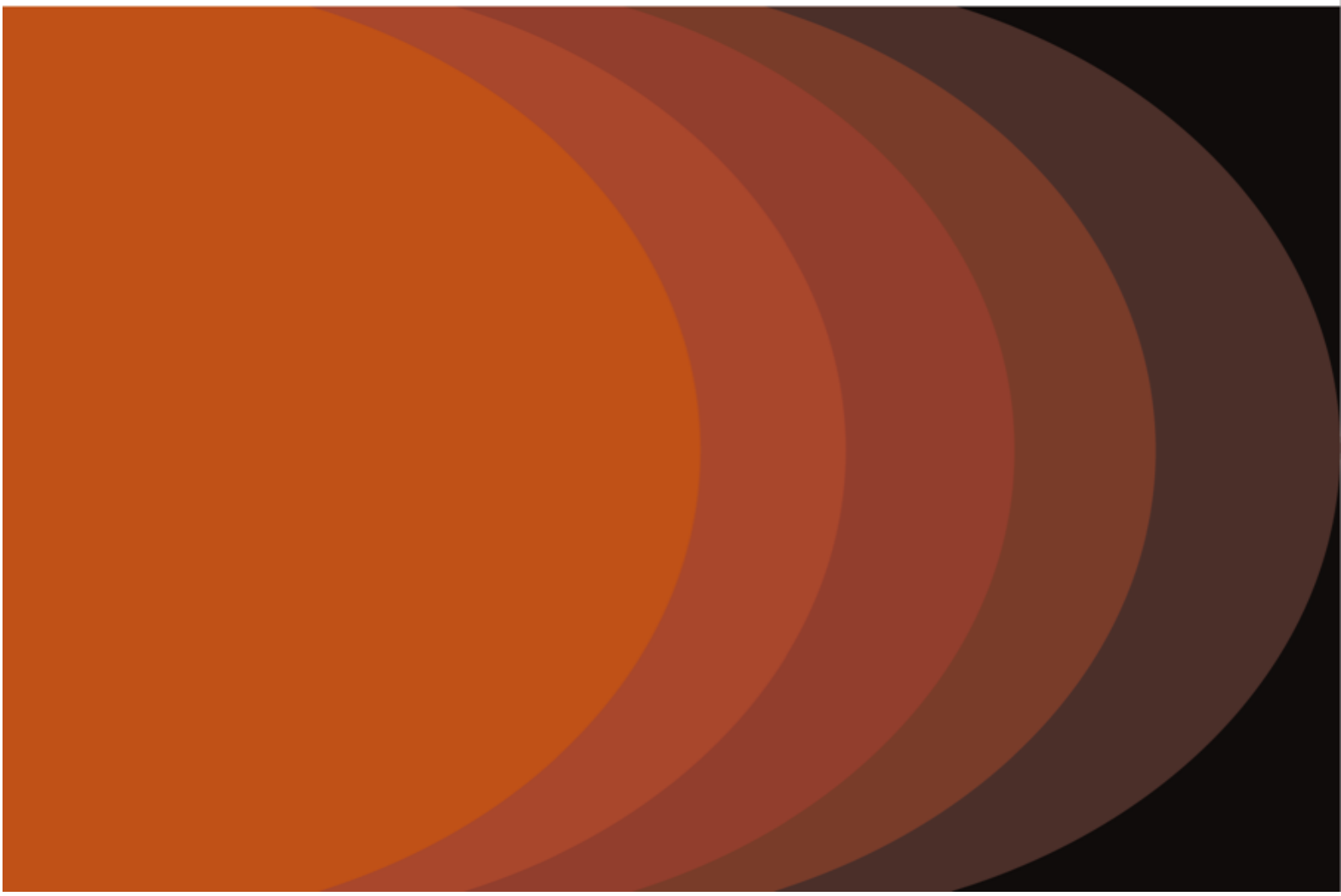




Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in
Windsor & Maidenhead

HM Inspectorate of Probation, November 2020



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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending service work with adults and children.

We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice, and use our data and information to encourage high-quality services. We are independent of government, and speak independently.

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Introduction

This inspection is part of our four-year programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Windsor & Maidenhead YOS across three broad areas of its work, referred to as 'domains': 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. We inspect against 12 'standards', shared between the domains. Overall, Windsor & Maidenhead YOS was rated as 'Good'.

Our standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended. Published scoring rules generate the overall YOS rating. The findings and subsequent ratings in those domains are described in this report. Our fieldwork, conducted through off-site analysis of case files and phone and video conferencing, took place between 24 and 28 August 2020.

Overall, youth offending services in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead are 'Good'.

Governance and leadership, staff, partnerships and services, and information and facilities have each been rated as 'Good'. The YOS Management Board advocates for children involved with the youth offending team (YOT). Practitioners are motivated and knowledgeable, and participate well in the YOT's integrated model of working. Children have access to a good range of personalised services and interventions that take account of the views and needs of victims and the community. The Board is newly formed and still establishing its membership. Not all of its strategic partnerships are effective and it would benefit from strengthening its insight into the impact of the YOT's out-of-court disposal work and how well it fulfils its duties under the *Equality Act 2010*.














We inspected three post-court cases. We rated the quality of assessment, implementation and delivery, and reviewing as 'Good', and planning as 'Requires improvement'. The YOT maintained sufficient focus on managing and reducing risk of harm and considered the needs and wishes of victims. However, there was inconsistency in the quality of joint work with children's social care services and a need for more focused planning to support desistance.

We looked at the quality of work in two out-of-court cases. Assessment and joint working were rated as 'Outstanding'. However, planning, and implementation and delivery were rated as 'Requires improvement'. Practitioners used their professional curiosity to gain a thorough understanding of the needs in both cases and took a fully collaborative approach with the police to implement the out-of-court disposals. However, aspects of planning, and implementation and delivery of services, and interventions were not sufficiently robust.



Marc Baker
Director of Operations

Ratings

Windsor & Maidenhead Youth Offending Service		Score	23/36
Overall rating		Good	
1. Organisational delivery			
1.1	Governance and leadership	Good	
1.2	Staff	Good	
1.3	Partnerships and services	Good	
1.4	Information and facilities	Good	
2. Court disposals			
2.1	Assessment	Good	
2.2	Planning	Requires improvement	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Good	
2.4	Reviewing	Good	
3. Out-of-court disposals			
3.1	Assessment	Outstanding	
3.2	Planning	Requires improvement	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement	
3.4	Joint working	Outstanding	

Recommendations

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

The Windsor & Maidenhead Youth Offending Service should:

1. strengthen its arrangements to support desistance, making sure that plans reflect the best interests of the individual child and provide sufficient detail to help them understand the work to be completed
2. make sure that written plans are updated to reflect changes in circumstances in a case.

The YOT Management Board should:

3. strengthen the YOT's partnership with children's social care services and the probation service to provide an effective, collaborative approach to case management
4. develop its understanding and strategic oversight of the Equality Act 2010 and scrutinise the YOT's contribution to meeting the requirements of this legislation
5. scrutinise out-of-court disposal data and processes to provide the best outcomes for children and the wider community.

Background

Youth offending teams (YOTs) supervise 10–18-year-olds who have been sentenced by a court, or who have come to the attention of the police because of their offending behaviour but have not been charged – instead, they were dealt with out of court. HM Inspectorate of Probation inspects both these aspects of youth offending services. We use the terms child or children to denote their special legal status and to highlight the obligations of relevant agencies such as social care, education and health to meet their safety and wellbeing needs.

YOTs are statutory partnerships, and they are multi-disciplinary, to deal with the needs of the whole child. They are required to have staff from local authority social care and education services, the police, the National Probation Service and local health services.¹ Most YOTs are based within local authorities; however, this can vary.

YOT work is governed and shaped by a range of legislation and guidance specific to the youth justice sector (such as the National Standards for Youth Justice) or else applicable across the criminal justice sector (for example, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements guidance). The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) provides some funding to YOTs. It also monitors their performance and issues guidance to them about how things are to be done.

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) sits in Berkshire, in the south of England. It became a unitary authority on the dissolution of Berkshire County Council in 1998.

This is a borough with a small population. Its youth population comprises 10.7 per cent of its total population, which is fairly consistent with the regional and national picture. Sixteen per cent of children in the borough identify as black and minority ethnic, compared with 12 per cent in the South East and 18 per cent across England and Wales. Care should be taken when drawing conclusions from small numbers, but data indicates that children from black and minority ethnic heritage (16 per cent) are over-represented among children in RBWM who are cautioned or sentenced (22 per cent).

RBWM took joint ownership of Achieving for Children, a not-for-profit social enterprise, in 2017. This organisation provides children's services for RBWM and the neighbouring Richmond and Kingston boroughs. In January 2020, Ofsted rated children's services in RBWM as 'Good'.

The YOT's workstreams include prevention, an early intervention service (its out-of-court disposal work) and its statutory casework (court sentences).

In line with national trends, the number of children entering the criminal justice system is decreasing, but the cases managed by the YOT are more complex. Children have increasing safety and wellbeing needs, and there is a greater focus on their risk of being exploited. Of the 17 cases (out-of-court and post-court disposals), 11 (65 per cent) involved violent offences.

As a small organisation, the YOT faces a challenge to plan for and provide appropriate services to meet the complexity of its caseload, and to prevent the focus of YOT children being diluted in the wider children's agenda. In RBWM, the YOT

¹ The *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* set out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

Management Board was previously amalgamated into the Community Safety Partnership. In 2018, it became a discrete entity and began the process of strengthening partnerships to support YOT service provision to children.

Contextual facts

Population information

150,906	Total population Windsor & Maidenhead (2018) ²
16,074	Total youth population (10–17 years) in Windsor & Maidenhead (2018) ²
2,569	Total black and minority ethnic youth population Windsor & Maidenhead (2011) ³

Demographics of young people cautioned or sentenced⁴

Age	10–14 years	15–17 years
Windsor & Maidenhead YOS	19%	81%
National average	23%	77%

Race/ethnicity	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
Windsor & Maidenhead YOS	78%	22%	0%
National average	70%	26%	4%

Gender	Male	Female
Windsor & Maidenhead YOS	85%	15%
National average	85%	15%

Additional caseload data⁵

5	Total current caseload: community sentences
9	Total current caseload: youth caution and youth conditional caution

² Office for National Statistics. (2019). *UK Population estimates, mid-2018*.

³ Office for National Statistics. (2012). *Census 2011*.

⁴ Youth Justice Board. (2020). *Youth Justice annual statistics: 2018 to 2019*.

⁵ Information supplied by YOT, reflecting caseload on 17 July 2020.

1. Organisational delivery



Strengths:

- The YOT Management Board sets the vision and drives the ambition of the YOT, actively seeking to improve service provision and keeping the needs of YOT children central to the partnership agenda.
- Board members balance their focus on strategy and the quality of casework, continuously strengthening their knowledge and scrutiny of the YOT's work with children.
- The views of staff, children, families and other stakeholders are valued and used to help strengthen service provision.
- The YOT has a fully integrated, motivated staff, working within a culture of learning and development, and supported by a comparatively large team of volunteers.
- Children have access to a good range of services and interventions that support them beyond their period of engagement with the YOT.
- The YOT has a good focus on victims and restorative justice, taking steps to try to encourage their participation in the victims service.
- The Board is responsive to new information, using this to anticipate future needs and inform plans to address these.

Areas for improvement:

- The YOT Management Board is yet to become fully established; it is still developing arrangements that provide for consistent attendance by appropriate partner representatives.
- Despite efforts to strengthen links with children's social care and probation services, the lack of effective partnership with these agencies is affecting the quality of case management.
- There is too little scrutiny of out-of-court disposals to enable the Board to assure itself that the process is effective and leading to positive outcomes.
- The YOT Management Board provides too little strategic oversight of the YOS response to the *Equality Act 2010*.

Organisations that are well led and well managed are more likely to achieve their aims. We inspect against four standards.

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.

Good

In making a judgement about governance and leadership, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

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

The YOT Management Board is still relatively new and is trying to establish an effective, consistent membership. It works cohesively to champion its vision for children and keep their needs central to the partnership agenda. Members drive an ambitious plan for improvement, taking an active interest in strategy and the quality of practice.

The Management Board was incorporated into the Community Safety Partnership until 2018. Achieving for Children, on taking responsibility for the YOT, set up a distinct Management Board to reinvigorate the strategic focus on YOT children. The Board meets every other month to cement its identity and maintain its child-first focus.

The Board has extended its membership to include a parent, lay professional and a youth court representative to broaden its perspective and understand better the impact of its decisions on the community.

Practitioner-facilitated workshops and discussions about the YOT's five most complex cases are a standing agenda item and enable Board members to keep abreast of emerging trends and to judge the quality of YOT service provision.

Responsibility for compliance with the specific duties stipulated by the *Equality Act 2010* sits with Achieving for Children. The YOT Management Board should better understand the Act, to make sure it meets its general duties and help inform its strategic priorities and scrutiny of the YOT. The YOT Management Board evidences its commitment to inclusivity but has little knowledge and awareness of the *Equality Act 2010* and does not provide enough strategic oversight of work relating to this.

Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?

Board members are interested in and knowledgeable about YOT children and how their agencies contribute to the wider partnership. They attend a range of boards and meetings, ensuring that the YOT's profile remains high and keeping the Board up to date with local and national strategies and priorities.

The YOT is fully integrated into Achieving for Children's partnership delivery model. This provides a seamless service for children, who can continue to receive specialist support following the period of intervention by the YOT.

Senior partners champion the needs of YOT children, and children on the cusp of offending, in the work of their own agencies. In health provision, this has been instrumental in the clinical commissioning group's (CCG) recent decision to provide a psychologist to the YOT. In education, this has helped to encourage schools to take a restorative approach to knife possession rather than automatically excluding a child.

The Board's knowledge of children working with the YOT helps it to anticipate future service needs, and where to strengthen partnerships to meet these. One example is the Board's focus on the quality of services to support remands to overnight custody and recent efforts to start engaging with HMP/YOI Feltham in response to escalating issues in their current caseload.

Board members actively challenge each other and the YOT to strengthen partnership arrangements. However, as the Chair is also the Board representative for children's social care services, independent scrutiny falls to the Deputy Chair. This role is fulfilled by the probation service, which is not consistent in its attendance at meetings. At an operational level, there have been issues relating to the quality of joint work between YOT practitioners and children's social care that Board arrangements have not been successful in addressing.

Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?

The YOT's leaders are visible and knowledgeable, and take an inclusive approach to service development. Practitioners are familiar with the Board, with some attending meetings to share their operational knowledge. Information about the Board's work, the YOT's vision for children, its priorities and improvement plan are shared with staff through a range of meetings and supervision processes.

Senior leaders understand the strengths of and risks to the YOT, such as the need for objective governance and the potential influx of cases once the courts open fully. They have contingencies in place to deal with these.

The YOT Head of Service post is being held in abeyance. As an interim measure, the role has been added to the portfolio of the Deputy Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help. This has the potential to lead to a conflict of interest. Recognising the need for open and objective challenge between the YOT and children's social care services, the Deputy Director has a succession plan as a contingency measure.

The YOT's improvement plan is ambitious but senior leaders are confident that it is achievable. There are systems to monitor progress against its objectives, and key milestones in place to set the pace of change. The plan includes appropriate measures to develop prevention, early intervention (out-of-court work) and post-court work but for some key areas, such as the introduction of trauma-informed practice, the timescales set out in the plan are too generous and do not reflect the importance of this work.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Key staffing data⁶

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent, FTE)	6.1
Average caseload per case manager (FTE)	8.7

In making a judgement about staffing, we take into account the answers to the following four questions:

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

The YOT has worked hard to establish the right staffing levels and structures to provide a fully integrated service to its children.

The staff includes: a dedicated YOT administrator and performance officer; victim, volunteer and mentoring lead; police officer; health worker; speech and language therapist; and a psychologist. Despite the YOT's efforts, no probation officer has been embedded in the YOT for some time. Unable to recruit a social worker, the YOT has seconded two part-time social workers from the children's safeguarding 'Front Door'. The National Probation Service (NPS) and children's social care services have provided single points of contact to strengthen communication with these services about individual children.

The capacity of the YOT is enhanced by its volunteers, who currently number 20. They feel well-supported to fulfil their roles as mentor, panel member, appropriate adult and/or reparation supervisor.

Caseworkers play an integral role in early help prevention work. Their workloads fluctuate, and at busy times they are expected to prioritise their statutory and out-of-court disposal work ahead of their early help cases. Additionally, each caseworker has responsibility for other aspects of the YOT's work – for example, court duty, the parenting group and reparation activities. As a result, they are busy but, overall, their workloads are manageable.

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

Staff feel valued and appreciate the YOT's positive team ethos and the manager's style of work. They are interested in the lives of the children and work well within their integrated delivery model.

The YOT has 1.5 full-time-equivalent (FTE) caseworkers. Even so, cases are allocated through a formal process, using an allocation tool that takes account of the

⁶ Data supplied by the YOT and reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

complexity of a case and the caseworker's additional responsibilities, and their skills and interests.

Leaders are aware of the importance of a diverse workforce. The YOT staff is almost entirely female; therefore, the YOT has set itself an objective to recruit more male volunteers within the next three months and, where boys are referred to the youth service, they will link with a male worker where appropriate.

Neither YOT caseworker is social worker qualified. Keeping children safe is a priority for the YOT, however, and caseworkers are supported by training, oversight and a multidisciplinary approach to case management. They have the opportunity to revisit and embed their skills through their involvement in YOT improvement activities – for example, the national standards audit of casework, and development of the (Sexual) Exploitation and Missing Risk Assessment Conference assessment tools. A recent Achieving for Children learning and development survey identified that practitioners would like more training on 'safeguarding and its wider impact'.

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

There are a range of measures to oversee the quality of case management and help address any obstacles to progress. These include discussions by the Board about children working with the YOT, multi-agency meetings to support children at risk of exploitation and missing, and risk and safeguarding meetings.

There is a good balance between the need to meet targets and the importance of providing a high-quality service. The YOT manager has a good understanding of the children working with the YOT, and within this context practitioners are given the autonomy to be creative and to personalise the services they deliver.

Individual cases are discussed during one-to-one supervision. Practitioners value the approach used for management oversight, and records indicate that this adds value to the quality of case management. Staff performance management measures are used, where necessary, to help maintain the quality of casework.

As a small YOT, the manager is responsible for audit, countersigning and providing case management advice to practitioners. The YOT recognises the importance of objectivity and is liaising with neighbouring YOTs about reciprocal audit arrangements.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

The YOT promotes a culture of learning and development, and individual staff are encouraged to progress through the organisation.

Training is managed through Achieving for Children, informed by an annual learning needs survey, available through a range of methods and tailored to individual staff need. In addition to a mandatory 'unconscious bias' course, Achieving for Children offers a range of equality and diversity courses, including cultural awareness, gender stereotyping and gender identity.

The impact of learning and development activities is measured through the YOT's case audit process and evaluation of participants' training experience.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Good

In making a judgement about partnerships and services, we take into account the following three questions:

Is there a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of children, to ensure that the YOT can deliver well-targeted services?

The small size of the YOT's caseload allows the service to identify equality and diversity issues as these arise. Additionally, the YOT's monthly data scorecard includes a breakdown of disposals by, for example, ethnicity, gender, child in care/protection status and age. The YOT understands the relevance of distinguishing between children from different white backgrounds, including the Irish Traveller, Roma and Gypsy communities. The Board has also been presented with data and information relating to speech and language needs and adverse childhood experiences to help members understand the prevalence of these among the children with whom they work, and the importance of a trauma-informed approach to practice.

The YOT not only looks at its own caseload, but also seeks to understand national diversity and disproportionality issues – for example, the experience of children in care.

Discussions on emerging needs and data relating to YOT children have been used to inform resourcing and service development priorities. Examples include an offer of restorative justice training to local care placements and the plan to embed a trauma-informed case management approach.

The YOT is aware that it would benefit from having a more sophisticated understanding of the context within which children offend and their experience of the criminal justice system. It is strengthening the monthly data scorecard to include factors relating to safety and wellbeing, risk of harm and other diversity characteristics. In autumn 2020, the YOT will be completing an audit of work with girls and then looking in more depth at the experience of children of black, Asian and minority ethnic, Roma, Gypsy and Irish Traveller backgrounds.

Does the YOT partnership have access to the volume, range and quality of services and interventions to meet the needs of all children?

Children have access to a good range of mainstream services and interventions to support their desistance, safety and wellbeing, and reduce the harm they pose to others.

The YOT follows a hub-and-spoke model, referring into the services available, across Achieving for Children and from partners, to widen the breadth of interventions available. The youth service provides an extensive programme of courses and interventions, including holiday diversion schemes, the substance misuse service and mentors. Children supervised by the YOT are identified as 'vulnerable' and given priority access to the interventions provided.

The YOT is also running a programme for the parents/carers of children at risk of offending to support their emotional resilience, coping and problem-solving skills, and strengthen their understanding of factors linked to their child's safety and wellbeing.

Where possible, reparation activities are tailored to meet the interests and aspirations of children – for example, baking a cake for a victim or playing the piano to an audience of older people attending a local centre. Litter picking is also an option where it is used to help facilitate conversations with children.

The YOT is increasing its focus on knife crime interventions. Staff value the YOT's emphasis on creativity that enables them to respond favourably to ideas from service users about initiatives to strengthen children's engagement and learning. An example of this is the recent participation of a number of children in the Ben Kinsella Trust anti-knife crime workshops.

The YOT is supportive and responsive to victims, tailoring its approach to victim awareness, direct reparation and restorative justice to reflect the needs of each case. In the year to March 2020, 17 of the 36 victims offered contact with the YOT accepted this. The YOT is working to increase this level of engagement.

Achieving for Children initiatives and interventions – for example, the parenting group and the drugs diversion programme – are evaluated. Although completed by the YOT, the evaluations take account of feedback from service users, are used to inform service improvement work, and are scrutinised by the Management Board.

In the main, caseloads are too small to provide group interventions that cater for different diversity needs. The YOT works to reflect the individual needs of its children on a case-by-case basis. The majority of YOT staff are female and are well aware of the impact of this on boys. Children have access to a group programme to enhance their self-esteem but practitioners have identified a need for a 'boys' group' to help develop their resilience and address issues relating to their self-identify. The YOT has built relationships with agencies and specialists in the community from whom it can seek advice about cultures, faiths and inclusivity issues (for example, advice relating to Muslim or Irish Traveller children).

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

The YOT has an effective partnership with the NHS. The CCG has provided, part time, a speech and language therapist, health nurse and psychologist, who are fully integrated into the service delivery model.

The YOT police officer is integral to the delivery of YOT work, working collaboratively with caseworkers to plan and facilitate post-court and out-of-court disposal work. She fulfils her role to provide information and intelligence relating to YOT children and delivers one-to-one offence-focused work with children, especially in relation to knife possession.

The (Sexual) Exploitation and Missing Risk Assessment Conferences strengthen the quality of case management, enabling partners to share intelligence that leads to joint action to help safeguard relevant children.

Gaps in the provision of post-16 education, training and employment, and the absence of a probation officer, have affected the quality of case management. The YOT has persevered in its efforts to address this. Young people can now participate

in the new Ways2Work initiative to increase their access to training and apprenticeships. The YOT has received money from the NPS for a part-time, qualified probation officer and intends to recruit to this post this autumn.

The high turnover of social workers in Windsor & Maidenhead has led to barriers in communication and partnership working in individual cases. In some instances, children's social care services have withdrawn their support once the YOT becomes involved with a family. This has occurred even in cases where children are subject to child protection measures, leaving them without the necessary professional protections that this status provides. We were pleased to learn that children's social care services increased their team of permanent social workers during 2020, leading to a more collaborative approach to case management.

An established and agreed process for out-of-court disposal decision-making reflects the need for proportionality, and the voluntary nature of community resolutions and youth cautions. The police are making community resolution and first youth caution decisions without the YOT's involvement. While there is a review process for these decisions, the police agree that this does not reflect a trauma-informed approach. The proportion of children who accept their invitation to engage with voluntary out-of-court disposals is low. In the year to March 2020, only 2 of 25 children given a community resolution or youth caution agreed to participate in an intervention. The YOT Management Board has identified this as an issue to address. Current measures to increase participation are yet to achieve this objective.

Involvement of children and their parents and carers

The YOT listens to the voice of children and their families. Representation at the Board includes the parent of a child who has experienced a YOT intervention, who considers the Board to be inclusive and supportive. In summer 2019, the Board facilitated a workshop for families, children and other stakeholders to contribute to the YOT vision and help identify its priorities for development.

Feedback is sought as part of the case management audit process, after a child has completed their intervention with the YOT, and to contribute to service impact evaluations.

The YOT responds well to feedback – for instance, using this to improve the reception area in the YOT building and expand its portfolio of interventions to address serious youth violence.

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

In making a judgement about information and facilities, we take into account the following four questions:

Are the necessary policies and guidance in place to enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

YOT staff have access to policies, guidance and protocols to enhance partnership working and support their case management decisions. These are up to date and reviewed after an appropriate period. Caseworkers know how to refer to partners and to interventions.

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

The YOT building is shared with the early help team. The reception area is spacious and the YOT has worked with the speech and language therapist to improve the information available there. The building has a large kitchen area, where children bake as one of the reparation activities. In another room, a pool table is used as an aid to communication with children. YOT staff, partners and volunteers consider the YOT building to offer a safe environment for those who visit and work there.

Children can meet with YOT staff at youth service hubs. This is not only helpful to children who have difficulty coming into the YOT office, for transport or safety reasons, but can also be an effective way of introducing them to the services offered there.

Most children attend the YOT or youth service buildings for their appointments. However, home visits take place to understand the child's family dynamics and to assess safeguarding issues.

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

Although YOT staff have had mobile phones with internet facility for some time, until recently their computer systems did not consistently and effectively support their work. The YOT team has now been provided with up-to-date laptops. This coincided with the COVID-19 lockdown, supporting effective remote working during this period.

The YOT and children's social care services have two separate information management systems. The YOT is able to check if children are known to children's social care but the lack of a joint system causes frustration to the YOT and its partners. The social worker secondments should help to address these issues.

Is analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement?

The YOT has sufficient understanding of its strengths and areas for development and the Board is responsive to new information and promotes a culture of improvement.

The quality of the YOT's case management is audited through the Achieving for Children performance quality assurance framework. This is a relatively new system which is still bedding in. The first YOT annual audit impact report has been used to identify where the process needs to be strengthened. The YOT's ambition is to agree reciprocal quality assurance arrangements with other YOTs to strengthen the objectivity of audit processes.

The Board is presented with a range of data and performance reports, including a national standards performance report and quarterly updates. These provide sufficient information to help the Board understand how well the YOT is meeting its key performance indicators and to forecast future challenges. A full performance report provides further insight, highlighting relevant areas to help the Board understand the context within which the YOT works. The YOT continues to develop

the format of the reports so that the Board can better understand how well the YOT is performing.

The YOT demonstrates its commitment to improvement by looking at the findings and learning from HM Inspectorate of Probation YOT inspections and benchmarking its practice against these. Learning from audits and performance reviews is also incorporated into the YOT improvement plan, which is used actively to monitor development work.

The Board would benefit from having a more in-depth understanding of how out-of-court disposal work helps the YOT to fulfil its vision for children. There is too little analysis of the process to identify issues relating to disproportionality and its impact on first-time entrants and offending rates. Currently, the Board cannot assure itself that the process is effective and leading to positive outcomes.



2. Court disposals

We inspected three community sentence cases managed by the YOT. There were no custody cases that met our timeframe criterion. We also conducted three interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery of services; and reviewing.

Strengths:

- The YOT focused well on work to keep other people safe.
- Where appropriate, the YOT considered the needs and wishes of victims.
- The YOT was integral to the partnership approach to keeping children and others safe.
- The (Sexual) Exploitation and Missing Risk Assessment Conference provided effective impetus and oversight of work to keep children and others safe, and the YOT police officer played an integral role in addressing risk of harm issues.
- The YOT had an effective relationship with the youth service; children had good access to the substance misuse service and exploitation mentors; and there was a strong and appropriate emphasis on the impact of carrying weapons, including participation in the Ben Kinsella Trust anti-knife crime workshops.
- The YOT used a range of methods to encourage engagement and compliance.

Areas for improvement:

- Plans did not provide enough detail about the interventions to be completed or help the child to understand the work they would participate in, or when. They were written in formal language, and it was hard to identify how the voice and needs of the child featured.
- Work was not consistently aimed at meeting the desistance needs identified during assessment – to support a child’s resilience, self-identity, and education, training and employment.
- In one case where there was a need for a collaborative approach with the child’s social worker, children’s social care services withdrew their involvement when they learned the YOT was involved with the family.
- In one case, the needs of the child were overshadowed by the YOT’s focus on his transition to probation services. We were not assured that this transfer served the best interests of the child, and we would have expected to see a more seamless and child-focused handover.
- There was too little focus on completing written reviews, even where this was highlighted as a need through the management oversight process. This was particularly concerning in the case of the child being transferred to probation services.

Work with children sentenced by the courts will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

2.1. Assessment



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

Good

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

Of the three cases inspected	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	3
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	2
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	3

The quality of assessment in this YOT was rated as 'Good'. There was a sufficient assessment of desistance and the risk of harm the child posed to other people in each of the three cases assessed, but a need for better analysis of children's social care involvement in one case.

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

Of the three cases inspected	Number 'Yes'
Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	3
Does assessment consider the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, utilising information held by other agencies?	1
Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	3
Where applicable, does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	2
Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and their likelihood of engaging with the court disposal?	3

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. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s, and opportunities for restorative justice?	1
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	3

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

Of the three cases inspected	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	2
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	2
Where applicable, does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	2

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Of the three cases inspected:	Number 'Yes'
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?	3
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	3
Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	3

2.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement⁸

Our rating⁹ for planning is based on the following key questions:

Of the three cases inspected	Number of relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	3	1
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? ¹⁰	3	2
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? ¹¹	3	2

There were noticeable weaknesses in relation to planning to support desistance. However, the information provided by staff interviewed, and the overall planning to keep the child, themselves, and others safe, led to an overall rating of 'Requires improvement'.

Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?

Of the three cases inspected:	Number 'Yes'
Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	0
Does planning take sufficient account of the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child?	2
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	1

⁸ Due to the size of the sample, performance in one case had a disproportionate impact on the overall score for this standard. The evidence available indicated that planning, overall, was not 'Inadequate' and the ratings panel exercised professional discretion to agree a rating for planning of 'Requires improvement'.

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. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

¹⁰ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.

¹¹ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping other people safe.

Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	3
Where applicable, does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s?	1
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	2

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Of the three cases with factors related to keeping the child safe:	Number 'Yes'
Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	3
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?	2
Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	2
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	3

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Of the three cases with factors related to keeping other people safe:	Number 'Yes'
Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	2
Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	2
Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	1
Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	3
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	2

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating¹² for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Of the three cases inspected	Number of relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?	3	2
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child? ¹³	3	2
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people? ¹⁴	3	3

The overall quality of implementation and delivery was rated as 'Good'. Work to support desistance, and safety and wellbeing, was variable but work to keep other people safe was sufficient for every element in this standard (there was only one case with relevant victim issues to address).

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

Of the three cases inspected:	Number 'Yes'
Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	0
Does service delivery reflect the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents/carers or significant others?	2
Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	2
Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents/carers?	3

¹² The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

¹³ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.

¹⁴ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping other people safe.

Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to services post-supervision?	2
Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	3
In cases when it is required, are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	2

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

Of the three cases with factors related to keeping the child safe:	Number 'Yes'
Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	3
Where applicable, is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?	2

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

Of the three cases with factors related to keeping other people safe:	Number 'Yes'
Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	3
Where applicable, is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	1
Where applicable, is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well coordinated?	3

2.4. Reviewing



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

Good

Our rating¹⁵ for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

Of the three cases inspected ¹⁶	Number of relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	3	2
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	3	2
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	1	1

Reviewing was rated as 'Good'. There was a fairly consistent approach to this area of work, which, in the main, was completed sufficiently well.

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

Of the three cases where there were changes in factors related to desistance:	Number 'Yes'
Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors linked to desistance?	2
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	2
Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	2
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	2

¹⁵ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

¹⁶ We only expect to see evidence of reviewing, in cases where there have been changes in factors related to desistance, keeping the child safe and/or keeping other people safe.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Of the three cases where there were changes in factors related to keeping the child safe:	Number 'Yes'
Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing?	2
Where applicable, is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?	2
Where applicable, does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	1

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Of the one case where there were changes in factors related to keeping other people safe:	Number 'Yes'
Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to risk of harm?	1
Where applicable, is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	1
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their risk of harm, and are their views taken into account?	1
Where applicable, does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	1



3. Out-of-court disposals

We inspected two cases managed by the YOT that had received an out-of-court disposal. Both were youth conditional cautions, and we interviewed each case manager.

We examined the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements are always inspected in respect of work done to address desistance. As both the youth conditional cautions inspected involved factors relating to safety and wellbeing, and keeping other people safe, we inspected the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services for these aspects of work too. We also looked at the quality of joint working with local police.

Strengths:

- Caseworkers completed comprehensive assessments, using information available from other agencies, and their professional curiosity, to understand the needs of each case. They considered all the factors that could have an impact on the child, including their lived experience, past trauma, family dynamics, wider social context and diversity factors.
- There was an appropriate focus on addressing risk of harm issues relating to the index offence, which in both cases involved the possession of weapons.
- The YOT took a collaborative approach, working well with the youth service and police in order to understand and address issues relating to the child's safety and wellbeing, and knife crime.
- Where relevant, the YOT paid due regard to the needs and wishes of identified victims.
- The YOT made sure that children participated in work to improve their resilience and lifestyle, and to address their substance misuse where these were identified during assessment.

Areas for improvement:

- Plans to support desistance lacked detail and did not reflect the child's voice or issues relating to complex diversity factors.
- Work to support desistance was not sequenced appropriately or completed promptly.
- In one case, the YOT did not do enough to address risk of harm issues beyond those posed by the index offence.

Work with children receiving out-of-court disposals will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

3.1. Assessment



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

Outstanding

Our rating¹⁷ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

Of the two cases inspected:	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	2
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	2
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	2

There was sufficient assessment of how to support desistance, and the child's safety and wellbeing, and to understand how to keep other people safe in both the cases assessed. This led to the rating of 'Outstanding'.

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

Of the two cases inspected:	Number 'Yes'
Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's acknowledgement of responsibility, attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	2
Does assessment consider the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, utilising information held by other agencies?	2
Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	2
Where applicable, does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	1
Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	2

¹⁷ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

Where applicable, does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s, and opportunities for restorative justice?	1
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	2

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

Of the two cases inspected:	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	2
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	2

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Of the two cases inspected:	Number 'Yes'
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?	2
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?	2

3.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

Our rating¹⁸ for planning is based on the following key questions:

Of the two cases inspected	Number of relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	2	1
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? ¹⁹	2	1
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? ²⁰	2	1

This standard was given a rating of 'Requires improvement'. These were complex cases that needed more effective planning to keep the child, and others, safe.

Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?

Of the two cases inspected:	Number 'Yes'
Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	0
Does planning take sufficient account of the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child?	0
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	1
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	1

¹⁸ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

¹⁹ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.

²⁰ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping other people safe.

Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out of court disposal work?	1
Where applicable, does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s?	1
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	2

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Of the two cases with factors relevant to keeping the child safe:	Number 'Yes'
Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	1
Where applicable, 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?	2
Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	1

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Of the two cases with factors relevant to keeping other people safe:	Number 'Yes'
Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	1
Where applicable, does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	1
Where applicable, does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	1
Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	1

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Requires improvement

Our rating²¹ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Of the two cases inspected	Number of relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	2	1
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child? ²²	2	1
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people? ²³	2	1

The inconsistency in the quality of implementation and delivery in these cases led to a rating of 'Requires improvement' for this aspect of work.

Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?

Of the two cases inspected:	Number 'Yes'
Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	0
Does service delivery reflect the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents/carers or significant others?	0
Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents/carers?	1
Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	1
Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	1

²¹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

²² This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.

²³ This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping other people safe.

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?

Of the two cases with factors related to the safety of the child:	Number 'Yes'
Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	1
Where applicable, is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	1

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?

Of the two cases with factors related to the safety of other people:	Number 'Yes'
Where applicable, is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	1
Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	1

3.4. Joint working



Joint working with the police supports the delivery of high-quality, personalised and coordinated services.	Outstanding
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Our rating²⁴ for joint working is based on the following key questions:

Of the two cases inspected	Number of relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the child, supporting joint decision making?	2	2
Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal? ²⁵	2	2

Joint work was rated as 'Outstanding'. In both the youth conditional cautions inspected, the YOT met all our criteria relating to joint decision-making and working with the police to implement out-of-court disposals effectively.

²⁴ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

²⁵ This question is only relevant in youth conditional caution cases.

Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the child, supporting joint decision-making?

Of the two cases inspected:	Number 'Yes'
Where applicable, are the recommendations by the YOT for out of court disposal outcomes, conditions and interventions appropriate and proportionate?	2
Do the recommendations consider the degree of the child's understanding of the offence and their acknowledgement of responsibility?	2
Where applicable, is a positive contribution made by the YOT to determining the disposal?	2
Is sufficient attention given to the child's understanding, and their parents/carers' understanding, of the implications of receiving an out of court disposal?	2
Is the information provided to inform decision making timely to meet the needs of the case, legislation and guidance?	2
Where applicable, is the rationale for joint disposal decisions appropriate and clearly recorded?	2

Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal?

Of the two cases with youth conditional cautions:	Number 'Yes'
Where applicable, does the YOT inform the police of progress and outcomes in a sufficient and timely manner?	2
Is sufficient attention given to compliance with and enforcement of the conditions?	2

Annexe 1: Methodology

HM Inspectorate of Probation standards

The standards against which we inspect youth offending services are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. These standards are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.²⁶

The inspection methodology is summarised below, linked to the three domains in our standards framework. We focused on obtaining evidence against the standards, key questions and prompts in our inspection framework. It is important that all Youth Offending Services, regardless of size, are inspected to highlight good practice and to identify areas for improvement. Of course, some YOTs have very small caseloads and so the percentages and figures quoted in these reports need to be read with care. However, all domain two samples, even for the smallest YOTs, meet an 80 per cent confidence level and in some of the smaller YOTs inspectors may be assessing all of that service's cases.

Domain one: organisational delivery

- The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance and the Director of Children's Services and Director of Children's Social Care Services (and Chair of the YOT Management Board) delivered a presentation covering the following areas:
- How do organisational delivery arrangements in this area make sure that the work of your YOS is as effective as it can be, and that the life chances of children who have offended are improved?
- What are your priorities for further improving these arrangements?

During the main fieldwork phase, we conducted five interviews with case managers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. We held various meetings, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and information. In total, we conducted eight meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations, and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.²⁷

Domain two: court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Sixty per cent of the cases selected were those of children who had received court disposals 7 to 12 months earlier, enabling us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and reviewing. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

We examined three court disposals. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of 5), and where possible we ensured

²⁶ HM Inspectorate's standards are available here:

<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

that the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

Domain three: out-of-court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Forty per cent of cases selected were those of children who had received out-of-court disposals six to seven months earlier. This enabled us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and joint working. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

We examined two out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set so that the combined case sample size comprises 60 per cent domain two cases and 40 per cent domain three. Where possible, we ensured the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

In some areas of this report, data may have been split into smaller sub-samples – for example, male/female cases. Where this is the case, the margin of error for the sub-sample findings may be higher than five.

Ratings explained

Domain one ratings are proposed by the lead inspector for each standard. They will be a single judgement, using all the relevant sources of evidence. More detailed information can be found in the probation inspection domain one rules and guidance on the website.

In this inspection, we conducted a detailed examination of a sample of three court disposals and two out-of-court disposals. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards: assessment, planning, and implementation/delivery. For court disposals, we look at reviewing; and in out-of-court disposals, we look at joint working with the police. For each standard, inspectors answer a number of key questions about different aspects of quality, including whether there was sufficient analysis of the factors related to offending; the extent to which children were involved in assessment and planning; and whether enough was done to assess and manage the safety and wellbeing of the child, and any risk of harm posed to others.

For each standard, the rating is aligned to the lowest banding at the key question level, recognising that each key question is an integral part of the standard.

Lowest banding (key question level)	Rating (standard)
Minority: <50%	Inadequate
Too few: 50-64%	Requires improvement
Reasonable majority: 65-79%	Good
Large majority: 80%+	Outstanding ☆

We use case sub-samples for some of the key questions in domains two and three. For example, when judging whether planning focused sufficiently on keeping other people safe, we exclude those cases where the inspector deemed the risk of serious harm to be low. This approach is justified on the basis that we focus on those cases where we expect meaningful work to take place.

An element of professional discretion may be applied to the standards ratings in domains two and three. The ratings panel considers whether professional discretion should be exercised where the lowest percentage at the key question level is close to the rating boundary, for example between 'requires improvement' and 'good' (specifically, within five percentage points of the boundary; or where a differing judgement in one case would result in a change in rating; or where the rating is based upon a sample or sub-sample of five cases or fewer). The panel considers the sizes of any sub-samples used and the percentages for the other key questions within that standard, such as whether they fall within different bandings and the level of divergence, to make this decision.

Overall provider rating

Straightforward scoring rules are used to generate the overall provider rating. Each of the ten standards will be scored on a 0-3 scale as listed in the following table.

Score	Rating (standard)
0	Inadequate
1	Requires improvement
2	Good
3	Outstanding ☆

Adding the scores for each standard together produces the overall rating on a 0-30 scale as listed in the following table.

Score	Rating (overall)
0-6	Inadequate
7-18	Requires improvement
19-30	Good
31-36	Outstanding ☆

We do not include any weightings in the scoring rules. The rationale for this is that all parts of the standards framework are strongly linked to effective service delivery and positive outcomes, and we have restricted ourselves to those that are most essential. Our view is that providers need to focus across all the standards, and we do not want to distort behaviours in any undesirable ways. Furthermore, the underpinning evidence supports including all standards/key questions in the rating, rather than weighting individual elements.