



Her Majesty's  
Inspectorate of  
Probation

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

---

HM Inspectorate of Probation, August 2022



# Contents

<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Ratings</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Background</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Contextual facts</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>1. Organisational delivery</b> .....	<b>14</b>
1.1. Governance and leadership .....	15
1.2. Staff.....	17
1.3. Partnerships and services .....	19
1.4. Information and facilities.....	22
Diversity .....	23
<b>2. Court disposals</b> .....	<b>25</b>
2.1. Assessment .....	26
2.2. Planning .....	27
2.3. Implementation and delivery .....	29
2.4. Reviewing .....	30
<b>3. Out-of-court disposals</b> .....	<b>32</b>
3.1. Assessment .....	33
3.2. Planning .....	34
3.3. Implementation and delivery .....	36
3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision .....	37
<b>4. Resettlement</b> .....	<b>40</b>
4.1. Resettlement policy and provision .....	40
<b>Annexe 1: Methodology</b> .....	<b>43</b>
<b>Annexe 2: Inspection data</b> .....	<b>45</b>

## Acknowledgements

This inspection was led by HM Inspector, Vivienne Raine, 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.

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence) or email [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

Published by:

HM Inspectorate of Probation  
1st Floor Civil Justice Centre  
1 Bridge Street West  
Manchester  
M3 3FX

Follow us on Twitter  
[@hmiprobation](https://twitter.com/hmiprobation)

ISBN: 978-1-914478-83-3

© Crown copyright 2022

## Foreword

---

This inspection is part of our programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Thurrock YOS across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. Overall, Thurrock YOS was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Outstanding'.

The Youth Crime Governance Board provides effective leadership and governance of Thurrock YOS. It takes an impressive, cohesive partnership approach to understanding and meeting the needs of children. A child-first, solution-focused culture is embedded at all levels of the organisation, and staff are given the guidance and support they need to work well. The partnership invests in evidence-based services and initiatives to make sure that children, especially the most vulnerable, can access effective support.

The post-court work we inspected was consistently effective, and an area of strength. Practitioners took a positive approach to supporting desistance, tailoring work to meet the child's neurodevelopmental needs, strengths and interests. We found that they successfully balanced this with work to protect victims. However, the YOS needs to strengthen the quality of its contingency planning and address the inconsistency of its approach to ensuring children's safety and wellbeing.

There is also more to be done to strengthen decision-making processes for out-of-court disposals and internal scrutiny of the impact of these decisions. Improvements were required across planning, and implementation and delivery for out-of-court work. Planning did not always set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child. Additionally, the YOS would benefit from reviewing its approach to diversity and ensuring all children's unique needs are met. Encouraging and enabling children and their parents and carers to actively participate will further enhance its strategic development in this area.

The board and the YOS staff are committed to ensuring the very best service for children. In this report, we make eight recommendations that we hope will support the YOS in building upon and further developing its practice and provision.



**Justin Russell**  
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

## Ratings

**Thurrock Youth Justice Service**  
Fieldwork started: May 2022

**Score 26/36**

**Overall rating**

**Good**



### **1. Organisational delivery**

1.1 Governance and leadership

**Outstanding**



1.2 Staff

**Good**



1.3 Partnerships and services

**Good**



1.4 Information and facilities

**Good**



### **2. Court disposals**

2.1 Assessment

**Outstanding**



2.2 Planning

**Good**



2.3 Implementation and delivery

**Outstanding**



2.4 Reviewing

**Outstanding**



### **3. Out-of-court disposals**

3.1 Assessment

**Outstanding**



3.2 Planning

**Requires improvement**



3.3 Implementation and delivery

**Requires improvement**



3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

**Requires improvement**



### **4. Resettlement<sup>1</sup>**

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

**Outstanding**



<sup>1</sup> The rating for resettlement does not influence the overall YOS rating.

## Executive summary

---

Overall, Thurrock YOS is rated as: 'Good'. This rating has been determined by inspecting the YOS in three areas of its work, referred to as 'domains'. We inspect against 12 core 'standards', shared between the domains. The 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.<sup>2</sup> Published scoring rules generate the overall YOS rating.<sup>3</sup> We inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision separately and rated this work as: 'Outstanding'. The findings and subsequent ratings in those domains are described below:

### Organisational delivery

We interviewed more than 35 people, including volunteers, board members, and managers and staff from the YOS and its partner agencies. We also attended specialist presentations, conducted surveys, and spoke with children and parents or carers.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows:

- The Youth Crime Governance Board has been remodelled to strengthen its influence and impact.
- Board members work as an active and cohesive partnership to meet the YOS's objectives.
- The YOS uses the youth justice plan to drive improvement in service delivery.
- A culture of learning and improvement is firmly embedded at every level of the partnership.
- The board has an evident commitment to addressing ethnic disproportionality.
- Members of the board take an evidence-based approach to understanding, monitoring, and scrutinising the YOS's work and strengthening its service provision.
- Partners have developed an effective strategic response to issues relating to gangs and exploitation.
- Children have good access to support for education, training, and employment; emotional and mental health; and speech, language, and communication.
- The YOS has firmly embedded a child-first culture at a strategic and operational level, but this does not detract from its focus on keeping other people safe.

---

<sup>2</sup> HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards can be found here:

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

<sup>3</sup> Each of the 12 standards is scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0 to 36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows: 0–6 = 'Inadequate', 7–18 = 'Requires improvement', 19–30 = 'Good', 31–36 = 'Outstanding'.

- The YOS is agile and responsive in its approach to feedback about its provision.
- The YOS is staffed by well-established, skilled practitioners who are supported by effective management, and learning and development processes.
- Practitioners take a cohesive team approach to their work with children.
- YOS volunteers are supported well to fulfil their role on referral order panels.

But:

- The board would benefit from widening its definition of diversity to include the nine characteristics protected under the *Equality Act 2010*.
- The Probation Service has taken too long to fulfil its obligation to provide a seconded probation officer to the YOS.
- There is scope to strengthen the participation of children and their parents or carers in strategic development work.
- Some staff identified concerns relating to the YOS's building and considered it was not a welcoming venue for all children. Some outlined that they preferred to meet in alternate venues. We note further work is planned to extend the building.

### **Court disposals**

We took a detailed look at seven community sentences and one custodial sentence managed by the YOS. We also conducted seven interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery of services; and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, keep the child safe, and keep other people safe.

Our key findings about court disposals are as follows:

- The YOS worked effectively with its partners, building and sustaining relationships with the child, and parents or carers to provide an effective service.
- The speech and language therapist made a significant contribution to the quality of case management.
- The partnership balanced a child-first culture appropriately with the need to protect other people.
- Children had timely access to mainstream services and the YOS took effective action to address any barriers to access provision as these arose.
- Case managers were active and thorough in their support for children who moved to another borough or transitioned to the Probation Service.

But:

- Planning to support the child's safety and wellbeing would have benefited from a stronger partnership approach and more detailed plans.
- There was too little focus on making sure contingency planning supported an effective partnership response to changes in a case.

- There was scope to improve recording, especially of reviews to protect the child and other people, and to make written plans more child-friendly.

### **Out-of-court disposals**

We inspected six cases managed by the YOS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of three youth conditional cautions and three community resolutions, which were all the out-of-court cases that met the criteria for our sample period. We interviewed the case managers in all six 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, to keep the child safe and to keep other people safe. The quality of the work undertaken for each factor needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision to be rated as satisfactory.

We also inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews.

Our key findings about out-of-court disposals are as follows:

- The Youth Crime Governance Board takes an active interest in the data on out-of-court disposal cases. It uses this to identify emerging and current trends relating to disproportionality.
- Work to support desistance was consistently thorough and focused on the child's strengths and aspirations.
- Specific concerns relating to victims were addressed well.
- Case managers worked flexibly with children to remove barriers to their engagement and encourage their participation in a wide range of tailored, offence-focused interventions.
- Children received good support for their neurodevelopmental, emotional, and mental health needs, and work was proactively undertaken to strengthen their access to education, training, and employment.

But:

- Neither the case manager nor YOS victim's worker contribute to the out-of-court disposal decision-making process.
- There is scope for strengthening the voice of the child and their parents or carers in the out-of-court decision-making process.
- The quality of contingency planning was poor and did not provide a suitable, tailored partnership response to indicators of escalating risk.
- The YOS did not engage consistently well with its partners to promote the safety and wellbeing of children.
- Case managers did not take sufficient account of children's diversity in their work to support desistance.
- The partnership had not sufficiently considered why children known to children's social care were overrepresented among those referred to the out-of-court disposal joint decision-making panel; or taken appropriate action to address this.

- There was too little scrutiny of the impact of out-of-court disposals delivered by the police outside the joint decision-making process.

## **Resettlement**

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews. To illustrate that work, we inspected one case managed by the YOS.

Our key findings about resettlement work are as follows:

- The YOS partnership had established an integrated, effective style of resettlement.
- Practice was supported by a newly drafted, evidence-based policy.
- Resettlement planning was timely and tailored to the needs of the case, and focused well on the child, their family, and victims.
- YOS specialists worked with the child and practitioners in the custodial establishment to ensure that, once released, children transitioned seamlessly to services in the community.
- Children who turned 18 years old before the end of their licence period receive ongoing support from YOS specialists until they could access adult services.
- The partnership continued to work with children who left the borough, and beyond their licence period.
- Policy development and review were facilitated by a dedicated, strategic resettlement group.
- Understanding and meeting the needs of children who are overrepresented in the custodial cohort is high on the Youth Crime Governance Board's agenda.

But:

- Children and their parents or carers do not contribute in a meaningful way to strategic reviews of resettlement.
- The YOS could consider how to include children more proactively as part of the multi-agency network to support their resettlement.
- There is scope to strengthen the guidance for protecting victims, especially those at a proposed release address, and to provide detailed advice about keeping children and others safe in relation to gang affiliation/exploitation.



## Recommendations

---

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 Thurrock. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth offending services, and better protect the public.

### **The Youth Crime Governance Board should:**

1. consider the nine characteristics protected by the *Equality Act 2010* in its work to strengthen service provision
2. take steps to understand and address the overrepresentation of children known to children's social care referred to the out-of-court decision-making panel
3. strengthen its understanding of the impact of out-of-court disposals on first-time entrance rates by scrutinising disposal decisions made by the police
4. involve children and their parents or carers in strategic and operational development work.

### **The Thurrock Youth Offending Service should:**

5. provide a child-friendly, appropriate environment for children to meet with case managers and YOS specialists.
6. make sure contingency planning supports an effective partnership response to changes in a case
7. engage more effectively with operational partners to plan and deliver services to promote children's safety and wellbeing
8. include an appropriately informed YOS assessment of need in the out-of-court decision-making process.

## Background

---

Youth offending teams (YOTs) work with children aged 10 to 18 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.

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 Probation Service, and local health services.<sup>4</sup> Most YOTs are based within local authorities, although 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.

Thurrock is a small unitary authority situated in the Thames Gateway. It is located next to Essex and East London and is easily accessible by public transport. Levels of deprivation in Thurrock are lower than the national average but relatively high in communities such as Tilbury and Purfleet, where one in four children live in poverty. The youth offending service (YOS) is based in Grays, central to many children who use it.



---

<sup>4</sup> The *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* set out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

Thurrock YOS is part of Thurrock Council's children's service. Its operations manager reports to the authority's strategic lead for the YOS and for prevention work. Overall leadership is provided by the assistant director for children's social care and early help. Ofsted rated Thurrock children's care services as 'Good' in 2019 and found it provided 'effective, responsive services for vulnerable children' during its visit in 2021.

Covid-19 had a considerable negative impact on Thurrock, due to the virulence of the Delta variant. During this time, health practitioners were redeployed to clinical care and children were seen on a risk and needs basis. Although staff and children are now able to visit a YOS building, the hybrid model of office/remote working is firmly established for practitioners and referral order panels.

In line with the national trend, the number of children on the YOS caseload has reduced, and the complexity of cases it manages has increased. Gangs and exploitation are a growing threat among Thurrock children, many of whom are working with the YOS for offences involving weapons. More than half have substance misuse issues and over a third have emotional health needs. About one in three has difficulties with speech, language, and communication.

The YOS is one of three covered by Essex police and this strengthens its links with partners in Essex and Southend-on-Sea. While the police out-of-court disposal scheme has been developed to meet an agreed process for the county, Thurrock YOS has produced its own guidance, tailoring the Essex policy to reflect the borough's aspirations for children. Despite a recent rise in post-court cases, out-of-court disposals make up about 60 per cent of the YOS's annual caseload.

## Contextual facts

### Population information<sup>5</sup>

<b>150</b>	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in Thurrock <sup>6</sup>
<b>167</b>	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in England and Wales
<b>36.4%</b>	Reoffending rate in Thurrock <sup>7</sup>
<b>33.6%</b>	Reoffending rate in England and Wales

<b>175,531</b>	Total population Thurrock
<b>18,747</b>	Total youth population (10–17 years) in Thurrock

### Caseload information<sup>8</sup>

Age	10–14 years	15–17 years
Thurrock YOS	<b>23%</b>	<b>77%</b>
National average	18%	82%

Race/ethnicity <sup>9</sup>	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
Thurrock YOS	<b>62%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>12%</b>
Youth population (school age children) in Thurrock	81%	19%	0%

Gender	Male	Female
Thurrock YOS	<b>87%</b>	<b>13%</b>
National average	86%	13%

<sup>5</sup> Office for National Statistics. (June 2021). *UK population estimates, mid-2020*.

<sup>6</sup> Youth Justice Board. (2022). *First-time entrants, January to December 2020*.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Justice. (April 2022). *Proven reoffending statistics, July 2019 to Jun 2020*.

<sup>8</sup> Youth Justice Board. (January 2022). *Youth justice annual statistics: 2020 to 2021*.

<sup>9</sup> Data supplied by the YOS.

### Additional caseload data<sup>10</sup>

<b>84</b>	Total current caseload, of which:
<b>33</b>	Court disposals
<b>51</b>	Out-of-court disposals

### Of the 33 court disposals:

<b>29</b>	Total current caseload: community sentences
<b>02</b>	Total current caseload in custody
<b>02</b>	Total current caseload on licence

### Of the 51 out-of-court disposals:

<b>03</b>	Total current caseload: youth caution
<b>12</b>	Total current caseload: youth conditional caution
<b>36</b>	Total current caseload: community resolution or other out-of-court disposal

### Education and child protection status of caseload:

<b>17%</b>	Percentage of current caseload 'Looked After Children' resident in the YOS area
<b>3%</b>	Percentage of current caseload 'Looked After Children' placed outside the YOS area
<b>3%</b>	Percentage of current caseload with child protection plan
<b>35%</b>	Percentage of current caseload with child in need plan
<b>65%</b>	Percentage of current caseload aged 16 and under in full-time school
<b>16%</b>	Percentage of children aged 16 and under in a pupil referral unit, alternative education, or attending school part-time
<b>41%</b>	Percentage of current caseload aged 17+ not in education, training, or employment

### For children subject to court disposals (including resettlement cases):

Offence types <sup>11</sup>	%
Violence against the person	78%
Drug offences	11%
Other summary offences	11%

<sup>10</sup> Data supplied by the YOS, reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

<sup>11</sup> Data from the cases assessed during this inspection.

# 1. Organisational delivery

---

## Strengths

- The Youth Crime Governance Board has been remodelled to strengthen its influence and impact.
- Board members work as an active and cohesive partnership to meet the YOS's objectives.
- The YOS uses the youth justice plan to drive improvement in service delivery.
- A culture of learning and improvement is firmly embedded at every level of the partnership.
- The board has an evident commitment to addressing ethnic disproportionality.
- Members of the board take an evidence-based approach to understanding, monitoring, and scrutinising the YOS's work and strengthening its service provision.
- Partners have developed an effective strategic response to issues relating to gangs and exploitation.
- Children have good access to support for education, training, and employment; emotional and mental health; and speech, language, and communication.
- The YOS has firmly embedded a child-first culture at a strategic and operational level, which does not detract from its focus on keeping other people safe.
- The YOS is agile and responsive in its approach to feedback about its provision.
- The YOS is staffed by well-established, skilled practitioners who are supported by effective management, and learning and development processes.
- Practitioners take a cohesive team approach to their work with children.
- YOS volunteers are supported well to fulfil their role on referral order panels.

## Areas for improvement

- The board would benefit from widening its definition of diversity to include the nine characteristics protected under the *Equality Act 2010*.
- The Probation Service has taken too long to fulfil its obligation to provide a seconded probation officer to the YOS.
- There is scope to strengthen the participation of children and their parents or carers in strategic development work.
- Staff have expressed concerns relating to the YOS's building, its location, and consider is not a welcoming venue for all children.

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

### Key data

Total spend in previous financial year	£665,719
Total projected budget current for financial year	£668,881

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

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

We saw an effective board, with members working actively and responsively to support, monitor, and challenge the work of the YOS.

The structures and role of the Youth Crime Governance Board have been remodelled since the arrival of the current chair in 2020.

Members have attended governance training (based on the Youth Justice Board's 'Modern Youth Offending Partnerships' guidance) to help them further understand their role. New terms of reference are in place, with revised membership and more frequent meetings, to strengthen the board's impact and scope of influence.

The board's membership is broad and includes housing, the Crown Prosecution Service, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and borough councillors.

The Youth Crime Governance Board reflects the importance of the evidence base in its decision-making by using research, local and national data, audits, and inspection to identify its priority objectives. The youth justice plan includes an objective to strengthen the use of the evidence base, to ensure children have access to relevant and effective interventions.

The partnership has successfully embedded a culture of 'child first, offender second' and this together with access to appropriate services is threaded through the youth justice plan. The board has recently added a stand-alone priority to this plan to monitor disproportionality and progress towards its targets to reduce this. The board would benefit from taking a broader look at the nine characteristics protected by the *Equality Act 2010* to ensure a systematic approach to addressing children's individual needs is embedded.

The partnership takes an active interest in the views of children and their parents or carers. The board uses this feedback to commission further research and builds this into its strategic decision-making. The YOS responds to the views of children and

their parents or carers and adapts its practice and processes appropriately to reflect these. There is scope to strengthen their involvement, however, in the review and co-creation of policies and procedures.

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

Board members advocate strongly in their wider organisations for the specific needs of YOS children. This manifests in effective commissioning by partner organisations, especially the health and education sectors, to make sure children have quick and easy access to appropriate services.

The Youth Crime Governance Board has effective links with a broad network of groups and boards across Thurrock. Although Thurrock is a unitary authority, board members work collaboratively with partners in Southend-on-Sea, Essex county, and London. This improves board members' knowledge, the range of services available to Thurrock children, and cross-border relationships to support children who move between boroughs.

The YOS is fully embedded into Thurrock's violence and vulnerability strategy, and works effectively with partners, including schools, to support children who are vulnerable to exploitation, gang affiliation, and associated offending behaviour.

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

The child-first approach is established across the partnership at a strategic and operational level alongside the needs and wishes of victims and keeping people safe.

YOS leaders take a proactive and inclusive approach to understanding what is working well. They adapt provision quickly where they can, for example to strengthen support to volunteers or adapt interventions and collaborate with partners to implement long-term solutions.

YOS managers have embedded a culture of trust and creativity. Practitioners use the evidence base, drawing on models of effective practice seen in other YOSs to strengthen their work with children.

The Youth Crime Governance Board and leaders are aware of current and potential strategic risks to service delivery, and monitor and consider relevant contingency plans. The rise in cases as the courts clear their Covid-19 lockdown backlog, and increase in custodial sentences, are both reviewed monthly.

YOS practitioners are fully conversant with the YOS's strategic priorities, and fully understand how they contribute to these. Their operational manager sits on the Youth Crime Governance Board and provides updates on its decisions. They are involved in sub-groups to review and improve service provision. Some staff, however, would like to know more about the activities of the board.



## 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>12</sup>

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent (FTE))	12
Total headcount qualified case managers (FTE) <sup>13</sup>	4
Vacancy rate (total unfilled posts as percentage of total staff headcount)	8%
Vacancy rate case managers only (total unfilled case manager posts as percentage of total case manager headcount)	0%
Average caseload case managers (FTE equivalent) <sup>14</sup>	6
Average annual working days sickness (all staff)	2.5
Staff attrition (percentage of all staff leaving in 12-month period)	16%

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

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

Staffing and workload levels are managed and monitored. The decision not to replace an operational manager has led to a change in role for senior practitioners, who now provide line management and oversight for their colleagues. Leaders have ensured the current structure provides a measure of staffing resilience to cover for practitioner absence and manage the potential increase in cases as the courts clear their backlog.

The sickness absence rate is low, averaging at 2.5 working days lost per member of staff per year, which is lower than the UK's 2021 national average rate of 4.6.<sup>15</sup> Currently, the only vacancy in the YOS relates to the half-time probation officer post. The YOS caseload is manageable, and case managers have sufficient time to carry out good-quality work and cover for planned and unplanned absence.

The victims and restorative justice officer has a wide remit, including reparation coordinator, and managing the YOS's volunteers and referral order panels. The

<sup>12</sup> Data supplied by YOS and reflecting staffing at the time of the inspection announcement.

<sup>13</sup> Qualified case managers are those with a relevant social work, youth justice or probation qualification.

<sup>14</sup> Data supplied by YOS, based on staffing and workload at the time of the inspection announcement.

<sup>15</sup> Office for National Statistics

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/labourproductivity/articles/sicknessabsenceinthelabourmarket/2021>

cumulative workload is being monitored and does not appear to be affecting the quality of this work.

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

The YOS works consistently to support and strengthen the skills of its staff. Senior practitioners have been supported into their new management roles through effective transition arrangements and support from their manager. The majority of cases are managed by qualified case managers, however, the staff survey indicated that a small number of practitioners do not feel fully experienced and qualified to manage their cases. There are systems in place to support staff who would like to gain a social work qualification.

The YOS monitors and publishes the gender and ethnicity of its staff, acknowledging the disparity between the ethnic representation of its workforce and that of the children who work with the YOS. Low staff turnover has made it difficult to address this. However, the YOS has made a conscious, successful effort to increase the diversity of its volunteers, and there are now more men, and representatives from minority ethnic communities, available for referral order panels.

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

In response to staff feedback, the YOS has recently been given the autonomy to tailor its oversight systems to better reflect the specific nature of its work.

Supervision and appraisal processes are completed in good time and provide effective support to staff. Every AssetPlus assessment is quality-assured, and we found that this made a positive difference to the quality of case management.

Volunteers are supported well, helped to prepare for panel meetings, and invited to staff training events. The learning from panel debrief sessions is shared across the volunteer team, and there are systems in place to make sure that volunteers have completed mandatory courses, such as child protection training.

Although we found quality in management oversight and examples of creative thinking in the cases inspected, we also identified the need for case managers to take a more dynamic approach to their work, strengthen their professional curiosity, and improve their recording, planning, and work to support children's safety and wellbeing.

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

Leaders have set a culture of learning and development. Training is identified, discussed, and agreed at a senior level to meet the strategic objectives of the YOS. The YOS has used the Youth Justice Board's skills matrix to identify learning and development needs relating to case management.

Recent training has focused on violence reduction, exploitation, and understanding special educational needs, which are all included in the youth justice plan. Practitioners have also attended comprehensive, skills-based training in trauma-informed practice, and speech, language, and communication training. Staff across the partnership feel able to participate in these programmes, which helps to strengthen the delivery of the child-first, trauma-informed vision for children in Thurrock.

### Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?

The YOS comprises a small, closely knit team. South Essex was badly affected by the Delta strain of Covid-19 and there is still a strong 'work at home' ethos. Despite the constraints of remote working, communication across the operational partnership has remained strong and practitioners have retained a strong focus on working effectively with children and victims.

Practitioners feel well supported by their managers and team, and there is evidence that leaders are sensitive to, and work to protect, the wellbeing of their staff. A YOS staff survey during 2020 led to an action plan, and many of the objectives in this have been implemented. Staff indicated that they are not asked often enough about their experience of working for the YOS, but when they are, their views are listened to and acted on.

Practitioners feel managers motivate them to deliver high-quality services. The YOS is able to participate in the local authority reward and recognition scheme. Some staff are not assured that exceptional work is recognised consistently.

### 1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Good

### Caseload characteristics

Percentage of current caseload with mental health issues	36%
Percentage of current caseload with substance misuse issues	57%
Percentage of current caseload with special educational needs or disability	27%

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

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

The Youth Crime Governance Board sees a range of case data, which stimulates discussion, drives decisions and requests for more granular information to understand the experience of children. The partnership also uses needs assessment reports commissioned by other boards and groups to help identify the needs of YOS children. This includes a recently commissioned comprehensive analysis of violence and vulnerability relating to gangs and exploitation.

Data evidence and the views of victims, children, and their parents or carers are all used to inform the YOS's priorities and its approaches to strengthening service provision. As a result, the partnership has funded staff to address violence and vulnerability, developed information packs for families moving from London to Thurrock, worked to strengthen access to education, training, and employment, reduced school exclusions, and provided skills-based training for practitioners.

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

The speech and language therapist and child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) practitioner add considerable value to the YOS at an operational and strategic level. The CAMHS practitioner sees every child within 10 days of referral and provides a 'pop in' service to see children during their YOS appointments. The speech and language therapist is fully integrated into the team, advising case managers, offering adaptive resources, and delivering training to the partnership. Both practitioners continue to provide support for children who move to neighbouring boroughs and transition to the Probation Service.

Case managers make sure children participate in a range of relevant interventions and deliver one-to-one offence-focused activity, often tailored to encourage the child's participation. Reparation includes skills-based, restorative activities, such as creating awareness-raising videos, as well as tutoring and mentoring peers at school.

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

The partnership has implemented a comprehensive approach to supporting children and families affected by gangs and exploitation. The following merit specific mention.

- Welcome packs are provided for families who have moved to Thurrock from London for safety reasons. The pack contains points of support in the community, advice on hate crime and support for victims, and indicators that children could be involved in gangs or exploitation.
- A youth worker is based full time in the local accident and emergency department to identify and work with children who are vulnerable to gang affiliation and exploitation.
- The YOS and children's social care have funded a permanent strategic gangs/exploitation coordinator. The coordinator is currently involved in a partnership venture with education providers to raise awareness among professionals working in education, and parents and carers, of indicators for exploitation and involvement in gangs. This aims to strengthen the restorative approach used by educators and reduce the number of exclusions of children.
- A gangs and exploitation practitioner mentors and delivers interventions to children in the community and as they leave custody.

Partners work effectively to strengthen the offer of education, training and employment to YOS children. The YOS speech and language specialist works with schools to help them engage more effectively with their pupils, providing training to education providers and school nurses. The education engagement consultation group was introduced to strengthen the involvement of the educational psychology service in YOS cases.

Having identified the overrepresentation of neurodiversity issues in the YOS cohort, the speech and language therapist worked with NHS colleagues to introduce a fast-track neurodevelopmental pathway for YOS children.

The YOS works with children's social care and housing services to find appropriate supported accommodation and is involved in projects with schools to keep these

children in education. Additionally, the partnership has an agreed protocol to focus on diversionary disposals rather than charge children for their behaviour.

Essex police reflect the partnership's child-first ethos in their work with children. Having identified that the traditional approach of seconding a police officer to the YOS prevented these officers from getting to know children in the community, they introduced a specialist team of child and young persons (CYP) officers to link with the community and YOS. While other police staff carry out information and intelligence checks, the CYP officers accompany YOS practitioners on home visits, do one-to-one work with specific children and contribute to the out-of-court disposals and National Referral Mechanism<sup>16</sup> processes. Case managers receive information and intelligence in a timely way. However, having reviewed their YOS model, the police have decided to strengthen it by providing a dedicated CYP officer to the YOS.

For some years, the Probation Service has been unable to fulfil its obligation to second a probation officer to the YOS. The restructure of probation services has strengthened the impetus to resolve this issue and the post was due to be filled in summer 2022. The Probation Service's failure to resolve this issue sooner is significant and has reduced the quality of coordinated work with probation services.

Finding suitable accommodation for children, especially those looked after by the local authority, raises challenges for the partnership. There are no local authority owned children's care homes in the borough.

Our inspection of case management indicated that children were not receiving sufficient support for their sexual health and safety. Practitioners were not consistently aware of the routes through which children could receive appropriate support and did not sufficiently consider the children's sexual health needs. The partnership should take steps to address this.

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

The Youth Crime Governance Board takes an active interest in hearing the views of children, their families, and victims, and understanding their feedback.

The YOS has implemented a rolling system to gather feedback from victims, children, and their parents or carers, as part of its 'You said, we did' process. Practitioners listen to the needs and aspirations of victims, children and their parents or carers, especially when delivering work to support desistance. The board has commissioned work that involves speaking with children who identify as black, Asian and minority ethnic to help it understand their experience of the criminal justice system.

The commitment to listening to the views of service users about their experience of working with practitioners is included in policies and procedures, such as out-of-court and resettlement guidance documents. The board recognises the need to strengthen the voice of children and their parents in the YOS's decision-making processes and has included this as a priority in Thurrock's youth justice plan.

The board and YOS actively use the views they collect to inform improvements to service provision. However, we assessed there is scope to increase the participation of children and their parents or carers in service reviews and in co-producing strategies and processes.

---

<sup>16</sup> The framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support.

As part of our inspection, we asked children and their parents or carers for their views on working with the YOS. Three responded, all of whom rated the YOS highly. One child explained:

*“Every time I go there, I learn something new. They teach me how to do better and help the community.”*

#### 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:

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

The YOS’s work is supported by a good range of documented policies and guidance. An example is the Thurrock safeguarding and child protection policy, which provides comprehensive guidance and includes reference to the National Referral Mechanism. Policies are reviewed and updated appropriately.

Processes and procedures take appropriate account of the diversity of victims, children, and families.

YOS staff understand the policies and procedures that support their work and, in the main, know how to access services from partners and providers.

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

The YOS moved to a new base in 2021. This provides less office space to practitioners, but is co-located with the youth service, housing, and the employment and training service.

The building is neither child-friendly nor welcoming and there is not enough tailored, adaptive information in the reception area.

Most children visit the YOS building for their appointments. It is based centrally and accessible by public transport. However, its location potentially compromises the safety of children who are in conflict with others in the neighbourhood. To address this, practitioners coordinate appointments carefully, and will arrange to see children in alternative places.

Although YOS appointments are limited to one interview room, the council has recently granted approval to extend the building and increase the number of rooms available for work with children. The interview room is equipped with cameras, which are monitored in live time.

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

Thurrock responded well to the Covid-19 restrictions, providing practitioners with appropriate technological equipment to support remote working including Microsoft Teams.

Information can be passed between partner organisations with the support and guidance of information-sharing protocols. However, not all embedded partner practitioners are able to access AssetPlus and some rely on case managers to update records on their behalf.

Although Thurrock has an up-to-date website, the YOS does not have an online presence to help stakeholders understand its role and services.

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

The YOS's approaches to quality assurance include partnership task-and-finish groups and joint case audits with children's social care. The youth crime governance board has also commissioned an external peer review to identify whether and how to strengthen the quality of YOS case management.

The board uses performance and case data reports to stimulate discussion and request more refined data and information to help deepen its understanding of current needs. Members monitor trends, for example, the growing proportion of younger children who work with the YOS on statutory orders. However, they may wish to consider the benefits of taking early action to address emerging issues before these become firmly established.

The youth justice delivery plan includes completion dates and target measures. The objectives and target measures are ambitious in the context of the cases the YOS is working with. However, the YOS works quickly and effectively to implement change. Progress against the plan is a standing item on the Board's meeting agenda, with partners expected to provide updates on relevant priorities and objectives.

The YOS continuously learns lessons from inspections and incidents. Recommendations from our thematic inspections on the experiences of black and mixed heritage boys, and out-of-court disposals have been used in the review of services to children.

---

## **Diversity**

Throughout our standards, we expect a personalised and responsive approach for all children, which includes taking account of their diversity and protected characteristics. Those factors may influence our judgements in specific standards. Here, we present an overall summary of the approach to diversity that we found in this YOT.

Disproportionality is a priority for the YOS, is included in its youth justice plan and is given sufficient oversight by the youth crime governance board. The YOS provides the board with case data reports, which help the partnership to monitor trends in disproportionality, and which stimulate its requests for more granular data to help explain the lives of YOS children.

The board's focus on disproportionality extends to age, education and learning, gender, and children who are looked after by the local authority. However, it has yet to consider needs relating to disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender reassignment, all protected characteristics under the *Equality Act 2010*. Our assessment of cases identified that data relating to sexual identity, and religion or faith, were not routinely recorded.

In April 2022, the youth crime governance board took a detailed look at the ethnicity of children who work with the YOS. It found that seven per cent of children (18 of 24) who were sentenced to custody between April 2017 and December 2022 were of black, Asian or minority ethnic heritage. In 2021/2022, 24 children (41 per cent) given statutory disposals identified as black, Asian or minority ethnic. A more detailed analysis highlighted that 14 of these had been moved to Thurrock from London or were known to a London borough YOS. Nine were known to the local gang-related violence group.

The partnership's commitment to addressing disproportionality for children who identify as black, Asian or minority ethnic is included in the youth justice plan and includes an overall target measure. The plan sets out the partnership's approach to meeting the identified needs of these children and includes strengthening ties with the black, Asian, and minority ethnic community, reducing violence and exploitation by gangs, and tailoring interventions to meet the needs of families who have moved to Thurrock for safety reasons.

We saw good progress against these objectives, including the appointment of a gang's exploitation strategic coordinator and gangs and exploitation practitioner. Progress is reviewed monthly by the partnership, with ongoing scrutiny of emerging concerns relating to black, Asian, and minority ethnic children, such as their prevalence among children in custody and under-representation in the out-of-court disposal cohort.

Work to address ethnic disproportionality focuses on the 'black, Asian and minority ethnic' race classification, which covers a group of communities. A focus on the individual ethnicities within this classification could help Thurrock further tailor its service provision and achieve its goal for equality more efficiently.

Leaders have assessed service provision against HM Inspectorate of Probation's thematic inspection report on the experiences of black and mixed heritage boys, and monthly meetings are used to maintain impetus in this area of work.

On average, 30 per cent of the children who work with the YOS have speech and language recognition needs. The YOS's speech and language provision is thorough and effective. The speech and language therapist provides adaptive resources for the YOS, screens every case, provides advice to case managers, and works with children to assess and support their cognitive and communication needs. Children who work with the YOS have expedited access to the speech and language part of an ADHD or ASD assessment and are able to follow a fast-track pathway for a multi-disciplinary neurodevelopmental assessment.

The YOS is aware of the need for its workforce to reflect the diverse needs of its children. Representation among staff from the black, Asian and minority ethnic community is low. However, the YOS has recently completed a successful campaign to broaden the ethnicity of its volunteers.

Our inspection of the YOS's case management highlighted that case managers reflect children's diversity effectively in their post-court work but inconsistently in their out-of-court disposals work.



## 2. Court disposals

---

We took a detailed look at seven community sentences and one custodial sentence managed by the YOS. We also conducted seven interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery of services; and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, keep the child safe and keep other people safe.

The ratings for assessment, implementation and delivery, and reviewing reflect the YOS's inclusive and thoughtful approach to understanding and meeting children's needs. The score for planning met our criteria for applying professional discretion. There were elements of effective practice across the three planning standards and when taking into consideration the quality of planning to support desistance and keep others safe, we found grounds to lift the rating for planning from 'Requires improvement' to 'Good'.

Case managers worked with care and skill to manage their post-court cases. Children received a holistic, individualised service that supported their needs and aspirations, took good account of their diversity, and encouraged them to engage with their case managers. Work to support children moving out of the borough or to the Probation Service was thorough and the YOS worked effectively with partners to manage cases involving gangs and exploitation. Management oversight of case work made an evident positive difference to the YOS's work.

There were some inconsistencies in the quality of case management; these related to work to support the child's safety and wellbeing, recording of case reviews and planning decisions made at multi-disciplinary meetings, and the quality of contingency planning.

### Strengths

- The YOS worked effectively with its partners, building and sustaining relationships with the child, and parents or carers to provide an effective service.
- Service provision was tailored to reflect the child's diversity and aspirations.
- The speech and language therapist made a significant contribution to the quality of case management.
- The partnership balanced a child-first culture appropriately with the need to protect other people.
- Children had timely access to mainstream services and the YOS took effective action to address barriers to access as these arose.
- Case managers were active and thorough in their support for children who moved to another borough or transitioned to the Probation Service.
- Reviewing was a thorough and inclusive process, and the partnership responded quickly and appropriately to escalating risks.

## Areas for improvement

- Planning to support the child’s safety and wellbeing would have benefited from a stronger partnership approach and more detailed plans.
- There was too little focus on making sure contingency planning supported an effective partnership response to changes in a case.
- There was scope to improve recording, especially of reviews to protect the child and other people, and to make written plans more child friendly.

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>17</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child’s desistance?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	<b>88%</b>

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

Case managers completed thorough and insightful assessments of the child, their circumstances, and diversity. They drew on all the information available, including where a child had links with other boroughs, and triangulated this to reach appropriate decisions about the needs of a child. Children and their families were involved meaningfully in the assessments and this helped the YOS to identify the strengths and aspirations of children as well as barriers to their progress, such as their sense of identity and level of maturity.

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

Case managers took a partnership approach to completing their assessments. They engaged well with other agencies working with families, and with the families themselves, to understand how to keep children safe and support their wellbeing. They drew on information such as child in need plans and that provided by the YOS speech and language specialist. There was an effective focus on the adverse

<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, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

experiences of children, and an evident commitment to understanding the factors linked to exploitation and gangs. We saw examples of assessments being strengthened by the Thurrock multi-agency child criminal exploitation group and appropriate reference to the national referral mechanism.

The thoroughness of these assessments enabled the YOS to make well-reasoned decisions about the level and nature of need in each case.

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

The children in the cases we inspected were all assessed as posing a medium or high risk of serious harm to other people. Knives featured in six of the eight cases we assessed.

Assessments considered the child’s perspective on their offence and looked at this as part of their pattern of behaviour and its context. Case managers liaised well with practitioners who were already working with the child and with specialists, including gang units, who could help them understand the child’s experience, community profile, and factors linked to potential conflict.

The YOS paid sufficient attention to examining the controls and interventions already in place to keep other people safe. In one case, for example, the assessment considered the relevance of a move to help the child comply with his bail conditions. Effective recording enabled us to ascertain the impact of management oversight, which, we noted, made a positive difference to the analysis of harm a child posed.

## **2.2. Planning**



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

Good

Our rating<sup>18</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

	<b>% 'Yes'</b>
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child’s desistance?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>63%</b> <sup>19</sup>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	75%

### **Does planning focus on supporting the child’s desistance?**

The quality of planning to support desistance was sufficient in every case. Case managers worked collaboratively, seeking a good balance between the aspirations of the child and the need to complete interventions, such as weapons awareness activity. Their ability and willingness to liaise with partners both locally and out of the area strengthened planning in relation to accommodation and education.

<sup>18</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, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

<sup>19</sup> Professional discretion applied to increase the rating from 'Requires improvement' to 'Good'.

There was variation in the quality of planning to make sure children could complete the work in their plans. YOS appointments were arranged around employment hours and provision was made for input by the speech and language therapist, for assessment and to help strengthen the child's participation in the interventions planned. However, planning documents were formal rather than child-focused, making it difficult for some children to understand what would happen during their appointments and what they would achieve. The number of objectives was not consistently proportionate to the child's ability to complete them, and case managers did not sufficiently consider barriers relating to their maturity or learning.

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

Case managers actively liaised with specialist workers, such as the speech and language therapist, substance misuse specialist, and CAMHS practitioner. They communicated effectively with YOSs in other boroughs to help facilitate the safe transition of children who moved out of Thurrock.

Parents or carers were at the heart of plans to keep children safe, playing a key role in understanding their child's behaviour.

However, the planning for some cases required additional focus to ensure the effective safety and wellbeing of children. The YOS's plans did not consistently reflect decisions made at partnership and high-risk meetings or the objectives in child in need plans. For children at risk from gangs and exploitation, we would have expected to have seen more emphasis on how they would be protected from known individuals.

We found some examples of good contingency planning that considered the changes that might occur, and how parents or carers and the partnership would respond to these. This included identifying named professionals with specific details of individual risks and the tasks that would be undertaken to support the child. However, contingency planning did not meet the child's needs in half the cases we inspected.

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

Partners worked collaboratively to plan their approach to managing and reducing the risk of harm the child posed, making sure appropriate controls and interventions were in place to promote other people's safety.

Controls included exclusion zones, and the provision of information and intelligence by the police and gangs' units. Parents and carers were involved in planning and played a key role in identifying escalating risks.

A range of interventions were planned to help children manage their response to other people, including work to help them manage their fear, and strengthen their ability to regulate their emotions and work towards resolving conflict.

Despite the effective focus on the children and their behaviour, the YOS did not always identify the individuals at risk from them. It had drawn up plans to address the specific concerns and risks relating to individual victims in only four of the seven cases where these should have been in place.

The quality of contingency planning was similar to that for planning to support the child's safety and wellbeing. Many of the children working with the YOS are affected by gangs or exploitation, and the risks related to this can escalate quickly and significantly. Half the contingency plans we assessed provided too little detail to

support a timely, appropriate response should circumstances change abruptly for these children.

### 2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

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

	% 'Yes'
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?	<b>100%</b>
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	<b>100%</b>
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	<b>100%</b>

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

The YOS's child-first focus translated well into practice. Case managers worked with children holistically and flexibly, staying in regular contact with their parents or carers to provide information and support.

A number of children moved to neighbouring boroughs during their sentence and case managers worked well with the receiving YOS and partners in the community to facilitate these moves, using escalation processes to advocate for appropriate accommodation. Transition to probation services was supported effectively.

Provision was tailored to reflect and further understand children's diversity and we saw effective and creative work to meet individual children's needs, including the provision of equipment to support one child's self-identity and Saturday appointments to reflect another's work obligations. The speech and language therapist worked directly with children to understand issues linked to their communication and cognition.

Children received support from the YOS's education and careers adviser, and case managers stayed in contact with schools. Referrals were made appropriately to the substance misuse worker, but the unreliability of this provision reduced some children's motivation to engage with the service.

Case managers considered the potential for restorative justice for all victims, and we saw evidence of successful restorative justice conferences.

Where case managers instigated enforcement action, including referral to court for breach proceedings, they considered this carefully and used it appropriately.

<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, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

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

The YOS worked effectively with its partners to keep children safe. It engaged with the child in need process and staff attended meetings to contribute information. Access to children’s social care’s recording system allowed it to make safeguarding checks on an ongoing basis.

Partners collaborated effectively to provide a ‘wrap-around’ service for children at risk of exploitation. In some cases, it was clear that discussions at multi-agency child criminal exploitation meetings led to action to protect children.

Parents and carers were kept involved in work to protect children. We saw an example of a case manager using shuttle communication to help a child rebuild his relationship with his parents, who were key to his safety and wellbeing.

There was scope to strengthen provision in only a small minority of cases. This related to monitoring ongoing risks to the child, for example after episodes where they had gone missing, or to obtain updates about people linked to the child and being supervised by the Probation Service.

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

Work to keep other people safe was the YOS’s strongest area of implementation and delivery.

The YOS took a partnership approach to protecting victims, with information flowing between agencies to monitor risks to others. In one case, the YOS considered the suitability and merits of a referral for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (category 3). Case managers also delivered a range of interventions that focused on weapons and violence, which aimed to help the child to develop skills in thinking things through and conflict resolution.

Case managers tailored their interventions to the individual child, rather than taking a generic approach. They used videos and nationally reported incidents to keep children interested and generate discussion about managing violence.

### 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>21</sup> for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	<b>% ‘Yes’</b>
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child’s desistance?	100%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>88%</b>

<sup>21</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, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

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

Reviews of work to support desistance and the child's engagement were thorough. Case managers took a strengths-based, family-focused approach to their reviews and adjusted their plan of work to meet the child's changing needs, taking care to address barriers to the child's engagement and their diversity needs.

The YOS convened referral order review panels to consider the child's progress and offer additional support. In one case, this led to a child voicing his aspiration to return to full-time education and the case manager changing her focus of work to link with relevant specialists and deliver an integrated approach to help him achieve this goal.

Case managers involved YOS specialists and partners in reviews. In one case, ongoing liaison with an education provider led to a family finding out about a child's previously undiagnosed learning needs, and improved communication between the child and his parents.

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

The YOS worked holistically with its partners, drawing on decisions made during multi-agency meetings to inform its reviews. It had strong relationships with children's social care, and case managers attended child in need meetings and used these to inform their own reviews.

Case managers used controls such as curfews and home visits to reduce threats to the child's safety. They responded effectively to evidence of escalating risk, referring the child to specialist services and the national referral mechanism if necessary.

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

Work to review the risk of harm children posed to other people was consistently thorough and effective.

When carrying out reviews, case managers used information available from families and partner agencies, including housing and the police, and liaised with their manager about how to meet changing needs.

The quality of reviews for children leaving the borough and transitioning to probation services was particularly strong. Case managers gathered and shared information to help receiving YOSs and the Probation Service understand the risks the child posed to others, and maintained contact to support their monitoring and review processes.

### 3. Out-of-court disposals

---

We inspected six cases managed by the YOS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of three youth conditional cautions and three community resolutions and included all the out-of-court cases that met the criteria for our sample period. We interviewed the case managers in all six 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, keep the child safe and keep other people safe. The quality of the work undertaken for each factor needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision to be rated as satisfactory.

We also inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews.

Assessment was the strongest and most consistent area of work and was rated as 'Outstanding'. While the majority of planning work was holistic and carefully considered, there was some variation in the quality of planning, particularly in relation to supporting the child's safety and wellbeing. However, upon review we felt that planning was sufficient in the main and we, therefore, applied professional discretion and, as a result, planning was subsequently given a rating of 'Requires improvement'. Implementation and delivery also met our criteria for professional discretion, but there was no justification for changing the rating from 'Requires improvement', as this accurately represented the quality of provision in relation to children's safety and wellbeing.

The police and YOS worked together well at a strategic level to achieve their child-first vision for out-of-court disposals. They reviewed procedures against the evidence base to strengthen their approach. Thurrock's scheme focuses on offering children appropriate diversionary pathways and makes sure that all children have equal access to these. Addressing issues relating to disproportionality is a priority, especially for children looked after by the local authority and those who identify as black, Asian or minority ethnic. At a case level, the YOS partnership focused well on supporting desistance and protecting victims. However, the quality of planning and joint work to support children's safety and wellbeing fell well below our expectations. We found that there was scope to strengthen the voice of children and victims in strategic and decision-making processes

#### Strengths

- Out-of-court decision-making processes are underpinned by clear policy and processes that reflect national guidance and HM Inspectorate of Probation's inspection findings.
- The Youth Crime Governance Board takes an active interest in the data on out-of-court disposal cases and uses this to identify emerging and current trends relating to disproportionality.
- Work to support desistance was consistently thorough and focused on the child's strengths and aspirations.



- Practitioners engaged well with families and partners to analyse and understand the needs in each case.
- Specific concerns relating to victims were addressed well.
- Case managers worked flexibly with children to remove barriers to their engagement and encourage their participation in a wide range of tailored, offence-focused interventions.
- Children received good support for their neurodevelopmental, emotional, and mental health needs, and to strengthen their access to education, training, and employment.

### Areas for improvement

- Neither the case manager nor YOS victims' worker contributed to the out-of-court decision-making process.
- There is scope for strengthening the voice of the child and their parents or carers in the out-of-court disposal decision-making process.
- The quality of contingency planning was poor and did not provide for a suitable, tailored partnership response to indicators of escalating risk.
- The YOS did not engage consistently well with its partners to promote the safety and wellbeing of children.
- Case managers did not take sufficient account of children's diversity in their work to support desistance.
- The partnership had not sufficiently considered why children known to children's social care were overrepresented among those referred to the out-of-court disposal joint decision-making panel or taken appropriate action to address this.
- There was too little scrutiny of the impact of out-of-court disposals delivered by the police outside the joint decision-making process.

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.

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>22</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

<sup>22</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, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

	<b>% 'Yes'</b>
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	<b>83%</b>

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

Case managers did not consistently receive enough information from the joint out-of-court decision-making panel but undertook their own enquiries to complete timely, well-reasoned assessments.

They liaised with partners, including education providers, to gain a more in-depth understanding of the child's circumstances and their cognitive and learning needs. We saw examples of thorough analyses of how a child's adverse experiences contributed to their outlook and behaviour.

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

The YOS's assessments of need relating to safety and wellbeing were wide-ranging and analytical. Case managers used information from partners to identify accurately the level and nature of a child's vulnerability. They recorded their assessments well, providing adequate information on exploitation, physical and emotional harm.

Case managers considered the influence of parenting and the family's circumstances on the children's lives.

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

Case managers drew on information from children's social care, the police, education providers and parents or carers to identify the child's pattern of behaviour. They considered the context of the offence, the child's past behaviour and criminal justice disposals, and details of victims in order to reach decisions about the level and nature of the risk that a child posed to others and potential future victims.

One case, however, would have benefited from more information about and analysis of the offence and the link between the child's cognitive thinking and risk of harm he posed to his victim.

## **3.2. Planning**



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

**Requires improvement**

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

<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, indicated in bold in the table. See Annex 2 for a more detailed explanation.

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>33%</b> <sup>24</sup>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	67%

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

Planning to support desistance included support for the child's mental health, education and career aspirations, and one-to-one work with the speech and language specialist. Case managers took account of the child's aspirations, concerns and other commitments, such as education and employment.

We saw examples of joint planning, which were enhanced by a case formulation exercise.<sup>25</sup>

We also found examples of child-focused plans that took a Signs of Safety approach, often taken by children's social care practitioners to help children and their families plan a response to identified risks and opportunities in a child's life.

The plan of work reflected the needs of the child rather than prioritising the disposal type. However, case managers did not consistently consider whether the child was willing and able to change and how to sustain desistance after the period of working with the YOS. In one community resolution case, the plan included too many objectives for a child with learning needs.

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

The quality of planning to support the child's safety and wellbeing was poor. In one complex case, there was a comprehensive plan in place to protect a child at risk of exploitation. This included a referral to the national referral mechanism and use of mentoring. However, many plans were not detailed enough or aligned with the plans held by partner agencies. They did not necessarily reflect the needs identified during assessment. Had they done so, we would have seen more planning that supported contextual safeguarding and addressed other links to safety and wellbeing, such as sexual health. We also saw little evidence of planning that set out how children would be protected from individuals known to affect their safety and wellbeing.

Too little priority was given to contingency planning. Circumstances can evolve rapidly in complex cases. The YOS had not given enough thought to how circumstances could change in a case or agreed a partnership response to safeguarding the child should risks escalate.

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

Having identified the level and nature of risk that the child posed to others, case managers planned an appropriate response to manage this, including measures to address the specific concerns relating to victims. We saw planning reference a range

<sup>24</sup> Planning met our criteria for applying professional discretion due to the relatively small number of cases inspected. We took account of the overall quality of planning and increased the rating from 'Inadequate' to 'Requires Improvement'.

<sup>25</sup> Case formulation is a psychological approach to assessing and addressing the needs of a case, based on the '4Ps': predisposing, precipitating, perpetuating and protective factors.

of one-to-one interventions to help children manage their emotions and decisions, with appropriate emphasis on weapons and victim awareness.

In one case, there was a clear plan to monitor escalating risks and share information with the partners who would be supporting the child's return to education. However, overall, there was insufficient joint planning with partners. Where control measures, such as exclusion zones, were in place, it was not always clear how the YOS would work with the police to monitor and enforce them.

The decision-making process did not provide for the effective flow of information between the out-of-court disposal decision-making panel and case managers. This weakened the concordance between the panel's and case manager's decision-making, and, ultimately, the quality of planning to keep others safe from harm. Case managers were not always aware of interventions suggested by the panel and in one case a condition to protect victims was added after the child had signed their youth conditional caution agreement, rendering this unenforceable.

Contingency planning was the weakest element of this work. While, generally, case managers could articulate what they would do if the risk the child posed were to escalate, documented plans were generic and lacked detail about the roles of those involved in the case and timescales for action to address specific risks.

### 3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Requires improvement

Our rating<sup>26</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	83%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	<b>50%</b>
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	67%

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

The YOS worked with partners to provide a comprehensive approach to supporting desistance. Children had good access to the YOS's CAMHS practitioner, speech and language therapist, substance misuse service, and careers worker. Case managers drew on information from these specialists and schools to strengthen their own work with the child. They delivered one-to-one offence-focused sessions, some of which were delivered creatively to encourage the child's engagement.

Service delivery focused appropriately on building relationships with the child and their parents or carers. Case managers were skilled and worked well to encourage children to engage with their plan of work. They were flexible about when they saw children. We noted that despite the priority given to tailoring work to reflect

<sup>26</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, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

children’s individual needs, there was scope for the YOS to improve its focus on interventions relating to their diversity in two of the six cases inspected.

### **Does service delivery focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?**

The quality of implementation and delivery of work to support children’s safety and wellbeing required improvement.

We saw elements of effective practice in each of the cases we inspected. For instance, referrals were made to the national referral mechanism; exit planning included ongoing appointments with the CAMHS practitioner; and there was a coordinated approach with children’s social care. Case managers made referrals quickly and, in most instances, there were no delays in the child being offered a first appointment. However, for a period there had been long delays to access substance misuse services and little flexibility in the timing of appointments to accommodate children in full-time employment.

Case managers and the exploitation worker collaborated effectively to deliver one-to-one sessions with children that were tailored to address their individual risks from gangs and exploitation.

We noted, however, that case managers did not always address less obvious risks to children or indicators of escalating safety and wellbeing needs, including those linked to sexual safety.

### **Does service delivery focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?**

Children participated in sessions to strengthen their ability to manage their anger, solve problems, think about the consequences of their actions, and increase their awareness about weapons and victims.

In the main, enough was done to protect victims. Restrictive measures such as exclusion zones and non-contact requirements were attached to youth conditional cautions and, in one case, the information that a child had shared during a session was fed into the ongoing management of risks to the victim.

We found room for improvement in joint work with the police to monitor compliance with restrictive measures and to monitor children’s behaviour in the community. Case managers were pleased with the progress made by children, but this optimism did not always reflect the evidence available.

---

## **3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision**



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

Requires improvement

In making a judgement about out-of-court disposal policy and provision, we take into account the answers to the following questions:

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

Essex police's out-of-court disposal policy had been written in consultation with the three local authorities it covered to reflect an agreed approach across the county. Thurrock YOS has developed complementary guidance, which tailors the scheme to help achieve its vision for children. The out-of-disposal scheme aims to reflect a 'child first, offender second' ethos, both strategically and operationally. The type and length of intervention offered to the child are expected to reflect their diversity and the needs of the case.

The scheme is evidence-based, having been reviewed to reflect findings from inspections and audits, and to highlight the partnership's commitment to addressing issues relating to disproportionality. Although equality features in policy documents, this needs strengthening to include expectations relating to all nine characteristics protected under the *Equality Act 2010*.

The scheme reflects sound strategic imperatives, such as making sure panel members are skilled and knowledgeable, that decisions equally support the child's safety and wellbeing and protect victims, that children can only be offered one community resolution outside the panel process, and that there is a system to refer cases from court to the decision-making panel.

Case managers and the YOS's victims' worker did not contribute to the out-of-court disposal decision-making process. This reduced the panel's ability to consider the views of the child, parents or carers, and victims, and any issues relating to the child's life and adverse experiences. It also limited the time that case managers had to encourage the child to engage with voluntary interventions. National guidance advises that, for youth conditional cautions, 'the YOT must assess the young person and advise on appropriate conditions'. In Thurrock, the lack of input from the YOS before the decision was made had led to conditions being added by the YOS after the child has signed their out-of-court disposal agreement, rendering them unenforceable.

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

Out-of-court disposal decision-making panels were well attended by the YOS, police, education specialists, the speech and language therapist, and children's social care.

Pre-panel screening identified basic information about the child, such as health, education, training and employment, contact with children's social care, the circumstances relating to the current and previous offending, and past experience of working with the YOS. The police provide the views of victims and the child to the panel. The panel was not given an analysis or proposal for a disposal and, ultimately, the decision was made by vote.

We noted that once a case was referred to the decision-making panel, the decision, allocation to the YOS, and delivery of the disposal to the child were made promptly.

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

The youth crime governance board was provided with data relating to the cases considered by the decision-making panel and used this to identify indicators of disproportionality. These include the under-representation among children offered an out-of-court disposal of those who identify as black, Asian or minority ethnic. The police were working to reduce 'no comment' responses by children, in order to

address this issue. However, the board may wish to consider the effective practice models implemented in other boroughs, which are included in HM Inspectorate of Probation's report on its thematic inspection of the experiences of black and mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system<sup>27</sup>.

In line with policy, the joint decision-making panel tried to divert children looked after by the local authority to the lowest disposal possible. However, during the first three quarters of 2021/2022, 48 per cent of children considered by the decision-making panel had active social care status, which suggests that the board needs to look more closely at this issue.

The joint decision-making panel preferred to recommend Outcome 22 disposals<sup>28</sup> rather than impose youth cautions because the latter provide too little support to children while bringing them into the criminal justice system. Children offered an Outcome 22 can access YOS services in the same way as those working with the YOS on other disposals, and Outcome 22 disposals make up a large proportion of Thurrock's out-of-court disposals. In the first three quarters of 2021/2022, the joint decision-making panel recommended an Outcome 22 in 23 per cent of the cases it considered. Additionally, a large number of Outcome 22s were delivered by the police outside the panel process.

Data on out-of-court disposals decided and delivered outside the panel process were not shared with the YOS and youth crime governance board. This limited the board's ability to understand the impact of out-of-court disposals on outcomes for children and against the YOS's key performance indicators.

At a case management level, children were offered a range of tailored interventions to support their desistance. As of quarter three in 2021/2022, only three of the 17 children (18 per cent) on an out-of-court disposal had reoffended within 12 months of the panel's decision. This is much lower than the proportion seen for children on post-court orders. The board may wish to explore this rate further to understand whether and how the YOS's intervention contributed to this.

The YOS asks children for feedback about their out-of-court disposal experience and uses this as part of its 'You said, we did' process. However, there is no system in place to involve children and their parents or carers in reviews of out-of-court disposal policy and processes.

---

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2021/10/The-experiences-of-black-and-mixed-heritage-boys-in-the-youth-justice-system-thematic-report-v1.0.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Outcome 22 is the code recorded by the police when it is not in the public interest to take further action in relation to a crime and the child has agreed to engage with a diversionary intervention or activity.

## 4. Resettlement

### 4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Outstanding

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews. To illustrate that work, we inspected one case managed by the YOS that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

#### Strengths

- The YOS partnership has established an integrated, effective style of resettlement.
- Practice is supported by a newly drafted, evidence-based policy.
- Resettlement planning is timely and tailored to the needs of the case, and focuses well on the child, their family, and victims.
- YOS specialists work with the child and practitioners in the custodial establishment to ensure that, once released, children transition seamlessly to services in the community.
- Children who turn 18 years old before the end of their licence period receive ongoing support from YOS specialists until they can access adult services.
- The partnership continues to work with children who leave the borough, and beyond their licence period.
- Policy development and review are facilitated by a dedicated, strategic resettlement group.
- Understanding and meeting the needs of children who are overrepresented in the custodial cohort is high on the youth crime governance board's agenda.

#### Areas for improvement

- Children and their parents and carers do not contribute in a meaningful way to strategic reviews of resettlement.
- The YOS could consider how to include children more proactively as part of the multi-agency network to support their resettlement.
- There is scope to strengthen the guidance for protecting victims, especially those at a proposed release address, and to provide detailed advice about children's safety and wellbeing in relation to gang affiliation/exploitation.

We do not provide a separate rating for the quality of work in resettlement cases inspected under this standard. In making a judgement about resettlement policy and provision, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:



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

A resettlement group, led by the YOS, was set up in 2021 to formalise processes and structures, and to evidence the partnership's resettlement work. The resettlement policy, introduced in January 2022, provides practical evidence-based guidance, drawn from YJB advice, HM Inspectorate of Probation's recommendations and relevant YOS policies and procedures.

As such, it recognises the importance of the seven key resettlement pathways, with appropriate emphasis on accommodation and addressing barriers to securing a suitable release address for the child and the role of temporary release in effective resettlement.

The partnership's child-first ethos is threaded through the policy, which emphasises the importance of the child's and family voice and the board's role in making sure resettlement is tailored to the needs of each child being released from custody. There is also reference to the *Equality Act 2010*. While reference to the Act is to be commended, the policy is unclear about how resettlement should consider the nine characteristics protected by this legislation.

There is scope to strengthen the guidance for protecting victims, especially those at a proposed release address, and to provide detailed advice about children's safety and wellbeing in relation to gang affiliation/exploitation.

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

The YOS partnership has well-established, effective processes in place to help children transition successfully from custody to the community. The YOS considers resettlement processes early in the custodial sentence.

Provision is based on the child's needs rather than funding constraints. Recognising the importance of accommodation as the foundation stone for resettlement, placements, once identified, can be held until release. Children who turn 18 years old during their sentence continue to be supported by YOS specialist practitioners until they can be seen by adult services. The YOS partnership also continues to work with children after the period covered by their licence.

Good relationships between practitioners in the community and the secure estate strengthened the quality of resettlement work. Examples included liaison between specialists in custody and the community, which helped to identify both the work the child has completed and their future needs; the YOS careers adviser meet with children before release to devise a training and employment action plan; and the gangs and exploitation worker met children when they were released to ensure they arrived safely at their next address.

The YOS maintained effective contact with parents or carers, takes account of their views in resettlement planning and helped them to maintain or rebuild their relationship with their child. Additionally, Think Family supported families during the resettlement period.

Some children were relocated to other boroughs on release, to protect their safety and wellbeing. In these instances, the YOS works effectively with the police, the receiving YOS and children's social care to facilitate this move. For care leavers who stayed in the borough, Thurrock was involved in a pilot that provided them with

'wrap-around' support in living skills, such as budgeting, housekeeping, training and employment.

YOS practitioners who work with children in custody have had training specifically for that role. Currently, the effectiveness of resettlement processes reflects their dedication, knowledge, skills, and relationships rather than the guidance in the documented resettlement strategy.

Although children were invited to attend the planning meetings led by their custodial establishment, multi-disciplinary resettlement meetings took place away from the secure establishment, with the voice of the child represented by the social worker or children's services independent reviewing officer.

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

The board provides effective governance for resettlement.

The YOS and the board use data reviews and case and practice audits to assess the quality of resettlement provision. This has led to the inclusion of resettlement objectives in the YOS's youth justice plan and the creation of a board resettlement sub-group.

Performance reports that provide a breakdown of diversity factors relating to children in custody prompted the Board to request a deep dive investigation of these cases to understand the over-representation in custody of children who identify as black, Asian or minority ethnic.

Children and their parents or carers are asked about the quality of their resettlement experience as part of the YOS's general feedback process. However, resettlement work could be strengthened by service users participating meaningfully in strategic reviews of resettlement policies and practice.

## Annexe 1: Methodology

---

### HM Inspectorate of Probation standards

The standards against which we inspect youth offending services are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. These standards are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.<sup>29</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.

#### Domain one: organisational delivery

The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance and the Director of children's services led a presentation covering the following areas:

- How do organisational delivery arrangements in this area make sure that the work of your YOS is as effective as it can be, and that the life chances of children who have offended are improved?
- What are your priorities for further improving these arrangements?

During the main fieldwork phase, we conducted 13 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 14 meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.<sup>30</sup>

#### Domain two: court disposals

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

We examined eight court disposals. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of five), and 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.

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

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Forty per cent of cases selected were those of children who had received out-of-court disposals three to five months earlier. This enabled us

---

<sup>29</sup> HM Inspectorate's standards are available here:  
<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, and implementation and delivery. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

We examined six out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set based on the proportion of out-of-court disposal cases in the YOT.

### **Resettlement**

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining the case file and interviewing the case manager, in the one case where a child had received a custodial sentence or been released from custody four to 12 months earlier. This enabled us to gather information to illustrate the impact of resettlement policy and provision on service delivery.

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.

## Annexe 2: Inspection data

In this inspection, we conducted a detailed examination of a sample of eight court disposals and six out-of-court disposals. In each of those cases, we inspect against standards regarding assessment, planning, and implementation/delivery. For court disposals, we also look at reviewing. 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 young offenders were involved in assessment and planning; and whether enough was done to assess the level of risk of harm posed, and to manage that risk. We reviewed a further one case to obtain data to illustrate our findings about resettlement policy and provision.

To score an 'Outstanding' rating for the sections on court disposals or out-of-court disposals, 80 per cent or more of the cases we analyse have to be assessed as sufficient. If between 65 per cent and 79 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then the rating is 'Good' and if between 50 per cent and 64 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then a rating of 'Requires improvement' is applied. Finally, if less than 50 per cent are sufficient, then we rate this as 'Inadequate'. Resettlement cases are not separately rated; the data is for illustrative purposes only.

The rating for each standard is aligned to the banding at the key question level where the lowest proportion of cases were judged to be sufficient, as we believe that each key question is an integral part of the standard. Therefore, if we rate three key questions as 'Good' and one as 'Inadequate', the overall rating for that standard is 'Inadequate'.

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

Additional scoring rules are used to generate the overall YOT rating. Each of the 12 standards are scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; and 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0 to 36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows:

- 0–6 = Inadequate
- 7–18 = Requires improvement
- 19–30 = Good
- 31–36 = Outstanding.

Domain one standards, the qualitative standard in domain three (standard 3.4) and the resettlement standard (standard 4.1) are judged using predominantly qualitative evidence.

The resettlement standard is rated separately and does not influence the overall YOT rating. We apply a limiting judgement, whereby any YOT that receives an 'Inadequate' rating for the resettlement standard is unable to receive an overall 'Outstanding' rating, regardless of how they are rated against the core standards. Where there are no relevant resettlement cases, we do not apply a rating to resettlement work.

**Data from inspected cases:<sup>31</sup>**

<b>2.1. Assessment (court disposals)</b>	
<b>Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?</b>	
a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	100%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	88%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	100%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	100%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	88%
g) Is enough attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and their likelihood of engaging with the court disposal?	100%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	25%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	88%
<b>Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?</b>	
a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	100%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	100%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	100%
<b>Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?</b>	

<sup>31</sup> Some questions do not apply in all cases.

a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	75%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	88%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	88%

## 2.2. Planning (court disposals)

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

a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	63%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	100%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	88%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	88%
e) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	63%
f) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims?	50%
g) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	100%

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

a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	63%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	75%
c) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	75%
d) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	50%

<b>Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>	
a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	75%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	88%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	50%
d) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	88%
e) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	50%

### **2.3. Implementation and delivery (court disposals)**

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

a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	100%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	100%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	88%
d) Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	100%
e) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	100%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to services post-supervision?	88%
g) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	100%
h) Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	50%

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

a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	100%
b) Is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?	88%



<b>Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?</b>	
a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	100%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	88%
c) Is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	100%

## **2. 4. Reviewing (court disposals)**

<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?</b>	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors linked to desistance?	100%
b) Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	88%
c) Does reviewing include analysis of, and respond to, diversity factors?	88%
d) Does reviewing consider the personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	100%
e) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	100%
f) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to support desistance?	100%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?</b>	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing?	88%
b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?	88%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	75%
<b>Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</b>	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to risk of harm?	75%

b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	88%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan all of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	75%

### 3.1. Assessment (out-of-court disposals)

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

a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's acknowledgement of responsibility for, attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	100%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	83%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	83%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	100%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	100%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	83%
g) Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	67%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	100%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	100%

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

a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	83%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	100%

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

a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	100%
--	------

b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including any other assessments that have been completed, and other evidence of behaviour by the child?	83%
---	-----

### 3.2. Planning (out-of-court disposals)

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

a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	83%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	83%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	100%
e) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	67%
f) Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?	67%
g) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims?	83%
h) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	83%

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

a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	50%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	50%
c) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	17%

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

a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	83%
--	-----

b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	50%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	100%
d) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	33%

### 3.3. Implementation and delivery (out-of-court disposals)

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

a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	83%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	67%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	83%
d) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	83%
e) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	83%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	100%

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

a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	50%
b) Is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	67%

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

a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	67%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	83%