

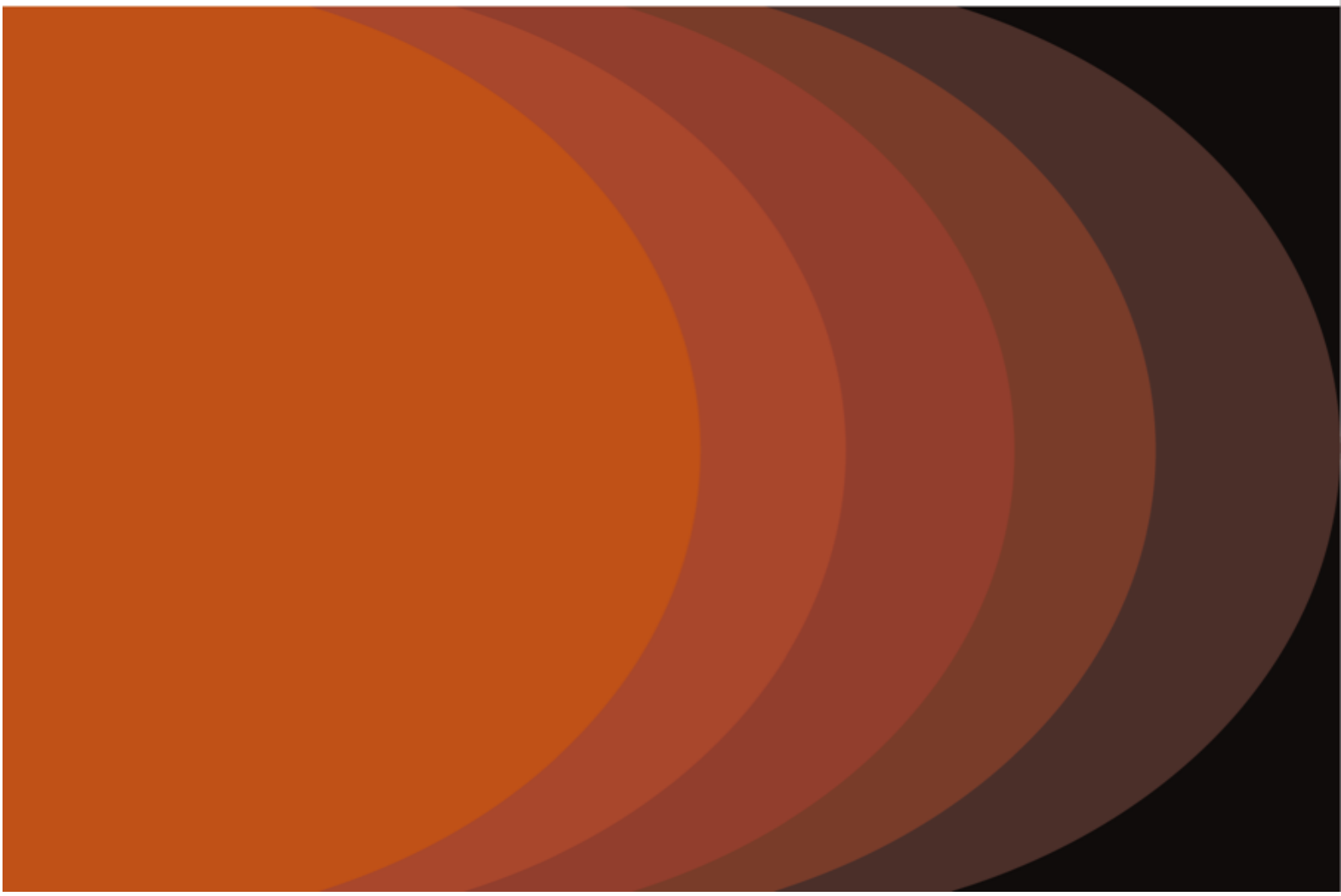


Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate of  
Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in  
**Darlington**

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HM Inspectorate of Probation, February 2021



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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.

Please note that throughout the report the names in the practice examples have been changed to protect the individual's identity.

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## Introduction

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This inspection is part of our four-year programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Darlington 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, Darlington YOS was rated as 'Outstanding'.

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 28 September and 01 October 2020.

The Darlington YOS is well-led and well-managed. The Management Board is made up of individuals with enough seniority in their own organisations to support the delivery of high-quality services. There is good communication between the Board and the operational team, which provides opportunities for challenge and support in equal measure. The YOS has an able, committed and forward-thinking management team and an experienced and skilled staff group who share a sense of purpose and passion for the work. They delivery work that is personalised and responsive to the unique characteristics of the child.

Of note is the impressive range of partnerships and services available to support the work of the YOS. Data analysis produced by a dedicated information officer is strong and is used to support the delivery of well-targeted services.

Most court disposal cases inspected were of a good quality. The staff engaged positively with the children and parents or carers with whom they worked, demonstrating optimism and focusing on successful outcomes.














All the out-of-court cases inspected met our requirements, and we rated each of the four standards in this domain as 'Outstanding'.

Areas for improvement include the consistent application of management oversight across all cases and case managers. From an already very strong base, we believe, if our recommendations are fully implemented, that the YOS can increase still further the quality of youth offending services in Darlington and continue to achieve positive outcomes for the children it supervises.



**Marc Baker**  
Director of Operations

## Ratings

<b>Darlington Youth Offending Service</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>31/36</b>
<b>Overall rating</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	
<b>1. Organisational delivery</b>		
1.1	Governance and leadership	<b>Outstanding</b> 
1.2	Staff	<b>Good</b> 
1.3	Partnerships and services	<b>Outstanding</b> 
1.4	Information and facilities	<b>Good</b> 
<b>2. Court disposals</b>		
2.1	Assessment	<b>Good</b> 
2.2	Planning	<b>Good</b> 
2.3	Implementation and delivery	<b>Good</b> 
2.4	Reviewing	<b>Outstanding</b> 
<b>3. Out-of-court disposals</b>		
3.1	Assessment	<b>Outstanding</b> 
3.2	Planning	<b>Outstanding</b> 
3.3	Implementation and delivery	<b>Outstanding</b> 
3.4	Joint working	<b>Outstanding</b> 

## Recommendations

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

**The Darlington Youth Offending Service should:**

1. implement rigorous management oversight of cases to assure the provision of high-quality services to the children it supervises
2. address the need to increase the evaluation of outcomes, particularly within the agreement with Durham University.

## Background

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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 multidisciplinary, 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.

Considering factors such as unemployment rates, health and disability and crime, 47 of the 317 neighbourhoods in the Darlington local authority are amongst the most deprived 10% nationally.<sup>2</sup>

The borough of Darlington is a unitary authority within the geographic and historic county of Durham. Darlington Youth Offending Service (YOS) was established in April 2000 and has developed as an integral part of the town's services. It has a stable, long-serving staff group, many of whom have remained in post for more than 10 years. Staff focus on 'collaboration' and 'flexibility' as essential components of partnership working.

Since 2015, the profile of the YOS caseload has changed, with an increase in out-of-court disposal work and a reduction in post-court work. Most recently published statistics show that offences committed amongst the 10-to 17-year old population in Darlington are higher than the national average, although proven reoffending rates showing a reduction over time. The number of First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice system is declining in line with the national trend. The rate of use of custody has remained relatively stable over time, although small numbers show an exaggerated impact in terms on percentage figures, with a quarterly range of between 3 and 5 cases.

Funding for the YOS has been maintained at a level that supports the delivery of high-quality services. With this support, the Darlington YOS partnership Management

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<sup>1</sup> The *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* sets out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

<sup>2</sup> *Indices of Deprivation (2019) Interactive Dashboard – Local Authority Focus (2019)* Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Board maintains a strong focus on delivering an efficient and effective range of services.

## Contextual facts

### Population information

<b>106,803</b>	Total population Darlington (2020) <sup>3</sup>
<b>10,147</b>	Total youth population (10–17 years) in Darlington (2020) <sup>3</sup>

### Demographics of children cautioned or sentenced<sup>4</sup>

Age	10–14 years	15–17 years
Darlington YOS	<b>17%</b>	<b>83%</b>
National average	23%	77%

Race/ethnicity	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
Darlington YOS	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>
National average	70%	26%	4%

Gender	Male	Female
Darlington YOS	<b>88%</b>	<b>12%</b>
National average	85%	15%

### Additional caseload data<sup>5</sup>

<b>20</b>	Total caseload: community sentences
<b>6</b>	Total caseload: in custody
<b>77</b>	Total caseload: out-of-court disposals (including youth caution, youth conditional caution and community resolutions)

<sup>3</sup> Office for National Statistics. (2020). *UK population estimates, mid-2019*.

<sup>4</sup> Youth Justice Board. (2020). *Youth justice annual statistics: 2018 to 2019*.

<sup>5</sup> Information supplied by YOT, reflecting caseload submitted to the YJB for the last four quarters.



# 1. Organisational delivery



## Strengths:

- The governance of Darlington YOS is robust, well-aligned with other local strategic partnerships and is led by an experienced Chair.
- There is a consistently attended, forward-looking Board.
- The YOS management group is skilled, experienced and capable, and these managers are role models for a positive and aspiring service for children.
- The YOS staff group and partnership workers are energetic, reflective and motivational in their approach to the work.
- There is an impressive range of services available and accessible to the children the YOS works with.
- The co-location of the YOS with other local authority services is strongly supportive of the services it delivers.

## Areas for improvement:

- Management oversight of the delivery of services should be of a sufficient standard in all cases.
- More careful evaluation of services should be undertaken, particularly where, for example in the case of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, there are tangible outcomes which could otherwise go unrecognised.

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.

Outstanding

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?**

There is a clear local vision and strategy for the delivery of services, and this is set by the YOS Management Board. There is an established set of organisational goals that are overseen by the Board. The Board has a strong grasp of the performance of the YOS, including an imaginatively presented data dashboard permitting an appreciation of progress on key YOS outcomes.

This is supported by comprehensive analysis presented and supplemented by work commissioned by the YOS Board, case studies, presentations by staff on new developments in the service, and 'good news' stories. The YOS Board demonstrates a strong focus on the quality of services provided.

The Board is regularly attended by senior representatives of the local authority, National Probation Service (NPS), Police and Crime and Victims' Commissioner's office, Durham Constabulary, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), public health and education providers. Unfortunately, the Board has been unable to secure representation from HM Courts & Tribunal Service over the past year, despite numerous representations. The YOS derives clear benefits from the contribution and support that the partner agencies provide to enhance the delivery of high-quality services.

The Chair of the Board, a senior police representative, has been in the role for four years and provides consistent, challenging, supportive and aspirational leadership for the work of the YOS.

### **Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?**

Darlington YOS contributes to the wider sustainable community strategy, 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed'. The YOS sits within the local authority Directorate of Children and Adults Services. The links between the Darlington YOS Board and broader strategic forums are strong, with representation across all the local safeguarding, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), community safety and criminal justice boards.

All Board members are committed to agreed terms of reference, requiring that they ensure access by the children working with the YOS to relevant universal and specialist services. Partnership working is well-developed in accordance with the identified needs of the YOS caseload. For example, the development of a trauma-informed approach to working with children is based on information analysis (public health needs analysis) leading to improved access to speech and language therapy, training for YOS staff, and the allocation of a dedicated health and wellbeing worker. YOS partnership staff have a strongly positive view of the level of induction, training and supportive line management provided within the YOS.

### **Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?**

There are strong links between the YOS Management Board and operational managers. Managers are held to account by the Board for operational performance in an environment that fosters aspiration and achievement with the children supported by the YOS. Where appropriate, Board members and managers jointly support celebratory events, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award presentation evening.

The Darlington YOS is sufficiently small to afford daily contact between managers and operational staff. In our survey, most staff (74 per cent) agree they are updated on strategic issues, and the majority (90 per cent) are aware of the activities of the Management Board. Almost all staff (94 per cent) consider their views are listened to and acted upon by the YOS.

Partner agencies are well-briefed on the work of the YOS, describing managers and staff as:

*“able networkers who respond rapidly to issues that emerge in cases”.*

Business risks to the Darlington YOS are identified and managed through an ongoing action plan. There is substantial evidence that the service is being well-managed during the Covid-19 period.

## 1.2. Staff



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

Good

### Key staffing data<sup>6</sup>

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent, FTE)	17
Average caseload per case manager (FTE)	7.25

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?**

Darlington YOS has an experienced and skilled staff group who share a sense of purpose and passion for the work. When asked to summarise their view of the YOS, staff said:

*“dynamic, supportive, lovely”; “above and beyond”; “the extra mile”; “dedicated, honest, family”; “innovative, nurturing, caring”; “forward thinking team”.*

The workload requirements are, in our view, at a level which supports the delivery of high-quality services. All case managers reported that they are comfortable with the caseload they are expected to manage.

There are clear plans concerning the management of cases during the period of Covid-19 crisis, based on a collaborative approach between the YOS and other local authority services.

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

In most of the cases we inspected, the staff were good at involving children and their parents or carers in the assessment and planning of work. Work was personalised and responsive to the unique characteristics of the child.

Staff consider themselves to have the necessary skills, experience and knowledge to deliver the service in line with the requirements of cases. There is good understanding of the requirements of the job, with all staff indicating that they understand relevant policies and procedures.

<sup>6</sup> Data supplied by YOT and reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

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

All staff (including partnership staff based in the YOS) have supervision meetings with their line manager at no more than six-weekly intervals, and their individual needs are recognised and responded to in most cases. There was some evidence that line management oversight was not always sufficiently rigorous, with some omissions in casework not detected (e.g. missing planning documentation; failing to record an enforcement decision following discussion).

### **Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?**

There is good access to in-service training, and the size of the YOS provides development opportunities through the breadth of work required of each member of staff. During the Covid-19 crisis period there have been opportunities to work in other local authority provision, for example, residential homes.

## **1.3. Partnerships and services**



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

Outstanding

In making a judgement about partnerships and services, we take into account the answers to 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?**

There is a dedicated information officer working in Darlington YOS: a highly prized resource. There is good evidence that data analysis is used to support the delivery of well-targeted services. The strongest example is the public health needs analysis. This led to the allocation by the Clinical Commissioning Group of a specialist psychologist, and a dedicated health and wellbeing worker to support risk management and develop trauma-informed ways of working.

The Management Board formally reviews the work of the YOS and associated performance data. There is a rolling programme of more detailed investigation into matters of concern or development.

The trauma-informed approach to working is supported by clinical oversight in the development of case formulations, and the health and wellbeing worker provides interventions to improve wellbeing alongside an effective pathway to appropriate mental health treatment services.

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

There is access to an appropriate range of interventions to support desistance, safety and wellbeing, and to manage risk of harm to others through extensive multi-agency working arrangements.

The service manager for Darlington YOS also manages the town's Early Help team and this fosters strong working relationships between the two disciplines. For

example, in some cases there can be a referral to Early Help services by the Out-of-Court Disposal panel. Increasingly, services which are available to YOS cases (such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme) can be accessed by children viewed as vulnerable to offending, on a preventative basis.

Access to education services for school-age children is good. A vulnerable pupil panel monitors the education provision of those identified with special needs. There is evidence of active support by education services for 16 and 17-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training, with opportunities for positive engagement. It is noteworthy that the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme has led to a healthy stream of children entering higher education and employment or training, including entry into the armed forces.

A well-established victim and restorative justice approach provides a range of services to victims and an imaginative approach to restorative justice.

Support for children's emotional health is strong, with the health and wellbeing worker able to link to specialist mental health services where necessary and appropriate.

The development of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme has allowed access to positive experiences for the children working with the YOS (it also provides places for some victims and some children assessed as being at risk of offending).

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

Partnership arrangements are a clear strength of the Darlington YOS. The YOS is well-integrated with other local authority functions, including the community safety partnership arrangements and the focus on antisocial behaviour.

The YOS team is viewed by partnership staff and managers as able communicators and strong advocates for children.

The victim scheme, which includes restorative activities, is delivered by an experienced and knowledgeable team. The range of activity is impressive. Restorative work is offered in all cases, and this can range from face-to-face victim/ offender mediation to direct or indirect reparative work undertaken by the child. Each intervention is based on the victim's proposals and requests, making for a highly individualised approach.

In auditing the core work, Darlington YOS managers measure the quality of service against HM Inspectorate of Probation standards. Assurance activity is complemented by local authority internal audit arrangements.

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

Embedded in the Darlington YOS approach to intervention planning is the voice of the child and their parent or carer. Great care is taken to understand and include the recipients of the service in developing individual packages of intervention. Work is evaluated based on direct feedback, using questionnaires, phone links and recorded sessions.

Our survey yielded mainly positive responses from children and their parents or carers, suggesting a highly rated YOS, viewed as contributing to the aim of keeping children out of trouble.

## 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 answers to 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?**

There is an appropriate set of policies and guidance to which YOS staff have access, with evidence of reasonable review and updating. Staff are clear about key areas of responsibility, including safeguarding duties and public protection.

Effective engagement is enhanced by a spirit of experimentation, with staff combining discussion meetings with on-site reparation activities. This flexible approach increased during the Covid-19 crisis period as a way of maintaining face-to-face contact.

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

The YOS is co-located with other children's services and community safety colleagues, and this fosters a partnership approach to support the delivery of high-quality services. We found that staff were able to access an appropriate range of services to support the needs of children in all cases.

Work is delivered in a safe, central and accessible location. There is a range of locations shared with the YMCA where contacts can also take place. Increasingly, children are visited at home or seen at locations where activities such as reparation, outdoor activities or voluntary work are being undertaken

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

ICT systems generally support a flexible approach to work. Concerns about a relatively antiquated case management system are being managed by a planned transfer to an improved system. Staff are able to access local authority children's services case records (Liquid Logic), and the liaison and diversion staff can screen every active YOS case for contact with mental health services.

All members of staff have laptops and mobile phones and have good remote working capability.

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

Driven by the Darlington YOS Management Board, there is good management of information with some imaginative use of infographics to present data.

A formal agreement with Durham University provides scope for further evaluative work. This could be particularly useful for further developing understanding of the impact of: trauma-informed practice; substance misuse interventions; educational attainment levels; improving employment prospects; and the community

engagement associated with extended volunteering work that the children undertake.



## 2. Court disposals

We took a detailed look at five community sentences and one custodial sentence managed by the YOS. We also conducted six interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery of services; and reviewing.

### Strengths:

- In most cases, Darlington YOS engaged well with children and their parents or carers in the processes of supervision.
- There was good evidence of constructive work with other agencies at all stages of contact with the child.
- Case managers used enforcement appropriately, when necessary and with due regard to the needs of the child.
- Cases were reviewed at appropriate intervals, with the work being of a sufficient standard in all cases.

### Areas for improvement:

- Management oversight of cases was not always robust enough.
- Consideration of children's safety and wellbeing was insufficient in a small number of cases.
- Attention to the risk of harm the child may present to others was insufficient in a small number of cases.

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

Of the 6 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	6	5

<sup>7</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.



Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	6	5
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	6	4

The quality of assessment in Darlington YOS is rated as 'Good'. Some of the cases had insufficient analysis of how to keep other people safe.

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

<b>Of the 6 cases inspected:</b>	<b>Relevant cases</b>	<b>Number 'Yes'</b>
Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	6	4
Does assessment consider the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, utilising information held by other agencies?	6	5
Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	6	5
Where applicable, does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	6	5
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?	6	6
Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s, and opportunities for restorative justice?	4	2
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	6	4

### **Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?**

<b>Of the 6 cases inspected:</b>	<b>Relevant cases</b>	<b>Number 'Yes'</b>
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	6	4
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	6	5

Where applicable, does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	4	4
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### Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Of the 6 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	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?	5	3
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	5	4
Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	5	4

In most cases inspected we found good engagement with the child and their parents or carers. The YOS was particularly good at assessing the child's level of maturity and motivation to be involved in work focused on changing the course of their life.

There was good assessment of how to keep the child safe in almost all cases.

A small number of cases paid insufficient attention to issues concerning victims

## 2.2. Planning



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

Good

Our rating<sup>8</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

Of the 6 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	6	4
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? <sup>9</sup>	6	4
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? <sup>10</sup>	4	3

The quality of planning in Darlington YOS is rated as 'Good'. Some of the cases paid insufficient attention to supporting the child's desistance, keeping the child safe and keeping other people safe.

<sup>8</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

<sup>9</sup> This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.

<sup>10</sup> This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping other people safe.

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

Of the 6 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	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?	6	3
Does planning take sufficient account of the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child?	6	4
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	6	5
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	6	5
Where applicable, does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s?	4	2
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	6	5

### Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Of the 6 cases with factors related to keeping the child safe:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	6	4
Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (for example, child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	6	5
Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	6	5
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	6	4

## Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Of the 4 cases with factors related to keeping other people safe:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	4	3
Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	3	3
Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	3	2
Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	4	3
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	4	2

Planning work was to a good standard in most cases. In a small number of cases there were omissions in the casefile which could have been identified if the management oversight of cases had been more rigorous.

### 2.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.	Good
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Our rating<sup>11</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Of the 6 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?	6	6
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child? <sup>12</sup>	6	5
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people? <sup>13</sup>	4	3

The quality of implementation and delivery in Darlington YOS is rated as 'Good'. Some of the cases paid insufficient attention to issues concerning victims and the co-ordination of work with other agencies.

<sup>11</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

<sup>12</sup> This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.

<sup>13</sup> This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping other people safe.

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

<b>Of the 6 cases inspected:</b>	<b>Relevant cases</b>	<b>Number 'Yes'</b>
Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	6	5
Does service delivery reflect the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents/carers or significant others?	6	5
Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	6	6
Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents/carers?	6	6
Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration including access to services post-supervision?	6	5
Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	6	6
In cases where it is required, are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	6	5

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

<b>Of the 6 cases with factors related to keeping the child safe:</b>	<b>Relevant cases</b>	<b>Number 'Yes'</b>
Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	6	5
Where applicable, is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?	6	5

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

<b>Of the 4 cases with factors related to keeping other people safe:</b>	<b>Relevant cases</b>	<b>Number 'Yes'</b>
Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	4	3

Where applicable, is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	3	2
Where applicable, is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	3	3

The implementation and delivery of court disposals was to a good standard in most cases. There was particularly strong practice in supporting the child's efforts to refrain from further offending.

The way the service was delivered supported the safety of the child in almost all cases.

In a small number of cases not enough attention had been paid to issues concerning risk of harm to others.

## 2.4. Reviewing



Reviewing of progress is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents/carers.	Outstanding
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Our rating<sup>14</sup> for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

Of the 6 cases inspected <sup>15</sup>	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	5	5
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	2	2
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	1	1

Where a review was necessary, these were of a sufficient quality in all cases, and reviewing therefore was rated as 'Outstanding'.

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

Of the 5 cases where there were changes in factors related to desistance:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors linked to desistance?	5	5
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	5	5

<sup>14</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

<sup>15</sup> 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 consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	5	4
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	5	5

### Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

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

### Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

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

Cases were reviewed well and demonstrated that the YOS staff responded well to changes in circumstances, including where progress and improvement had occurred. There was good evidence that reviews were shared appropriately with other agencies.



### 3. Out-of-court disposals

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

We examined the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance. For the one case where there were factors related to harm, we also inspected work done to keep other people safe. We also looked at the quality of joint working with local police.

#### Strengths:

- Assessment was consistently good, and all relevant checks were undertaken to ensure safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others were appropriately considered.
- Planning was good, with strongly personalised activities identified in the work.
- The implementation and delivery of appropriate interventions were good. We saw strong examples of Darlington YOS providing opportunities for community integration, through voluntary activities which endured beyond the period of the intervention.
- Joint working arrangements were clear and well-established.

#### Areas for improvement:

- None identified.

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 rating<sup>16</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

Of the 4 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	4	4

<sup>16</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.



Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	4	4
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	4	4

All cases inspected were of sufficient quality, and so for assessment work the rating for Darlington YOS is 'Outstanding'.

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

<b>Of the 4 cases inspected:</b>	<b>Relevant cases</b>	<b>Number 'Yes'</b>
Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's acknowledgement of responsibility, attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	4	4
Does assessment consider the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, utilising information held by other agencies?	4	4
Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	4	4
Where applicable, does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	2	2
Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	4	4
Where applicable, does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s, and opportunities for restorative justice?	2	2
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	4	4

### **Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?**

<b>Of the 4 cases inspected:</b>	<b>Relevant cases</b>	<b>Number 'Yes'</b>
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	4	4
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	4	4

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

Of the 4 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	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	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	2

We found that assessment work for out-of-court disposals managed to balance children's needs and risks appropriately. All sources of relevant information about the child were considered in formulating an assessment.

Assessments formed an important part of the decision-making leading to the use of these disposals.

### 3.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>17</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

Of the 4 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	4	4
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? <sup>18</sup>	0	0
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? <sup>19</sup>	1	1

All cases inspected were of sufficient quality, leading to a rating of 'Outstanding' for planning of work in Darlington YOS.

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

<sup>18</sup> This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.

<sup>19</sup> This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping other people safe.

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

Of the 4 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	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?	4	4
Does planning take sufficient account of the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child?	4	4
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	4	4
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	4	4
Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?	4	4
Where applicable, does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s?	2	2
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	4	4

### Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

There were no cases with factors relevant to keeping the child safe:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	0	0
Where applicable, does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (for example, child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	0	0
Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	0	0

### Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Of the 1 case with factors relevant to keeping other people safe:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	1	1

Where applicable, does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	0	0
Where applicable, does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	0	0
Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	1	1

Plans to deliver interventions incorporated the views of the child and their parent or carer, were easy to understand and included, where necessary, relevant contingencies should things go wrong in the child's life.

### 3.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.	Outstanding
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Our rating<sup>20</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Of the 4 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	4	4
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child? <sup>21</sup>	0	0
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people? <sup>22</sup>	1	1

All cases inspected were of sufficient quality and meant that for implementation and delivery the rating for Darlington YOS is 'Outstanding'.

#### Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?

Of the 4 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	4	4
Does service delivery reflect the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents/carers or significant others?	4	4

<sup>20</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

<sup>21</sup> This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping the child safe.

<sup>22</sup> This question is only relevant in cases where there are factors related to keeping other people safe.

Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents/carers?	4	4
Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	4	4
Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	4	4

### **Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?**

<b>There were no cases with factors related to the safety of the child:</b>	<b>Relevant cases</b>	<b>Number 'Yes'</b>
Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	0	0
Where applicable, is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	0	0

### **Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?**

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

Darlington YOS staff engaged children well in activities and interventions associated with out-of-court disposals. In some cases, the interventions were the basis for longer-term volunteering work or health and fitness activities. Offence-related work and reparation activity were delivered appropriately and to a good standard.

### 3.4. Joint working



Joint working with the police supports the delivery of high-quality, personalised and coordinated services.

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>23</sup> for joint working is based on the following key questions:

Of the 4 cases inspected	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the child, supporting joint decision making?	4	4
Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal? <sup>24</sup>	1	1

All cases inspected were of sufficient quality. This means that for joint working the rating for Darlington YOS is 'Outstanding'.

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

Of the 4 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Where applicable, are the recommendations by the YOT for out-of-court disposal outcomes, conditions and interventions appropriate and proportionate?	4	4
Do the recommendations consider the degree of the child's understanding of the offence and their acknowledgement of responsibility?	4	4
Where applicable, is a positive contribution made by the YOT to determining the disposal?	4	4
Is sufficient attention given to the child's understanding, and their parents'/carers' understanding, of the implications of receiving an out-of-court disposal?	4	4
Is the information provided to inform decision-making timely to meet the needs of the case, legislation and guidance?	4	4
Where applicable, is the rationale for joint disposal decisions appropriate and clearly recorded?	4	4

<sup>23</sup> The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

<sup>24</sup> This question is only relevant in youth conditional caution cases.

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

Of the 1 case with youth conditional cautions:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Where applicable, does the YOT inform the police of progress and outcomes in a sufficient and timely manner?	1	1
Is sufficient attention given to compliance with and enforcement of the conditions?	1	1

Joint working to support the decision-making and delivery of out-of-court disposals was undertaken within a well-established set of processes. The processes worked well, and all contributing staff had a sound understanding of their respective roles.

# Annexe 1: Methodology

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## 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.<sup>25</sup>

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 any percentages or 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 most or all of that service's cases.

### Domain one: organisational delivery

- The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance and the Darlington YOS Chair delivered a presentation covering the following areas:
- How do organisational delivery arrangements in this area make sure that the work of your youth offending service 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 10 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 11 meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.<sup>24</sup>

### Domain two: court disposals

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

We examined six 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 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.

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<sup>25</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards are available here:  
<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>



### Domain three: out-of-court disposals

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

We examined four 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 six court disposals and four 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 well-being 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 when 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 10 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.