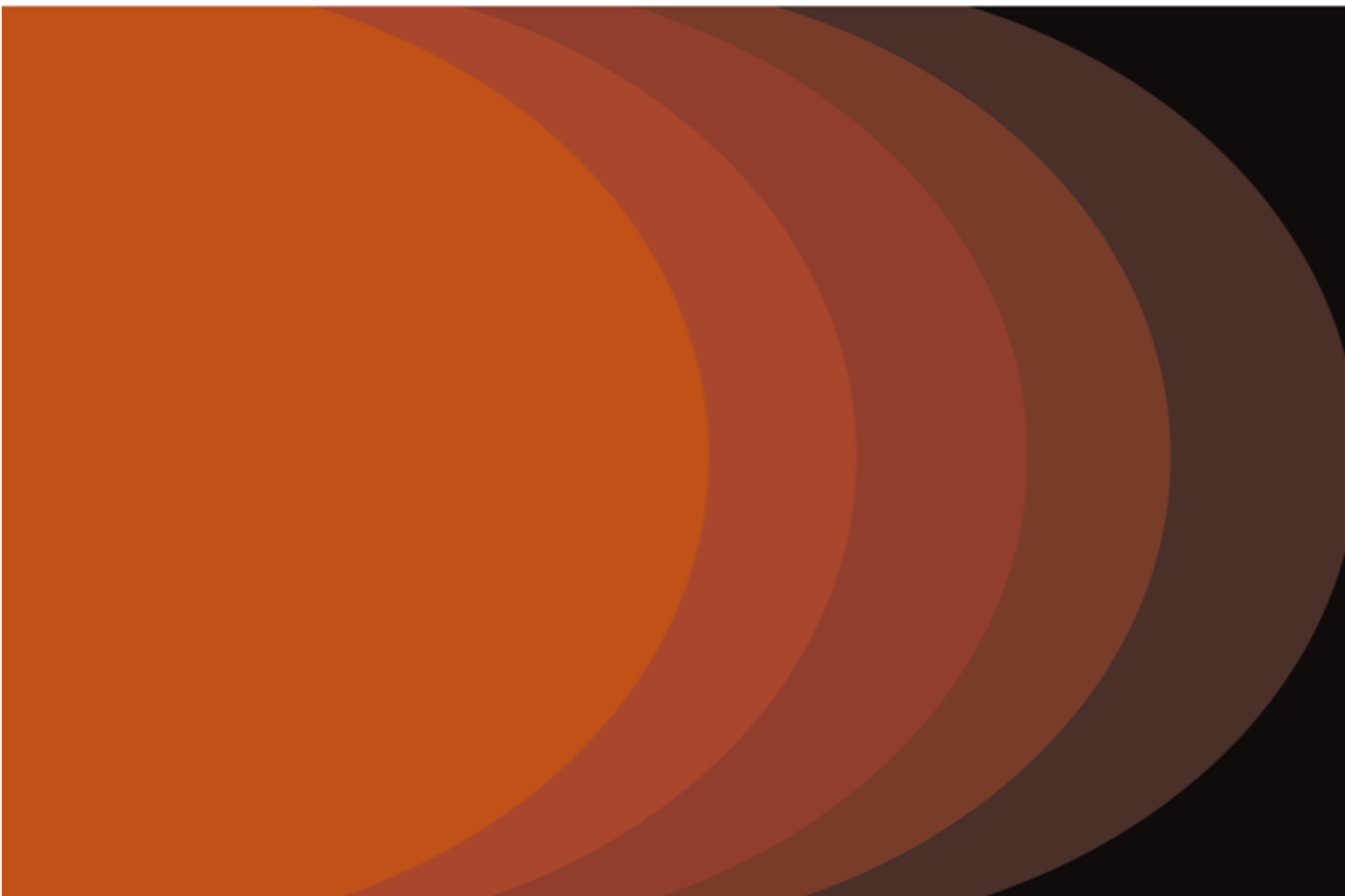
HM Inspectorate of Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in

Stockport

HM Inspectorate of Probation, November 2022



Contents

Acknowledgements

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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

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 Stockport 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, Stockport YJS was rated as 'Requires improvement'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Good'.

There have been changes in membership of the partnership board and new members have the necessary strategic knowledge of their agencies to make a constructive contribution to the board. However, members need to better understand their required roles as board members to enable them to be proactive in holding each other to account. The board also needs to have a clear plan for how the service will develop children's participation going forward.

Stockport's YJS partnership working was a strength. Health provision was of a good standard and every YJS child receives a health screening. However, the inspection found that the framework for managing children at risk of exploitation could more effectively utilise the skills and expertise of YJS practitioners at an earlier stage. In addition, too many YJS children are excluded from school. The partnership needs to ensure all children can access education provision.

The quality of statutory court work needs to be improved. We found inconsistencies across assessment, planning, and intervention and delivery. This was particularly in relation to supporting children's safety and wellbeing. Although multi-agency information was shared with case managers, it was not evident that this was used consistently to inform and support safety assessments for children. Assessments lacked analysis and case manages did not always consider the external measures that could be put in place to support the safety of children.

Out-of-court disposal work was stronger. Planning to address children's safety and wellbeing was supported by multi-agency work with the child exploitation team (Aspire) and children's social care. There was good coordination with the YJS health and wellbeing team to provide screenings and direct interventions when needed.

The YJS provides diversion and prevention activities through various programmes and projects and the ethos of effective diversion is positive. However, we were concerned that the expansion of the service has impacted upon the capacity to provide quality management oversight. Managers were required to balance leadership of specialist areas and attendance at partnership meetings with managing the day-to-day operations of the YJS. The service is co-located with other teams and partners and this helps build professional relationships. The inspection found that staff do all they can to encourage good engagement and compliance from the child.

Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Stockport Youth Justice Service Fieldwork started July 2022		**Score**	**18/36**
Overall rating		**Requires improvement**	
1.	**Organisational delivery**		
1.1	Governance and leadership	**Good**	
1.2	Staff	**Requires improvement**	
1.3	Partnerships and services	**Good**	
1.4	Information and facilities	**Good**	
2.	**Court disposals**		
2.1	Assessment	**Requires improvement**	
2.2	Planning	**Requires improvement**	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	**Requires improvement**	
2.4	Reviewing	**Requires improvement**	
3.	**Out-of-court disposals**		
3.1	Assessment	**Requires improvement**	
3.2	Planning	**Good**	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	**Good**	
3.4	Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	**Good**	
4.	**Resettlement**[1]		
4.1	Resettlement policy and provision	**Good**	

[1] The rating for resettlement does not influence the overall YJS rating.

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

The chair of the YJS partnership board should:

1. make sure that board members fully understand their roles and responsibilities and are proactive in holding each agency to account, to ensure YJS resources effectively meet the specific needs of YJS children.

The YJS partnership board should:

2. review the capacity in the management structure to ensure effective management oversight is provided to all YJS cases.
3. ensure that current plans and discussions translate into effective arrangements to capture the views of children and families, so that their participation impacts on service delivery going forward.
4. ensure pathways are in place to facilitate YJS practitioners contributing at the earliest opportunity to the assessment and safety planning of children at risk of exploitation.
5. make sure that all YJS children receive their legal entitlement to education provision and proactive work is undertaken to reduce school exclusions.
6. work with the police to implement effective information sharing which ensures the YJS is routinely informed of all children who receive a police sanction. This is to maximise all opportunities of working with children and their families at the earliest stage.

The YJS head of service should:

7. improve the quality of assessment, planning, implementation and delivery and review of post court work, which effectively utilises information and intelligence from other agencies and informs risk analysis, safety planning and effective interventions.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Stockport Youth Justice Service (YJS) over a period of a week, beginning 11 July 2022. We inspected cases for which the sentence or licence began between 12 July 2021 and 06 May 2022; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 12 July 2021 and 06 May 2022; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between12 July 2021 and 06 May 2022. We also conducted 31 interviews with case managers.

Stockport is in Greater Manchester and is seven miles southeast of Manchester city centre. It is a polarised borough with communities falling into the 10 per cent most and least deprived areas nationally. The 2022 Spring school census indicated 149 different languages are spoken throughout Stockport's school age population.

The YJS sits within the integrated 'Stockport Family' Children's Services directorate of Stockport Council. The service has a well-embedded prevention offer, which includes early intervention (voluntary), and a targeted youth support service, offering a range of school-based programmes, community and sporting activities, a dedicated detached youth work programme, as well as the YJS and the serious violence reduction programme. Greater Manchester experienced more lockdown periods than many other areas and Stockport's YJS response to ensuring that service delivery was not affected during the covid pandemic was commendable.

Performance data for Stockport YJS show that for the period January 2021 to December 2021 the number of first-time entrants to the criminal justice system for Stockport was lower than the average for England and Wales and has been decreasing for the last two quarters. For the July 2019 to June 2020 cohort, (the most recent for which re-offending data is available) the proportion of children who reoffended within 12 months and the frequency with which they did so was lower than the national average for England and Wales.

Stockport is one of the 10 Greater Manchester local authorities and works collaboratively with the other Greater Manchester youth justice services. This enables comparisons, benchmarking and the identification of good practice across the region.

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 14 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 chair of the board has been in the role for a number of years, is knowledgeable about youth justice issues and holds members to account for their actions.
- New members to the board receive an induction pack and meet the YJS head of service.
- Although there have been recent changes in the membership of the board, the people who have joined have the strategic knowledge of their agencies' work to provide constructive contributions to the business of the board.
- The YJS has a youth justice plan in place for 2021/2022. The board and partners were consulting on the draft plan for 2022/2023.
- The YJ plan outlines the vision for the YJS and is reviewed on a regular basis, to ensure that the service's aims and objectives are being progressed.
- Issues impacting on youth offending are prominent on the agendas of other key strategic groups in Stockport and across Greater Manchester.
- The YJS has been successful in obtaining funding from various streams.
- The board has access to the locally developed Tableau dashboard which captures 'live' data across a number of case management systems and can report on up-to-date performance.
- The board has also been presented with other reports including a serious violence review, an analysis of children released under investigation and work with victims.
- The board actively oversees a comprehensive diversity and disproportionality policy, which is supported by a detailed action plan.

Areas for improvement:

- New board members need to understand their roles and responsibilities, and develop their knowledge of the specific needs of children known to the YJS.
- Board members should be proactive in holding each agency to account, as, disappointingly, they could provide no examples of how they challenged each other about the resources that are provided to the service.

- Pre March 2022, the YJS commissioned an independent organisation, to develop a participation programme for children. At the time of the inspection, this programme had ceased and although plans and discussions were underway for how to continue this going forwards, there was no current arrangement in place to enable the board to gather and hear the views of children going forward.

1.2. Staff

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

Strengths:

- The service benefits from a stable management team and an experienced workforce. It has good staff retention rates and low levels of sickness'.
- Allocation of cases considers which staff have previously been involved with the family, so that the consistency of case managers is prioritised.
- Staff do all they can to encourage good engagement and compliance from the child. Staff and managers are child centred and know their children well.
- Staff receive regular monthly supervision and an annual appraisal, and reported feeling supported both by their managers and their peers.
- There is a YJS learning and development framework in place which is supported by a comprehensive training matrix tracker.
- Staff have lead areas of responsibility to help their development and reported they feel encouraged to take up training opportunities.
- The YJS encourages staff development actively through offering management opportunities within the service and supporting staff to complete external qualifications.
- Staff are consulted at practice meetings about any new policy or guidance that is to be reviewed or introduced.
- Of the 31 staff members who answered the staff survey question, 21 said that exceptional work is always recognised.

Areas for improvement:

- There are capacity issues within the structure as managers try to balance leading in specialist areas and representing the service at partnership meetings with staff supervision and day-to-day operational oversight of their teams.
- Case managers had an average of 15 cases each at the time of the inspection which is high compared to many other YOTs recently inspected.
- Management capacity appears widely spread across responsibilities and caseloads, and there was a lack of effective management oversight in some of the cases inspected.
- Relatively high caseloads may also explain why we found some examples of poor-quality case management work in the inspected cases.

- More could be done with service volunteers to develop their skills and integrate them into the team.
- The inspectors found that although staff had received training relevant to their role, they did not always apply it to their practice.

1.3. Partnerships and services

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

Strengths:

- The Tableau dashboard is used across the partnership to monitor performance. The YJS also produces a 'scorecard' which allows oversight for disproportionately represented groups.
- Stockport is included in the data produced by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and this enables comparisons, benchmarking and the identification of good practice across the region.
- A YJS risk management review is convened if a child is assessed as presenting a high risk of reoffending, high risk for their own safety and wellbeing and/or high risk of harm to others.
- The YJS has a directory of interventions and a wide range of preventative and early help provision that is part of the service.
- The approachability and commitment of the victim officer is reflected in the positive victim engagement figures that they produce.
- Feedback from the court states that YJS staff are always well informed, and their reports are child focused and bespoke to the individual child.
- Health provision to the YJS is of a good standard and every YJS child receives a health screening. Staff and children have access to a psychologist, a mental health practitioner, a school nurse, a parenting nurse, a speech and language therapist and a substance misuse link worker.
- Career advisers are present in all secondary schools, and learning mentors are used to engage and motivate YJS children, and support transition.
- YJS staff have a clear understanding of the referral process for children's social care interventions if they are concerned about familial harm.
- Transition arrangements with the Probation Service are good, with a dedicated 18–25-year-old probation team hub working closely with YJS staff.

Areas for improvement:

- For children at risk of, or experiencing, criminal exploitation, YJS managers will attend multi-agency panels which share information and monitor child exploitation and antisocial behaviour. However, when practitioners are concerned about an individual child there is no specific meeting that they attend where their worries can be discussed and intelligence from other agencies can be shared to help them formulate both their assessment and their plan for the child.

- The number of YJS children who are excluded from schools is high and although the partnership is sighted on this, more needs to be done to ensure that children receive appropriate education provision, and the number of exclusions reduces.
- The review of the police secondment arrangements needs to be progressed and completed to ensure effective arrangements are in place.
- Although police intelligence is shared with case managers, it was not evident that this is used to inform risk assessments for children.

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 full range of policies and guidance are in place, which are reviewed annually and are accessible to staff.
- Information-sharing protocols are evident and understood across the partnership.
- There is an escalation process for all partners, to help in challenging other agencies, and staff feel supported by managers in raising concerns.
- The YJS is co-located with other teams and partners in a town centre office. Staff felt that the co-location of agencies helps to build professional relationships and enables a better understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities.
- The office is accessible to children and families, and the building is child friendly and is a safe space for staff from all the different agencies.
- The YJS has a quality assurance framework and policy in place which includes deep-dive audits of case work, national standards self-assessment, feedback from victims and feedback from children and families.
- The YJS is part of the regular 'practice weeks', whereby all children's services are audited by managers from other services, with a thematic area as its focus.
- The partnership board and safeguarding board completed a serious youth violence learning review which looked in detail at three cases from a multi-agency perspective.
- There is evidence that the YJS reviews cases when serious incidents occur and learns from the outcomes of inspections of other areas and thematic inspections in order to improve practice.

Areas for improvement:

- The YJS has a comprehensive quality assurance framework and policy in place and so it was disappointing to note that effective management oversight was not consistently applied in the inspected cases.
- The YJS captures feedback from children and families in various ways, however the commissioned contract for children's participation had ceased. Plans and discussions were underway on how this would be achieved moving forward, but no clear arrangements were in place at the time of the inspection.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

Up until March 2022, the YJS commissioned Coram Voice, an independent organisation, to develop a participation programme for children. In July 2021 the partnership board was presented with the annual Coram Voice Report for 2020 – 2021 which outlined the work that had been done to improve the service following the feedback from children and families. It highlighted the feedback from 118 children who had been contacted and asked their opinion about their time with the YJS. It also included an update on the children's participation panel, which unfortunately had not taken place, although feedback had been gathered from smaller groups of children on a more informal basis. At the time of the inspection the commissioning of this service had ceased. Although the YJS captures feedback from children and families in other ways – for example, through self-assessments and post-intervention feedback. Although plans and discussions had taken place regarding ongoing arrangements, at the time of inspection, there were no clear arrangements in place for capturing the views of children and families now that the commissioned contract has ended.

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 21 children who consented, and 11 children replied. When asked how they rated the service they had received from the YJS eight responded, with a score of 10 out 10, with one child saying:

> *"My worker is very helpful and has supported me with many things over the past few months, he is also a great guy and I trust him a lot."*

Six people responded with a score of 10 out of 10 for how much the YJS had helped either themselves or (if they were a parent) their child stay out of trouble, and one parent said:

> *"They have provided support and training [that] no other service provides and are non-judgmental and approachable, making it easy to speak to them about any issues."*

Inspectors also spoke to one child and two parents. They all felt that their YJS workers have the right skills to do the work, and said that they have been able to access the right services and support to help them stay out of trouble.

One child, talking about their case manager, said:

> *"They're approachable, kind, they listen and are happy to help with anything."*

When asked if their YJS worker has the right skills, one parent said:

> *"They've been amazing. My child has additional needs, but they adapt to these so he can understand, and they deliver on a level he can tolerate."*

Diversity

The YJS management board has a focus on addressing diversity and disproportionality. It has developed a policy and an action plan which is reviewed at meetings regularly. Monitoring has identified that, based on published data available for the 10–17-year age range, the children known to the service are generally of comparable age and gender to those in Greater Manchester and the North West. However, ethnicity varies, with vastly different ethnic profiles for each Greater Manchester authority.

The YJS has created a number of training webinars on diversity and staff have completed the YJS 'unconscious bias' training. After the tragic death of George Floyd, senior leaders in the local authority sent emails advising staff how they could access emotional support, and a forum was set up for informal chats. In the YJS, the health and wellbeing team offered support for staff, and people shared their reaction and experiences on the WhatsApp group. Staff reported that they feel able to talk about the situation more and share experiences with each other. Recognising the impact of this event on children, the YJS developed reparation packs around racism, identity and sexuality and delivered workshops online which included sessions on hate crime. Overall, staff feel that this has changed the way they work with children, as they now feel more confident in asking questions and trying to engage children in conversations about their heritage, diversity and 'lived experience'.

In the locality the YJS can access 'Ebony and Ivory Community Organisation' which supports and advocates on behalf of children (aged five to 18 years) and their families especially those from African and Caribbean descent. Its principal aim is to encourage and enable cross-cultural integration among children. Sessions are open to black and minority ethnic families who alongside support are offered meals comprising, for example, traditional Caribbean food.

The YJS also has access to a mosque for reparation projects which is welcoming to all children. The service is currently looking for provision for transgender children, and developing work with schools and in the community, to ensure these children's needs are met.

Stockport has a large number of private residential providers operating children's care homes, and partners have recognised that staff need to understand the specific needs of care experienced children. The substance misuse service provides mentors for those children who are in care or have experienced care, and in the education department, staff are provided with additional training to get a better understand of the needs of YJS children generally. The YJS has strong links with residential homes and good relationships with the care staff working there.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 11 community sentences managed by the YOS.

2.1. Assessment

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

Our rating[2] for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	64%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	**45%**[3]
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	64%

The inspection found that, overall, case managers did not sufficiently use the assessment document to help them to structure their analysis of children's risk of reoffending, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others. In assessing desistance, case managers showed some understanding of the trauma that children had experienced and the impact of these on their behaviour and engagement. Although assessments collated information from other agencies, they lacked analysis and the information was not used to understand children's factors for and against desistance. Children's diversity needs were explored and assessments provided a sufficient understanding of the child, their family and their personal circumstances. The views of parents were sought, and case managers focused on children's strengths, and levels of maturity.

Professional discretion was applied to the assessments of children's safety and wellbeing. Cases were limited in their identification of the potential risks to children's safety and wellbeing. Information again lacked analysis and case manages did not always consider the external factors that could be put in place to support the safety of children. Overall, however, the ratings panel concluded that work in the main to keep the child safe was requiring improvement rather than inadequate.

In assessing children's risk of harm to others information from other agencies was used to inform the assessment, and this included access to children's social care records. However, there was limited evidence that information from the police was used to help analyse the internal and external controls, and interventions needed to manage the risks that children presented to others. Case managers did not consider consistently who was at risk, and the nature of that risk.

[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 in the data annexe.

[3] Professional discretion was applied at the ratings panel to move this rating from 'inadequate' to 'Requires improvement'

2.2. Planning

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

Our rating[4] for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	73%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	**55%**
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	**55%**

Planning to support the children's desistance was a stronger area of practice. Case managers considered the diverse needs of children and could plan access to the appropriate services. Child-friendly plans were used to engage children, and the views of parents or carers were taken into consideration. Planning was linked to the child's assessed desistance factors and took account of their level of motivation to engage. Due to the wishes of victims not being taken into account in some assessments; planning did not consider their needs in most of the relevant cases and this limited the opportunity for restorative justice.

Planning to keep children safe was sufficient in just over half of the cases inspected. Other agencies were involved in the planning process, which built on existing relationships with other professionals, including social workers and substance misuse practitioners. Case managers planned for the interventions that were needed to support children and manage the risk to their safety and wellbeing. However, contingency planning to address escalating concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing were not adequately detailed in most cases. The contingency arrangements were too generic and not specific to the child and did not outline the controls that would be required to keep the child safe.

Planning did not promote the safety of other people in nearly half of the cases, and it was not clear how it addressed the safety of specific victims. Where there were concerns that the child's risk to others was increasing, contingency planning was not evident in most cases. Although concerns around the child's risk of harm to others had been identified as part of the assessment, the intended interventions to manage this were not clearly evident or outlined within the plan. Case managers had used information from other agencies, and the YJS risk management review meeting and other multiagency meetings, where appropriate, to help inform the planning process.

[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 in the data annexe.

2.3. Implementation and delivery

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

Our rating[5] 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?	73%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	**64%**
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	73%

The delivery of services and interventions was a stronger area of practice. To help support children's desistance, the interventions delivered built on their interests, and case managers prioritised involving children and were creative in the interventions they delivered. If children's motivation began to lessen, there was a quick response to engage them in something different. Most cases demonstrated the importance that case managers gave to considering children's diverse needs, and developing positive relationships with them and their parents or carers. However, the interventions identified in the plan to support the child's desistance were not delivered consistently as part of the child's interventions.

Inspectors noted case managers were involved in multiagency discussions and meetings. There was evidence of joint working with children's social care services and the Aspire team, as well as with substance misuse workers and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Children also had access to a mentor who engaged children based on their interests, - for example music sessions in a recording studio. However, by not identifying interventions that were required to manage the child's safety and wellbeing at the planning stage, there were gaps in the services delivered.

In general, there was good multi-agency co-ordination to monitor the risks that some of the children posed to others. There were positive examples of case managers working with other agencies to manage children's risks and ensure that all professionals were updated with progress. However, there were gaps in the services delivered to address these risks, and in some cases, interventions had not been delivered and opportunities for work with victims had been missed.

[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 in the data annexe.

2.4. Reviewing

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

Our rating[6] for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	73%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	91%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	**55%**

Reviews were completed at key points in the order, and in many cases we saw the ongoing reviewing of desistance factors as the order progressed. It was pleasing that case managers continued to build on children's strengths, responding to their diversity needs and considered the changes in their personal circumstances. There was evidence that the focus of interventions changed if needed, although not all cases adjusted the child's ongoing plan when necessary. The reviews considered children's motivation appropriately as the order progressed, although, disappointingly, the child and their parents or carers were not involved consistently in the reviewing process.

Reviewing of the safety and wellbeing of children was the strongest area of practice for the inspected cases. Reviews detailed the changes in children's circumstances and case managers responded accordingly. There were examples of professional discussions and meetings with children's social care services, with one case being escalated to ensure a more timely response. Case managers also used the risk management review meeting to help them to manage any changing concerns or escalations in the risk to children's safety and wellbeing. In most cases this resulted in adjustments to the ongoing plan of work with children, which reflected the changing circumstances.

However, reviews of the safety of other people needed improvement, as although information was included from other agencies, this was not used effectively in too many cases. The reviews did not lead consistently to the necessary changes in the interventions being delivered and, in some cases, work to manage the risk of harm to others remained ineffectively addressed or managed. In too many cases, the plans for children had not been updated in line with the reviewing process.

[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 in the data annexe.

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 17 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of three youth conditional cautions, four youth cautions, and 10 community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in 17 cases.

3.1. Assessment

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

Our rating[7] for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	59%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	**47%**[8]
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	53%

The YJS had developed its own screening and pre-court assessment tools. However, these were not always used to good effect to capture and analyse the information required to effectively assess children's risks and needs. To help identify children's desistance factors case managers had accessed a range of sources from partner agencies to inform their assessment. They also considered any diversity issues and focused on children's strengths and their motivation to change. Case managers involved children and their parents or carers in the assessment, and in most cases the needs and wishes of victims had been considered. However, most cases did not offer a sufficient analysis of children's attitudes towards, or motivations for, their offending.

Professional discretion was applied to the assessments of children's safety and wellbeing. Over half the cases did not identify or analyse sufficiently the potential risks to children's safety and wellbeing. Information from other agencies was used to inform the assessment, but in nearly half of the cases there was not a clear written record of children's wellbeing or how to keep them safe. Overall, however, the ratings panel concluded that work in the main to keep the child safe was requiring improvement rather than inadequate.

In the majority of cases, the risks to others were not identified, or analysed, and assessments did not record clearly who was at risk, or the nature of that risk. A number of cases did not assess the risk to other people, or effectively identify potential victims. Inspectors found that there was limited assessment of how to keep other people safe.

[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 in the data annexe.

[8] Professional discretion was applied at the ratings panel increasing this rating from 'Inadequate' to 'Requires Improvement'.

3.2. Planning

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

Our rating[9] for planning is based on the following key questions:

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

Planning was a stronger area of practice. In planning to support children's desistance, case manager's set out the appropriate programme of activity. They took account of children's diversity needs, and, where appropriate, ensured the plan was sensitive to the child's learning disability. They also considered the work of other agencies and how plans could be aligned so that there was ongoing provision available in the community when the out-of-court disposal ended. Case managers ensured that parents or carers were included in the plans, and that they reflected the wishes and needs of victims. As some of the interventions were voluntary, when case managers were putting plans in place, they had concentrated in nearly all cases on children's motivation, focusing on their maturity, strengths and personal circumstances.

Planning to address children's safety and wellbeing was supported by multi-agency work with the Aspire team and children's social care services. Plans addressed concerns such as substance misuse, sexually harmful behaviour and potential child exploitation. There was good coordination and planning with the YJS health and wellbeing team to provide screenings, assessments and direct interventions when needed. Planning also linked well to the risk management reviews for the high-risk cases. However, contingency planning to address escalating concerns about a children's safety and wellbeing were not adequately detailed in most cases.

Planning to keep other people safe was considered by case managers in nearly all cases. Case managers had used information from other agencies and considered the safety of specific and potential victims to help inform the planning process. If concerns around the child's risk of harm to others had been identified as part of the assessment, interventions to manage this were contained within the plan. However, there was a lack of contingency planning in most cases, when there were concerns related to children's increasing risk.

[9] 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 in the data annexe.

3.3. Implementation and delivery

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

Our rating[10] for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	71%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	82%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	82%

The delivery of services and interventions was a strong area of practice which built on the assessment and the plans. To help support children's desistance case managers matched interventions to children's needs and learning styles, taking account of their diversity. It was also proportionate to the type of disposal. There was good engagement and compliance with interventions, which were mainly voluntary, and case managers worked hard to establish effective working relationships with both the children and their parents or carers. Case examples showed interventions had been adapted to consider a child's speech, language and communication assessment and needs. In nearly all cases, consideration had been given as to how children could be linked into mainstream services once their interventions had ended.

The delivery of interventions to support children's safety and wellbeing was a strong area of practice. Examples of interventions delivered included sessions on online safety, healthy relationships and child exploitation awareness. In one case, the case manager used trauma-informed case consultations to help them deliver sessions that would meet the child's needs. In most cases, there was good liaison with other agencies, and the inspected cases showed that the service delivery and interventions supported the safety of children effectively.

Interventions with children to support the safety of other people was also a strong area of practice, with nearly all cases showing that the services delivered were managing and minimising the risk of harm. Victim impact statements were shared, and restorative justice sessions completed where appropriate. Both the case manager and the victim worker had given consideration to the protection of potential and actual victims. Overall, the interventions delivered had supported the safety of other people in nearly all of the cases inspected.

[10] 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 in the data annexe.

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:

- The YJS provided diversion and prevention activities through various programmes and projects across the local authority, ensuring that children and families could receive appropriate early intervention work.
- There was a YJS process for out-of-court disposals, and this was supported by the service's youth justice and targeted youth support prevention strategy.
- The victim officer was proactive in contacting the victim and ensured that their views were heard at the diversion panel.
- The diversion panel was chaired by the YJS team leader and included the youth justice police officer, education worker, victim worker, and mental health practitioner.
- The panel had access to children's social care database, to see if the child or their family were known to services; if they were the social worker was contacted.
- When a child did not comply with their disposal, efforts were made to support engagement.
- Performance reports were generated to analyse out-of-court disposal work which was reported to the partnership board.
- A police inspector met the designated YJS team leader to review cases, to ensure that the correct processes had been followed and the right outcome achieved.
- A local scrutiny panel and a Greater Manchester scrutiny panel reviewed cases and looked at the consistency of decision-making and outcomes.

Areas for improvement:

- Although the YJS had a youth justice and targeted youth support prevention strategy and a process for out of court disposal work, this area of practice would have been improved by a specific policy. Such a policy should incorporate the partnership working agreements, and the practice guidelines for the operation of the diversion panel, including an escalation process.
- At the time of the inspection the out-of-court disposal process did not include an escalation process should disagreements regarding outcomes arise.
- 'Street RJ' and 'Outcome 22' were available for Greater Manchester police officers to use with children. However, the YJS was not informed routinely about these children, and opportunities might have been missed to work with children and their families at the earliest stage.

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

Strengths:

- The YJS had a resettlement strategy in place, which outlined the arrangements for the Greater Manchester Resettlement Consortium and Stockport's local delivery model.
- Greater Manchester Director of Children's Services and HMYOI Wetherby funded a fulltime senior social worker, based in the establishment, specifically to review the safeguarding needs of Greater Manchester children who were based there.
- The principal lead for social care was the designated partnership board member with oversight of children in the secure estate and resettlement.
- Stockport's local delivery models included the partnership board being briefed on children in custody, and reporting on the information from the commissioned senior social worker in HMYOI Wetherby.
- YJS staff described communication with the secure estate as positive. Each child was allocated a resettlement worker and there were weekly conversations between the YJS and the establishment.
- Planning and provision for education, training and employment was appropriate in the cases inspected.
- There was a good level of contact between the YJS case manager, the child and their parents or carers prior to the child's release.
- The Greater Manchester Resettlement Consortium recently had devised an information dashboard regarding children in custody and this was influencing the training needs of staff.
- Stockport practitioners had received resettlement training and reported that they were always supported appropriately when supervising a resettlement case.
- The YJS had reviewed and updated its resettlement strategy in 2021 and the partnership board were updated regularly on the work of the Consortium.

Areas for improvement:

- The strategy included practice guidance for staff, although it did not contain information on recalling children to custody. This has since been rectified, and the strategy updated.

- There was no specific resettlement panel, but children who received a custodial sentence were discussed at the risk management review meetings.
- Resettlement work could have been improved with more timely interventions from children's social care services and priority access to healthcare provision for children on release from custody.

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.