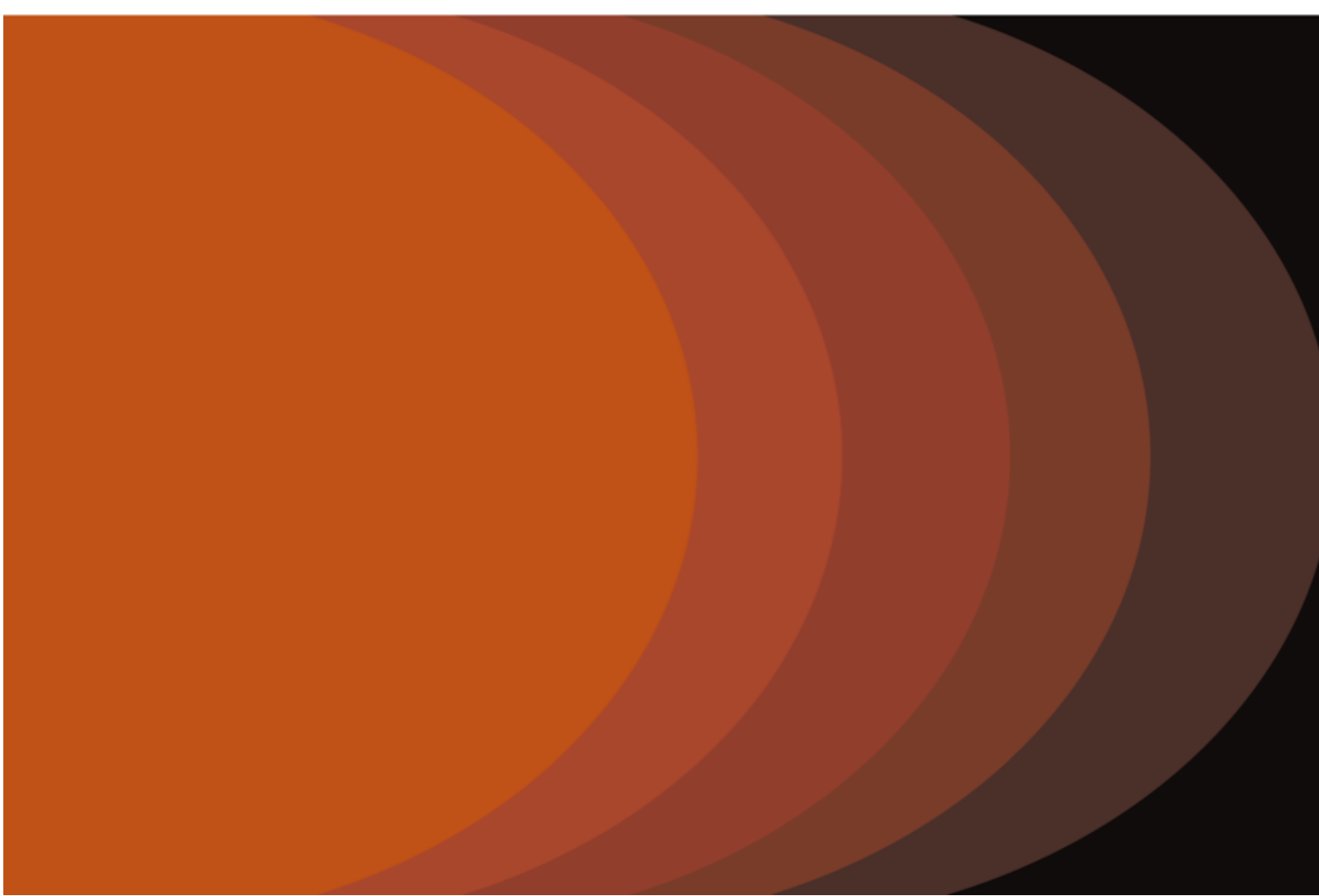




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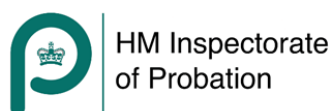
A joint inspection of youth justice services in
Hackney

HM Inspectorate of Probation, May 2023



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HM 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 justice service (YJS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Hackney 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, Hackney YJS was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Good'.

The Safer Young Hackney management board has adopted a powerful anti-racist position to underpin the strategic vision for the YJS. This reflects the concerns of the local community and actively seeks to build confidence and trust in the work of the criminal justice system. The board has developed a good understanding of the disproportionate representation of children at various points of the youth justice system and is working hard to reduce disparities. There is a clear focus on identity and heritage in the work with children, delivered by a staff group that mirrors the local population. The board is supported by a knowledgeable, experienced, and skilled group of managers who help translate strategic intentions into practical and sensitive working arrangements.

We found considerable strengths in the delivery of work coming from the courts. Staff demonstrated a passion for the work with the children, and the feedback we got from the children and their parents or carers during the inspection was a testament to their interest and skill. However, the quality of planning work could be strengthened. We found some examples where risks to the child had been underestimated. Plans lacked the necessary focus or tailoring to support children's safety. We were concerned with a small number of children that contingency planning lacked specificity to their unique circumstances.

For out-of-court disposals, we found high quality assessments and strong delivery of interventions. The use of well-designed tools for the activities associated with assessment and planning yielded a unique picture of the experience of the child and their parents or carers. Practitioners then reflected upon and analysed information and this resulted in highly collaborative assessment work. Children's diverse needs were understood and there was systematic inclusion of key agencies such as health, education, and children's social care.

Resettlement work with children leaving custody was to a high standard. We found the core issues of post-release accommodation, education, training and employment, and health were planned for during the custodial phase of the sentence and arrangements were in place for children released into the community. There were clear partnership processes in place and attention was paid to ensuring children's diverse needs were met.

Our colleague inspectors with police, health, social care and education inspectorate expertise, identified two critical findings. First, that more children could be screened and assessed by the YJS before a decision is made to prosecute the child through the court process. Second, we would advocate the development of a more detailed understanding of children's education engagement, their progress, and the adoption of ambitious achievement targets for every child.

We have provided six recommendations which we believe will support the YJS on its improvement journey.



Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Hackney Youth Justice Service

Fieldwork started February 2023

Score 25/36

Overall rating

Good



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

Good



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

Outstanding



3.2 Planning

Good



3.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding



3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

Good



4. Resettlement¹

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

Good



¹ The rating for resettlement does not influence the overall YOS rating.

Recommendations

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

The Hackney Youth Justice Service should:

1. develop data collection that improves understanding of the health needs of the children working with the YJS and informs the health offer they receive
2. develop data collection that increases understanding of the educational progress of the children, in order to ensure children are appropriately offered, supported to access, and engaged in education
3. engage constructively with the probation service to secure a seconded probation officer arrangement fully capable of managing transition arrangements, for example, with access to probation service case records and assessment system
4. work with police colleagues to make sure that all children are appropriately referred for out-of-court disposals, and that assessment and joint decision-making is consistently available. Options such as deferred decision-making, which can lead to an Outcome 22 resolution, should be considered in appropriate cases
5. improve the quality of planning work and management oversight of this work, to keep children safe
6. reduce the disproportionate representation of Black children subject to custodial sentences by reviewing the current approach to resettlement and applying the learning to inform all future work.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Hackney Youth Justice Service (YJS) over a period of two weeks, week commencing 16 January 2023 and week commencing 06 February 2023. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began between 17 January 2022 and 11 November 2022; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 17 January 2022 and 11 November 2022; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between 17 January 2022 and 11 November 2022. We also conducted 34 interviews with case managers. As this was a joint inspection, we also had the perspectives of a social care inspector, an education inspector, a health inspector, and a police inspector, who all joined the team for the second week of the inspection.

Hackney's communities are very diverse, with a high degree of variation even within small geographical areas: 62 per cent of the 0–19 aged population are from a Black and global majority backgrounds and at least 89 languages are spoken in the borough. 63,655 of the population are aged 0-18 (23 per cent of population); and 44 per cent of children live in poverty; there are 432 children looked after. There are significant housing pressures and social and economic disparities. Local data indicates that children and young people from Black and global majority backgrounds are significantly more likely to be excluded from school than white children.

There is a wide offer of youth provision and early help services delivered by the borough council and voluntary and community sector partners. Indirect and direct therapeutic support in schools is provided through the wellbeing and mental health in schools (WAMHS) service and mental health support teams (MHST) offer from the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS). Speech and language therapy is provided in all schools. This provision extends directly to Hackney YJS.

Fewer than one in 100 Hackney children have informal or formal contact with the YJS each year. The first-time youth offending rate is very low, at 141 per 100,000 of the 10-17 population, April 2021-March 2022. Research is indicating that seven out of 10 children have no further contact with youth justice services after an out of court disposal.

In 2020/2021, the Hackney YJS cohort was 84 per cent Black, Asian or minority ethnic, while the general Hackney population was 62 per cent, and they accounted for 83 per cent of custodial sentences in 2021/2022 (six children). Approximately five per cent of the cohort is female. Research by Middlesex University over five years has shown that, accounting for offence seriousness, there was no statistically significant difference in the ethnicity of those children receiving an out-of-court disposal in Hackney – suggesting that ethnic minority children have equal access to these.

City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership's vision is that children and young people are seen, heard, and helped, and that they are effectively safeguarded, properly supported, and their lives improved by everyone working together. Hackney council has a strong anti-racism commitment, and the children and families service anti-racism position statement has been adopted by the Safer Young Hackney Board.

The approach taken by the YJS, and wider partnership is 'child first', with an emphasis on hearing the 'voice of the child'. The work is delivered by a passionate and dedicated group of staff, and their commitment to children and their families is strongly appreciated by the recipients of the service.

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 20 meetings, including with staff, volunteers, managers, board members, and partnership staff and their managers. Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows.

1.1. Governance and leadership



The governance and leadership of the YOT supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.

Good

Strengths:

- The senior management board (Safer Young Hackney) has representatives of all the statutory partners, at an appropriate level of seniority, and an elected, well-informed lead cabinet member representative. Courts are represented by the chair of the youth court panel. There is also active representation from the voluntary and community sector.
- The board is well-attended and provides an appropriate balance of support and challenge to the work of the youth justice service.
- The chair of the board is forthright, knowledgeable, experienced, and provides clear and energetic direction for the work.
- The strategic vision adopts a 'child-first' and strengths-based approach to the work, and this is set in the context of an anti-racism position statement. There is an unambiguous and assertive commitment to make anti-racism the foundation of practice with children and families.
- The voice of children and their families is to the fore in the Hackney youth justice plan (2022-2025), with future improvements – such as matching work to learning styles and increased access to speech and language and education partners – based on these perspectives.
- Staff and partnership staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and have a shared purpose within the strategic direction set by the board.
- Members of the board align the work of the youth justice service with key strategic work, including the Hackney safeguarding children partnership and community safety partnership.
- The board's work is supported by an able and dynamic management team.
- Risks to the service are systematically and extensively identified, adverse consequences are recognised, and mitigating actions are in place.

Areas for improvement:

- Not all the needs of children are fully understood by the board, particularly their health and education needs, although improvements in both areas are developing.
- Engagement of the probation service is essential for the long-term progress of the YJS and securing a seconded probation officer is a matter for urgent attention (in the context of enduring significant staff shortages in the probation service in Hackney).

1.2. Staff



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

Outstanding

Strengths:

- The workload of case managers, averaging 5.8 cases per practitioner, was at a level where we would expect high-quality work to be delivered. Almost all staff reported that their caseload was manageable.
- The YJS is committed to maintaining reasonable workloads for its staff.
- This is a highly motivated and thoughtful group of staff, with a strong sense of collaboration, working within productive partnerships.
- There is a strong child-first approach to delivery, augmented by staff clarity of the importance of understanding children's diversity.
- The gender and heritage of the staff group broadly reflects the community of Hackney. This is a source of pride amongst staff.
- The YJS has a strong commitment to supporting and developing staff, either through career progression or through optimising the quality of work that they can each deliver.
- Alongside effective staff supervision, there has been an active and supportive response to staff at times of sensitivity.
- There is a strong offer of training available to staff, including online training, face-to-face learning experiences, and opportunities to engage in action learning sets.
- There are career development opportunities through formal, externally validated professional training courses, with time to undertake study.
- There is an evident learning culture, with opportunities to reflect and improve fully utilised through training, team meetings, and individual supervision. This includes embedding learning from local and national reviews.
- Staff effort and success are recognised and rewarded through nomination for external awards.
- Staff at all levels of the YJS indicate that their contributions are valued and that they feel included in the development of the service.
- Staff feel safe at work, including feeling that they can air and address issues of culture in the work environment.

Areas for improvement:

- Access to education, training, and employment support needs to be strengthened for the children working with the YJS on out-of-court disposals.

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

Strengths:

- There is an impressive and extensive performance report containing a wealth of information, including on desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of serious harm.
- There is substantial analysis of offending patterns and understanding of criminal justice outcomes.
- Its exploration of racial disparity means that the YJS is able to demonstrate extensive understanding of the diversity factors evident in children's early years, through education, pre-court, offending patterns, safety and wellbeing, and mental health. This allows for comprehensive understanding of disproportionality at key stages in children's lives.
- There is an extensive offer of co-located health-related services, including a specialist clinical practitioner, speech and language therapy, a sexual health service, a prescribing nurse, mental health staff, substance misuse interventions, and clear multidisciplinary team decision-making to support access to more specialist services.
- The 'virtual school' provides support for the education needs of children subject to post-court disposals and has developed a comprehensive plan for the implementation of relevant recommendations from HM Inspectorate of Probation's thematic review of education, training, and employment services (2022).
- There are many opportunities for successful provision of employment-related interventions, through a network of providers.
- Restorative interventions are offered when all parties consent and the victim perspective is incorporated into all key decision-making processes.

Areas for improvement:

- A health needs analysis needs to be developed and included in the wider data capture and analysis documentation.
- The voice of the child and their families is not evident in the data analysis.
- Monitoring and analysis of children's progress through education need to be developed and refined to assure that statutory entitlement is achieved.
- There is evidence that pupil referral units or alternative providers are used as long-term solutions following school exclusion, when return to mainstream education should be regularly considered. In some cases, these were needs-based decisions related to educational attainment.
- There is insufficient understanding of the impact of multi-agency working in the case of the extra-familial risk panel (focusing on risk to the safety and wellbeing of children outside of the family or the immediate surroundings) or the integrated gangs panel to assess their effectiveness.
- At the time of the inspection, the lack of a seconded probation officer had adverse consequences for children needing to be transferred to adult probation services. (We understand that this situation has been resolved.)

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

Strengths:

- A comprehensive set of policies and practice is available to all staff in the YJS and these are scrutinised for their impact on disproportionality.
- Some policies are prefaced by the Hackney borough council anti-racism statement.
- All policies are readily available to staff and partner agencies.
- There was good evidence that IT systems are used to support staff in their work.
- Information is shared through the use of ChildView and Mosaic case management systems by all staff and partners.
- There is easy and timely access to services for the children across most of the partnership, mostly due to co-location of the partner agencies.
- All staff have mobile phones and laptops and can work in offices or remotely as required.
- There is extensive and well-presented management information to inform the YJS work.
- Responding to the diverse needs of the children is central to information gathering and used to inform all service developments.
- Quality assurance identifies service improvements and informs training and reflective team discussions.
- There is a systematic approach to extracting learning from reviews of critical incidents and from external sources, such as HM Inspectorate of Probation thematic inspections.
- Learning is reviewed at board level and the information is cascaded through seminars and team meetings. Staff were able to confirm the effective communication of the approach.
- The YJS is participating in a longitudinal study of out-of-court work which is evaluating the efficacy of the approach.

Areas for improvement:

- The interior of the main YJS building appears tired and would benefit from effort to improve its suitability, specifically for children with neurodivergent conditions.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

Hackney YJS has a clear, strategic commitment to eliciting, and acting on, the voices of children and their parents or carers. It is making tangible changes because of listening to these voices. These include matching activities to visual and active learning styles, wider engagement with partners (such as speech and language therapists and education providers) and linking children to more sports and social activities.

The YJS contacted, on our behalf, children who had open cases at the time of the inspection, to gain their consent for a text survey. We delivered the survey independently to the 14 children who consented, and seven children replied. The results were predominantly positive from this small sample. We also conducted interviews with six children and three parents or carers during our first week of fieldwork and some of the responses are presented below:

Question: Do you know what the YJS aims to do?

Child's response: *"They are trying to guide me and help to get me on the right path after I got arrested for possession of cannabis."*

Parent's response: *"To help him not to offend again and to think about consequences."*

Question: Have the YJS got the right skills to work with you/your child?

Child's response: *"Staff know what they are doing, they are good at it because they have been doing it for a long time. I feel confident ... and my worker and I trust them. It's taken some time to build the trust because it is something I struggle with. They got round it by being genuine and being with them a long time now has helped me to really get to know them."*

Parent's response: *"The YJS worker is fantastic. He has been with us every step of the way and he has formed a really positive relationship with my son, which is helping him to move forward. He understands my son and knows how to deal with him. My son shuts down very quickly if they approach him the wrong way and his YJS worker understands this - he is consistent and makes my son feel valid. He is a positive role model, and he gets things done. He works with me as well and we are on the same page, giving the same messages to my son. The communication is exceptional. I could not ask for a better YJS worker or a better social worker."*

Question: Have you/your child been able to access the right services and support to help you/your child stay out of trouble?

Child's response: *"They got me into college previously but because of my attendance I got kicked out. Now they are helping me find work. I got a CSCS [construction skills] card in custody. I am working with the YJS worker who is good and is trying to help me find work. I went to a youth club and there was a little talk. They have shown me the consequences of previous behaviour which has helped me to think about what I have been doing and about the future. I went to a knife crime programme and it helped me see the reality."*

Parent's response: *My son has ADHD and through the YJS he was able to access speech and language support. They offered him a music intervention and the [YJS] worker worked well with the school when there were problems."*

Diversity

Hackney YJS has a strong and clear focus on the diverse needs of the children that it works with. The commitment to understanding the needs of children exists throughout the organisation – there is a culture of commitment, engagement, and action.

Characteristics of the work:

- Reflecting the concerns of the community in Hackney, particularly in the light of incidents highlighted, for example, in the review of child Q the YJS has an explicit and assertive anti-racism approach, which guides all aspects of policy and practice.
- The staff group reflect the population in which they work, and this is a matter of pride within the organisation.
- We were impressed by the knowledge and understanding of diversity issues across all levels of staff.
- A shared child-first, trauma-informed approach is at the heart of joint work with partners, in which there is a developing understanding of the trauma associated with children's experience of racism and discrimination.
- Our case inspection yielded good results for post-court work in addressing the diverse needs of the children and for the out-of-court work there were excellent results. The nature of assessment and planning work, that is, the tools used by the prevention and diversion team, permits greater focus on the child as an individual and elicits the child's voice in a powerful way.
- In resettlement work, the child's identity was carefully explored and understood by the case manager and we were impressed by the extent of knowledge of the child's vulnerabilities and strengths.
- Through the work of the speech and language therapists there is an increasing sensitivity to, and understanding of, the neurodivergent needs of the children.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 17 community sentences managed by the YJS.

2.1. Assessment



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

Good

Our rating² for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	76%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	65%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	71%

Assessment work was done well in most cases, leading to a comprehensive and clear view of the child's circumstances and a sound understanding of the likelihood of further offences featuring in their life. In almost all the assessments there was good use of information from other agencies and, where necessary, the engagement with the child was supported by conducting the interviews with a speech and language therapist. In all cases there was evidence that the child or their parents or carers were meaningfully involved in the process, reflecting the strong personal relationships being built by the case manager.

When the child's diversity was addressed, it was done very well in most cases. A strong focus on heritage was complemented by a sound understanding and analysis of the child's wider protected characteristics. In a small number of cases, the issues were identified but not explored further, with the opportunity for meaningful discussion lost. In some instances, we found assessments that were descriptive rather than analytical.

In most cases, there was sufficient analysis of the child's safety and wellbeing. In a small number of cases the inspector found that important features of risk to the child - including maturity, recent bereavement, not being in education, employment, or training (NEET) or participation in drug dealing - had been underestimated in the classification of safety and wellbeing.

Almost all the classifications of risk of causing harm to others were accurate. Key issues of risk to others were identified using police information or past and current behaviour. These were typically balanced against strengths and positive changes in the child's life, with sufficient consideration of the potential impact of further offending on potential victims. In a small number of cases, these factors had not been analysed well enough in the assessment process.

² 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. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

2.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

Our rating³ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	76%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	53%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	65%

Plans focused well on supporting the child's desistance in almost all cases. In most cases, the child's diversity was addressed in planning. There was strong evidence of partnership engagement in desistance work, where there was a network of professionals around the child, and we saw a consistent focus on relationship building and adapting work to the specific needs of the child. In too many of the cases, however, the child's views or those of their parent or carer were not incorporated into the plans for work. We found deficiencies in the accessibility of planning information to the child in a small number of cases – the plans were not adjusted to help the child understand what was expected of them.

Focus on the child's safety and wellbeing was insufficient in too many cases. Where the risks to the child had been underestimated, plans lacked the necessary focus or tailoring to support safety. We were concerned that, with a small number of children, arrangements anticipating things going wrong in the child's life (contingency planning) lacked specificity to the unique circumstances of the child.

Comparing two children with similar contextual safeguarding issues (where risks of exploitation were from peers or adult criminal influences), we found in one case a 'team around the child' and oversight of the case by the 'extra-familial risk panel' to monitor risks to the child's safety from negative peer influences. In the other case, we found insufficient involvement of other agencies in the formulation of planned work to keep the child safe. When issues of safety and wellbeing were addressed in planning, they were done well, but this was not consistent.

In most children's cases, we found a good enough focus on the risk of harm that the child presented to others. There was good evidence of advocacy for the children in securing appropriate services, a strong multi-agency approach, engagement of families in supporting work to manage behaviour, and interventions delivered to focus on the impact of offending on victims and future potential victims. In a small number of cases, planning for the management of the child's risk did not include the multi-agency mechanisms of extra-familial risk meetings or reflective risk review meetings, despite the level of risk being assessed as high.

³ 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. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating⁴ 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?	82%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	76%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	76%

In most cases, the delivery of services focused on the key areas in the child's life which could impact on the likelihood of further offences being committed. There was ample evidence that services were sequenced and timely in relation to the needs of the child. Almost always, the diverse needs of the child were considered in delivering services. The strength of the working relationship between the case manager and the child and their parents or carers was evident in every case.

The work typically demonstrated good partnership working, and the involvement of police, mental health staff, education workers, substance misuse, social care staff, and speech and language therapists was well coordinated and based on the effective sharing of information. There was evidence of the successful use of escalation procedures when barriers to the child's progress were encountered. Where necessary, interventions going beyond the time constraints of statutory supervision were considered and put in place for the child.

In the delivery of services, the focus on the child's safety and wellbeing was maintained well in most cases. Again, when the work was done well, it was coordinated and there was good information sharing between agencies. The safety and wellbeing needs of the child were understood and there was appropriate multi-agency oversight and active monitoring of the child's circumstances.

Risk of causing harm to others was addressed appropriately in most cases. When this is done well, the support of other agencies is clear and where evident risks emerged, such as involvement in local criminal groups (gangs), interventions are tailored to develop the child's understanding of risky behaviour, through weapons awareness or consideration of the consequences of offending behaviour. The work is grounded on the case manager liaising with police colleagues and the active monitoring of the context in which the child is living, for example, the impact of peers and other negative influences on their behaviour. The quality of the working relationship was central to the effective management of the child's risk of causing harm to others.

⁴ 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. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

2.4. Reviewing



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

Good

Our rating⁵ for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	76%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	76%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	71%

There was strong evidence that, in relation to desistance, active review of the work was ingrained in the practice of case managers. We frequently identified the involvement of the speech and language therapist as being key to adapting the work with the child. In one case, for example, we found that the adaption of the work in the light of a recently diagnosed ADHD condition meant that the case manager was instrumental in successfully navigating the child through education from school to college. There were many reviewing processes in place and these included remand and rescue meetings, a risk of reoffending panel, emotional coaching opportunities (reflective discussions with clinical specialists to explore the impact of the work with individual practitioners), and management discussions. In a small number of cases, reviews of progress, albeit formally completed, did not reflect the changing circumstances of the child's life.

In relation to safety and wellbeing, we found reviewing practice that was sensitive to threats in the child's life in most cases. A range of reviewing mechanisms, including formal multi-agency meetings, meant that significant changes were identified and responses to changed circumstances included providing additional support to parents, increasing the level of contact with the child, use of outreach approaches to maintain contact, and engaging with education to reduce the child's unstructured time.

As with reviews of safety and wellbeing, there was a formal written record of review in almost all cases where risk of harm to others was relevant to the child's circumstances. When work was adjusted to changes in risk factors, it was done well. For example, in one instance the case manager undertook work aimed at reducing the child's likelihood of retaliating to provocation, and restorative approaches were used to mediate the tensions between the child and the subject of hostilities. There were, however, a small number of cases in which the child's risks to others were not managed through information exchange between the relevant agencies. In particular, when further offending occurred this did not always lead to appropriate review of the risk of harm and associated management arrangements.

⁵ 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. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 18 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of five youth conditional cautions, seven youth cautions and six community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in 16 cases.

3.1. Assessment



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁶ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	89%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	89%

All assessment work for out-of-court disposals was undertaken using a bespoke assessment tool (designed by Safer Young Hackney staff) and was delivered by members of the prevention and diversion team in the YJS. The tool is explicitly intended to capture the voice of the child and their parents or carers in answering key assessment questions, and the responses are reflected upon and analysed by the assessing practitioner. We found the children were participating in highly collaborative assessment work with the systematic inclusion of key agencies such as health, education, and social care, and the victim's perspective.

The assessments were holistic and diversity needs, including heritage and identity, were considered. In our inspection, we found that in almost all cases diversity needs were sufficiently analysed. In one case the inspector noted:

"It is evident that the YJS has made a genuine attempt to understand the pathways into this child's offending behaviour and consider her family and social context."

The assessment tool ensures the routine gathering of information in respect of the child's safety and wellbeing, and we found this area of work to be sufficient in most cases (16 out of 18).

For most of the children there was an appropriate identification of issues pertaining to risk of harm, with appropriate responsibilities and interventions identified. Nonetheless, in two of the cases, more work was needed to address the risks the child presented. The areas of concern were in relation to the risks a child may present to their immediate family members or individuals in with whom there may be ongoing conflict.

⁶ 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. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

3.2. Planning



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

Good

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

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	94%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	72%

To support the assessment tool, the YJS used a complementary planning tool. We found that in all the children's cases, the case manager addressed the issues necessary to support the child's desistance from further offending. Planning provides a balance between risk and safety work with an emphasis on promoting strengths and constructive activity based on the child's interests. In the plans, we saw strong and active joint working with education, children's social care, speech and language therapists, substance misuse staff, and victims' and restorative justice staff. There was a clear sense that plans were co-created with partner agencies and central to this, was the contribution of the child and their parents or carers.

The documentation used for planning is clear and accessible. Actions set in planning documents are also clear and are set within appropriate time boundaries. A great deal of care was taken to explore the child's heritage and the documentation used ensures that it, and other diverse characteristics, are considered in every case. In our inspection sample this was done sufficiently in all but one of the children's cases.

Planning for the safety and wellbeing of children was sufficient in almost all the cases where this was considered necessary. In one case, illustrative of the high standards of work we saw, the inspector noted:

"A separate action plan is completed which breaks down the initial plan further providing clear actions of how the child's safety is to be addressed. Intervention focuses on mitigating concerns, for instance safety planning where alternative (rather than carrying a knife) options and mapping are explored and completed with the child. Contingency planning is detailed and explores each potential adverse outcome, what could increase risks, and appropriate actions to complete should this occur."

Where planning for risk of harm to others was required (half of the cases inspected had a medium risk classification), almost all sufficiently promoted the safety of other people and involved other agencies appropriately. Some development of consistent contingency planning is necessary. When done well, this was to an exemplary standard, but in five out of 12 relevant cases this was not as detailed as it could be, for example, in addressing the child's discriminatory views, or through planning for increased association with pro-criminal associates.

⁷ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁸ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	100%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	78% ⁹
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	83%

The focus on children's desistance was unwavering and delivered effectively in all the children's cases we inspected. The relationship building of the case managers reflected their commitment, skill, and tenacity. In every aspect of a case that we considered, the YJS delivered effective services. These were often children with complicated lives and a range of needs. Amid many complex cases, this is well illustrated by the following example:

"There is evident focus on engaging this child and his carer, balanced against appropriate action in response to missed sessions. The case manager described a focus on identity and beliefs and the use of positive reinforcement. Sessions were scheduled to avoid overwhelming the child and his carer and to secure engagement. YJS sessions were rearranged to allow for special guardianship order and psychological assessment work to take priority. The YJS increased the frequency of service delivery when the child's youth worker was absent from work so that engagement was maintained. Suitable locations for service delivery were considered and a variety of methods used, to include virtual sessions and scenario-based intervention."

Promotion of the child's safety and wellbeing was sufficient in most of the cases and there was clear evidence of working in partnership with other agencies. This included the involvement of children's social care, substance misuse services, schools, and speech and language therapists when safety and wellbeing concerns had been identified.

In most cases where risk of harm to others was identified, the implementation and delivery of services maintained effective management of the issues. We saw excellent examples of coordinated working translating into practical, supportive work, such as escorting a child to school and picking him up at the end of the day to minimise immediate risks to himself or others.

⁸ 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. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

⁹ Professional discretion was applied in this standard to reflect the overall quality of work, thus achieving an 'Outstanding' rating.

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.

Good

We also inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews. Our key findings were as follows:

Strengths:

- All relevant documentation is in place to support the process.
- There are clear timescales set for each stage of the process.
- There are bespoke assessment and planning tools which assure the focus on the child's diversity, their safety and wellbeing, and the risk of harm they may present to others.
- The voice of the child and their parent or carer is clear and strong in assessment and planning work.
- The multi-agency panel (joint decision-making panel) includes YJS police, the prevention and diversion team leader, the victim and restorative justice worker, the case manager, the specialist clinical practitioner, the speech and language therapist, and any other professional involved in the child's life.
- At all points in the scheme, youth justice practitioners and partnership staff provide access to the entire range of services that can be made available to children.
- The scheme is subject to independent academic evaluation, with early indications that this is a promising area of practice.
- Robust monitoring arrangements provide a comprehensive, data-based analysis of the scheme leading to continuous improvements (including the development of bespoke assessment and planning tools).
- There is an active external scrutiny panel which provides independent review of a sample of cases and gives feedback on the assessed appropriateness of the decisions taken.

Areas for improvement:

- All children arrested where prosecution is being considered, other than for the most serious offences or first community resolutions, should be referred to the YJS out-of-court disposal panel directly in order to secure effective diversion, assessment and panel decision-making.
- Options such as deferred decision-making, which can lead to an Outcome 22 resolution, could be considered in appropriate cases.

4.1. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Good

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

Strengths:

- In a collaborative effort, Hackney YJS is part of the London Resettlement Partnership and London Accommodation Pathfinder.
- There is an extensive data-sharing agreement to allow the London Resettlement Partnership to be monitored and delivered.
- The Hackney YJS resettlement standards contain a very clear offer about the range of services available to children receiving a custodial sentence.
- In practice we found that the core issues of accommodation, education, training and employment, and health were planned for during the custodial phase of the sentence and arrangements were in place for children subsequently released.
- The work was undertaken by case managers who took the time to maintain appropriate levels of contact with the child and their parents or carers, where this was possible.
- When appropriate to the issues the child presented, there were clear multi-agency arrangements to manage risks to the child's safety and wellbeing or risk of harm presented to others.
- Victims' concerns were identified and the needs of victims were addressed in all the relevant inspected cases.
- The breadth of diversity needs was considered and planned for appropriately in all cases.

Areas for improvement:

- The approach to resettlement needs to be fully reviewed and evaluated. It is evident that Black children are over-represented in the group that experiences custodial sentencing. Careful review of the pathway to a custodial sentence, through examination of children's histories and involvement in criminal justice processes, can be used to locate the optimum and earliest point at which intervention will be effective.

Further information

The following can be found on our website:

- [inspection data, including methodology and contextual facts about the YJS](#)
- [a glossary of terms used in this report.](#)