most recent health needs analysis is from 2021 and provides little information about the diversity profile of children working with the YJS.
- Information about the children's diversity was not sufficiently detailed to drive service improvement.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at six community sentences managed by the YJS.

2.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

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

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	83%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	50%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	50%

The work we inspected was based on sensitive and patient relationship-building with the children. Assessment work on desistance was consistently delivered well. With every child, the case manager had identified and analysed diversity. There was a clear appreciation of the barriers to engagement. Furthermore, in every case, the child and their family members were meaningfully involved in the assessments and their views were considered. Assessments were based on a good range of information sources, including, where necessary, social care, education, health, and the police. The children's lives were frequently complicated by (often multiple) adverse childhood experiences, and the link to current and potential future offending behaviour was well understood.

When assessments were done well, the work addressed concerns about the child's life, identified from a range of sources of information. The assessments drew on children's social care and missing persons information from the police. They considered the child's emotional state and identified concerns within the family and the risk of exploitation outside the family.

However, in half of the cases we inspected, case managers did not sufficiently focus on the child's safety and wellbeing. We found gaps in prominent safety factors. For example, in a small number of cases, the assessment had not identified and analysed concerns about exploitation, missing from home incidents had not been linked to the child's safety and wellbeing, and relationships with key individuals in the child's life had not been considered in terms of the potential harm they may present to the child.

When risk of harm to others was addressed and analysed in assessments, case managers gathered information from an extensive range of sources, and identified appropriate external controls in recognition of the risk of harm to others that the child could present. This was not, however, consistently evident in the work. We found gaps in the identification of risks concerning direct victims, and identified risk classifications were not well supported by the available evidence.

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 on our website.](#)

2.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁴ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	50%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	67%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	67%

We expect plans to set out the key aspects of work to address potential further offending. In most cases we inspected, the case manager had addressed the child's diverse needs in planning and paid a good level of attention to their needs and wishes and those of their parents or carers. In a small number of cases, the case manager had paid insufficient attention to concerns about victims. We saw good examples of planning being done well, but in an equal number of cases, insufficient attention was paid in planning to the full range of desistance-related factors in the child's life.

In most cases, the child's safety and wellbeing had been appropriately addressed through the planning undertaken. There was good evidence of case managers engaging with the multi-professional network involved in the child's life and engaging parents or carers, where possible, in supporting the child's safety. In a small number of cases, the case manager did not take substance abuse into account when planning for the child's safety, or on occasions when the child's whereabouts were unknown.

When planning to address the child's potential to harm to other people was done well, building on multi-agency working was a strong feature. There was a clear focus on encouraging family members, and those with a close relationship to the child, to monitor the child's behaviour and potential risks to others. In a small number of cases, the case manager did not consider issues concerning direct victims of previous behaviour. There was a lack of clarity about the nature of planned interventions, and contingency planning needed to more specifically identify what should be done, when and by whom, in the event that risk of harm to others increased because of deteriorating behaviour.

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 on our website.](#)

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating⁵ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

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

When services were delivered, they sufficiently addressed the child's desistance in almost all cases. There was consistent, positive relationship-building between the case manager and the child. Consequently, the way work was done was adjusted to the child's individual needs. The use of conversation starter cards, toys to aid the child's concentration, and praise and support demonstrated a highly responsive approach to the work. There was a strong focus on the child's educational engagement and active work with the education officer to support this. Engagement was achieved in almost all cases. Letters of encouragement and non-compliance meetings, including with the child's parent or carer, were used appropriately.

The child's safety was supported effectively in most cases. This included active engagement in risk and exploitation panels, careful monitoring of the child's behaviour, and a detailed exploration of issues in the child's life that increased risks to their safety. Other agencies engaged positively and actively in work to support the child's safety, including the police, CAMHS, children's social care and residential workers. Where necessary, the case manager undertook specialist assessments in relation to child exploitation or underlying concerns about violent behaviour.

Where the child presented a risk of harm to others, we found that sufficient work was delivered in most cases. When concerns arose about the possibility of increased risk to other people, information was appropriately shared with other agencies. As a result, external controls and monitoring were applied, as well as interventions specifically related to the presenting issues (for example, holding knives and stolen goods for other people). There was a good focus on developing consequential thinking, and work to reduce harm.

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 on our website.](#)

2.4. Reviewing



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁶ 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?	83%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	100%

The deficits identified in the preceding sections were all addressed through the processes of case review. Reviews were undertaken at appropriate points in the work with the children. Diversity was analysed and responded to in every case. In relation to desistance, the case manager had carefully considered and reset the work being undertaken. This was a direct consequence of review at key points in the disposal, the contributions of other agencies, and management oversight.

In almost all cases, reviews led to appropriate actions to support the child's safety. These included referrals to exploitation services, enhanced multi-agency involvement, positive information-sharing about circumstances that rendered the child vulnerable and the increased engagement of family members, including the necessary use of home visits.

In every case, we were satisfied that work to keep other people safe was effective in supporting the case manager to understand and manage the risks presented by the child.

For example, we noted, 'There is a regular review and update of this case. All agencies are in close communication and the response to risk is reactive. Home visits are completed with the police and YJS where there are risk concerns, and this is communicated and considered in the work and discussions with the child.'

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 on our website.](#)

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected nine cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of two youth conditional cautions, one youth caution and six community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in six cases.

3.1. Assessment



Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.	Inadequate
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Our rating⁷ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	78%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	44%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	56%

Case managers demonstrated a clear focus on the child's desistance needs through assessment work. They built effective working relationships with the child and their parents or carers. In almost all cases this gave them a good understanding of the child and their individual circumstances, what contributed to their offending and what was likely to help them to avoid further offending. In a small number of cases, the case managers had not considered the child's diverse needs. This meant that they did not adapt the work to help engage the child.

We found examples of assessment work that was appropriate, analytical and accurate in establishing an understanding of risks to the child's safety and wellbeing. Too frequently, however, issues relating to the child's safety and wellbeing were not considered well enough in assessment work. We found that the case manager had not fully explored important information or had misunderstood it. These omissions included risks to the child within the home, episodes of homelessness, previous self-harm, risks associated with potential retaliation and negative influences from known adults in the child's life. In some cases, this led to the case manager underestimating the risks to the child's safety.

Assessment of the risk of the child causing harm to other people was inconsistent. In most cases, the case manager accessed a range of available sources of information well enough but did not analyse the information in the context of risk to others. In a small number of cases, this led to key issues, such as knife possession, not being considered as a factor in understanding the child's potential to present a risk of harm to other people.

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 on our website.](#)

3.2. Planning



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

Inadequate

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

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	67%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	33%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	44%

In most cases, planning was done in a way that maintained a clear focus on supporting the child's desistance. Typically, we found that planning followed on appropriately from the identified areas of need and included an outline of the specific interventions required to support desistance. Plans were developed in a way that responded to the child's individual needs, adjusting the way work was delivered to take account of their learning needs, where appropriate. In most cases, planning included the views of the children and their parents or carers.

There were cases where the processes of assessment and planning took up to two months from the panel decision. In the majority of cases, planning for the child's safety was not done well enough. None of the children in the inspected sample were assessed as having a low risk to their safety and wellbeing. Where medium or high risk to the child's safety had been identified, we found in some cases that the case manager had not sought support from other agencies in considering the risks of child exploitation, self-harm, emotional wellbeing, substance misuse, sexual health, or peer associations. Effective contingency planning was limited, and multi-agency work was not developed well enough to support the child after the period of work with the YJS. In some cases, the practitioner had not escalated concerns about the child when other agencies had provided unsatisfactory responses to information that had been shared.

Too few of the inspected cases had sufficient plans to address the risk of harm to other people that the child presented. We were not confident that the plans were robust enough to support the reduction or management of risk factors that the children may exhibit. In particular, the engagement of other agencies, such as the police, was limited. When areas of risk to others were identified that reflected wider issues in the child's life (beyond the presenting offence), plans did not address these concerns. Contingency arrangements were not specific, robust or too limited to mitigate the risk that the child presented.

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 on our website.](#)

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

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	67%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	56%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	56%

In the delivery of services to children, we found a considerable range of activity to support the child's desistance, where needed. Building on positive working relationships (which we found in all cases inspected), the case managers successfully delivered interventions with most children and secured the support of parent or carers when possible. Case managers undertook positive work with education providers. Work was adapted to suit the child's individual needs and, when done well, included engagement beyond the duration of the disposal period to ensure that exit planning was appropriately carried out. We had some concerns, however, that the diverse needs of the children were not always fully understood or addressed.

Focus on the child's safety was inconsistent in our selected cases. When done well, there was enough ongoing monitoring of the child's circumstances, assessments were updated, and other agencies were engaged in the work. Conversely, liaison with CAMHS or other support providers was frequently unsatisfactory, despite concerns about the child's mental or emotional wellbeing. Where there was a high risk to the child's safety, the appropriate level of multi-agency oversight was not always evident.

In some cases, the risk of the child causing harm to others was appropriately addressed. Interventions, including the One Punch programme to develop an understanding of the risks associated with violent behaviour, were used appropriately and in an individualised manner. When done well, the work was characterised by clear inter-agency cooperation and good engagement with the child's parents or carers. Where the issues were less well managed, case managers paid insufficient attention to issues such as emotional regulation or conflict resolution, to equip the child with greater capacity to avoid further risky behaviour.

⁹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision



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

Good

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

Strengths:

- The out-of-court disposal scheme operates within a working protocol between Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary and Youth Offending Services for Hampshire and IOW.
- The protocol is supported by a comprehensive out-of-court disposal policy and associated guidance. Within the decision-making and allocation process, the policy seeks to divert children into the most appropriate level of care and support services.
- The range of disposals and eligibility are well defined and there is differentiation between the types of disposals used.
- All the assessment tools used include screening to make sure the child's diversity, safety and risk of harm to others are considered.
- As part of these arrangements, the YJS delivers Youth Crime Prevention, a voluntary service for children aged 10 to 17 and their families. This is for children deemed to be at risk of offending, who are referred by the police and schools.
- The policy contains an approach to working with children's diverse needs and avoiding disproportionate outcomes. It specifically relates to heritage, gender, looked after status, special educational needs and disabilities and experience of poverty (including digital poverty).
- There is a weekly joint decision-making panel at which all decisions concerning community resolutions or other disposals are made. This is a multi-agency panel, at which the YJS and police lead the process.
- Data is used to demonstrate the effectiveness of the scheme in the Isle of Wight, and this includes the use of information on the range of diverse needs presented by the children.
- The YJS manager participates in an out-of-court disposal scrutiny panel, alongside the police and colleagues from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- All work is delivered within a time-bound process. This provides sufficient opportunity for assessment work to be undertaken, where necessary, to inform the panel's decision.

Areas for improvement:

- While the policy and strategic provision of out-of-court disposals appear to be operating effectively, our case inspection findings indicate that there needs to be greater scrutiny and oversight of the operational delivery of out-of-court disposals. This should focus on work to keep children and others safe. There is no clear input from children and their families into the scheme's monitoring and evaluation.

4.1. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Good

Strengths:

- There is a comprehensive policy and guidance document, which covers all aspects of resettlement work and sets out the required guidance on accommodation; education, training and employment; healthcare; substance misuse; families; and finance, benefits and debt.
- The policy, in setting out the principles of constructive resettlement, specifically addresses the need to develop a pro-social identity with the child and is clear about the requirement to share information between partner organisations.
- There are clear positions on the need to focus on the child's safety and wellbeing in custody and how to address and manage risk of harm to others, particularly where this requires multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA).
- In our inspection sample we found clear evidence that accommodation was planned for from an appropriately early point in the child's sentence.
- There were positive attempts to engage the children in education, both in custody and on release.
- There was a positive focus on the child's health needs in our inspected cases.
- In the inspected cases, we found that the diverse needs of the children were appropriately identified and that work by the case manager was constructed in a manner that was sensitive to these needs.

Areas for improvement:

- Apart from the requirement for referral to the probation service Victim Contact Unit for MAPPA category two violent or sexual offenders, there is no reference to victim work in the policy document.
- Transition to adult probation for the post-custody licence period of the sentence needs to be improved to maintain continuity of service provision around accommodation; education, training and employment; and health needs.
- Policies need to take greater account of the wider diverse needs of the children.

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.](#)