

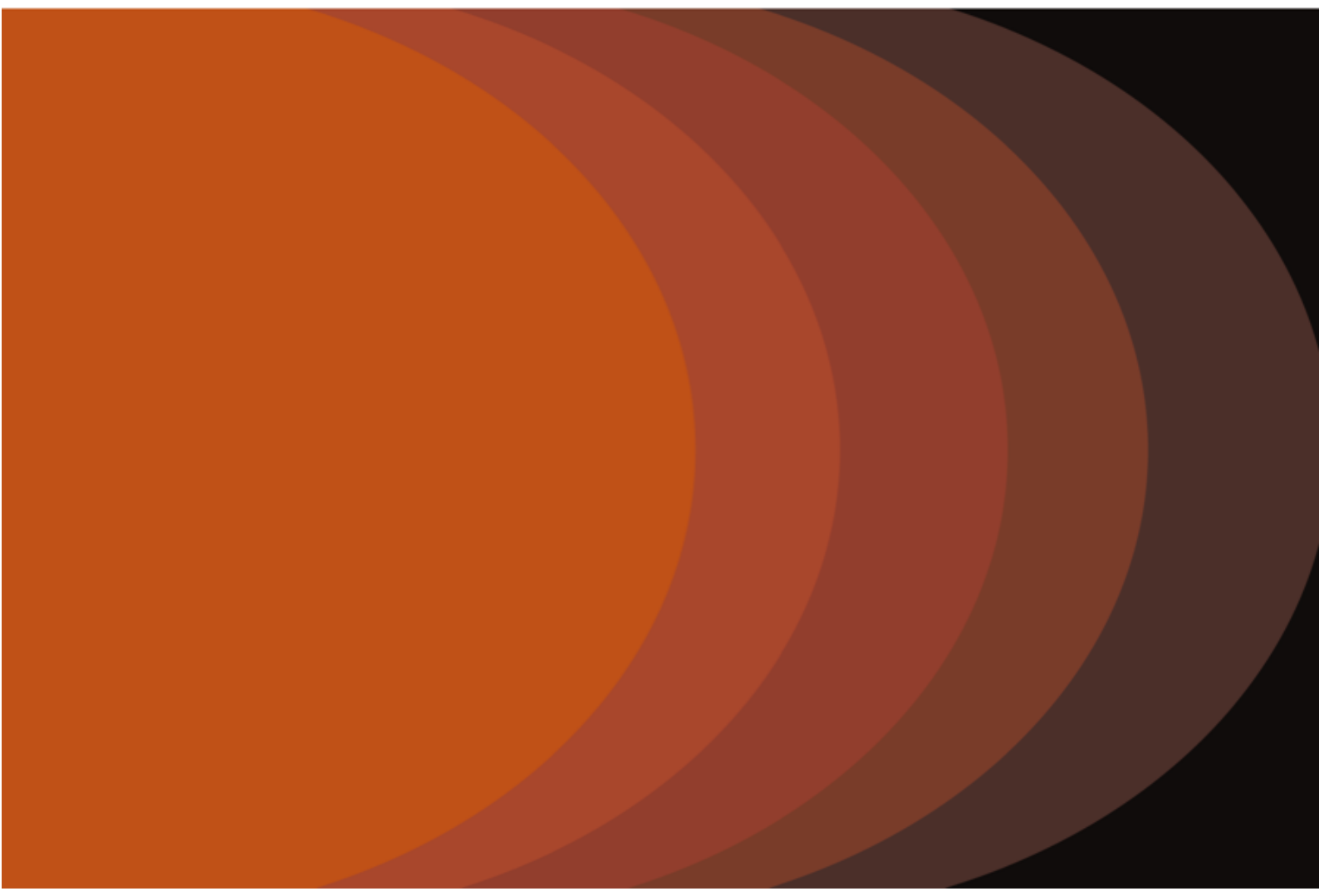


HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in

York

HM Inspectorate of Probation, December 2022



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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.

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Foreword

This inspection is part of our programme of youth justice service (YJS) inspections. We have inspected and rated York 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, York YJS was rated as 'Outstanding'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Outstanding'.

York YJS has achieved our highest rating by providing services to children consistently well and establishing a culture of putting the needs of children first. The culture was clear at operational and strategic levels and across the partnership. It has been developed and sustained over time and was impressive in how it translated into services for children

All partnerships were strong and made a significant contribution to the work of the YJS. We were particularly impressed with the way in which the partnership has responded to the accommodation needs of children. This is an area of practice where, despite best efforts, many local partnerships struggle to provide access to suitable accommodation. There are lessons to be learnt from the approach taken in York, which is providing a quick and appropriate response to the issue of youth accommodation and homelessness, particularly when limited resources are compounded by children's offending.

We were impressed by the consistently high quality of service delivery and range of interventions that children could access, including how well the findings from speech and language communication assessments were shared and used by the partnership to support children. We found many examples of innovation and effective practice, which had been well thought through and developed to meet the changing needs of children and families.

A skilled and committed staff team is ably led and motivated by a strong management team. All are ambitious for children and unrelenting in their desire to improve the life chances of children. The team drives service improvements and has been able to develop excellent relationships with other agencies, resulting in effective assessment, planning and delivery of interventions, both for statutory orders and out-of-court disposals.

Desistance, safety and wellbeing needs, and risks to others are given equal importance and the service's role in the city's approach to addressing harmful sexual behaviour is a good example of how the YJS is effectively supporting and working with children, while also ensuring that the needs of victims are considered.

In order to continue the good work we have seen, the board could further support the service to ensure that the views of children and families fully inform strategic decision-making.



Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

York Youth Justice Service
Fieldwork started September 2022

Score 32/36

Overall rating

Outstanding



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

Outstanding



1.2 Staff

Outstanding



1.3 Partnerships and services

Outstanding



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

Good



2.2 Planning

Outstanding



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding



2.4 Reviewing

Outstanding



3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

Good



3.2 Planning

Good



3.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding



3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

Outstanding



4. Resettlement¹

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

Outstanding



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

Recommendations

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

The York Youth Justice Management Board should:

1. ensure that there are sufficient resources to improve access to education, training and employment, including reviewing the post-16 education, training and employment offer
2. review the financial contribution and budget arrangements to the service, to ensure that there is sufficient contingency planning to allow planned development.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in York Youth Justice Service (YJS) over a period of a week, beginning 12 September 2022. We inspected cases for which the sentence or licence began between 13 September 2021 and 08 July 2022; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 13 September 2021 and 08 July 2022; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released within the same period. We also conducted 13 interviews with case managers.

York is a small local authority and the principal city of North Yorkshire. North Yorkshire Police covers both York and North Yorkshire and there is a shared out-of-court disposal scheme.

York YJS is located in the children's safeguarding service within the People's Directorate, City of York Council. The service ethos is that 'every conversation starts with a child', and there is a clear determination to support the City of York Council values of 'working together: to improve and make a difference'.

York is a major tourist destination and has areas of wealth, with some isolated pockets of deprivation. Housing costs in the city are high, driven by high demand and limited opportunities for housing development.

The YJS caseload has no unusual features. Reoffending rates are below the national average. However, the proportion of young people who reoffend is higher, at 41.7 per cent as opposed to 33.6 per cent.

As in most services, the service deals with more out-of-court disposal than statutory orders, with approximately 75 per cent of cases being out-of-court disposals; these are a mixture of youth conditional cautions, youth cautions and Route 22 disposals (the latter being the majority).

No particular groups are overrepresented on the caseload, but, as there are so few cases, this can lead to spikes in numbers. These are tracked and monitored by the board.

The chair of the board has changed several times over the past four years, with the current chair taking up post just before this inspection took place. The new chair is also the new Director of Children's Services and has experience of chairing other youth justice boards.

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 16 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.

Outstanding

Strengths:

- The agreed strategy to reduce offending and to provide services to prevent children from offending is ambitious and being delivered through established and effective partnership working. We found highly effective translation of the strategic aims into operational practice.
- The board understands the YJS population well, and this has led to the implementation of targeted interventions. Effective relationships outside of the board support the service to respond to new issues quickly.
- The board demonstrates a detailed understanding of the work of the service, utilising data, performance dashboards, comparison reports and thematic approaches. Case studies are used effectively and support board members to review and improve their own service provision to meet the needs of the YJS cohort.
- There is a clear action plan to achieve the stated aims and objectives, which is reviewed at each board meeting. A flexible approach allows the board to identify new and promising practice and support the development of this into operational practice. We found numerous examples of this during the inspection.
- Board membership has been reviewed proactively. Members have a detailed understanding of the important role of the YJS and demonstrate a commitment to its work.
- There has been a board representative from the local authority housing department for around five years. In a city where accommodation is limited and expensive, this has supported an exceptional housing offer to reduce youth homelessness and has ensured that the housing needs of YJS children are met where required.
- Although the board has had four chairs in as many years, the YJS manager and board members have provided stability and consistency, while responding positively to the thinking and approaches of each new chair.
- The outgoing chair has provided robust oversight and improved the use of data and evaluation. The new chair has quickly understood how the service is working and its strengths, and identified areas requiring development. These

include how to strengthen the voice of the child and ensure that children's education, training and employment (ETE) is given a clearer focus.

- The YJS manager is an excellent support to the board, providing strong advocacy for the service and its children.
- The response and service provision for children who are travellers are strong.

Areas for improvement:

- The service is funded in part by its financial reserves. Funding has been an ongoing risk and although some measures have been taken to bring money into the service, confirmation of future funding would support the YJS to plan in the longer term and support innovation.
- The city-wide approach to hearing the voice of the child is through day-to-day work, assessment, interactions and exit questionnaires. In case work, this is strong, but the board needs to consider further how it hears from or consults with children, families and carers, and explore how this will be utilised strategically.

1.2. Staff



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

Outstanding

Strengths:

- Children are supported by a well-trained, committed and thoughtful staff team. A strong culture of support and a shared aim to give children every opportunity to do well are embedded in practice. Staff are proactive, vocal and accomplished in their advocacy for children.
- Partnership staff are skilled, and improvement focused. The support they give allows children's needs to be understood and responded to, not just by the service, but also by partner agencies.
- Joint work between the speech and language therapist (SALT) and YJS police officer has resulted in a SALT guide being made available to all police officers via handheld electronic devices. Officers coming into contact with children can identify if the child is working with the YJS and quickly access the guide. This has improved the way that police talk and interact with children and reduced the number of assaults on the police by children.
- We saw excellent examples of joint work in cases to help children understand the respective roles of workers. This includes work with the probation officer to support effective transitions and children's social care.
- Training for staff is comprehensive, and the management team understands that the development of a stable and experienced workforce requires an innovative approach. Each staff member holds an area of responsibility, where they are able to focus on improving service delivery. Work to address harmful sexual behaviour is a good example of practice being driven forward and having a positive impact.
- Case managers can undertake a degree in youth justice, alongside a range of targeted training.
- The team takes opportunities to learn from each other and seconded specialist staff support quality training. Their contribution is integral to the strong case management work we found. There is a strong culture of learning and continuous improvement, and doing the right thing for children and families is the driver for this. We saw examples of where the YJS has been instrumental in providing city-wide learning, including on harmful sexual behaviour and Route 22 (an out-of-court disposal pathway).
- Staff are expected, and are able, to incorporate new learning into their work with children. We saw examples of this being done in case work, including methods of working with children who have learning disabilities or neurodivergence.
- There is a stable staff team, and this means that succession opportunities are limited. However, managers are proactive in exploring learning and developmental opportunities for the team and are focused on maintaining high levels of team motivation and commitment. The allocation of specialist areas of responsibility help staff develop new skills. These staff are outward focused and use national and regional sources to review and develop practice.

- Supervision is timely and managers are visible and approachable. They achieve a good balance of driving strategy, supporting partnership work and managing the team operationally.
- Induction was described as effective, even by remote contact during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. Appraisals are a continuation of effective line management, where praise is used to highlight good and exceptional work.
- Staff strive to improve and make suggestions proactively to managers and partners about how systems and services could be refined.

Areas for improvement:

- Managers need to respond proactively to staff absence, to ensure continuity of high service delivery. We found some instances of drift when case managers were absent.
- The board could be more proactive in recognising and rewarding positive work by staff.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Outstanding

Strengths:

- There is comprehensive understanding of the needs of this cohort of children, at a strategic, operational and case level.
- Work to address harmful sexual behaviour is a particular strength. It is led by the YJS and is well regarded by schools and other partners. The YJS has provided training to a wide range of partners, undertaken assessments and interventions with children, and provided consultation on individual cases. As a result, children with harmful sexual behaviours receive early support and victims are protected quickly.
- The operational partnership with the police is excellent. This is contributing to a significant shift in the police's approach to children and reducing unnecessary criminalisation.
- Understanding of offence type and sentencing patterns has driven the development of Route 22 where there is a high level of support and interventions are available to meet the complexity of needs in these cases.
- Work has begun to address the specific needs of girls and children in care, both groups being overrepresented currently in the YJS cohort. Each girl's case has been discussed at board level and specific services are currently being developed for them. Restorative approaches have been developed with children's homes.
- The YJS has analysed early signs, patterns and indicators relating to child exploitation, and adapted its prevention offer to ensure that an effective offer of support and intervention is in place.
- A range of service provision has been developed, including the youth group 'The Island', which supports emotional and mental health; community engagement in community hotspots; and the development of a child-to-parent violence programme (C2VP).
- Health services are highly effective, and all children have access to SALT consultation, assessments and interventions. SALTs have provided training to courts, and magistrates feel well supported by YJS staff when sentencing. Confidence in the YJS is high and contributes to low numbers of custody and statutory orders.
- There is expedited access to child and adolescent mental health services via the specialist nurse for children requiring emotional and mental health support
- Links with some schools and the pupil referral unit are strong, and there is a culture of meeting need, rather than waiting for a diagnosis.
- Links with probation services, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) are effective, and support good risk management and the promotion of the voice of victims.

- There is good support for children in police custody, with ready access to appropriate adults and interpreters where needed. There is provision of a specialist 'trusted relationship worker' for children who are exploited.

Areas for improvement:

- There is a two-year waiting list for children requiring autism spectrum disorder/attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder diagnoses, and no means of prioritising children known to the YJS.
- Although staff have specialist areas of responsibility, there is no specific ETE or educational welfare officer role within the YJS. A method of working focused explicitly on prioritising the ETE needs of children would strengthen the current offer.

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:

- There is a range of up-to-date policies and processes, designed to be effective and easy to access. Staff are confident in using them.
- Processes are considered in terms of disproportionality for children in care (where steps are taken to provide support and restorative approaches, rather than an out-of-court disposal outcome) and harmful sexual behaviour.
- Information technology systems are used effectively to support case management and information exchange. Specialist workers have access to their own systems and utilise these well in keeping case managers updated – this includes the police officer sharing information on overnight arrests and contacts with children.
- The use of the reoffending live tracker is a positive initiative to understand the details of a small group of children with prolific offending.
- Information and data are provided to the board by the performance and data manager. Time is taken to understand what the data means, and information on individual cases is brought to the board to aid understanding.
- There is a strong culture of learning and reviewing, and we found a service that is performing well but not becoming complacent in its practice. The approach to harmful sexual behaviour, for example, is based on learning identified from a joint targeted area inspection.
- The YJS office provides excellent facilities for staff to work in and for children to attend, although space is at a premium and staff feel that they have lost some flexibility in completing interventions with children. The building is a good reflection of the pride that the YJS has about its work and the importance of children having a good, clean, safe building to come to.

Areas for improvement:

- The views of children, parents and families are not yet directly affecting strategic thinking, and the board does not currently have the mechanism to hear directly from those who have received the service of the YJS partnership. However, the voice of children is strong in case work.
- Although there are examples of the effective use of data, information to the board on ETE and children's experiences of education is limited.
- Although children from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background are not disproportionately represented within the YJS cohort, a targeted approach to this area of practice would help the service understand these particular needs and promote confidence in children that the service is alert to the issues they may face.
- Specific interventions to help children understand their experiences of discrimination are limited.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

There is a city-wide approach to obtaining the voice of children, parents and carers, which focuses on obtaining views through the direct work undertaken. Professionals, including the YJS workers, obtain these views as they undertake assessments and during service delivery. The YJS case managers did this well, ensuring that they spoke to children and parents or carers at the start of their involvement and then on an ongoing basis. This meant that plans could be adapted, and service delivery changed to meet any expressed needs and wishes. YJS managers supported this and prompted staff to record the voices of children in case recording systems, as well as speaking to children directly to understand their views on working with the service.

There were several examples of where this approach had led to direct changes, including the decision to change where children were seen, from the more corporate West office to Moor Lane, previously a youth centre. Although well located, the large open-plan main office, in the centre of York, provided little privacy for children. This was particularly difficult when they became upset or had to discuss difficult matters. The Moor Lane location provides a child-friendly space, which children helped to decorate and plan. This comfortable and dedicated space is more suited to children's needs.

Some years ago, children were invited to speak to board members directly, but this was stopped by a previous chair of the management board. The new board chair has already given thought to how to have direct contact with children, families and carers so that the board can use their views to improve services and identify what works best for them.

The YJS contacted, on our behalf, children and parents 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 seven children who consented, and two children and two parents replied.

Broadly, children were satisfied with the service they received and commented on how staff were approachable and interested in them.

When we asked people: 'On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being poor and 10 being fantastic, how do you rate your local YOT service?', all four rated the service as 10.

Comments that respondents made included:

"The people at the service are friendly and approachable, they really try and go out of their way to help me, and they're easy to talk to."

"They have really helped my daughter in thinking about good decisions about her future and school, also they are working with school to make it better for her."

"They are understanding and speak to my child with the right balance of compassion and firmness."

"Well, I have anxiety, so I avoid trouble anyway, and it's nothing they've really done to help me avoid trouble as such, but they've helped me try and maintain my life."

"Help think about making better decisions."

Diversity

The service has a good understanding of the diverse needs of children. This is based on the use of data and evaluation, and on an individual case-by-case basis.

Work with children from travelling families was very good, with knowledge, skills and relationships having been built over time. The development of a jargon buster, which included words used by travellers, was good practice, aiding understanding and communication between practitioners, children and families.

In case work, we found that staff were having discussions with children about their individual diversity needs, and these were responded to well. Staff effectively ensured that the lived experience of the child was taken into account and considered.

Although the service has few children from a black or mixed heritage background, case managers were alert to issues of discrimination and had conversations with children about how this impacted on them. Case work demonstrated that work was undertaken on hate crimes, for children who committed these and for those who were victims.

In the cases of girls, a specific group has been run for them previously. There was a focus on the importance of critical relationships and identity within the work we saw.

At a strategic level, data on trends and population is available and provided, so the board is able to monitor any potential disproportionality. No groups are overrepresented within the York YJS, so the board has actions to ensure that children in care are supported effectively. However, the board could do more to give a specific focus and develop an understanding of the specific needs of children who are black or from a mixed heritage background. This would support children to know that their experiences are recognised and responded to, enabling them and their families to be confident that service provision is focused on eliminating the effects of discrimination.

Staff and volunteers are predominantly from a white British background, represent a wide age range and come from a variety of life experiences.

Just over half of the children being supported by the YJS at the time of the inspection had a learning disability, learning difficulty or were subject to an education health care plan. We found that these needs were quickly identified and well responded to. The partnership had a culture of responding to presenting needs and not waiting for formal diagnosis. Within the YJS, we found that staff had adapted their work to meet the individual needs of children very well. They had thought about children's concentration span and the language that they could easily understand. They took time to go over work again, to make sure that children had understood and taken in the learning from each session.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at six 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?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	83%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	67%

Staff were skilled in assessment, both at the start of orders and over time. Evidence-based assessments provided a robust understanding of what interventions and support were best suited to help children. Diversity issues were given clear consideration. Case managers had a detailed understanding of the desistance, and safety and wellbeing needs of children, based on a range of information gathered quickly from other agencies, from children, parents and carers, and from specialist workers.

Assessments to understand what the child needed to support them to lead a positive life away from offending was very strong, based on an accurate understanding of what had led children to actions and decisions. Information about children's understanding and communication was particularly strong and helped all professionals, not just case managers, understand children better. There was considered assessment of the child's level of maturity, ability and motivation to change.

Safety and wellbeing factors were assessed well and considered a wide range of current and historical factors. Concerns, including self-harm and factors which might place children at additional risk, were well thought through, with the exact nature of these clearly outlined, and judgements about the imminence and impact reasonably and carefully considered.

However, the risk of harm to actual and potential victims was not fully recorded in each case we assessed. In a small number of cases, more detail was needed, particularly in relation to assessments of situations where children and victims may come into contact with each other. Exploration of when potential conflict might occur and how it could be minimised needed greater consideration.

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.](#)

2.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

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

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

Planning for all areas of work was detailed, responsive to needs and based on the best way to work with children. Planning included a coordinated response with partnership agencies, including social care and health services.

A wide range of interventions was available for case managers to select from, and we saw good attention to the timing and sequencing of plans, to help children build skills and understanding. Plans demonstrated that staff were focused on risk management, with good use of external controls, including the monitoring of electronic tags and child protection arrangements. Workers were able to build strong and trusted relationships with children, so that they were able to have open discussions with them and that the children knew the reason for some appropriate planned actions, even if they disagreed with the need for them.

There was a good focus on maintaining positive aspects of children's lives and developing self-esteem and worth. Reparative activities, designed to help children repair harm, were well thought through and planned for. Planning gave a good balance of actions that were aimed at addressing specific offending-related needs, as well as supporting community integration.

Planning included how the individual needs of children would be supported. We saw examples of plans that included frequent but short sessions with children, and good use of communication plans.

We saw impressive planning and work with the police to address issues in the community that could have led to further offending. Planning included targeted action by youth justice workers to provide diversion activities in the community, all aimed at supporting children in their communities, reducing further offending and preventing people becoming victims of crime.

The service had identified that more specific contingency planning was needed, and steps had already been taken to improve this area of work.

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 in the data annexe.](#)

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

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?	100%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	100%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	83%

We were impressed with the way in which the YJS and the partnership consistently delivered services to children. The relationships and joint ethos of supporting children resulted in them being able to access a wide range of targeted and specialist services as and when they needed them. Partners had developed effective service provision that met the specific needs of this group of children. Excellent practice was in place to meet their accommodation needs. As a result of two youth homelessness workers and a range of available accommodation, an offer of somewhere to stay could be made very quickly.

Good joint work with a range of partnership agencies was evident, including co-working with social workers, good transitional arrangements for children moving to probation services and rapid access to emotional and mental health support. Above all, services were delivered consistently, in line with assessed need and plans. Case managers followed up what they said they would do, enabling trust to be built with children.

A number of children in the cohort had assaulted police officers or had difficult relationships with them. Strategies were put in place to improve relationships and help children understand the protective element of the police role. The YJS police officer had developed, and was delivering, a session at the end of YJS involvement, to outline the progress that children had made and any future implications of further involvement in the criminal justice system, and to reinforce how the police could also provide support to a child. This was one of several interventions designed to develop the relationships between children and the police.

Work to address children's emotional and mental health needs was good, including the management of, and response to, any self-harm by children.

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.](#)

2.4. Reviewing



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

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

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

Reviewing was an ongoing and dynamic activity, based on frequent checking of progress and information. Reviews were not only undertaken at a given point in time, but also used proactively to identify and respond to changes. The YJS was provided with a range of information from other agencies.

This approach of ongoing review allowed staff to consider how the child was responding to key events, including interventions, starting college, the involvement of social workers with the family and if there was a new incident of offending.

Case managers were able to discuss issues with children and other professionals quickly and make any necessary changes. This ensured robust responses to safety and wellbeing issues, and the management of risk of harm to others.

Children were supported well to deal with these changes, and this provided them with stability and responsive support.

The police provided information about overnight arrests on a daily basis, again providing the opportunity for the service to consider if additional intervention was needed, and we saw evidence of this informing reviews.

Staff from the YJS spent time working in the multi-agency safeguarding hub, which had been an effective way to share the unique skills evident in the YJS and for information and intelligence to inform work with children. Again, we saw evidence of this being effectively utilised in the reviews of children.

When staff reviewed the work they were doing with children, they always focused on building the child's strengths and on ensuring that parents and carers were fully involved in helping to identify what was working well and anything that needed to change. The contact with families also helped case managers to monitor the child's personal situation, who they were mixing with and the suitability of their contacts.

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.](#)

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected nine cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of one youth conditional caution and eight community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in five cases.

3.1. Assessment



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

Good

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?	78%

High-quality, detailed assessments of how to support children's desistance were produced routinely. Based on a wide range of information, and the views and perspectives of the child and their parents, the assessment tool supported the case manager to explore all relevant issues. The quality of assessment was reviewed regularly by managers, to ensure that they provided a good balance of desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm.

Detailed consideration about how safety and wellbeing factors affected children had been undertaken. These included both past and present issues that were impacting on the child. As cases were processed quickly, assessments were as soon after to the incident as possible. Practitioners then provided good support to the child and assessments aided effective decision-making by the panel.

The views of children and parents were fully considered, and any expressed wishes were included in the assessments for the panel to consider. On the whole, individual needs and diversity issues were incorporated into assessments.

Classifications of risk of harm, and safety and wellbeing were, in the main, accurate and this provided the opportunity for cases to be prioritised according to children's needs.

In two cases, the risk of harm posed to others was not analysed sufficiently. All the right information was gathered, but incidents of difficult behaviour were seen in isolation, rather than analysed and considered within the wider context.

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.](#)

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?	89%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	78%

Planning started as soon as the case was allocated, with case managers using the assessment period to make referrals to other agencies and to contact other professionals involved with the child. Formal planning started at the youth outcome panel, where members specified the types of intervention that should be included in planning, informed by quality assessments.

Case managers worked with children to translate plans into a child-friendly 'My plan'. This format was easy to understand and gave clear timescales, so that children knew what to expect during their involvement with the YJS. They were given some control about how the plan would be delivered and were able to contribute to this process. Where they had learning needs, these were planned for carefully and included necessary adaptations.

The Route 22 offer was comprehensive, and it was positive to see that planning included the involvement of emotional and mental health support and SALT input. This was planned for at the start of involvement, and we found no delays in access to these services.

There was consideration of how interventions would be delivered where children had a number of plans in place. We saw good communication between professionals in order to prioritise actions and pull plans together. Thought had been given to the needs of victims, and there was some joint planning with schools where the child and their victim were likely to come into contact with each other.

However, despite the highly detailed planning outlined, there were some omissions in planning to keep other people safe. In these cases, more detailed planning was needed to provide clear contingency actions in a number of known situations, one in a case where the child was assessed as presenting a high risk to others and another in a case with well-documented family involvement in drug dealing. In both cases, planning needed to consider the specific behaviours of the child and the response required by a range of agencies. In our view, the need for professionals to act quickly to reduce risk to others was a critical factor, so very specific plans would have been more helpful to those working with the child.

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.](#)

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?	89%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	89%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	89%

This was an area of strength, where we found children were benefiting from a wide range of interventions, delivered well and tailored to individual needs.

Children were able to access the same services available to those on court orders, including the support of health workers.

In all cases, there was very good attention to how to best establish and maintain engagement with children. As a result, case managers were able to build trust and credibility with children quickly. In most of the cases we saw, staff delivered services in way which put the child at the centre of the work and gave them effective opportunities to provide input on how it would be delivered. This then fostered positive engagement, so that children benefited from interventions and support.

Several children were also in contact with social workers during their involvement with the YJS. We saw good co-working in these cases, and a shared understanding of how the various agencies' work contributed to keeping the child safe. This included the way in which the police community teams were used when exploitation was a factor. Building and strengthening relationships with parents was supported by professionals in a consistent way. Housing options were offered as and when needed, and were provided quickly.

In order to reduce any further harm to victims, we saw a range of methods used to increase the child's understanding of the effect of their behaviour. Victim awareness sessions delivered by the victim liaison officer had been well received by children.

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 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.

Outstanding

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:

- There was a clear, joint protocol with the police. The scheme was well established and had been reviewed and improved recently. The introduction of Route 22 had broadened the offer to children and provided a wide range of interventions to divert them effectively.
- Outcome decisions were made jointly, with quality assessments supporting the youth outcome panel with their decision-making. This panel outlined the level and nature of interventions to be offered to the child and included detailed discussions regarding children's needs and risks, as well as public protection. There was an effective consistency of approach.
- The victim liaison officer was a core member of the panel. They had good contact with victims and were able to represent their views and wishes well.
- Panel members were able to challenge each other and bring alternative views about the child. This was done with respect and in a transparent manner.
- New police staff were invited to attend panels, to ensure that they understood the scheme and what could be offered to the child and victims. This had increased the confidence of officers and custody staff to propose out-of-court-disposals as a credible alternative to charge.
- Children had access to the same range of interventions as those on court orders, and services were provided quickly. There were interventions to support desistance, keep children safe and prevent victims from further harm.
- A specific pathway was available to children who exhibited harmful sexual behaviour, in order to provide prevention support and swift intervention.
- Engagement with children was generally good, and relationship building started with the assessment process. This ensured that the child's and parents' or carers' voices were taken into consideration when the youth outcome panel considered the most appropriate disposal.
- As Route 22 had only recently been introduced, data was being collected to identify the progress that children made and assess whether it was an effective disposal. Data was collected for all other disposals, and results were positive, with very few children coming back for subsequent disposals.
- The scheme had benefited from the consistent chairing arrangements, which were child focused. The chair had sufficient seniority to have an impact on police practice and decision-making.
- The parameters for use of Route 22 were clearly defined in the policy, which also provided guidance about the appropriate use of the overall scheme.

- The policy described how diversity considerations would be met and was aligned with the YJS diversity policy.

Areas for improvement:

- Although information was provided to parents and children that specified the difference between the various disposals, we noted that the word 'breach' was used in the information leaflets, and considered that this did not reflect the voluntary nature of the out-of-court disposal.

4.1. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Outstanding

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

Strengths:

- There was an up-to-date resettlement policy in place that specified the resettlement pathway. This was evidence based, utilising current research and knowledge of effective resettlement.
- Both policy and practice focused on individual needs, and the YJS and partners adapted to meet individual needs and provide personalised support. The case we assessed evidenced meeting the child's individual needs, keeping the child safe and effective use of transitions to adult probation services, to manage risk of harm.
- The YJS victim liaison officer was involved in planning and represented the views of actual victims. There were effective links with victim services in the community and probation services.
- There was a strong and individualised partnership response to resettlement. Partners understood their roles and responsibilities and provided services in a timely way.
- The provision of a range of accommodation for children leaving custody was a strength. Named accommodation was identified quickly and reserved if needed. Specialist youth homelessness workers had effective links with accommodation providers and were able to secure placements that allowed other partners to make effective plans for release and ensure that the child and their parents or carers knew where they would be living.
- The policy recognised the role of social care, housing, health and education in meeting the needs of children.
- Where children were eligible for transition to adult services, there were clearly defined pathways and associated timescales to ensure that risk, and safety and wellbeing were managed effectively.
- Contact and joint work with custody were strong, and there were named contacts at HMP Wetherby and at Adel Beck Secure Children's Home.
- Managers provided effective oversight of resettlement cases
- The board took an active part in reviewing resettlement cases, seeking to understand any lessons that could be learnt and address any barriers to effective resettlement.
- Joint work between the YJS, custody staff and children's social care and leaving care services were effective.

Area for improvement:

- The views of children, parents and carers were not used to shape resettlement policy.

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.](#)