



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

Inspection standards for youth offending services

May 2021

Effective from July 2021

1. Organisational delivery

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.

1.1.1 Is there an effective local vision and strategy for the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

- a) Does the YOT Management Board set the direction and strategy for the YOT, prioritising the quality of service and adherence to the evidence base?
- b) Does the vision and strategy for the YOT address diversity considerations and set out equality objectives?
- c) Does the YOT Management Board include all statutory partners and non-statutory partners where these would add value?
- d) Are YOT Management Board members active in their attendance and participation, recognising the contribution their own agency makes to the YOT?
- e) Is the Chair of the YOT Management Board well-engaged, with a sufficient understanding of the YOT's work?
- f) Does the YOT Management Board incorporate the views of children into the YOT's local vision and strategy?
- g) Are there effective governance arrangements and clear delivery plans that translate the vision and strategy into effective case supervision?
- h) Is the impact of the strategy on delivery monitored and regularly reviewed?

1.1.2 Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?

- a) Do YOT Management Board members advocate the work of the YOT in their own broader roles?
- b) Do the YOT's partnerships arrangements facilitate the delivery of effective operational work?
- c) Do staff understand their roles and responsibilities within the partnership arrangements, and what they are accountable for?
- d) Does the YOT Management Board take a deliberate, strategic and informed approach to meeting diverse needs?
- e) Do other relevant local strategic partnerships give priority to work to support desistance and prevent harm, supporting integration with wider services for children?

1.1.3 Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?

- a) Does the YOT leadership team provide an effective link to the Management Board?
- b) Does the YOT leadership team effectively communicate the vision and strategy of the YOT to staff and stakeholders?
- c) Does the YOT leadership team successfully deliver and operationalise the vision and strategy?

- d) Does the YOT leadership team fully consider and address issues of responsivity and disproportionality in making decisions on policy and practice?
- e) Does the YOT leadership team promote openness, constructive challenge and ideas?
- f) Are risks to the service sufficiently understood by the leadership team, with appropriate mitigations and controls in place?

1.2 Staff

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

1.2.1 Do staffing and workload levels support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

- a) Are staffing levels sufficient?
- b) Are staffing levels planned and reviewed to meet the changing demands and case profiles?
- c) Are practitioners' and managers' workloads reasonable, given the profile of the cases and the range of work undertaken?
- d) Are workloads actively managed?
- e) Is there an effective strategy to maintain the quality of delivery during periods of planned and unplanned staff absences?

1.2.2 Do the skills of YOT staff support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

- a) Does the workforce adequately reflect the diversity of the local population and provide the skills to meet diverse needs?
- b) Are cases allocated to staff who are appropriately qualified and/or experienced?
- c) Is there an appropriate strategy in place to identify and develop the potential of individual staff to support succession planning?

1.2.3 Does the oversight of work support high-quality delivery and professional development?

- a) Do staff receive effective supervision to enhance the quality of work with children?
- b) Is there an effective induction programme for new staff that addresses issues of diversity and is accessible to all?
- c) Is the appraisal process used effectively to ensure that staff are competent to deliver a high-quality service?
- d) Is sufficient attention paid to identifying and addressing poor performance?

1.2.4 Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

- a) Does the YOT identify and plan for the learning needs of all staff?
- b) Does the YOT provide sufficient access to in-service training to support the delivery of a high-quality service?
- c) Does the YOT promote and value a culture of learning and continuous improvement?

d) Do staff from all backgrounds have equitable access to promotion opportunities, and reward and recognition?

1.2.5 Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?

- a) Are staff motivated to contribute to the delivery of a high-quality service?
- b) Is appropriate attention paid to monitoring and improving staff engagement levels?
- c) Do managers recognise and reward exceptional work?
- d) Is appropriate attention paid to staff safety and wellbeing, and building staff resilience?
- e) Are reasonable adjustments made for staff in accordance with statutory requirements, diversity and personal circumstances?

1.3 Partnerships and services

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

1.3.1 Is there a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of children, used by the YOT to deliver well-targeted services?

- a) Is there an up-to-date strategic and operational analysis of the desistance needs presented by the children?
- b) Does the analysis pay sufficient attention to factors for safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm?
- c) Does the analysis pay sufficient attention to diversity factors and to issues of disproportionality?
- d) Is there sufficient analysis of local patterns of sentencing and offence types?
- e) Is the analysis used effectively to influence service delivery?
- f) Does the analysis incorporate the views of children and families about the services they receive?

1.3.2 Does the YOT partnership provide the volume, range and quality of services and interventions required to meet the needs of all children?

- a) Is there access to the right specialist and mainstream services and interventions to meet the desistance needs of children?
- b) Is sufficient attention paid to building on strengths and enhancing protective factors?
- c) Are diversity factors and issues of disproportionality sufficiently addressed in the range of services provided?
- d) Is the quality of services reviewed and evaluated, including a review of the impact on diverse groups, with remedial action taken where required?

1.3.3 Are arrangements with statutory partners, providers and other agencies established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services?

- a) Are there effective arrangements with partners and providers to support desistance through access to specialist and mainstream services?

- b) Are there effective arrangements with partners and providers to support the safety and wellbeing of children?
- c) Are there effective arrangements with partners and providers to manage the risk of harm to others?
- d) Are there effective arrangements with partners and providers to support the personal circumstances and diversity needs of children?
- e) Are courts made sufficiently aware of the services available to support sentencing options?

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.

1.4.1 Do the policies and guidance in place enable staff to deliver a high-quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

- a) Are the necessary policies in place that describe and guide effective service delivery?
- b) Are policies and guidance communicated effectively to all those to whom they apply?
- c) Do staff understand how to access the right services from partners and providers?
- d) Are policies and guidance regularly reviewed, paying due regard to diversity issues?
- e) Are YOT processes effectively and regularly reviewed, including considering issues of disproportionality?

1.4.2 Does the YOT's delivery environment(s) meet the needs of all children and enable staff to deliver a high-quality service?

- a) Does the YOT deliver its work to children in accessible places?
- b) Is the YOT delivery environment a safe place for staff and children?
- c) Does the YOT delivery environment enable staff to undertake appropriate personalised work and engage effectively with children?

1.4.3 Do the information and communication technology (ICT) systems enable staff to deliver a high-quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

- a) Do the ICT systems enable staff to plan, deliver and record their work in a timely way, and to access information as required?
- b) Do the ICT arrangements allow access to and exchange of the right information to and from partners, providers and other key stakeholders?
- c) Do the ICT systems support the production of the necessary management information, including diversity information?

1.4.4 Are analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement?

- a) Do performance and quality assurance systems drive improvement?
- b) Are service improvement plans supported through evaluation and development of the underlying evidence base?
- c) Are processes in place to ensure that the YOT learns from things that go wrong?

- d) Are the views of the children, their parents or carers, and other key stakeholders sought, analysed and used to review and improve the effectiveness of services?
- e) Does the YOT collect and use diversity information to drive improvement?
- f) Where necessary, is action taken promptly and appropriately in response to audit or inspection?
- g) Is learning communicated effectively?

2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

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

2.1.1 Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?

- a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?
- b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?
- c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?
- d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?
- e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?
- f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?
- g) Is enough attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and their likelihood of engaging with the court disposal?
- h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?
- i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?

2.1.2 Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

- a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?
- b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?
- c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?

2.1.3 Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

- a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?
- b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?
- c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?

2.2 Planning

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

2.2.1 Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

- a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?
- b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?
- c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?
- d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?
- e) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?
- f) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims?
- g) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?

2.2.2 Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

- a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?
- b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?
- c) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?
- d) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?

2.2.3 Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

- a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?
- b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?
- c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?
- d) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?
- e) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?

2.3 Implementation and delivery

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

2.3.1 Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?

- a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?
- b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?
- c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?
- d) Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?
- e) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?
- f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to services post-supervision?
- g) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?
- h) Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?

2.3.2 Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?

- a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?
- b) Is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?

2.3.3 Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?

- a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?
- b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?
- c) Is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?

2.4 Reviewing

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

2.4.1 Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

- a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors linked to desistance?
- b) Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?
- c) Does reviewing include analysis of, and respond to, diversity factors?
- d) Does reviewing consider the personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?
- d) Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?
- e) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?
- f) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to support desistance?

2.4.2 Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

- a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing?
- b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?
- c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?

2.4.3 Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

- a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to risk of harm?
- b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?
- c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?

3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

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

3.1.1 Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?

- a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's acknowledgement of responsibility for, attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?
- b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?
- c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?
- d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?
- e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?
- f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?
- g) Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?
- h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?
- i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?

3.1.2 Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

- a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?
- b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?

3.1.3 Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

- a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?
- b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including any other assessments that have been completed, and other evidence of behaviour by the child?

3.2 Planning

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

3.2.1 Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?

- a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?
- b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?
- c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?
- d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?
- e) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?
- f) Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?
- g) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims?
- h) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?

3.2.2 Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

- a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?
- b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?
- c) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?

3.2.3 Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

- a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?
- b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?
- c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?
- d) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?

3.3 Implementation and delivery

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

3.3.1 Does service delivery support the child's desistance?

- a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?
- b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?
- c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?
- d) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?
- e) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?
- f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?

3.3.2 Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?

- a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?
- b) Is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-utilised and coordinated?

3.3.3 Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?

- a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?
- b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?

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.

3.4.1 Is there a policy in place for out-of-court disposal provision that promotes appropriate diversion and supports sustainable desistance?

- a) Is there a clear, joint protocol in place with the police, setting out a locally agreed out-of-court disposal policy and practice, including joint and defensible decision-making?
- b) Are the out-of-court disposal eligibility criteria clearly defined and appropriately broad to allow for the use of discretion while avoiding inappropriate net-widening?
- c) Does the out-of-court disposal eligibility criteria include an escalation process which avoids the inappropriate overuse of specific disposals?
- d) Does the policy set out the distinct and substantial differences between community resolutions and formal out-of-court disposals?
- e) Are arrangements set out to ensure that children are actively and consistently diverted into the most appropriate care and support services?
- f) Does the out-of-court disposals policy describe how diversity needs will be addressed?
- g) Are arrangements set out to ensure that children are kept safe?
- h) Are arrangements set out to ensure the safety of other people?

3.4.2 Does out-of-court disposal provision promote diversion and support sustainable desistance?

- a) Is there an out-of-court disposal panel or other suitable means of joint decision-making in place that includes representation from the YOT, police and social care as a minimum?
- b) Does the out-of-court disposal panel or decision-making process support timely and effective diversion?
- c) Is there a clear and effective escalation process in place when the out-of-court disposal panel or decision-making process is unable to achieve consensus?
- d) Are arrangements in place to ensure that out-of-court disposals are consistently applied in a timely and robust manner?
- e) Is a wide range of out-of-court disposal interventions available that are strengths based, future focused and promote positive child outcomes?
- f) Is sufficient attention given to compliance with, and enforcement of, conditions where appropriate?
- g) Does the provision pay sufficient attention to keeping children safe?
- h) Does the provision pay sufficient attention to keeping other people safe?

3.4.3 Are the out-of-court disposal policy and provision regularly assessed and updated to ensure effectiveness and maintain alignment with the evidence base?

- a) Are the out-of-court disposal policy and provision regularly evaluated and reviewed?
- b) Does evaluation include the use of data and is it informed by necessary input from other agencies involved in delivering the out-of-court disposal service?

- c) Does evaluation include active consideration of diversity issues?
- d) Do evaluation and review identify and respond to changes in the out-of-court disposal evidence base?
- e) Do evaluation and review lead to the necessary adjustments to the out-of-court disposal policy and provision?
- f) Are children and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in the evaluation and review of out-of-court disposal policy and provision?

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

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

4.1.1 Is there a resettlement policy in place that promotes a high-quality, constructive and personalised resettlement service for all children?

- a) Does the resettlement policy set out the arrangements for the suitable and timely provision of accommodation, education, training and employment, healthcare and other resettlement pathway services?
- b) Does the resettlement policy address structural barriers to effective resettlement enabling pro-social identity development?
- c) Does the resettlement policy describe how diversity needs will be addressed?
- d) Does the resettlement policy advocate an approach to personalised support that is constructive, strengths based and future focused?
- e) Does the resettlement policy set out the arrangements for access to, and exchange of, the right information to and from partners, providers and other key stakeholders?
- f) Does the resettlement policy set out arrangements to ensure that children are kept safe?
- g) Does the resettlement policy set out arrangements to ensure the safety of other people?
- h) Does the resettlement policy address the needs of victims?

4.1.2 Does resettlement provision promote a high-quality, constructive and personalised resettlement service for all children?

- a) Is suitable and timely accommodation provision available for all children leaving custody?
- b) Is appropriate access to other services, including education, training and employment, and healthcare, available for all children leaving custody?
- c) Is sufficient attention paid to meeting diversity needs in resettlement provision?
- d) Is the approach to resettlement provision evidence based?
- e) Are staff specifically trained to assess, identify, plan for and respond to each child's resettlement needs?
- f) Does resettlement provision pay sufficient attention to keeping children safe?
- g) Does resettlement provision pay sufficient attention to keeping other people safe?
- h) Does resettlement provision address the needs of victims?

4.1.3 Are resettlement policy and provision regularly assessed and updated to ensure effectiveness and maintain alignment with the evidence base?

- a) Are resettlement policy and provision regularly evaluated and reviewed?
- b) Does evaluation include the use of data and is it informed by necessary input from other agencies involved in delivering elements of resettlement?
- c) Does evaluation include active consideration of diversity issues?

- d) Do evaluation and review identify and respond to changes in the resettlement evidence base?
- e) Do evaluation and review lead to the necessary adjustments to resettlement policy and provision?
- f) Are children and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in the evaluation and review of resettlement policy and provision?