



Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in
Sutton

HM Inspectorate of Probation, August 2022



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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

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

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

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

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Foreword

This inspection is part of our programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Sutton Youth Justice Service (YJS) 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, Sutton YJS was rated as 'Requires improvement'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Requires improvement'.

The Sutton YJS leadership team is creating a child-first approach and is developing a commitment to anti-racist practice. We saw evidence of innovative practice within the borough and a committed and experienced staff group. Some specialist provision, such as that delivered by the education, training, and employment officer and by the speech and language therapist, is of high quality, with positive outcomes.

There is also evidence that staff work collaboratively with children. Reparation placements are particularly child friendly, and the broader collegiate approach to service delivery was noticeable in the court orders we inspected, where work was generally of good quality.

However, not all practice was strong. Planning was an area for development for both court and pre-court work. Furthermore, work to keep others safe that was carried out with children on out-of-court disposals was not always done well. Risk factors were not always identified and addressed, particularly when the potential risks posed by a child were not related to the index offence which had led them to the YJS. This issue has been highlighted by recent changes in the way the borough deals with cannabis possession, which have led to a significant increase in community resolution cases for this offence.

Throughout our fieldwork, we noted that a number of partnership managers did not sufficiently understand the broader needs of YJS children and the board acknowledge that performance data was not analysed sufficiently in the past. Additionally, some partners, most notably the probation and police services, need to demonstrate a better understanding of how strategic decisions taken by their agencies can affect YJS operational delivery.

Reassuringly, the board chair is aware of some of the strategic difficulties we saw, and the board has already taken action to address these concerns. In this report, we make a number of recommendations that we hope will enable the YJS and the management board to develop an even better service for children.



Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Sutton Youth Justice Service

Fieldwork started April 2022

Score **18/36**

Overall rating

Requires improvement



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

Requires improvement



1.2 Staff

Outstanding



1.3 Partnerships and services

Requires improvement



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

Good



2.2 Planning

Requires improvement



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Good



2.4 Reviewing

Good



3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

Requires improvement



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

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

Requires improvement



Executive summary

Overall, Sutton YJS is rated as: 'Requires improvement'. This rating has been determined by inspecting the YJS 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.¹ Published scoring rules generate the overall YOS rating.² We inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision separately and rated this work as: 'Requires improvement'. The findings and subsequent ratings in those domains are described below:

Organisational delivery

We inspected Sutton YJS in April 2022. We interviewed the YJS management team and the chair of the management board. We held meetings with other members of the board, key stakeholders, YJS staff and volunteers, and children, parents, and carers. We considered the context and impact of Covid-19 on organisational delivery throughout the inspection, although noted that Sutton had reinstated face-to-face contact earlier than many organisations, and by the time of our inspection the service was operating very much to a 'business as usual' model.

The youth justice management board promotes a child-first ethos and is committed to developing anti-racist practice. The board chair is influential and linked into a number of strategic partnerships.

However, some members of the partnership lacked a detailed understanding of the YJS's priorities and organisational risks. The partnership is taking action to address this, which is reflected in recent changes in board membership. Nonetheless, some arrangements still need to be strengthened. Police and probation colleagues, for example, need to have a clearer understanding of the impact of strategic decisions within their organisations on operational activity.

The YJS leadership team ensures that the child-first approach set out in the youth justice strategy is put into practice. The team oversees a well-resourced and well-motivated service that now focuses far more on children at the pre-court stage. Furthermore, staff are skilled and retained well by the service. The service offers some specialist provision, such as the education, training, and employment (ETE) officer and the speech and language therapist (SALT), which is a notable strength.

The wider partnership work with children who offend does not always demonstrate a clear understanding of the desistance needs of these children. This is because of a lack of accurate data and lack of analysis and because, previously, some provision did not focus sufficiently on desistance. However, the partnership has identified these challenges and has put in place measures to address them.

¹ HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards can be found here:

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

² 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 partnership has a good understanding of racial disproportionality in the borough but less of an understanding of the age and gender profile of YJS children and also data relating to victims

YJS staff have access to appropriate policies and procedures, and ICT systems facilitate access to both this guidance and the case management systems. The YJS delivers interventions in safe and accessible venues.

There is a quality assurance framework in place, although some of the case data we inspected suggests there is a need to review the oversight of work with children, particularly in relation to children on out-of-court-disposals where there are concerns relating to keeping other people safe.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows:

- There are strong child-first and anti-racist principles in Sutton's vision for working with children who offend.
- All appropriate services are engaged with the management board and there are good links with relevant strategic partnerships. The board has actively reviewed arrangements and altered board membership to strengthen these.
- The YJS has taken a coherent approach to tackling racial disproportionality, and a number of recommendations have arisen from a recent child-led forum to address this issue.
- The YJS leadership team has helped to coordinate alignment of partnership approaches to service delivery such as the development of restorative practices across the authority.
- Recent feedback from an independently commissioned youth justice expert has been incorporated swiftly into an operational self-improvement plan.
- The YJS is well resourced with motivated, capable, and competent practitioners, supported by a proactive management team.
- Some specialist provision, such as the ETE worker and SALT, has resulted in positive outcomes for children.
- There is a strong learning and development ethos within the YJS.
- The partnership has analysed and understood the characteristics of children at risk of exploitation.
- The development of the 'communication passport' has helped the YJS to engage with children who have speech, language, and communication needs.
- All relevant policies and procedures are in place.
- Children are seen in safe and accessible venues.

But:

- Not all board members and partnership managers have a clear understanding of the YJS's priorities and organisational risks; police and probation in particular need to have a better understanding of the impact that their strategic decisions have on operational delivery for the YJS.
- The YJS needs to strengthen arrangements to incorporate children's voices and victim data at board meetings.

- The YJS needs to develop a more systematic way of evaluating how effective its arrangements are for delivering interventions for girls.
- More structured 'case formulation' arrangements are needed to embed the service's trauma-informed interventions.
- Previous issues with data integrity mean that the YJS has not fully understood the profile and desistance needs of YJS children.
- Education outcomes for children on court orders are poor.
- Referrals to child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) provision have been negatively impacted by a number of factors, including Covid-19, though this has been identified and arrangements have recently been reviewed.
- The management board and partnership managers did not fully consider the impact on service delivery of the significant increase in community resolutions when new arrangements were introduced.

Court disposals

We took a detailed look at eight community sentences managed by the YJS. We also interviewed the relevant seven 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, to keep the child safe, and to keep other people safe.

Work relating to this standard was generally strong, but there were some inconsistencies. Assessments to support desistance were generally undertaken well but did not always consider and analyse diversity issues sufficiently. There was evidence that assessments were co-produced with children and their parents or carers and also took into account the victim's needs and wishes.

However, plans to support desistance were implemented effectively in too few cases. Again, practitioners did not consider diversity or the child's personal circumstances in all cases. Service delivery was generally strengths-based and likely to support desistance. Reviewing of desistance factors was strong in the majority of cases and led to necessary adjustments in ongoing work.

Work to keep the child safe was inconsistent. Assessment, implementation and delivery, and reviewing were all done well, but, again, planning was sufficient in too few cases and it did not always promote the child's wellbeing or involve other agencies where appropriate. Contingency arrangements also needed to be strengthened.

Work to keep others safe was the strongest element of work in court disposals and was done well across all key questions. Assessment was particularly strong and analysed how to keep people safe in every case inspected.

Management oversight to support court work was good, as was the range of services to support children on court orders.

Our key findings about court disposals are as follows:

- Case managers had a good analytical understanding of children's desistance needs.
- Children and their parents or carers were normally proactively involved with their assessments and reviews.

- The case manager's analysis of how to keep others safe was sufficient in every case inspected.
- The classification of risk to the child and risk to others was undertaken well and was reasonable in every case inspected.
- Case managers normally considered victims' needs and risks when working with children on court orders.
- Sutton has a good range of services to support children, which enhances the implementation and delivery of its work.
- Managers had good oversight of the work undertaken by case managers.
- When carrying out reviews, case managers generally worked proactively with partners if appropriate.

But:

- Case managers did not always take diversity into account when delivering work to support desistance.
- Planning to support desistance and keep the child safe was not always effective.
- Case managers did not always take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances when undertaking planning to support desistance.
- Case managers did not always collaborate with relevant agencies when planning to keep children safe.
- Contingency planning to keep children safe needs to be better.
- Where children are placed out of the area, the YJS needs to be proactive in working with the host YOT to satisfy itself that appropriate action and interventions are completed.

Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 12 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal, which were all community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in all 12 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.

Work to support desistance was generally undertaken well. Additionally, case managers considered diversity more thoroughly than in the court disposal cases we inspected. While they did not always assess structural barriers well, more often than not they involved children and their parents or carers and considered the needs of victims.

Planning, and implementation and delivery to support desistance were both undertaken well, and case managers focused on building good relationships with children and their families and encouraging compliance.

Work to keep the child safe was also undertaken well in the main. Assessment and planning were undertaken well on the whole, although contingency planning needs to be improved. The YJS's services promoted children's safety.

Work to keep other people safe was not as good, however, and was sufficient in too few cases. Assessments did not always identify, analyse, and classify risk satisfactorily. Planning did not always keep others safe. These deficits had a direct impact on the quality of service delivery.

It is also our judgement that recent changes in policy and provision have increased the number of children open to the YJS whose risks have not been fully assessed, particularly where risks may not always be linked to the index offence. For example, it was not clear whether the board and YJS had sufficiently considered how recent changes in the approach to working with children found to be in possession of cannabis (now generally dealt with through community resolutions) would affect practice.

Going forward, the YJS should ensure that case managers consider all potential risks to others when they assess children for out-of-court disposals. Additionally, the YJS needs to take a more systematic approach to reviewing the data that it has available in order to develop provision.

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

- Work to support children's desistance and their safety and wellbeing was generally undertaken well.
- Planning focused sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance in a large majority of cases.
- Case data indicated that staff take greater account of diversity in out-of-court cases than they do for children on court orders.
- Case managers usually considered the views of children and their parents or carers and the needs and wishes of victims when working to support children's desistance.
- Case managers sufficiently considered how to enable children to comply with interventions.
- The YJS had swiftly implemented the recommendations made by an independently commissioned reviewer.
- A good range of services are available for children who have received an out-of-court disposal.

But:

- Work to keep other people safe was not always undertaken well.
- Case managers only identified and analysed risk of harm to others sufficiently in half of the cases where there were factors relating to risk of harm.
- Case managers did not always consider and analyse the structural barriers to desistance well enough.
- Contingency planning was not always strong.
- Potential victims were not always considered when case managers planned and delivered interventions to keep others safe, particularly if risks were not related to the index offence.

- More scrutiny is required to evaluate the impact of the decision to issue community resolutions for cannabis possession.
- The partnership needs to evaluate its data more systematically to help develop provision in the borough.

Resettlement

We inspected the quality of policy and provision for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews. To illustrate that work, we inspected two cases managed by the YJS that had received a custodial sentence.

A comprehensive draft policy is in place and there is evidence that the partnership has made attempts to address structural barriers to resettlement. The recent engagement of 'corporate parenting' in aligning practice with YJS activity in this respect is, for example, a positive approach to meeting the needs of this very small cohort of children and has been triggered by the consideration that the partnership has given to this particular priority.

Provision itself is not always sufficient. We saw inconsistent outcomes for the children reviewed. Positively, healthcare provision and planning were good and, overall, there is a clear understanding of the constructive resettlement ethos. The tenacious input of the YJS ETE officer typifies this approach. Not all outcomes were positive, however, and the partnership needs to ensure that it always considers the specific needs of YJS children and their victims.

The board had seen the data on resettlement and held relevant resettlement discussions. It planned to sign off the reviewed policy at the April 2022 board meeting. One challenge now will be to ensure that the voice of the child is evident in ongoing reviews of policy and provision; up to this stage, it has not been explicit in reviews.

Our key findings about resettlement work are as follows:

- A comprehensive policy has recently been updated.
- A number of additional policies and service level agreements are in place, which focus on the needs of vulnerable children; these are applied to children in the secure estate and on release.
- There is a strong focus on improving access to accommodation by engaging with the corporate parenting service and multi-agency placement panel.
- The draft special educational needs/YJS policy provides assurance that the needs of this group of children will be considered when they are in custody.
- The YJS ETE worker is a good advocate for children in custody.
- Case managers generally consider children's health needs in resettlement planning.
- The YJS has undertaken deep-dive practice audits in an attempt to develop resettlement practice. In addition, it is a member of the London Resettlement ETE group, and this provides a forum for sharing good practice.

But:

- Consideration and understanding of victim work in the draft policy needs to be strengthened.

- The partnership needs to evidence positive outcomes for children resulting from evaluation of the unique needs of the cohort of children in custody or at risk of custody.
- The delay in arranging accommodation in one inspected case meant that there was a significant interval in confirming the provision of ETE upon release.
- The YJS considers diversity in its approach to resettlement, but it needs to record evidence of impact more consistently; it also needs to improve its use of diversity data to develop provision.
- The YJS's understanding of how child exploitation prevention arrangements could be incorporated into resettlement planning was poor in one case inspected.
- The role of feedback from children in reviews of policy and provision needs to be clearer.

Recommendations

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

The Sutton Youth Justice Service should ensure that:

1. children's plans are undertaken to a high standard, in collaboration with partners when required, and that contingency planning is always effectively considered
2. managers are confident that case managers identify and consider all potential risks of harm to others, especially when behaviours are not linked to the index offence
3. case managers consider all of the protected characteristics and diversity factors when developing and delivering interventions.

The Sutton Youth Justice Service and Metropolitan Police should:

4. assure themselves that arrangements for assessing children who receive a community resolution for cannabis possession are appropriate and capture all their potential risks and needs.

The Sutton Youth Justice Management Board should ensure that:

5. it has access to good-quality, analytical performance data so that the partnership is aware of the needs of children who offend
6. board members always communicate effectively to each other about any significant changes to practice or provision within their respective agencies to guarantee that any potential impact on the Youth Justice Service can be evaluated and discussed
7. the efficacy of partnership provision and engagement with the YJS resettlement policy is reviewed at regular intervals.

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 National Probation Service, and local health services.³ 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.

Sutton YJS (formerly Sutton YOT) is one of three teams that comprise the Early Help and Integrated Youth Justice Service (EHYJS) in Sutton Children's Services. EHYJS was formed in April 2021 following a service transformation and merger of Integrated Youth Services (YOT and Targeted Youth Support) and the Targeted Early Help Service. A standalone 'prevention' team has been incorporated into the YJS. Practitioners in this team provide interventions both for children on youth justice interventions and for those who require additional support outside of the youth justice system. YJS case managers also oversee out-of-court disposals as well as court orders.

A service manager oversees the YJS, early help and adolescent teams, and she in turn is overseen by a head of service with responsibility for the strategic oversight of arrangements.

In terms of local needs, an internal borough audit conducted in June 2021 found that 32 per cent of children open to the Sutton Multi Agency Child Exploitation panel in the first six months of 2021 were born outside the borough.⁴ Of this cohort, the data provided by Sutton during fieldwork indicated that there was an over-representation of black (African and Caribbean), mixed ethnicity, and white European young people. Many had experienced multiple moves (locally and internationally), and a high number had moved from inner London to Sutton with their families to access temporary housing, because of housing costs or to escape violence or domestic abuse. This meant that many had significant histories of dislocation, loss, and trauma, and had arrived in Sutton either not open to children's social care or as a child in need/child protection case but had since entered care. Opportunities for early intervention were limited because the children had arrived in Sutton as older adolescents with a high level of risk.

This changing demographic has been reflected to some degree in the YJS cohort of children and there is a similar level of racial disproportionality within children open to

³ The *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* set out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

⁴ Data was provided by Sutton YJS before the fieldwork.

the service who are at risk of exploitation. Sutton YJS recognises that the risks associated with increasing disproportionality need to be monitored and addressed promptly.

In addition to this, our review of data indicated differences between YJB and local data regarding the proportion of girls represented within the YJS cohort which was not fully understood by the service at the point of inspection. The YJS has since taken steps to review and understand this data more effectively.

YJB data also indicates that children aged 10 to 14 were overrepresented on the Sutton caseload in 2020-2021 compared with regional and national averages.⁵

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on Sutton YJS. Some staff experienced loss of family members and anxieties about lockdown. The focus within both the service and the borough was on staff wellbeing and managing risk effectively. Caseloads fell for a time, which led to a 'surge' when things began to open up. Even now, the service reports a considerable backlog of Crown Prosecution Service cases still going through the courts.

The service listened to young people and their feedback was that they preferred to return to face-to-face provision. This resumed in April 2021. The YJS has reviewed what it learned about positive practice during the pandemic. Consequently, hybrid working has been embraced to help staff to achieve a better work/life balance. Virtual working has enabled better relationships with out-of-borough cases and improved the attendance of partners at some meetings. If appropriate, the YJS will use virtual working methods with children, although face to face is by far the most frequently used method of service delivery.

⁵*Ibid.*

Contextual facts

Population information⁶

133	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in Sutton YJS ⁷
154	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in England and Wales
43.1%	Reoffending rate in Sutton YJS ⁸
34.2%	Reoffending rate in England and Wales

207,707	Total population Sutton
21,278	Total youth population (10–17 years) in Sutton

Caseload information⁹

Age	10–14 years	15–17 years
Sutton YJS	22%	78%
National average	18%	82%

Race/ethnicity	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
Sutton YJS	63%	29%	7%
Youth population (10–17 years) in Sutton ¹⁰	59.4%	40.6%	0%

Gender	Male	Female
Sutton YJS	88%	12%
National average	86%	13%

⁶ Office for National Statistics. (2021). *UK population estimates, mid-2020*.

⁷ Youth Justice Board. (2022). *First-time entrants, October to September 2021*.

⁸ Ministry of Justice. (2022). *Proven reoffending statistics, April to March 2020*.

⁹ Youth Justice Board. (2022). *Youth justice annual statistics: 2020 to 2021*.

¹⁰ Data supplied by the YJS in the chief executive's briefing on day 1 of fieldwork. This compares with only 27 per cent of the overall population who come from a black, Asian, and minority ethnic background.

Additional caseload data¹¹

135	Total current caseload, of which:
35	Court disposals
100	Out-of-court disposals

Of the 35 court disposals:

31	Total current caseload on community sentences
3	Total current caseload in custody
1	Total current caseload on licence

Of the 100 out-of-court disposals:

8	Total current caseload with a youth caution
5	Total current caseload with a youth conditional caution
87	Total current caseload with a community resolution or other out-of-court disposal

Education status of caseload:

44¹²	Current caseload aged 16 and under in full-time school
27	Percentage of children aged 16 and under in a pupil referral unit, alternative education, or attending school part-time
21¹³	Percentage of current caseload aged 17+ not in education, training or employment

For children subject to court disposals (including resettlement case):

Offence types ¹⁴	%
Violence against the person	56%
Robbery	11%
Theft and handling stolen goods	11%
Drug offences	11%
Indictable motoring offences	11%

¹¹ Data supplied by the YJS, reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

¹² 61.97%. Source: Sutton YJS organisational spreadsheet.

¹³ 35.59%. Source: Sutton YJS organisational spreadsheet.

¹⁴ Data from the cases assessed during this inspection.

1. Organisational delivery

The youth justice management board promotes a child-first ethos and is committed to developing anti-racist practice. The new board chair has the authority and influence to ensure prompt action can be taken where required across a range of services.

However, some members of the partnership lacked a detailed understanding of the YJS's priorities and the organisational risks that it needs to focus on to meet the needs of children open to the youth justice system. The partnership has recognised that some strategic activity did not begin quickly enough, and that this has impacted negatively on outcomes.

Some arrangements still need to be strengthened. Police and probation colleagues, for example, need to have a better understanding of the impact that strategic decisions made within their organisations have on the YJS's operational activity.

The YJS leadership team is well respected and plays an important role in ensuring the child-first approach set out in the youth justice strategy is put into practice.

There has been an increase in the number of out-of-court disposals over the last 18 months. This has reshaped service delivery priorities but, overall, workload has not increased for this well-resourced service.

The staff themselves are a diverse group, although, unusually, there are few female case managers in the service. Further scrutiny and monitoring of whether girls' needs are always met is still required. Particularly for girls receiving tier one interventions such as conditional discharges and fines; to ensure they receive an appropriately targeted early help offer within the borough.

Staff are skilled and retained well by the service. The YJS offers some specialist provision, such as the ETE officer and the SALT, which is a notable strength.

Staff supervision is regular, and appraisals are in place for all staff to facilitate personal growth. There is also a comprehensive training offer and we saw good levels of competence and motivation, and some good practice throughout the inspection week.

Data is available to the agencies in the wider partnership that work with children who offend, but it does not always give them a clear understanding of the desistance needs of this small but complex cohort. Previously, some provision was not sufficiently focused on desistance, and the partnership's approach was sometimes inconsistent. However, the partnership has identified these challenges and has put in place measures to address them.

The partnership has a good understanding of racial disproportionality in the borough but less of an understanding of the age and gender profile of YJS children and the data related to victims. This could impact on service delivery if it is not addressed.

Some service provision is of a good standard. The service has developed a communication passport for children with speech, language, and communication needs, which is a good way of ensuring that those children can engage effectively with other services.

YJS staff have access to appropriate policies and procedures and there is evidence that these are reviewed appropriately. ICT systems function well and enable staff to access both this guidance and the case management systems used by the service.

The YJS delivers interventions from a spacious, well-located office. Appropriate risk assessments are in place for both buildings and staff, and also for children who may be at risk from other peers who attend the office.

There is a defined, reflective, and collaborative quality assurance framework, although some of the case data we inspected suggests that there is a need to review the oversight of work with children on out-of-court-disposals to keep other people safe.

Strengths

- There are strong child-first and anti-racist principles in Sutton's vision for working with children who offend.
- All appropriate services are engaged with the management board and there are good links with relevant strategic partnerships. The board has actively reviewed arrangements and altered board membership to strengthen these.
- The YJS has taken a coherent approach to tackling racial disproportionality and a number of recommendations have arisen from a recent child-led forum to address this issue.
- The YJS leadership team has helped to coordinate alignment of partnership approaches to service delivery, such as the development of restorative practices across the authority.
- Recent feedback from an independently commissioned youth justice expert has been incorporated swiftly into an operational self-improvement plan.
- The YJS is well resourced with motivated, capable, and competent practitioners, supported by a proactive management team.
- Some specialist provision, such as the ETE worker and SALT, has resulted in positive outcomes for children.
- There is a strong learning and development ethos within the YJS.
- The partnership has analysed and understood the characteristics of children at risk of exploitation.
- The development of the 'communication passport' has helped the YJS to engage with children who have speech, language, and communication needs.
- All relevant policies and procedures are in place.
- Children are seen in safe and accessible venues.

Areas for improvement

- Not all board members and partnership managers have a clear understanding of the YJS's priorities and organisational risks; police and probation in particular need to have a better understanding of the impact that their strategic decisions have on operational delivery for the YJS.

- The YJS needs to strengthen arrangements to incorporate children’s voices and victim data at board meetings.
- The YJS needs to develop a more systematic way of evaluating how effective its arrangements are for delivering interventions with girls.
- More structured ‘case formulation’ arrangements are needed to embed the service’s trauma-informed interventions.
- Previous issues with data integrity mean that the partnership has not fully understood the profile and desistance needs of YJS children.
- Education outcomes for children on court orders are poor.
- Referrals to child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) provision have been negatively impacted by a number of factors, including Covid-19, though this has been identified and arrangements have recently been reviewed.
- The management board and partnership managers did not fully consider the impact on service delivery of the significant increase in community resolutions when new arrangements were introduced.

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.

Requires improvement

Key data

Total spend in previous financial year	£514,000
Total projected budget current for financial year ¹⁵	£564,000

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?

Sutton’s youth justice strategy has been endorsed by the management board and incorporates ‘child-first’ principles. However, during the inspection fieldwork, some board members and partnership managers had difficulty in setting out their vision for the YJS specifically, as well as recalling current objectives and priorities. Importantly, the broader focus on anti-racist practice and disproportionality across the borough is understood across the partnership.

¹⁵ Although the inspection of Sutton YJS took place in financial year 2022/2023, the information provided relating to current projected budget refers to financial year 2021/2022 and previous financial year refers to 2020/2021.

Well-defined governance arrangements have enabled partners to engage with the board, but the evidence of their impact outside of the board, such as successful outcomes for all YJS children, is less explicit.

The board recognises that it needs to carry out more analysis of YJS data. This would improve monitoring and review of the YJS's strategy and vision, as would developing arrangements further to incorporate children's voices at the board.

The board's chairing arrangements have recently changed, with the previous knowledgeable chair ensuring a smooth transition of responsibilities. However, while representatives from all appropriate services attend the board, there has been poor engagement by the probation service over the last 12 months. The seniority of police representation at the board does not reflect the level that that we often see elsewhere. Health representation has recently changed also, so there is a need for the board as a whole to consolidate its understanding and delivery of YJS priorities.

Positively, there is evidence that case studies and performance reports have been presented at the board, and these have helped the board to focus more closely on some cohorts of children, such as those who reoffend.

Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?

Local partnership arrangements are in place to help develop service delivery for vulnerable children. For example, management board membership has been proactively reviewed to strengthen arrangements, and the YJS's position within the restructured EHIYJS enables it to focus on adolescents most at risk of involvement with the youth justice system.

However, some arrangements do not always facilitate successful outcomes. Board members recognised that they should have focused more on the educational needs of children subject to court orders at an earlier stage to improve attendance in school and broaden engagement with full-time education.

The YJS is implementing transitional safeguarding¹⁶ arrangements for all relevant children within Sutton Children's Services, but the probation service has not yet engaged sufficiently with these.

Overall, the board needs to focus more on developing arrangements for children who offend. For example, the board did not sufficiently consider the impact that changes to police community resolution practice would have on service delivery and resources. A more detailed evaluation of impact at this initial stage was needed.

The board recently supported a Youth Summit, which was held in response to the scrutiny of concerning racial disproportionality data. A number of recommendations were made at this child-led forum, demonstrating the board's ambitions to use service users' feedback to improve service delivery. At the same time, however, the board needs to undertake more regular scrutiny of data to ensure it is fully informed of the YJS's victim work and that the needs of these service users are not neglected.

¹⁶ Transitional safeguarding is an approach to safeguarding that focuses on meeting the needs of adolescents and young adults across developmental 'transitional' stages (i.e., turning 18 and/or moving between different tiers of intervention). The approach replaces a binary notion of childhood and adulthood and allows for a more fluid approach to working with adolescents. <https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2022/03/Academic-Insights-Holmes-and-Smith-RM.pdf>

Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?

The YJS leadership team is well regarded and provides a good link to the management board. There is evidence that it has been proactive in coordinating partnership approaches, such as the development of restorative practices across the authority.

The leadership team holds regular practice meetings and learning conversations to develop staff and partners' understanding of the YJS vision and strategy. The local Youth Bench Magistrates' chair also indicated that the YJS leadership team has shared the service's vision and strategy with magistrates.

The YJS leadership team has actively supported reflective review and challenge of service delivery. For example, feedback from an independently commissioned youth justice expert has been incorporated swiftly into a self-improvement plan. Additionally, the vast majority of staff responding to the staff survey noted that they felt they could challenge managers if appropriate.

Issues relating to racial disproportionality within the YJS cohort have been taken into account in the recent development of policy and practice. This is reflected in the borough's wider anti-racist practice ambitions.

The annual youth justice strategy correctly identified organisational risks that we ourselves observed during fieldwork, but neither the YJS leadership team nor the board has taken a systematic approach to monitoring these regularly.

1.2. Staff



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

Outstanding

Key staffing data¹⁷

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent (FTE))	12.6
Total headcount qualified case managers (FTE) ¹⁸	3.5
Vacancy rate (total unfilled posts as percentage of total staff headcount)	0%
Vacancy rate case managers only (total unfilled case manager posts as percentage of total case manager headcount)	0%
Average caseload case managers (FTE) ¹⁹	9
Average annual working days sickness (all staff)	5.7 ²⁰
Staff attrition (percentage of all staff leaving in 12-month period)	0%

¹⁷ Data supplied by YJS and reflecting staffing at the time of the inspection announcement.

¹⁸ Qualified case managers are those with a relevant social work, youth justice or probation qualification.

¹⁹ Data supplied by YJS, based on staffing and workload at the time of the inspection announcement.

²⁰ Average days of sickness excluding Covid-19 sickness were 3.4.

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?

There are sufficient case managers and restorative justice workers within the YJS. It is evident that staffing levels have been planned and reviewed as part of the recent service restructure.

There has been an increase in out-of-court interventions in the last 12 months. This has led to resources being targeted on the YJS's prevention and out-of-court work through both an increase in the number of prevention workers and the reallocation of work to staff who previously only held court orders.

The probation officer resource within the service is determined by the national probation staffing formula, but this does not allow sufficient flexibility to reflect the complexity of work that is undertaken. Managers coordinate the service's overall workload effectively and communicate challenges to staff well; cover is sourced efficiently at times of increased pressure on workload. Additionally, operational managers have benefited from access to cover from Early Help service managers if needed.

Volunteers are committed and knowledgeable but low in numbers and if some left the service there might be a shortfall at panels, although assurance was provided that arrangements with a neighbouring YOT would ensure support was available.

Average sick leave and other unplanned absences are not excessive and staff absence does not have a significant negative impact on service delivery.

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

Minority ethnic children in Sutton benefit from the positive role models provided by the black and minority ethnic staff and volunteers working in Sutton, who are represented well in the workforce. Policies are in place to ensure that these children's needs are understood and met.

There are few female case managers within the service. Managers assured us that girls could ask for a female worker if required, but there is no systematic way of evaluating how effective such arrangements are.

All of the staff we met are experienced, appropriately qualified, and well supported by specialist staff. Those involved in the service's 'assessment clinic', such as the speech and language therapist (SALT), school nurse and ETE worker, are particularly knowledgeable, committed, and enthusiastic.

Allocation of work is discussed collaboratively and based on skills, experience, and current workload.

The restorative justice worker is an accredited practitioner who has also trained large numbers of children's social care staff in restorative practice.

Staff are well supported by the YJS and the wider local authority.

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

A children's services supervision policy and template is in use and staff report that they receive regular supervision. The format of supervision is well planned and

ensures capacity for both reflective discussions about practice and more focused discussions on wellbeing. Additionally, management oversight was apparent on case files in a reasonable majority (70 per cent) of all court and out-of-court cases inspected.

There is a comprehensive induction pack for new staff. While low case manager turnover means that it has not been used extensively recently, partnership staff said that their experience of the YJS's induction processes was positive.

There is children's services directorate appraisal guidance in place and most staff felt that their appraisals were valuable.

There are appropriate processes should poor performance be highlighted as a concern.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

A comprehensive, directorate-wide internal training offer for staff includes continuous professional development focusing on developing social work skills. Training that is specific to youth justice is available through a pan-London training offer. Although there is no formal budget for this, the YJS manager said that no training request had ever been declined by budget holders.

Should they wish to, staff are encouraged and supported to take on work outside of their job description and undertake appropriate formal qualifications. There was evidence of a highly supportive culture within the YJS, where all staff are encouraged to develop their potential. Development for volunteers is not forgotten either, for example, the SALT trains new panel members as part of their induction.

Following the recent service restructure, an EHIYJS service day was held to give managers and staff an opportunity to undertake a collaborative skills audit.

While staff have undertaken relevant trauma-informed practice training, the service needs to develop better case formulation arrangements to embed this approach further. The monitoring of risk assessment training is another area for further development; some practitioners told us that they had not received sufficient training.

Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?

Throughout fieldwork, we saw evidence of a good working environment and highly motivated staff. We heard positive feedback from other partnership services complimenting YJS practice.

Both staff and volunteers feel valued by the service, and in many cases, this is reflected in their length of service with the YJS. A team charter formalises the principles of how to work well together, although staff made minimal reference to it during fieldwork.

Good practice is recognised informally, and staff have been nominated for, and have won, local authority awards for good work.

Staff who responded to our survey indicated that managers made adjustments in accordance with any individual diversity needs.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Requires improvement

Caseload characteristics

Percentage of current caseload with mental health issues	37%
Percentage of current caseload with substance misuse issues	65%
Percentage of current caseload with learning disability or learning difficulty or subject to an education, health and care plan	36%

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?

We identified concerns about the YJS's data accuracy during fieldwork. This meant that there was only limited assurance that partners had access to a comprehensive, up-to-date analysis of all children's desistance needs. For example, throughput data did not match that published by the YJB in its youth justice annual statistics for 2020-2021.

The YJS does not have a full analytical understanding of the age and gender profile of children. For example, the impact upon desistance needs of the relatively high numbers of 10–14-year-olds on the Sutton YJS caseload in 2020-2021,²¹ compared to the national average has not been scrutinised sufficiently. However, the YJS does have a good understanding of levels of racial disproportionality and its impact.

Overall, partnership staff and managers have only a high-level appreciation of the YJS children's profile and lack detailed knowledge. However, the YJS partnership has identified these weaknesses and put arrangements in to place to address them. For example, the YJS has recently appointed a dedicated performance analyst and the management board has refocused on data integrity.

Some data analysis has been used to address needs. For example, data from the YJS assessment clinic has been used to help identify specific safety and wellbeing needs, such as emotional-based school avoidance.

The YJS is aware that children in care are far more likely to be open to the service on a court disposal than an out-of-court disposal, and the characteristics of children at risk of exploitation have been analysed and understood by the partnership. Most have issues with trauma and links to negative peer groups.

Only 12.5 per cent of children reoffended after engaging with the SALT intervention; however, it was not clear how the partnership had utilised the effective features of these interventions to develop good practice elsewhere within the YJS cohort.

²¹ Youth Justice Board (2022). *Youth Justice Annual Statistics: 2020 to 2021*.

The YJS collects data on the number of victims who have engaged with the service, but it does not analyse this by ethnicity. There is evidence of wide-ranging attempts to gather feedback from children and families. Evidence of impact is sometimes, but not always, present.

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

Staff told us that, overall, they have access to appropriate local services. Also, the recent restructure, which created the EHIYJS, seems to have resulted in more integrated access to services for vulnerable adolescents. The partnership has made use of Your Choice, a pan-London therapeutic service, funded by the Violence Reduction Unit, for children aged 11 to 17 who have been assessed as being at risk in relation to contextual safeguarding concerns.

The realignment of CAMHS staff with the therapeutic hub in 2021, as part of pilot arrangements, did not increase YJS referral numbers. Arrangements were reviewed and a new service delivery model has been introduced with provision now sitting directly within the YJS. The YJS ETE worker is tenacious and skilled, and advocates strongly for YJS children. However, there is evidence that some education providers do not provide appropriate bespoke interventions for this cohort. Board members are attempting to resolve this at a strategic level through the senior multi-agency education panel, but this forum was developed recently and so attendance outcomes for children on court orders are still poor.

A comprehensive range of creative restorative justice options are available, both in working hours and at evenings and weekends.

An EHIYJS engagement report provided by the YJS indicates that its prevention staff worked with 182 children over the previous 12 months, involving them in therapeutic activity programmes and prosocial activities such as art and craft. The report highlights a number of qualitative outcomes, such as diverting children from antisocial behaviour at key times, but no quantitative data that can be used to measure efficacy.

The borough's anti-racist action plan and recommendations from the internal fairness commission, based within the local authority, have set the direction of travel for consideration of tackling disproportionality within the borough. However, the impact of this activity on children open specifically to the YJS needs to be better evidenced by the service. Arrangements are in place to ensure that children's speech, language, and communication needs are screened and addressed. The development of the 'communication passport' has helped to engage children with these needs.

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

The head of service provides strategic input at discussions on the services required for YJS children but, overall, the partnership has not focused sufficiently on the specific needs of this cohort. For example, the partnership did not plan well enough for the potential impact that changes in the approach to dealing with cannabis possession would have on the substance misuse service.

Some transitional safeguarding arrangements are in place locally; however, arrangements need to ensure more focus on supporting children who offend and, in particular, the probation service needs to develop an understanding of this approach when taking on transition cases.

More structured use of the case formulation model, utilising support from CAMHS or educational psychologists, would embed the YJS trauma-informed approach more effectively.

A number of practice directives ensure alignment of approaches between different agencies when tackling issues relating to exploitation. However, some partnership managers lacked awareness of how effective National Referral Mechanism²² processes were when asked during inspection.

Feedback from the court about the services available to children was positive, and YJS staff have given presentations on local services to ensure that sentencers are aware of local arrangements.

Across the partnership there is a focus on diversity; appropriate services are delivered for those from minority ethnic groups and those with learning needs. However, there is less information about work with girls on the YJS caseload.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

There is evidence that the YJS listens to the voice of the child and their family, although direct interaction with children and families at the management board needs to be developed.

Feedback from children is actively sought to develop service delivery. The well-attended Youth Summit, held in 2021 to gain feedback from children about how ethnic disproportionality could be tackled more effectively, is evidence of this approach. While the impact of this summit has yet to be fully realised, a number of recommendations were made, which the partnership is working through.

The YJS's approach to reparation is particularly impressive and is a good example of how to co-produce intervention plans with children. Interventions are based on suitability requirements identified by the children themselves and placements tend to match their skills and interests.

Children and parents or carers were approached during fieldwork to canvas their views but the number of responses to both text and telephone contact was extremely limited. The feedback we did receive was universally positive about the support of the YJS.

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?

²² The framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support.

The YJS has access to an online document library that contains details of local children's safeguarding partnership and children's services policies and practice directives. Specific YJS policies are available and readily accessible, though not all of them are stored in the online repository.

Local practice learning conversations and meetings are examples of the interactive forums in place to discuss new policies and procedures meaningfully. Indeed, staff were aware of guidance, and we saw evidence that they have played an active role in developing some of it; for example, a case manager had developed previous resettlement guidance.

Several documents have been updated recently or are in the process of being updated as part of a standard review cycle. The broader borough-wide anti-racist action plan provides a foundation for ensuring that reviews consider racial and ethnic diversity. A standalone joint YJS/special educational needs policy is in place to help case managers ensure that the needs of children with SEN in custody are considered and met jointly by appropriate professionals.

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

The YJS is based in a spacious, child-friendly building that is accessible by public transport. The atmosphere in the communal areas during fieldwork was genuinely convivial and welcoming, and we saw staff interacting well with colleagues and children.

If an alternative venue is required because of a specific need, both YJS and partnership staff arrange to see children at home or at an appropriate satellite location if one is available. Reparation activities take place in a number of varied and suitable placements.

Appropriate building and placement risk assessments are in place and staff have access to personal safety devices at the main office. Furthermore, risk assessments of children are always undertaken before they visit the office. If they are at risk from other children or pose a risk to other children, additional safety arrangements and measures are put into place.

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

The YJS uses the Servelec Core+ case management system for youth justice recording and staff have read-only access to the Mosaic system for updates on social care records. Inspectors did not note any issues with access or capacity to record or view assessments or case notes. Victims' details are recorded in a confidential section of the case management system.

There are a number of service level agreements covering data-sharing and information security.

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

Previous performance reports have not been sufficiently analytical, and this has hampered attempts to drive improvement. However, the board has recognised these deficits and the YJS has put new arrangements in place to capture and analyse data. The new data analyst has a youth justice performance background, and the performance manager, who now sits on the board, demonstrated a good understanding of the areas of challenge and how to address these.

While data from the inspected cases indicates that the YJS needs to do more to provide assurance that work to keep others safe is always undertaken to a high standard, it is clear that its work is aligned with broader local authority quality assurance framework arrangements. These involve case audit by managers and peer review, and we saw evidence that learning was used to try and drive improvement. For example, the YJS commissioned an external, independent evaluation of practice in December 2021. This resulted in a quickly developed action plan, which the board will be monitoring. It is envisaged that this plan will be updated by the YJS following our inspection recommendations.

Additionally, the YJS has proactively participated in a multi-agency reflective learning event relating to child safeguarding practice review, and board minutes indicate that inspection activity is reviewed. YJS managers have visited an area we have previously rated 'Outstanding' to learn from good practice.

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.

Data provided by the YJS indicates that 40.6 per cent of children living in Sutton are from a minority ethnic background compared with 27 per cent of the overall population of Sutton. The YJB's annual statistics for 2020/2021²³ indicate that the proportion of minority ethnic children on Sutton's caseload for the year (29 per cent) was lower than London average (66 per cent), although equal to the national average. Seven per cent of children open to Sutton YJS that year were recorded as unknown ethnicity in the published statistics. These statistics indicate a gender mix (12 per cent of throughput in the year were female) in line with national and regional averages; however, at the point of inspection, just over a quarter of children open to the YJS were girls,²⁴ mostly on out-of-court-disposals.

During 2020/2021, the average age of children receiving a formal disposal in Sutton was 16, but the published national statistics indicated that 22 per cent²⁵ of the overall YJS cohort was aged 10 to 14, which was significantly above regional (16 per cent) and national (18 per cent) averages.

Although the proportion of minority ethnic children open to the service is lower than that of other London boroughs, the YJS is aware that this masks the fact that such children are disproportionately represented within certain cohorts, such as those at risk of exploitation. Work to address this disproportionality was visible and a clear priority. However, we saw far less evidence that the age and gender of the children were having an impact on the development of service delivery for YJS children. This was reflected at management board level and it is clear that, while the board is aware of issues relating to potential racial disproportionality, data on diversity as a whole is underused. More examples of how analysis is developing interventions to

²³ Youth Justice Board (2022). *Youth Justice Annual Statistics: 2020 to 2021*.

²⁴ Sutton YJS organisational spreadsheet provided to HMIP prior to fieldwork.

²⁵ Youth Justice Board (2022). *Youth Justice Annual Statistics: 2020 to 2021*.

address out-of-court disposals and resettlement disproportionality, for example, would evidence that data is always being used effectively.

Data from both court and out-of-court cases inspected indicates that diversity is not always considered by case managers during assessments and planning. However, we did see examples of practice where they had delivered personalised, needs-led approaches. For example, the approach to reparation in Sutton is impressive; the suitability of placements is normally dictated by the children themselves. Elsewhere, emerging transitional safeguarding arrangements across the authority show promise and may enable case managers to develop more personalised interventions for older children open to the YJS.

An anti-racist action plan is in place across the borough and all individuals and services we spoke to were aware of it. YJS staff and volunteers are diverse, and this in itself ensures that there are a number of different positive role models for children who are open to the service. The service makes reasonable adjustments for staff where diversity issues are apparent.

There is a strong speech, language, and communication offer, and the SALT is skilled, experienced, and has a good links with other speech and language professionals at a national level; she evidenced significant success with the children she has worked with, and reoffending rates for those who engage with her are much lower than the average for the service as a whole.

The YJS's data on exploitation indicates that a disproportionate number of children coming to Sutton from other London boroughs are from minority ethnic groups. There is oversight regionally at relevant boards to ensure an integrated approach to tackling this concern, but it is not clear what outcomes have been achieved at these forums that will assist Sutton YJS.

2. Court disposals

We took a detailed look at eight community sentences managed by the YJS. We also conducted interviews with the seven 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.

Children who receive a court disposal in Sutton should expect that both they and their parents or carers will be effectively engaged, that their diversity needs will be met, that the YJS will work collaboratively with partners to ensure they do not reoffend, and that risks to and from others will be addressed. These outcomes should be achieved through high-quality and consistent assessment and planning, delivery of interventions supported by effective management oversight, and robust ongoing review of the work that has been undertaken.

In Sutton, the quality of work with children on court orders was sometimes undertaken very well, but not in all instances. Work to support desistance reflected this inconsistency. Assessments to support desistance were generally undertaken well. Case managers' assessments were generally analytical and covered all relevant areas, but they were let down by not always considering and analysing diversity issues sufficiently. However, the assessments generally explained the child's social context in detail, and there was evidence that assessments were co-produced with children and their parents or carers and took into account the victim's needs and wishes.

Planning only considered diversity issues in half of the inspected cases and did not always take into account the child's personal circumstances. Service delivery was generally strengths-based and likely to support desistance in the majority of instances identified, but good relationships with the child and their parents or carers were not always maintained. Reviewing responded to change, built on the child's strengths and led to necessary adjustments in ongoing work where required.

Work to keep the child safe was also inconsistent. Assessments, implementation and delivery, and reviewing were all done well, but, again, planning was sufficient in too few cases. In regard to assessment, we agreed with most of the YJS's judgements and noted a high level of congruence between its classification of risks to the child and our own. This was not translated well into planning activity, however, which did not always promote the child's wellbeing or involve other agencies where appropriate. Contingency arrangements needed to be strengthened. Work improved during the service delivery and reviewing stages, and we saw good collaborative work delivered to keep the child safe. Subsequent review of this activity was sufficient in a reasonable majority of cases.

Work to keep others safe was the strongest element of work in court disposals and was done well across all key questions. Assessment was particularly strong and analysed how to keep people safe in every case inspected. Planning was generally sufficient and the YJS was adept at ensuring that it involved other agencies where required. Services were delivered very well and supported the safety of others effectively. Reviews invariably resulted in changes in risk being identified and necessary adjustments being made.

Management oversight to support court work was good, as was the range of services to support children on court orders.

Strengths

- Case managers have a good analytical understanding of children's desistance needs.
- Children and their parents or carers are normally proactively involved with their assessments and reviews.
- The case manager's analysis of how to keep others safe was sufficient in every case inspected.
- The classification of risk to the child and risk to others was undertaken well and was reasonable in every case inspected.
- Case managers normally consider victims' needs and risks when working with children on court orders.
- Sutton has a good range of services to support children, which enhances the implementation and delivery of its work.
- Managers have a good oversight of the work undertaken by case managers.
- When carrying out reviews, case managers generally work proactively with partners if appropriate but need to ensure that the host YOT follows up actions, where required, if the child is placed out of area.

Areas for improvement

- Case managers do not always take diversity into account when delivering work to support desistance.
- Planning to support desistance and keep the child safe was not always effective.
- Case managers do not always take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances when undertaking planning to support desistance.
- Case managers do not always collaborate with relevant agencies when planning to keep children safe.
- Contingency planning to keep children safe needs to be better.
- Where children are placed out of the area the YJS needs to be proactive in working with the host YOT to satisfy itself that appropriate action and interventions are completed.

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.

Good

Our rating²⁶ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	75%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	88%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	100%

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

Assessment analysing how to support the child's desistance was undertaken well. In all cases inspected, the assessment sufficiently analysed offending behaviour, including the child's attitude towards and motivation for their offending. Staff considered the child's personal circumstances, including their wider familial and social context, in seven cases, but the child's diversity was considered in only five of the eight cases inspected. Case managers used information held by other agencies in seven cases. In every case inspected, the assessment focused on the child's strengths and their protective factors. In seven cases, the case manager had given sufficient attention to the child's level of maturity, ability, and motivation to change.

Structural barriers were analysed in all six of the cases where this was required. The views of both the child and their parents or carers were considered in all cases inspected. The victim's needs and wishes were taken into account in all but one case. Substance misuse and mental health were the two most pertinent desistance factors identified and were present in six of the eight cases inspected. Learning and ETE and lifestyle were the next most relevant factors, noted in five cases.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

The assessment clearly identified and analysed risks to the child's safety in seven of the eight cases inspected, and it drew on available sources of information where appropriate in all cases. The assessment analysed controls and interventions to promote the child's safety and wellbeing in six cases. We agreed with every classification of risk made by the YJS, and we felt the case manager's classification of safety and wellbeing was reasonable in all cases inspected.

There was a clear written record of the assessment of the child's safety and wellbeing in all cases.

²⁶ 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 assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Assessment analysing how to keep others safe was undertaken particularly well. This was summed up by one inspector reflecting on a case, who noted:

“The assessment analyses the different types of harmful behaviour that the child could display, including the index offence, historical and other behaviours of concern. The assessment draws on information held by other agencies, such as children’s services and school. Context, imminence and impact are also evaluated.”

The assessment clearly identified and analysed the risk of harm to others posed by the child in all cases inspected. The assessment drew sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involved other agencies, where appropriate, in all cases.

The assessment analysed controls and interventions to manage and minimise risks in all but one case, and we agreed with every risk classification made by the YJS. There was a clear written record of the assessment to keep others safe in all cases.

2.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

Our rating²⁷ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child’s desistance?	63%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	50%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	75%

Does planning focus on supporting the child’s desistance?

Planning set out the services most likely to support desistance and paid sufficient attention to timescales and sequencing in six of the eight inspected cases. However, diversity factors were considered in only half of the inspected cases. The child’s levels of maturity, ability, and motivation to change were considered in six cases. The child’s strengths and protective factors were considered in all but one case.

Sufficient services were planned for in six cases inspected, and proportionate planning was noted in the same number of cases. The child and their parents were meaningfully involved in planning in six cases, and the case manager paid sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim in six cases too.

Overall, inspectors assessed that planning focused sufficiently on supporting the child’s desistance in five of the eight cases.

²⁷ 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.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Inspectors noted deficits in Sutton’s approach to planning to keep the child safe. Planning promoted the safety and wellbeing of the child sufficiently to address risks in only half of the cases inspected. Planning involved other agencies in only four of the seven cases where this was appropriate. Planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the child’s safety and wellbeing in only half the cases inspected and there was effective contingency planning in only five cases.

One inspector highlighted deficiencies in planning to keep the child safe in one case inspected, noting:

“The intervention plan does not include children’s social care, or the intervention planned by the named social worker to safeguard the child and her sibling. Having checked the case systems, this case was a child protection case at the time of sentence and was reduced to child in need some time later. There should have been planning to align the safeguarding work done by both agencies.”

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Planning promoted the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors, in six cases. Other agencies were involved, where appropriate, in all but one case.

Planning failed to address specific risks and concerns related to actual and potential victims in only two cases. Plans to set out necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of others were sufficient in six cases. Effective contingency planning was undertaken sufficiently in six of the cases inspected.

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating²⁸ 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?	63% ²⁹
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	75%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	88%

²⁸ 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.

²⁹ Professional discretion was used to raise the rating from 'Requires improvement' to 'Good' following the review of our summary judgement for one case.

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

Services that were most likely to support desistance, with sufficient detail given to sequencing and timescales, were delivered in five of the inspected cases. In one of the cases where services were not delivered, this was noted to be due to circumstances beyond the YJS's control (see footnote 30).

Service delivery took diversity considerations into account sufficiently in six cases and reflected the child's wider familial and social context in six cases. In five cases, there was evidence that service delivery built on the child's strengths and protective factors. The case manager focused sufficiently on maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers in five cases. Service delivery promoted opportunities for community integration, including access to services post-supervision, in only half of the cases inspected. There were good attempts to encourage compliance in six of the inspected cases.

Enforcement action was undertaken appropriately in all relevant instances, and, overall, the delivery of services was proportionate to the disposal and completed in a timely manner in six cases.

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

Service delivery supported the child's safety effectively in six of the eight cases inspected. Additionally, the coordination of other organisations involved in keeping the child safe was sufficient in six of the seven relevant cases. This good practice was noted in one case where:

"Throughout the order there have been incidents in which the child has been missing from home. Multi-agency work is undertaken, and strategy meetings are held by the YJS and attended by a range of professionals to manage the risks associated with exploitation. This results in the education officer carrying out work in relation to exploitation, 'making sure you keep safe'. When the child is seen with bruising on her hands and face, there is evidence of good liaison between agencies collectively to investigate how these injuries have taken place. Children's social care carried out work in relation to safety planning for victims of domestic abuse."

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

This work was undertaken well by the YJS. Services to manage and minimise the risk of harm were delivered sufficiently in all but one case.

Coordination of the involvement of other agencies to manage the risk of harm was sufficient in six of the relevant seven cases where their presence was required. The attention given to protecting actual and potential victims was good and present in all but one case.

2.4. Reviewing



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

Good

Our rating³⁰ for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	88%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	75%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	88%

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

Reviewing identified and responded to changes in desistance factors in six of the seven relevant cases where this was required. It focused on building strengths and protective factors in all but one case, but responded to diversity factors in only three of the five cases where inspectors assessed that this was required.

A written review was completed for all children. The case manager considered the child's personal circumstances, including their wider familial and social context, in all cases inspected. The case worker considered the child's motivation and engagement in all of the relevant cases, and the child and their parent or carer were meaningfully involved in the review in six of the eight inspected cases.

Reviewing led to necessary adjustments in ongoing work to support desistance in six of the seven cases where it was required.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Reviewing identified and responded to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing in four of the seven cases where this was required. A written review was completed in all but one case. Input from other agencies was considered in five of the seven relevant cases and this activity resulted in necessary adjustments in ongoing work in four of the seven cases where adjustments were required.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Reviewing identified and responded to changes in factors related to risk of harm in four of the five relevant cases. A sufficient written review was completed in all cases.

Six of the seven relevant cases that needed to incorporate the input of other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm into the review evidenced this input. Reviewing activity resulted in changes to the ongoing plan of work to manage risk in four of the five cases where an adjustment was required.

³⁰ 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.

3. Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 12 cases that had received an out-of-court disposal, which were all community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in all 12 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, work to keep the child safe and work 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.

Work to support desistance was generally undertaken well. Assessments to support desistance demonstrated sufficient analysis in a reasonable majority of cases. Additionally, case managers considered diversity more thoroughly than in the court cases we inspected. While case managers did not always assess structural barriers well, more often than not the YJS involved children and their parents or carers and considered the needs of victims.

Planning, and implementation and delivery to support desistance were both undertaken well. Consideration of diversity was again stronger than we had seen for court cases. Overall, work was strengths-based and generally promoted the plans and interventions most likely to support desistance and community integration. Case managers also focused on building good relationships with children and their families and encouraging compliance. Where children disengaged, staff generally did all they could have done to deliver services.

Work to keep the child safe was also undertaken well. Assessments were done well, although we disagreed with the case manager's classification in regard to two children. Planning was undertaken well, although contingency planning needs to improve. YJS service delivery promoted the child's safety, although the YJS should ensure that it uses and coordinates other agencies when required.

Work to keep other people safe was not done so well. It was sufficient in too few cases. Assessments did not always identify, analyse, and classify risk satisfactorily. Planning did not always keep others safe. Some risks were overlooked, and this meant that case managers did not always consider contingency planning or actual or potential victims. These deficits had a direct impact on service delivery.

Management oversight was sufficient in a reasonable majority of the cases inspected and we felt there were sufficient services in place to support the out-of-court disposal.

Although we found positive aspects with the YJS's out-of-court disposal policy and practice, this has been rated 'Requires improvement' because it is our judgement that the implications of some changes were not sufficiently well enough considered by the YJS and the board. We felt this deficit in consideration was reflected in the lack of consistency of work to keep other people safe, particularly for children whose potential risks to others did not reflect their index offence.

In regard to current provision, there are links with a number of relevant services and assurance that appropriate interventions are available.

In the long term, the YJS and its partners should also take a more systematic approach to reviewing their data. The evaluation of data for minority ethnic, female and younger children, and linking this analysis to service provision, is currently underdeveloped and needs to improve.

Strengths

- Work to support children's desistance and their safety and wellbeing was generally undertaken well.
- Planning focused sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance in a large majority of cases.
- Case data indicated that staff took greater account of diversity in out-of-court cases than they did for children on court orders.
- Case managers usually considered the views of children and their parents or carers and the needs and wishes of victims when working to support children's desistance.
- Case managers considered how to enable children to comply with interventions sufficiently.
- The YJS had swiftly implemented the recommendations made by an independently commissioned reviewer.
- A good range of services are available for children who have received an out-of-court disposal.

Areas for improvement

- Work to keep other people safe was not always undertaken well.
- Case managers only identified and analysed risk of harm to others sufficiently in half of the cases where there were factors relating to risk of harm.
- Case managers did not always consider and analyse the structural barriers to desistance well enough.
- Contingency planning was not always strong.
- Potential victims were not always considered when case managers planned and delivered interventions to keep others safe, particularly if risks were not related to the index offence.
- More scrutiny is required to evaluate the impact of the increase in the number of community resolutions for cannabis possession.
- The partnership needs to evaluate its data more systematically to help develop provision in the borough.

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.

Requires improvement

Our rating³¹ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	67%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	67%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	58%

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

There was sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's acknowledgement of responsibility for, attitudes towards, and motivation for their offending, in nine of the 12 inspected cases.

Substance misuse was identified as the main factor related to desistance in 10 cases. It is assessed that this figure reflects the changes in 2021 in out-of-court disposal practice, which had led to increased numbers of children coming to the YJS on community resolutions for cannabis possession. Lifestyle was the next most prominent factor related to desistance and was present in eight cases.

Staff analysed diversity issues sufficiently in nine cases and the child's wider familial and social context was analysed in 11 cases. Staff used information held by other agencies to inform the assessment in 10 cases and focused on the child's strengths and their protective factors in nine cases. The case manager considered the child's maturity, ability, and motivation to change in 10 cases. Structural barriers were analysed sufficiently in five of the eight cases where such consideration was appropriate.

The views of the child and their parents or carers were considered in 11 cases inspected. The victim's needs and wishes were taken into account in five of the seven cases where there was a relevant victim.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

Assessments identified and analysed risks to the child's safety and wellbeing in nine of the 12 inspected cases. The assessment itself drew on available sources of information, where appropriate, in 10 cases.

The YJS's initial classification of risks to safety and wellbeing was generally sound and we felt the case manager's classification was reasonable in 10 of the cases inspected. There was a clear written record of the assessment of the child's safety and wellbeing in all 12 cases.

³¹ 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 assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

This was the weakest area of assessment inspected. The assessment did not clearly identify and analyse the risk of harm to others posed by the child in half of the 10 cases where there were risk of harm factors.

Assessment drew sufficiently on available sources of information in all but two cases inspected.

There was evidence of some under-classification of risk; we assessed that five cases posed a medium risk of harm to others compared with three classified as medium by the YJS.

There was a clear written record of the assessment to keep other people safe in 10 of the cases inspected.

3.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

Our rating³² for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	83%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	67%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	58%

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

Planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to timescales and sequencing in 10 of the inspected cases. Diversity factors were considered sufficiently in only eight cases, although planning took sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances in 10 cases.

The child's strengths and protective factors were considered in nine cases but their levels of maturity, ability, and motivation to change were considered in only seven cases.

Sufficient opportunities for community integration were planned for in 10 cases. The child and their parents or carers were meaningfully involved in planning in eight cases, and sufficient attention was given to the victim's needs and wishes in five of the eight cases where it should have been considered.

Sufficient services were planned for in nine cases and this planning was proportionate, with interventions capable of being completed within appropriate timescales, in 11 cases.

³² 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.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Planning promoted the child’s safety and wellbeing in eight of the 12 cases inspected. Planning involved other agencies in eight of the 10 cases where coordinated planning was appropriate. Contingency arrangements were clear in only half of the 10 cases where these were required.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Overall, planning to keep others safe was done well on too few occasions. Planning promoted the safety of other people in only four of the nine cases where it was required to keep others safe. It involved planning with other agencies in six of the nine cases where other services were involved, but contingency planning was sufficient in only half of the 10 cases where it was needed.

Actual or potential victims were considered in only three of the nine cases where this was assessed to be required. This was reflected by one inspector, who noted:

“Planning to keep others safe referred only to Sidney’s use of cannabis; issues with regard to his wider behaviour and risks were not considered.”

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Requires improvement

Our rating³³ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child’s desistance?	67%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	67%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	58%

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

In reaching our conclusions on sufficiency, we also took into account those children who had disengaged from voluntary intervention and assessed whether case managers had done everything possible to support service delivery.

Eight children had services delivered that were most likely to support desistance. Case managers considered the child’s diversity factors and their wider familial and social context when delivering services in nine of the inspected cases. Inspectors found sufficient focus on developing and maintaining relationships with the child and their parents or carers in nine cases and sufficient attention was given to enabling compliance in 10 cases.

³³ 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.

Service delivery promoted opportunities for community integration in 10 cases. It was judged to be proportionate to the type of out-of-court disposal and completed within timescales in eight cases. Sufficient services were delivered to address identified desistance factors in eight cases.

Does service delivery focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Service delivery promoted the child's safety and wellbeing in eight of the 12 inspected cases. Other agencies were sufficiently well used and coordinated in keeping the child safe in six of the nine relevant cases.

Does service delivery focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Services delivered to manage and minimise risk of harm were sufficient in only four of the nine relevant cases where they were required. The case manager considered the actual and potential victims in only two of the eight cases where this was appropriate. Inspectors found that service delivery supported the safety of other people in only seven cases.

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?

Guidance on joint decision-making had recently changed following feedback from a review of practice by an independent expert on youth justice. New terms of reference for the joint decision-making panel had strengthened assessment quality by ensuring it happens before decisions are made.

The eligibility criteria in the guidance for disposal options are mostly clear. There is a well-defined approach that focuses on prevention, which is shared by both the police and YJS. The updated joint terms of reference set out the differences between community resolutions, triage, and more formal disposals. This is designed to ensure that appropriate diversion is considered. Diversion via an Outcome 22 intervention is noted as a potential outcome in the updated terms of reference but is not available currently in the borough.

In the last six months, there had been a significant increase in the number of community resolutions for cannabis possession given by the police and picked up by the YJS outside of joint decision-making arrangements. This had been a deliberate shift in approach by the police and YJS. Guidance states that a brief review of these disposals is undertaken at the joint decision-making panel. This review is not always sufficient though, as our inspection highlighted some cases where it had not fully considered all potential risks. The guidance needs to be re-evaluated to ensure sufficient consideration of risks is taken at this review, otherwise it is in danger of becoming a 'tick-box exercise'.

Local guidance promotes consideration of keeping children safe by noting that safeguarding checks should take place before the panel and there is some reviewing of children at panel towards the end of intervention.

Work with victims was a key consideration in the guidance at the pre-panel stage, but the guidance does not fully take into account difficulties in undertaking this activity. These have been exacerbated by changes to the Metropolitan Police's victim contact procedures.

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

There is a regular joint decision-making panel attended by the YJS, CAMHS, and police. Information is collected from agencies who do not attend and is included in pre-panel assessments. While there is capacity for other relevant professionals to attend if required, it is not clear how this arrangement is monitored and what partner agencies' expectations for attendance are.

Once interventions have been decided, some children may be referred to the prevention panel or youth conditional caution panel for further discussion of service delivery opportunities. The allocated worker will begin engaging with the child immediately. Once the case has been allocated, there are a number of strengths-based interventions on offer.

All provision to keep children or others safe that is available for children on other disposals is also available for children on out-of-court disposals and they can be referred to appropriate risk or safeguarding panels if required. However, not all of the cases we inspected evidenced sufficient assessment of potential risk of harm to others, particularly if those risks were not related to the index offence.

The guidance includes an escalation procedure, which determines the actions to take if the panel cannot reach a decision. This is supported by regular quality assurance activity and an external scrutiny panel.

The out-of-court disposal terms of reference detail expectations for enforcement if a child does not comply; the panel has capacity within its standard agenda to review options if needed.

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

There had been a number of changes to out-of-court disposal policies and practice; however, it is not clear whether the board had fully considered the implications of some of these changes.

While practice had been reviewed, it is unclear how much this has been driven by an analysis of data, or how the outcomes of review have been fed into other partnership strategic activity, or how changes to out-of-court disposal practice linked in with the broader Sutton early help strategy.

A number of girls referenced by the YJS during fieldwork were currently open to the service on intensive referral orders for violent offences but were never on out-of-court disposals. It is not clear how these outcomes were reviewed by the partnership and whether these girls should have received other early help, prevention or child exploitation interventions. This is a crucial consideration,

given the recent increase in the number of girls who are open to the service on out-of-court disposals.

It is also unclear how data on ethnicity had been fully used and how it had contributed to the analysis of disproportionality, particularly within the context of Outcome 22, which has been proposed by police colleagues as a potential future outcome.

The YJS prevention coordinator has produced a comprehensive report that sets out the interventions offered and reoffending rates for children who have accessed prevention interventions.

Arrangements are in place to gain children's feedback, but it is not clear how this feedback had been used in recent reviews of policy and practice.

4. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Requires improvement

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 two cases managed by the YJS that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

Strengths

- A comprehensive draft resettlement policy has recently been updated.
- A number of additional policies and service level agreements are in place, which focus on the needs of vulnerable children; these are applied to children in the secure estate and upon release.
- There is a strong focus on improving access to accommodation by engaging with the corporate parenting service and multi-agency placement panel.
- The draft SEN/YJS policy provides assurance that the needs of this group of children will be considered when they are in custody.
- The YJS ETE worker is a good advocate for children in custody.
- Case managers generally consider children's health needs in resettlement planning.
- The YJS has undertaken deep-dive practice audits in an attempt to develop resettlement practice. In addition, it is a member of the London Resettlement ETE group, and this provides a forum for sharing good practice.

Areas for improvement

- Consideration and understanding of victim work within the draft policy needs to be strengthened.
- The partnership needs to evidence positive outcomes for children resulting from evaluation activity of the unique needs of the cohort of children in custody or at risk of custody.
- The delay in arranging accommodation in one inspected case meant that there was a significant delay in confirming the provision of ETE upon release.
- The YJS considers diversity in its approach to resettlement, but it needs to record evidence of impact more consistently; it also needs to improve its use of diversity data to develop provision that is underdeveloped.

- The YJS's understanding of how child exploitation prevention arrangements could be incorporated into resettlement planning was poor in one case inspected.
- The role of feedback from children within reviews of policy and provision needs to be clearer.

We gathered evidence for this standard from documents and meetings and inspected two cases to allow us to illustrate the qualitative standards. 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 draft policy has recently been updated and was due for ratification at the next management board at the time of the inspection. Consultation with partners when developing the policy had been limited but corporate parenting had input and had recently joined the management board to provide additional oversight.

Accommodation is a key structural barrier and the policy sets out how the partnership will address need at the multi-agency placement panel.

Education is another key structural barrier and is referenced in the policy; arrangements for tackling challenges, such as some providers' risk-averse approaches to working with complex children, are less explicit though.

The policy refers to consideration of diversity needs but does not explicitly detail how these will be addressed. It incorporates a strengths-based constructive resettlement ethos.

There are several additional policies and service level agreements in place, detailing arrangements and expectations for information exchange and arrangements for referral, and discussion at various risk management and safety and wellbeing forums.

The policy does not reference victims' needs, although there is a separate victim policy that can be used to ensure that needs are met

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

Agreement has been reached for children's services in Sutton to pay retainers for accommodation to help ensure that hard-to-place children have accommodation to go to, and that this is arranged at least a month before they are released.

Discussions about placements are held at the placement panel and professionals provided examples to the inspectors of children receiving timely accommodation.

However, in one of the cases inspected, accommodation was not identified early enough. This reflects concerns identified in domain 1 about how well the specific needs of YJS children are considered.

The draft SEN/YJS policy provides assurance that the needs of this group of children will be considered when they are in custody, and there is evidence of tenacious input from the YJS ETE worker, both in liaising with the secure estate and in trying to improve outcomes on release. However, the delay in securing accommodation in one inspected case meant that the case worker was unable to source ETE provision:

“It was difficult for provision to be identified without knowing which area he was going to be released to. Planning did not start until two weeks before release and ETE provision had not been identified by the time he was released.”

Data from the cases inspected indicates that health care provision was adequately planned. Additionally, sufficient consideration was given to keeping others safe in both of the cases inspected. An inspector noted:

“When intel was received regarding threats of harm Lenny had made, this was shared with the secure estate in a timely manner. The secure estate were also made clear on the potential risks Lenny poses to YJS staff, in particular his case manager, and appropriate steps were taken to ensure the risks were sufficiently managed, particularly in face-to-face meetings, such as additional staff/security being in attendance.”

Case managers considered how to keep children safe, but the efficacy of Sutton’s approach would benefit from further review, as the role of multi-agency child exploitation prevention arrangements was unclear in one case inspected.

Consideration of diversity is apparent within Sutton’s approach, although evidence of impact needs to be recorded more consistently.

Four out of five staff working with resettlement cases who responded to the staff survey said that they have received relevant training.

Consideration is given to victims’ needs, although there could be improvements to this provision if all staff had a clearer understanding of the victim liaison officer role.

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

Resettlement policy and provision have been discussed at the management board and the current draft policy develops previous arrangements, which had been created solely by an experienced case manager.

There has been some review of the circumstances in which children come into custody, though many of these are children in care and both the YJS and the board need to evidence more explicitly how such children are being diverted from custody. Likewise, the YJS is aware of broader diversity data but it is less clear how this has been used in recent review activity.

The YJS has undertaken deep-dive audits of children who have entered custody, but it is unclear how it has shared learning across the whole of the partnership.

The YJS is a member of the London Resettlement ETE group, and this provides a forum for sharing good practice.

It is not clear what role children have had in the reviews of policy and provision, but in both cases inspected there was good liaison and co-production of plans with the child and their parents or carers.

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.³⁴

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 strategic director of Sutton People Directorate delivered a presentation covering the following areas:

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

During the main fieldwork phase, we conducted 20 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 13 meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.³⁵

Domain two: court disposals

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

³⁴ HM Inspectorate's standards are available here:
<https://www.justiceinspectors.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 12 out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set based on the proportion of out-of-court disposal cases in the YJS.

Resettlement

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining two case files and interviewing case managers in cases where children had received custodial sentences or been released from custodial sentences four to 12 months earlier. This enabled us to gather information to illustrate the impact of resettlement policy and provision on service delivery. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

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 12 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 two cases 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:³⁶

2.1. Assessment (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 attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	100%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	63%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	88%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	88%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	100%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	75%
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?	88%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	88%
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?	88%
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?	75%

³⁶ Some questions do not apply in all cases.

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 past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	100%
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?	75%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	50%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	63%
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?	75%
f) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims?	75%
g) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	75%
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 set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	50%

d) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	63%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
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?	75%
d) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	75%
e) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	75%

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?	63%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	75%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	75%
d) Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	63%
e) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	63%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to services post-supervision?	50%
g) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	75%
h) Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	75%
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?	75%

b) Is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?	75%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	
a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	88%
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?	75%

2. 4. Reviewing (court disposals)

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

a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors linked to desistance?	75%
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?	38%
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?	88%
e) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	75%
f) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to support desistance?	75%

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing?	50%
b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?	63%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	50%

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to risk of harm?	50%
b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	75%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan all of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	50%

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?	75%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	75%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	92%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	83%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	82%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	42%
g) Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	83%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	42%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	92%

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?	75%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	83%

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?	42%
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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%
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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?	67%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	83%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	75%
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?	58%
f) Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?	83%
g) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims?	42%
h) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	67%

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	67%
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?	67%
c) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	42%

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	33%
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b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	50%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	25%
d) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	42%

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?	67%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	75%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	75%
d) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	82%
e) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	91%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	83%

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?

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

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?

a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	33%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	17%