

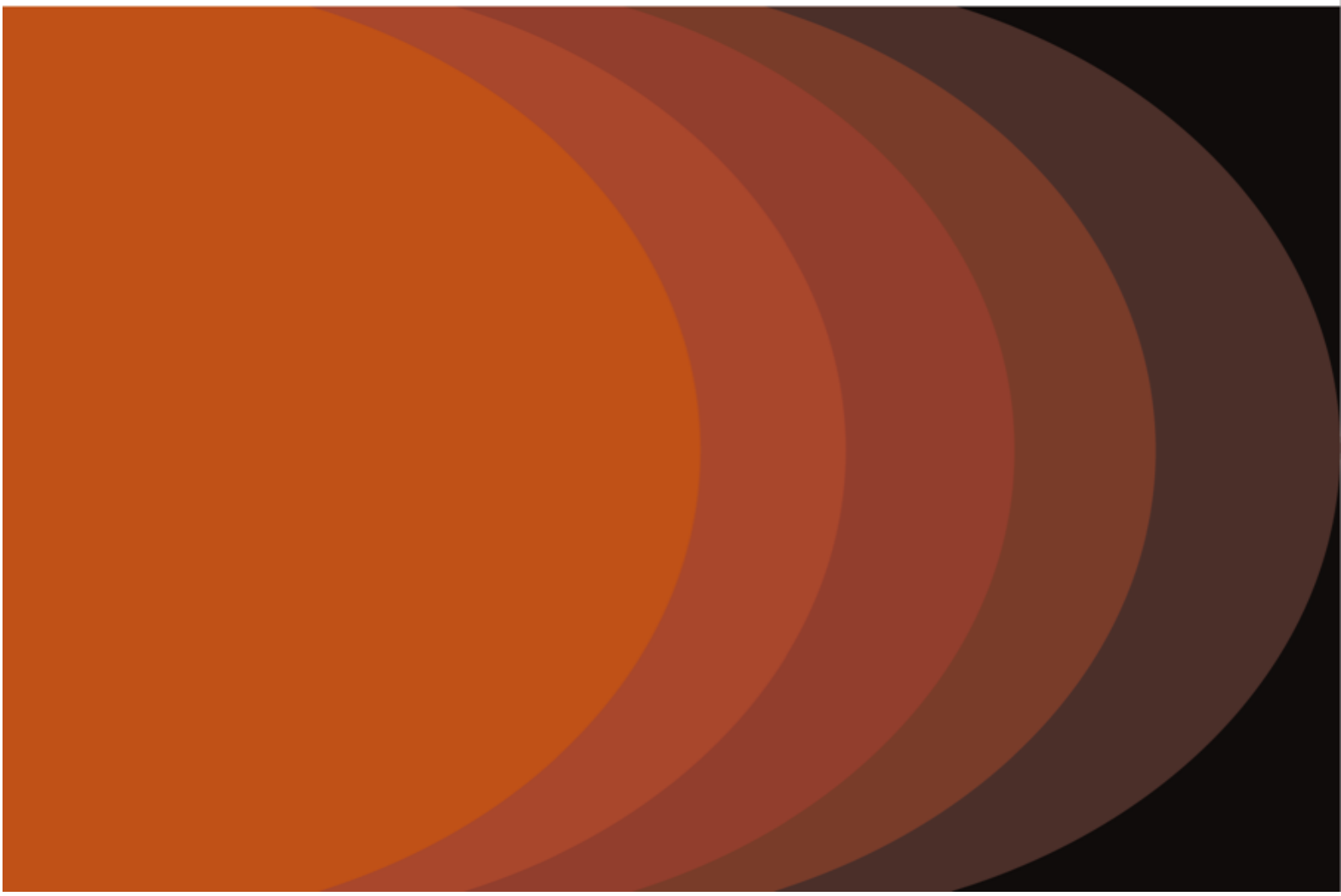


Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate of  
Probation

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

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HM Inspectorate of Probation, March 2021



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## Acknowledgements

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Maria Jerram, supported by a team of inspectors and colleagues from across the Inspectorate. We would like to thank all those who helped plan and took part in the inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

## 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 inspections. We have inspected and rated Torbay Youth Offending Team (YOT) 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, Torbay YOT was rated as 'Requires improvement'.

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 YOT 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 telephone and video conferencing, took place between 26 October and 29 October 2020.

### **Domain one – organisational delivery**

The governance arrangements for the YOT are not robust enough. There is insufficient oversight of the needs of children supervised by the YOT at Board level. This means that the Board cannot be sure that resources are sufficient, or that partner agencies can advocate effectively for YOT children in their own services at a strategic level. There is also a lack of analysis and understanding of the overall performance of the YOT against the priorities of the youth justice plan.

The seniority of Board members has not been at the right level since the pan-Devon strategic YOT Board disaggregated and Torbay returned to a single authority Board late in 2019. Deficiencies in Board processes and effectiveness were recognised prior to the inspection and a peer review has recently been completed. The review recommendations will inform new governance processes. The YOT Head of Service has a large portfolio, and while this can provide some useful links into wider children's services, competing demands on their time make it difficult for the YOT's business to be prioritised. Team managers have large workloads, and while the quality of management oversight of post-court work was rated as 'Outstanding', for out-of-court disposals it is not effective.

There is a stable team of practitioners, who are committed to delivering high-quality services. This is complemented by good access to a range of services to meet a spectrum of needs.

### **Domain two – court disposals**

We rated the management of court disposal cases in the Torbay YOT as 'Outstanding' in terms of assessment, planning, the implementation and delivery of services, and reviewing. YOT case managers demonstrated great skill in establishing exceptional working relationships with children and their parents or carers, and were able to involve other services speedily and effectively. Staff know the children they work with and form strong relationships with them and their families. Work to support desistance, promote the safety and wellbeing of children, and manage risk of harm to others was judged to be of a consistently high quality.














### **Domain three – out-of-court disposals**

Work with children to deliver out-of-court disposals was insufficient in all cases, as was partnership working and joint decision-making. For community resolution cases, an assessment was not completed, so the factors linked to the child's offending were not properly understood. In all other out-of-court cases, assessments were completed after the disposal had been decided. There were serious deficits in every aspect of out-of-court work practice, particularly in work to support safety and wellbeing, and manage the risk of harm to others.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marc Baker', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Marc Baker**  
Director of Operations

## Ratings

<b>Torbay Youth Offending Team</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>16/36</b>
<b>Overall rating</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>1. Organisational delivery</b>		
1.1	Governance and leadership	<b>Inadequate</b> 
1.2	Staff	<b>Requires improvement</b> 
1.3	Partnerships and services	<b>Good</b> 
1.4	Information and facilities	<b>Requires improvement</b> 
<b>2. Court disposals</b>		
2.1	Assessment	<b>Outstanding</b> 
2.2	Planning	<b>Outstanding</b> 
2.3	Implementation and delivery	<b>Outstanding</b> 
2.4	Reviewing	<b>Outstanding</b> 
<b>3. Out-of-court disposals</b>		
3.1	Assessment	<b>Inadequate</b> 
3.2	Planning	<b>Inadequate</b> 
3.3	Implementation and delivery	<b>Inadequate</b> 
3.4	Joint working	<b>Inadequate</b> 

## Recommendations

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

### **The YOT Management Board should:**

1. make sure that Board members understand the specific needs of children known to the YOT and advocate on their behalf in their own agencies
2. develop the knowledge and understanding of the Board members' role and the service's work, so that they can provide effective challenge to partner agencies
3. review management capacity, to ensure that there are the necessary resources to oversee the service effectively
4. ensure that the partnership understands the reasons for the large disparity in education provision for children involved with the YOT, compared with those in the general population, and put plans in place to redress this.

### **The YOT Head of Service should:**

5. develop and update policies, procedures and guidance for out-of-court disposals to improve joint decision-making and the quality of management oversight
6. undertake an assessment on all children receiving an out-of-court disposal and make sure that equal attention is given to desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others
7. ensure that staff have access to the buildings and facilities they need to deliver services to children and families
8. embed processes for capturing feedback from children, parents and victims, and use this information to develop services.

## 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.

Torbay is located on the South Devon coast and covers three district communities: Torquay, Brixham and Paignton. Torbay faces challenges typically associated with larger urban areas, and these, coupled with its coastal location, compound the challenges of its economy. Torbay comprises areas with large material wealth alongside areas of deprivation. Torbay is ranked the 48th most deprived district in England, with 36,691 people living in the bottom 20 per cent most deprived areas, equating to 27.4 per cent of the local population. The most deprived areas are concentrated primarily around the centres of each of the three towns.

Torbay YOT is a multi-agency partnership between Torbay Council, Devon and Cornwall Police, the National Probation Service, South Devon and Torbay Clinical Commissioning Group, and the Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner. The YOT sits within an integrated youth support service (IYSS), which has a parenting worker and a healthy relationship worker in addition to the usual specialist staff associated with a YOT, such as a child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) worker, a substance misuse worker, the police, a victim worker, an education worker and speech and language therapy (SALT) worker.

In addition to statutory and out-of-court work, the YOT also delivers prevention work. Prevention cases are primarily received from the early help service when there is a concern that a child may be at risk of offending. The YOT caseload is currently made up of 40 per cent youth justice work and 60 per cent prevention work. The YOT is based in a dedicated building in Paignton but, along with many other council buildings, this was closed in March 2020 owing to Covid-19.

In terms of national key performance indicators, the YOT reoffending and custody rates are lower than the England and Wales average, but for first-time entrants are substantially higher, and addressing this is a priority of the Torbay youth justice plan.

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

The YOT has not identified any issues with disproportionality in terms of ethnicity, but almost a quarter of the YOT caseload is made up of children who are in care.

The YOT/IYSS forms part of the early help service within children's social care (CSC). Torbay Children's Services were judged to be inadequate by Ofsted in 2015 and again in 2018, and are subject to a statutory direction by the Department for Education. A new senior leadership team, including the Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services, has been appointed in the last 12 months, and the last Ofsted monitoring visit recognised an improved focus on addressing the inadequacies in practice, and this is having a positive impact. Half of the children supervised by the YOT at the time of the inspection were also involved with CSC.



## Contextual facts

### Population information

<b>136,264</b>	Total population Torbay (2019) <sup>2</sup>
<b>11,157</b>	Total youth population (10–17 years) in Torbay (2019) <sup>2</sup>

### Demographics of children cautioned or sentenced<sup>3</sup>

Age	10–14 years	15–17 years
Torbay YOT	<b>36%</b>	<b>64%</b>
National average	23%	77%

Race/ethnicity	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
Torbay YOT	<b>94%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>
National average	70%	26%	4%

Gender	Male	Female
Torbay YOT	<b>85%</b>	<b>15%</b>
National average	85%	15%

### Additional caseload data<sup>4</sup>

<b>13</b>	Total current caseload: community sentences
<b>2</b>	Total current caseload in custody
<b>0</b>	Total current caseload on licence
<b>0</b>	Total current caseload: youth caution
<b>5</b>	Total current caseload: youth conditional caution
<b>6</b>	Total current caseload: community resolution or other out-of-court disposal

<sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics. (2020). *UK population estimates, mid-2019*.

<sup>3</sup> Youth Justice Board. (2020). *Youth justice annual statistics: 2018 to 2019*.

<sup>4</sup> Information supplied by YOT, reflecting caseload on 19 October 2020.

# 1. Organisational delivery



## Strengths:

- The Director of Children's Services took up the position of Chair of the YOT Board at the end of 2019 and immediately identified that improvements were required. As a result, a Local Government Association (LGA) peer review was commissioned to assist in improving governance arrangements.
- The terms of reference and membership for the Board are under review and there is a commitment to strengthening and developing the function of the Board at a strategic level.
- There is a stable staff team which supports children and helps to improve outcomes for them.
- Children have good access to services provided by partner agencies.

## Areas for improvement:

- Induction processes for new Board members need to be established, so that all representatives are clear about their role and responsibilities.
- Almost two-thirds of staff responding to our survey are not aware of the activities of the Board, and a third do not understand the YOT vision, challenges and development plan, suggesting that communications need to be improved.
- The YOT manager post was removed from the YOT structure in 2017. Since 2017, there have been four Heads of Service, who have managed the YOT as part of a wider CSC portfolio.
- Data is not used effectively to understand the needs of children or to analyse and evaluate the impact of the work delivered.
- A decision has been made not to use the youth caution as an out-of-court disposal option, but this is not understood by senior managers. The rationale for not using the youth caution is weak and increases the possibility of children escalating through the justice system.
- In Torbay, six per cent of the general youth population are not in education, training or employment; for YOT children, this rises to 31 per cent. In addition, a third of those with placements are attending a pupil referral unit or alternative education provision. Understanding and addressing this disparity need to be a priority for the Board and the partnership.

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.

Inadequate

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?**

In 2018, as a result of a second inadequate Ofsted inspection finding, Torbay Children's Services joined with Plymouth Children's Services as part of a programme to improve the quality of practice and services delivered. Joint governance arrangements were put in place, and this included oversight by a pan-Devon strategic YOT Management Board. In 2019, it was assessed that the arrangements were not having enough impact, and the authorities separated. At the time of the inspection, the governance arrangements for Torbay YOT were in the process of being re-established.

The Director of Children's Services took up the position of Chair of the YOT Board at the end of 2019 and immediately identified that improvements were required. As a result, an LGA peer review was commissioned to assist in improving governance arrangements. The terms of reference and membership of the Board have recently been reviewed, and there is a commitment to strengthening and developing the function of the Board at a strategic level. Some Board members have recently been involved in the YOT self-assessment audit, to help them gain a better understanding of the quality of YOT practice. It is recognised by the Chair of the Board that processes need to be established that hold both the YOT and partners to account for the delivery of effective youth justice services.

The service has a youth justice plan and a business continuity plan in place. The Board was not involved in the development of the plans, but it is aware of their content. Almost two-thirds of staff responding to our survey are not aware of the activities of the Board, and those we spoke with felt that future plans for the service were not well communicated.

The governance of the service is not sufficiently focused on youth justice and the specific risks associated with children involved in, or at risk of, offending. Board members are not of the right seniority to facilitate improvements and advocate for the YOT, and effect change in their own services. Induction processes for new Board members need to be established, so that all representatives are clear about their role and responsibilities.

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

The Director of Children's Services is the Chair of the YOT Board, and she provides links to other strategic fora, such as the Children's Safeguarding Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Chair of the Community Safety Partnership is a

member of the YOT Management Board, and this creates opportunities to align agendas and priorities at a wider strategic level.

We found that the effectiveness of the YOT Management Board was hampered by members not fully understanding the needs of YOT children, and data was not being used to ensure that resources are sufficient to meet their needs. There was also little evidence of Board members advocating for YOT children and prioritising them in their own services. For example, in Torbay, six per cent of the general youth population are not in education, training or employment, and for YOT children this rises to 31 per cent. In addition, a third of those with placements are attending a pupil referral unit or alternative education provision. Understanding and addressing this should be a priority for the Board and the partnership. Some work has started with the development of a 'not in education, training or employment' improvement plan. This work has been primarily led by the YOT education worker, but it needs to be prioritised at a strategic level, given the evident disparity. The same applies to children in care, who make up just under a quarter of the YOT caseload. Understanding and addressing this is an important task for the Board.

There has been a focus on improving CSC service delivery at a strategic level, and leaders recognise that there has been less focus on YOT practice and service delivery. In the past 12 months, increased efforts have been made to improve the coordination of work between the YOT and CSC; for example, a CSC team manager from the single assessment team now sits on the YOT out-of-court disposal panel. Managers from the YOT attend the early help panel, to contribute to discussions and receive IYSS case allocations.

The number of first-time entrants in Torbay is substantially higher than the national average, and addressing this is a priority for the Board. However, we found the processes for the delivery of out-of-court disposals to be under-developed. While the joint decision-making panel has been in place since February and has good attendance from partners, decision-making is not robust. There is no assessment tool used for community resolutions, so there is no way of knowing if interventions are targeted or focused on the needs of children and the protection of others. A decision has been made not to use the youth caution as an out-of-court disposal option, but the implications of this are not fully understood by senior managers. The rationale for not using the youth caution is weak and increases the possibility of children escalating through the justice system.

The YOT children, although relatively small in number, have a high level of need. The rationale for the YOT/IYSS taking cases from early help and CSC is based on the expertise of the team in working with adolescents. The Board should check that, in addition to analysing the needs of YOT children, it has mechanisms in place to monitor the impact that any additional IYSS cases may have upon limited resources, such as CAMHS, SALT and education support, to ensure that provision is sufficient.

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

The YOT manager role was removed from the YOT structure in 2017. Since 2017, there have been four Heads of Service, who have managed the YOT as part of a wider CSC portfolio. The loss of a dedicated YOT manager has created a sense of instability among the team. The current Head of Service has been in post since October 2019. The large span of control, including the single assessment team and the exploitation team, makes it difficult for them to prioritise the YOT, particularly given the focus on improvement work in CSC.

The YOT has two practice managers, who report to the Head of Service. One practice manager usually has 10 direct reports, but at the time of the inspection, owing to staffing issues, this had increased to 13. The team manager post is responsible not only for staff supervision, but also for several areas of service delivery, such as education, parenting, mental health and substance misuse. Workload pressure had had an impact on the time available to the manager to evaluate the performance of these areas of service in sufficient detail.

Most staff felt that their training needs were met and that they were well supported by their direct line managers, who are approachable and supportive. We found that management oversight for post-court work was effective in every case, but it was lacking in relation to out-of-court work.

## 1.2. Staff



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

Requires improvement

### Key staffing data<sup>5</sup>

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent, FTE)	24 staff - 18.7 FTEs
Average caseload per case manager (FTE)	4.3 (not including prevention cases)

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 staff team is stable and committed to delivering high-quality services to children and families. Statutory cases are allocated according to the skills and experience of staff, and workloads are manageable, with most workers holding between eight and nine statutory and prevention cases. There are duty rotas in place and there is a dedicated YOT court officer.

The YOT seconded police officer holds the majority of the YOT youth conditional caution cases, undertaking assessments and delivering interventions. This is not the officer's area of expertise and this practice does not fit with the YJB guidance on the role of YOT police officers (2014).<sup>6</sup> We were informed that the case management responsibilities do not have an impact on the other duties expected from the YOT seconded police officer role, despite them holding the equivalent caseload of full-time case managing colleagues.

At the time of the inspection, one of the two YOT team manager posts was being covered temporarily by the CSC exploitation team manager, in addition to his other substantive duties. He has been selected to cover the vacancy because of his

<sup>5</sup> Data supplied by YOT and reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

<sup>6</sup> Superintendent Marion Sandwell, Senior Police Advisor, Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (2014). *The Role of the YOT Police Officer*.

exploitation lead role and extensive youth work experience, but at this stage, he is still developing his knowledge of youth justice.

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

The YOT is a multi-disciplinary team, and the skills and make-up of the team reflect the children and families it works with. Staff managing statutory cases are qualified in youth justice or an alternative relevant field, and almost all feel that they have the relevant skills required for their role. Every volunteer who responded to our survey said that they had received sufficient training, are well supported and feel included in the wider team.

The YOT social worker holds cases which involve Looked After Children, and their knowledge of the processes involved supports effective communication between the YOT and CSC Looked After Children teams. The probation officer holds primarily high-risk cases and oversees the transition between the YOT and adult services. All staff are trained in the delivery of harmful sexual behaviour work, which is undertaken jointly, in line with best practice guidance.

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

Management oversight is effective in statutory cases, but there is a lack of scrutiny in relation to out-of-court work. We found assessments that were not sufficiently robust that had been countersigned, and there was a lack of challenge in relation to the quality of work. Deficits in the quality of out-of-court disposal work had not been identified prior to the inspection.

Most staff receive regular supervision which they find helpful and supportive. SALT staff receive clinical supervision from their home organisation, and the probation officer has regular meetings with their link probation manager.

Exceptional work is noted at weekly team meetings, and the YOT recently featured in the wider CSC bulletin owing to its positive engagement in the LGA peer review and its ongoing commitment to delivering services to children during the pandemic.

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

Some staff have been provided with opportunities to shadow managers, to find out about their role, and one worker we met delivers the youth justice element of a public health training course at a local college as part of her development plan. However, not all staff have an up-to-date performance review and some feel that development opportunities are limited.

Staff said that the training they have received meets their needs. This included recent training to help them consider the impact of trauma on the children they work with. AssetPlus refresher training and other bespoke youth justice training are scheduled for 2021. Most case managers have received Assessment, Intervention, Moving on three (AIM3) training. All volunteers responding to our survey are satisfied with their training and the support they receive from the YOT volunteer officer.

There are regular team meetings, which staff use as an opportunity to discuss casework and share best practice.

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### 1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Good

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?**

The profile of children in Torbay underlines the wide range of issues for the YOT to address, including criminal exploitation, poor relationships, mental health concerns and poor attainment at school. While there is some understanding of these issues, a more detailed analysis is required, to ensure that these needs are being met and to influence service delivery effectively at operational and strategic levels.

The YOT/IYSS caseload is made up of 40 per cent youth justice cases and 60 per cent prevention work, referred from other services, such as schools and early help. Data on the needs and profiles of children receiving prevention interventions is not routinely collected, and this means that the impact of the additional work on the YOT's limited resources is not fully understood. There is no set limit on the amount of additional prevention casework that the YOT/IYSS team can take, which means that increased demand could result in YOT children not getting prioritised for the support they need if the throughput of work is not analysed, monitored and managed effectively.

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

Children can access a range of specialist services, including education support, CAMHS, substance misuse interventions, SALT and healthy relationship support. There is a dedicated parenting worker, who offers a range of services to parents and carers who need it. There are effective youth to adult transition processes in place with the Probation Service.

The YOT has developed, and delivers, the 'Respect' programme to children who have experienced/witnessed domestic abuse in the family home. The course provides a safe space for children to discuss issues relating to their experiences.

Sentencers are satisfied with the services delivered to the court, and spoke highly of the 'exceptional' quality of pre-sentence reports. However, they raised a concern regarding the number of hours of education provision that some children receive.

YOT staff felt that their work with children had been negatively affected in the last few months, as the building that they usually worked from had been closed and they had been unable to access the resources they use to deliver interventions.

The YOT is establishing a working relationship with the Torbay Youth Trust manager, to explore opportunities for YOT children through the voluntary sector services. The Trust manager oversees 'Imagine this', which is a voluntary sector umbrella body funded by Big Lottery, with an aim to coordinate all the voluntary services in Torbay.

Recent planning meetings have been taking place between the YOT and the Trust, to consider how access for YOT children to the 30-plus projects can be prioritised.

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

The YOT has been influential in raising issues of child criminal exploitation (CCE). This has contributed to a review of the multi-agency child sexual exploitation (MASE) panel to include CCE cases, in recognition of safety and wellbeing concerns for children affected by criminal exploitation. The YOT is represented on the MASE panel and also in the children missing operational group.

Staff report that joint work with CSC has improved substantially in the last 12 months and we saw some examples of this in the statutory cases we inspected. Processes have more recently been put in place to improve the focus on children who go missing and those who are being exploited. A new tool to identify children at risk of exploitation has been developed and YOT practitioners routinely complete this as part of the wider assessment process. The YOT is involved in multi-agency safeguarding hub strategy meetings and is also represented on the early help panel.

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

In terms of casework, we saw good involvement from children and their parents or carers in all elements of work delivered to children subject to statutory court orders. For out-of-court disposals, there was less evidence that they had been involved in assessment, planning, and implementation and delivery.

The YOT has a feedback policy which outlines how service user information, including feedback from children and their families, as well as victims, will be gathered. We saw little evidence of feedback being analysed and used to understand the experiences of any group. This is something that the leadership team recognises that it needs to improve. It is considering how it can consult children on any future decisions about service delivery.

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**1.4. Information and facilities**



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

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 high-quality service, meeting the needs of all children?**

Most staff understand the policies and procedures that apply to their role and know where to find them. They are aware of how to access services and support for the children they work with and have no concerns about barriers or waiting lists.

The YOT has an out-of-court procedure in place that states that decision-making responsibility for disposals lies with the police and the YOT, but we found that in



practice there was a lack of clarity about who was responsible for deciding the most suitable disposal, and the process for recording decisions was poor.

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

All staff spoke positively about the Parkfield House site, where the YOT is located. They described a specially adapted building that has been set up specifically to meet the needs of children. There is access to large rooms, where group sessions take place, and also a kitchen, where staff deliver life skills sessions to children. Owing to the pandemic and the associated restrictions, the YOT premises, along with many other council buildings, have been closed. Staff we met expressed concerns about this and said that they have had no information about when it will be reopened, or if the YOT will continue to be based there. This is a serious concern for staff, and communicating the future accommodation plans to the team must be a management priority. Some staff also feel that they have not received clear guidance on how they should now be working, and said that they have been given no alternative venues to use.

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

Staff have suitable ICT systems to enable them to undertake their work effectively, although they raised some concerns about access to printers and shredding equipment over the past few months, when they have been working from home. In terms of information held by other agencies, staff have access to the CSC database, and the YOT education worker can access education records for all children, so any school absences can be followed up swiftly. The YOT seconded police officer has access to police systems and provides information to the team daily.

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

The YOT data analyst provides information to the Board on national key performance indicators and some local targets, but it has been recognised that more detailed reports about the needs of children and YOT performance are required.

No assessment tool is being used in the delivery of community resolutions, so there is no data to analyse the needs of this group of children or the quality of services delivered to them. In addition, a separate assessment is completed on IYSS prevention cases, which means that the needs of this group of children and the demand on YOT services are not fully understood.

Quality assurance has not been routinely undertaken over the past 12 months. This means that the Head of Service has not been provided with regular reports, to help him understand the quality of practice and address any deficits.

There are no effective mechanisms to gain feedback from children and victims that can be used and analysed to review the impact of service delivery. There are plans to set up a 'task and finish' group, to consider how the voice of the child and the victim is currently captured and how this can be improved.

The peer audit which has recently been completed resulted in the commissioning of AssetPlus refresher training.



## 2. Court disposals

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

### Strengths:

- Assessment, planning, implementation and delivery, and reviewing are rated as 'Outstanding', with sufficient attention paid to desistance needs, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others.
- Children and their parents or carers are meaningfully involved in the work undertaken with them.
- Diversity needs and barriers to engagement are routinely considered and addressed.
- Case managers understand the children they work with and have good relationships with them.
- The needs and wishes of victims are considered.
- Service delivery builds upon the child's strengths and enhances protective factors.

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 or carers.

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>7</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
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	4	4
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	4	4

<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.

Assessment was rated as 'Outstanding'. All the cases inspected were of a sufficient standard regarding supporting the child's desistance, keeping the child safe and attending to any apparent risks to individual or potential future victims.

**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 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?	3	3
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?	4	4
Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s, and opportunities for restorative justice?	4	3
Are the child and their parents or 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
Where applicable, does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	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?	4	4
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	4	4
Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	4	4

Assessments were typically based on a broad set of information sources, including CSC, the police and mental health services, where relevant to the needs of the child.

There was an equal focus on desistance, risk of harm, and safety and wellbeing, and this resulted in high-quality, well-balanced assessments. The child's individual needs and circumstances were routinely considered, giving context to their offending and behaviour. Strengths and areas to develop were identified and there was clear evidence, in every case, of the child and their parent or carer being closely involved and engaged in the assessment process.

We agreed with the assessed level of risk to safety and wellbeing in every case. In three cases, a high level of risk was identified and there was a thorough and detailed analysis of what needed to happen to keep the children safe. In one case, we saw an excellent example of partnership work to safeguard a child who had been the victim of CCE.

It was a similar picture in relation to the assessment of risk of harm to others. We agreed with the assessed risk level in every case; in one of the four cases, a high level of risk was identified, and in another a very high level.

## 2.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

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

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

The planning in all cases inspected was sufficient for desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others, and is therefore assessed as 'Outstanding'.

### 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
Where applicable, does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s?	4	4

<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.

Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	4	4
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### Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Of the 4 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?	4	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?	4	4
Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	4	4
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	4	4

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

Of the 3 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?	3	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	3
Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	3	3
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	3	3

In all the cases inspected, there was enough planning to support desistance work and there was a good level of involvement of the child and their parents or carers in the planning process. All cases were assessed as sufficient in respect of keeping the child safe and keeping other people safe. Planning focused appropriately on the factors highlighted in the initial assessment, and there was cross-referencing to plans held by other agencies, as well as involvement from other professionals in the planning process. We were pleased to see a good example of planning for a

vulnerable child who was due to be released from custody. There was a coordinated partnership approach that supported effective planning for his resettlement, including good contingency arrangements.

### 2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>11</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

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

In every case, the implementation and delivery of services supported desistance, the safety of the child and the risk of harm to others. The consistent delivery of high-quality services resulted in our rating of 'Outstanding'.

#### Does the implementation and delivery of services 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 or carers, or significant others?	4	4
Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	4	4
Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	4	4

<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 service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to services post-supervision?	4	4
Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	4	4
In cases where it is required, are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	0	0

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

<b>Of the 4 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?	4	4
Where applicable, is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?	4	4

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

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

Inspectors were impressed with the skill and commitment that case managers demonstrated in delivering services and interventions to children and families. The individual needs of the child were consistently considered, and positive engagement was promoted and supported. In every case, there was a clear focus on encouraging the involvement of parents or carers. In one case, discussion with the child and his family about his concerns regarding education meant that the right college placement was found. He has sustained his attendance with support from the YOT and his mother, and he is on track to receive a qualification which will secure him employment in a family member's business.

We saw good examples of YOT staff maintaining contact with children and their families during lockdown. Outdoor sessions were held when this was possible, and telephone meetings took place when it was not. Tasks were set and followed up, and social media was used appropriately for educational purposes. A referral order panel



member told us that a panel meeting had been held outdoors, to make sure that there were no delays to children starting their interventions and getting the support they needed.

In most cases, effective partnership working supported and enhanced the quality of work delivered to support desistance, safety and wellbeing, and the management of risk posed to other people.

## 2.4. Reviewing



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

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>14</sup> for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

Of the 4 cases inspected: <sup>15</sup>	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	3	3
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	4	4
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	3	3

In every case, where changes had been identified, reviewing focused sufficiently on the progress of the child, in terms of desistance. Similarly, case managers reviewed the impact that interventions were having on keeping the child and the public safe, and work plans were adjusted appropriately in response to changing circumstances. Overall, reviewing was assessed as 'Outstanding'.

<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 focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

Of the 3 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?	3	3
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	3	3
Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	3	3
Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	3	3

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

Of the 4 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?	4	4
Where applicable, is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?	4	4
Where applicable, does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	4	4

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

Of the 3 cases 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?	3	3
Where applicable, is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	3	3
Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their risk of harm, and are their views taken into account?	3	3
Where applicable, does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	3	3

We rated the work on reviewing cases as 'Outstanding'. In all the cases we inspected, there was sufficient review of desistance factors, issues concerning the wellbeing of the child, and risk of harm to others.

Reviewing was an ongoing process in most cases, and it involved the children and their parents or carers in every case. Effective inter-agency working meant that reviewing was an ongoing process. Swift information sharing between partner agencies helped practitioners to be responsive to any change in the circumstances of children. When things changed, they did not remain fixed on delivering the original plan of work, and there was a clear focus on meeting the shifting needs of children.

In one case where there were serious concerns about a child's safety, the YOT worked with other agencies to monitor their family circumstances, associates and changes in compliance and engagement. The risk was reviewed at social care meetings and risk management meetings. When intelligence suggested that the child had been associating with a concerning peer group and potentially engaging in further criminal activity, this was shared with the family, partnership agencies and the child. The coordinated and transparent approach to reviewing concerns supported the safety of the child.



### 3. Out-of-court disposals

We inspected three cases managed by the YOT that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of two youth conditional cautions and one community resolution. We interviewed the case managers in all three 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. In the two cases where safety and wellbeing concerns were identified, we looked at work done to safeguard the child. We also looked at the quality of joint working with local police.

#### Strengths:

- Assessment and planning of desistance were good.
- Assessments considered the diversity and social context of the child.
- Planning took sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors.
- Attention was given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT.
- The YOT worked effectively with the police in implementing youth conditional cautions.

#### Areas for improvement:

- Assessments of how to keep the child and other people safe were inadequate.
- Planning did not focus sufficiently on keeping the child or other people safe.
- There was no assessment of the child completed prior to the out-of-court disposal decision being made, so recommendations were not sufficiently well informed and personalised to the child.
- Recommendations did not routinely consider the degree of the child's understanding of the offence and their acknowledgement of responsibility.
- Implementation and delivery was inadequate across all three areas of practice.
- The rationale for joint disposal decisions was not clearly recorded.

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 or carers.

Inadequate

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

Of the 3 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	3	2
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	3	0
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	3	1

In two of the three inspected cases, the assessment of desistance factors was sufficient. However, the assessment of risk of harm to others was adequate in just one case. The assessment of safety and wellbeing was lacking in all inspected cases, and it was this score that drove the overall rating of 'Inadequate' for assessment.

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

Of the 3 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's acknowledgement of responsibility, attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	3	2
Does assessment consider the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, utilising information held by other agencies?	3	2
Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	3	2
Where applicable, does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	3	2
Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	3	2
Where applicable, does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s, and opportunities for restorative justice?	2	2

<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.

Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	3	2
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### Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

Of the 3 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	3	0
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	3	1

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

Of the 3 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?	3	0
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including any other assessments that have been completed, and other evidence of behaviour by the child?	3	0

One of the three cases inspected was a community resolution, and as the YOT does not complete a structured assessment for these cases, it failed to meet our standards in all three areas of practice.

In the other cases, the assessment of desistance was the strongest area of practice. We saw good evidence that assessments considered the individual circumstances of children, and attention was paid to understanding their motivation for offending. In most cases, barriers to engagement were considered, and strengths and protective factors were identified.

We found that assessments of safety and wellbeing lacked depth and analysis, and evidence was not triangulated. Indicators of wider issues were not picked up, and there was not enough curiosity about underlying factors that may have had an impact on the child's behaviour. Assessments did not clearly identify and analyse risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child and did not routinely include information from other services.

Assessments did not analyse risk of harm to others and did not set out how any risk would be mitigated. We agreed with the assessed level of risk in the two cases where a risk level had been identified. However, overall, we found the assessment of risk of harm to be insufficient in two out of three cases. Not enough attention was paid to gathering information from all relevant sources, to understand and analyse any patterns of concerning behaviour.

### 3.2. Planning



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

Inadequate

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

Of the 3 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	3	2
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? <sup>18</sup>	2	0
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? <sup>19</sup>	1	0

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

Of the 3 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?	3	2
Does planning take sufficient account of the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child?	3	1
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	3	2
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	2
Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?	3	2
Where applicable, does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s?	2	2

<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.

Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	3	1
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### Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Of the 2 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?	2	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?	2	0
Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	2	1

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

There was no intervention plan completed for the community resolution case, which meant that there was a lack of focus about the intervention that was to be delivered. For the two youth conditional caution cases, planning appropriately set out and sequenced the interventions.

Insufficiencies in the assessment of risk to the safety and wellbeing of the child were reflected in a limited level of planning to promote safety. Where other agencies were included within the plan, the information shared was limited. For example, in one case where there were concerns about mental health, a referral was made appropriately to CAMHS, although as the child's anxiety was linked to pending examinations, we would have expected to see their school included, but this did not happen.

Victim issues were considered in both of the cases where this was required, and victim awareness work was included in the plan. However, in the one case where risk



of harm issues were identified, planning to manage the potential risk of harm to others was insufficient. In this case, the lack of analysis in the assessment meant that the plan did not target some of the underlying factors affecting the child's thinking and behaviour that were linked to a risk of harm to others.

### 3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Inadequate

Our rating<sup>20</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Of the 3 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	3	0
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child? <sup>21</sup>	2	0
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people? <sup>22</sup>	1	0

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

Of the 3 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?	3	0
Does service delivery reflect the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers or significant others?	3	1
Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	3	1
Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	3	2
Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	3	2

<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.

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

Of the 2 cases with factors related to the safety of the child:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	2	0
Where applicable, is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	2	0

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

Of the 1 case with factors related to the safety of other people:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Where applicable, is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	1	0
Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	1	0

We were disappointed to find that the delivery of interventions fell below our standards in all cases, across all three areas of practice. In one case, a SALT assessment had been completed and, despite issues being identified, information was not used to guide the delivery of interventions. Interventions lacked coordination, and referrals and actions were not always followed up. In one case, this meant that there was a three-month delay in making a CAMHS referral, despite there being concerns about possible self-harm.

Interventions were not personalised to meet the child's needs. In the community resolution case, the intervention was limited to a discussion with the child's mother and a request that the child complete a letter of apology to the victim.

### 3.4. Joint working



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

Inadequate

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

Of the 3 cases inspected:	Relevant cases	Number 'Yes'
Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well informed, analytical and personalised to the child, supporting joint decision-making?	3	1
Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal? <sup>24</sup>	2	2

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

Of the 3 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?	3	2
Do the recommendations consider the degree of the child's understanding of the offence and their acknowledgement of responsibility?	3	1
Where applicable, is a positive contribution made by the YOT to determining the disposal?	3	2
Is sufficient attention given to the child's understanding, and their parents' or carers' understanding, of the implications of receiving an out-of-court disposal?	3	2
Is the information provided to inform decision-making timely to meet the needs of the case, legislation and guidance?	3	3
Where applicable, is the rationale for joint disposal decisions appropriate and clearly recorded?	3	0

<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 2 cases 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?	2	2

The cases we inspected were one community resolution and two youth conditional cautions. Currently, youth cautions are not considered at the joint decision-making panel.

The process for out-of-court disposals does not involve the YOT meeting the child and their parents or carers prior to the disposal decision being made. This meant that recommendations did not always consider the child's understanding of the offence or their attitude towards it. We found the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well informed, analytical and personalised to the child in only one of the three cases we inspected.

The information provided by other agencies at the decision-making panel was helpful in assisting the understanding of the child's contact with other services. However, in cases where the child had not been involved with other services, and in the absence of any meeting with them and their parents or carers, there was very little information available to support decision-making.

We found evidence that the implications of accepting an out-of-court disposal had been discussed with the children and their parents or carers in two of the three relevant cases. Staff and managers assumed that these individuals would have been spoken to by the officer in charge of the case at the point of the initial police interview. However, the YOT needs to confirm this, to make sure that families are clear about the processes and their implications.

The rationale for decision-making was not clearly recorded in any of the cases we inspected.

## 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 Director of Children's Services 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 seven 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 10 meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.<sup>25</sup>

### Domain two: 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 court disposals nine to 11 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 four 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's standards are available here:

<https://www.justiceinspectrates.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. Three of the cases selected were those of children who had received out-of-court disposals seven 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 three out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set so that the combined case sample size comprised 60 per cent domain two cases and 40 per cent domain three. 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.

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 four court disposals and three 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 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.