



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in
Swindon

HM Inspectorate of Probation, January 2023



Contents

Foreword	3
Ratings	4
Recommendations	5
Background	6
Domain one: Organisational delivery	7
1.1. Governance and leadership	7
1.2. Staff	8
1.3. Partnerships and services.....	9
1.4. Information and facilities	10
Domain two: Court disposals	13
2.1. Assessment	13
2.2. Planning.....	14
2.3. Implementation and delivery	15
2.4. Reviewing	16
Domain three: Out-of-court disposals	17
3.1. Assessment	17
3.2. Planning.....	18
3.3. Implementation and delivery	19
3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	20
4.1. Resettlement	21
4.1. Resettlement policy and provision.....	21
Further information	22

Acknowledgements

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Avtar Singh, supported by a team of inspectors and colleagues from across the inspectorate. We would like to thank all those who helped plan and took part in the inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

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.

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

Published by:

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

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

ISBN: 978-1-915468-19-2

© Crown copyright 2023

Foreword

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

Leaders and partners have worked effectively to create a clear vision and road map to help children thrive and achieve their potential. The management board is led well by a chair who is knowledgeable, has good links with various departments in the borough, provides trust, freedom, and flexibility where a culture of developing creativity, and innovation is encouraged. There are strong foundations in place leading to positive outcomes for children. Partners embrace their responsibilities passionately and work together well to overcome structural barriers experienced by children.

YJS staff are highly driven to help each and every child to flourish, and are led well by an enthusiastic, reflective, and forward-thinking head of service. Senior leaders, managers, stakeholders, and operational staff across the partnership, seek and actively use feedback from children and their parents and carers to improve service delivery. The impact of the youth board and contribution of peer advocates is impressive and empowering children to be heard.

The pandemic has presented many challenges for the YJS but the imaginative and productive way in which it has reacted is commendable. Statutory and non-statutory partners are strong champions for the children supervised by the YJS. This has enabled staff to access wider services provided by the borough throughout this difficult period.

While the partnership has access to a range of reports and management information about the profile of children, covering first-time entrants (FTE), use of out-of-court disposals and reoffending, for example, the YJS now needs to establish a more comprehensive understanding of all its children, especially those with a range of protected characteristics. A forensic analysis will provide greater insight into the lived experiences of these children and help the YJS to develop its services. Furthermore, the YJS needs to strengthen its work to consistently support children's safety and wellbeing and their potential to cause harm to others. Our inspection found that, across court and out-of-court work, not all staff had consistently applied the systems and processes to keep children safe and prevent them from committing harm to others.

The YJS partnership can rightly be pleased and celebrate the effective way in which it has progressed its service delivery over the past 30 months. All staff must take credit, as the very positive outcome of this inspection, has been a team effort. We trust that the findings in this report will assist the YJS to improve further.



Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Swindon Youth Justice Service
Fieldwork started October 2022

Score 31/36

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

Outstanding



2.2 Planning

Good



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding



2.4 Reviewing

Good



3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

Outstanding



3.2 Planning

Outstanding



3.3 Implementation and delivery

Good



3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

Good



4. Resettlement¹

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

Good



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

Recommendations

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

The Swindon Youth Justice Service should:

1. ensure robust contingency plans are in place for all children that address their safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others
2. review the Rapid Assessment and Rationale tools to ensure that they include additional guidance to staff to effectively address diversity and safety and wellbeing needs of children
3. review the Enhanced Constructive Resettlement Policy to make sure that the needs of victims and victim work is explicit
4. enhance the external scrutiny of the YRI panel to ensure all decisions are proportionate and defensible.

The Swindon Youth Justice Service Management Board should:

5. expand the breadth and depth of management information, forensically analyse segmented data, and use findings to improve outcomes for children.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Swindon Youth Justice Service (YJS) over a period of a week, beginning 17 October 2022. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began between 18 October 2021 and 12 August 2022; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 18 October 2021 and 12 August 2022; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between 18 October 2021 and 12 August 2022. We also conducted 26 interviews with case managers.

The latest mid-year estimate from the Office for National Statistics records the population of Swindon Borough to be around 222,881². Ethnicity data from the 2021 census is not yet available however the 2011 census found that whilst 84 per cent recorded their nationality as White British, 16 per cent of the population of Swindon were non-White British compared with 15.4 per cent in the surrounding borough. There was also little difference between the percentages of Black and Asian residents. Swindon is considered to be one of the most ethnically diverse towns in the South West of England.

The mid-year estimates count 50,752 children aged 0 – 18 in Swindon of which, as of July 2022, 863 were recorded as Children in Need, 238 were children on Protection Plans and 335 were Children Looked After.

Within the YJS Partnership and Service, the organisation embraces the vision for youth justice. This is:

'We take a child first approach, and always seek to work in partnership with children and families to build resilience and sustain positive change.'

The YJS operates across the Swindon Borough as part of Swindon's wider Children's Services. The YJS and its strategic partnership board interfaces effectively with a diverse number of partners and participates in a wide range of multi-agency forums and other strategic boards. Partnership arrangements are reviewed and monitored through service level agreements, where appropriate, to ensure an effective collaborative and interface with the shared service.

The YJS underwent a management transformation and restructure in 2019/20 which resulted in the move of the restorative youth services into the Early Help – bringing integration with a wider range of support services and more specialist management. The management capacity of the YJS was subsequently reviewed resulting in two new management posts – a Team Manager and an Assistant Team Manager created to ensure a dedicated and focused response for children at risk of offending.

As a result, youth justice workers have a specialist and dedicated function in Swindon Borough Council and only work with children in the youth justice system pre and post court. However, the YJS continues to have access to the full range of services throughout the Early Help and children's social care division.

The YJS has developed well over the past two years as a partnership in Swindon to innovate and develop youth justice practice and improve holistic outcomes for children, families, victims, and communities. These have included a vaccination programme, academic accreditation of interventions, support for parents in courts and COLLECT, a partnership with the local Foodbank. Notably, the YJS practice model focuses on identity development for desistance, and this has supported positive outcomes for children and families in Swindon.

² Statistical information on paragraphs 2 and 3 provided by Swindon YJS

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 13 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 YJS strategic plan (2022/2023) effectively sets the direction for the service. The focus on diversity is intentional and supported by comprehensive action plans and space for YJS staff and partners to enhance their learning.
- Partners are active in their participation and excellent advocates for YJS children, as evidenced, for example, by the intervention of a senior housing leader in the case of a vulnerable child and the youth bench supporting services for parents in the youth court.
- The board is led well by a chair who has good links with various departments in the borough, provides trust, freedom, and flexibility to enable creativity to flourish. The integration of the voices of children and their parents and carers is impressive and has led to service improvements. The work of the youth board, peer advocates and the 'village circle' forum has all contributed to driving better outcomes for children.
- Local strategic partnerships (community safety, reducing re-offending board, Early Intervention and Violence Reduction Group, serious youth violence) understand the needs of YJS and secure appropriate resources.
- The head of service effectively enables the partnership to achieve positive outcomes for children that will help them to thrive and succeed. The operating model ('identity shift') is understood well across the partnership and ensures a child first approach to desistance and positive outcomes for children. Business risks to the YJS are understood well by leaders and there are appropriate controls in place to mitigate risk.

Areas for improvement:

- The partnership needs to develop and enhance its work across all protected characteristics.
- The diversity of the board and YJS workforce needs to be enhanced.
- Not all YJS staff are fully aware of the work undertaken by the management board.
- The partnership needs to explore and develop links with community providers who deliver services for children with a range of lived experiences.

1.2. Staff



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

Outstanding

Strengths:

- The YJS has provided excellent pastoral and professional support to staff during Covid-19.
- Staffing resources are used well, planned, and appropriately reviewed to respond to the changing demands and profile of children being supervised by the YJS.
- The workloads of practitioners and managers are reasonable, and attention is appropriately given to ensure that staff are not over stretched.
- There is an effective strategy that ensures the quality of work during planned and unplanned absences is not compromised.
- Cases are correctly allocated to practitioners with suitable skills and qualifications. Co-working of cases provides additional accountability, learning and development.
- Staff are supported well in their professional development and progression into other roles. The YJS pays for staff to attend bespoke courses. This helps succession planning.
- Staff receive regular supervision (one-to-one and group), and this enables them to improve the quality of services they deliver to children.
- The majority of staff report the quality of supervision is quite or very good.
- All staff have access to in-service learning opportunities. This training helps them to deliver interventions well to children and enhance their partnership working. Training completed by staff in the past 12 months has included, the YJS operating model, CCE and gangs, child to parent violence (Respect), AIM3, ASDAN co-ordinator, trauma informed practice, disproportionality via the OPCC, Traffic light (HSB), and mandatory safeguarding training.
- The partnership collectively promotes and values a culture of learning and continuous improvement.
- Employment opportunities are openly advertised.
- Staff are highly motivated to deliver high-quality services.
- Attention to staff safety and wellbeing is robust. This builds resilience.

Areas for improvement:

- Not all volunteers are satisfied with the frequency and quality of support they receive from the YJS.
- Reward and recognition arrangements are minimal and should be strengthened or enhanced.
- Consideration should be given to providing training opportunities in relation to ROH, MAPPA and SAVRY.

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 an up-to-date analysis of the desistance needs of children. The analysis considers safety and wellbeing and risk of harm factors as well as diversity needs across some protected characteristics. This is appropriately informed by management information extracted from Asset Plus, audits, thematics and quality assurance processes.
- Children and their parents and carers are actively invited to provide feedback, and this is used well to influence service delivery. For example, the fundraising event for Afghan refugees at the Swindon Town football club was driven and led by children. This subsequently led to a child led music project, where 20 per cent of children who participated were open to the YJS.
- Access to specialist and mainstream services that help children to desist from offending, keep them and others safe is impressive. These include, speech and language, where the worker has produced some excellent child-friendly resources and YJS CAMHS, where there is no waiting list, U-turn (substance misuse), ETE, IPSUM (music project) Street Doctors Knocked Out/Bleed Programme, a First Aid initiative, Iprovement, a mentoring programme and an accredited girl's group where topics such as sexting and indecent images, understanding the law, ETE, body image and anxiety are covered. The initiative with the Nelson Trust provides excellent additional support to girls.
- There are well established, embedded, and effective links and relationships with a range of statutory partners, providers and agencies providing desistance, safeguarding (MASH, OPAL Adolescent Team) and public protection interventions (daily risk briefing meetings, sentence planning and risk management panels). Oversight is effectively provided through various memorandums of understanding, service level agreements, and terms of reference for different groups.
- The YJS has good links with local sentencers, and this ensures that courts are aware of the services available to support sentencing.

Areas for improvement:

- Reparation activity, in terms of quality and volume, is variable. It is not always clear how reparation is contributing to helping children understand the harm they have caused to others
- There is insufficient integration with plans held by partners in low and medium safety and wellbeing and risk of harm cases
- All partners need to ensure that trauma informed practice is integrated into their service delivery.

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:

- The YJS has a number of policies, procedures and guidance in place that enable staff to carry out their responsibilities. All staff (15/15) in the Inspectorate's staff survey reported that they understood 'quite well, or very well' the policies and procedures that applied to their roles.
- Policies are regularly reviewed. For example, a key document called the 'Swindon YJS - case formulation, sentence planning and family led plans approach' was initially produced on 11 June 2021 and then reviewed on 13 April 2022.
- The out-of-court disposal policy has undergone an equality impact assessment to ensure that children with protected characteristics receive fair outcomes. This is good practice.
- Services for children are delivered in accessible places and safe environments. The Swindon office has a sensory room, and the layout was designed in consultation with children and volunteers. Images of weapons awareness programmes, rules and sanctions were taken down and replaced with images of positivity, strength, and the future. This has enabled staff to engage more effectively with children.
- ICT access, enabling staff to carry out planning, service delivery and reviewing mostly works well. Staff can work effectively from office and remote bases.
- There are a range of quality assurance processes which include random and scheduled auditing, deep dives and thematics. The QAPIB (QA Board) arrangements work well.
- There are effective processes in place to ensure that the YJS learns from things that go wrong. These include critical learning reviews and audits. Learning is disseminated very well across the partnership.
- Views of children and their parent/carers are sought both formally, at key stages of the supervisory process and on completion of interventions.

Areas for improvement:

- Not all staff know how to access some specialist services within the partnership. This leads to some unmet needs.
- Some management information that is available and presented to the management board is too broad and lacks detail. For example, not all protected characteristics are covered in reporting and the reasons for the exclusion of children from mainstream education are not fully examined and understood.
- The Inspectorate's survey found that for a small number of staff (02/15), IT did not work very well.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

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 32 children who consented, and 13 children replied. We also spoke to 14 children who had accessed the service and four parents/carers.

Swindon YJS values, collects, and proactively considers the views of children and their parents and carers. It gathers and captures their feedback in different ways, including an effective youth board, peer advocates, regular consultation events, surveys, audits, and end of intervention feedback. The service can show how, on many occasions, the contributions of children and their parents and carers have had a direct impact on informing service delivery. For instance, changes in the girl's intervention and the addition of a module in the weapons awareness programme. The 'village circle' initiative provides space for parents and carers to obtain support and provide insight into the quality of services their children are receiving. Irrespective of the number of parents attending, the sessions are never cancelled, and this is a credit to the service, its volunteers, and parenting workers.

In our telephone and face to face interviews, all 14 children reported that they understood what the YJS is trying to achieve. When asked if they thought the staff had the right skills, they all responded 'yes'. Comments from children included:

"They (YJS practitioners) have sat down with me, looked at what things led me to getting into trouble and then put together work that helps me to realise who I hurt. That's made a real difference for me. I can now see how I hurt my mom and how others could have been hurt. I was not thinking at the time and just saw it as an opportunity to join my mate. Now I can see how to think things through fully first."

"They have helped me to get back into attending more at school. I was going now and again because I started working. But now it's on my order, I got to go school or go back to Court. It's not good that I lost my job because of it, but school is going OK. I have seen the nurse as well which is good because I am into fitness so that's good to see someone to talk about your health."

"YOT has helped me lots. Getting driving theory test, helping me get a job and a CV, mental health support and helped me get contraception. Without YOT I wouldn't be in the position I am now. Help me feel confident."

"I worked with the YJS about six or seven months ago. It's like they could see I was in self-destruct. They made me feel welcome and they really understood me. There were a lot of problems going on for me with my mental health and this was affecting my family as well, so they helped us all do some family work."

Parents and carers stated:

"The worker was so nice. She kept me updated and gave me a chance to share my worries about my son. It helped me think a lot about where and why things had gone wrong for us."

"The family session really helped repair our family. My son was able to develop coping skills and he was a changed person."

"The level of care they show to you in a time of difficulty and stress means so much. It gave us an opportunity to overcome our difficulties in a safe way."

Diversity

The information below highlights some of the staffing and children diversity data held by the YJS.

- 27.5 per cent of children on the current caseload are girls.
- 88 per cent of staff working in the YOT are female.
- 12.5 per cent of children in the area covered by the YOT are black, Asian or minority ethnic, and 12.5 per cent of children on the current caseload are black, Asian or minority ethnic.
- 4 per cent of staff working in the YOT are black, Asian or minority ethnic.
- 37.5 per cent of children on the current caseload have a learning disability, a learning difficulty or an education, health, and care plan.
- 55 per cent of current caseload with protected characteristics (sexuality, disability, religion, other ethnicity etc).

Work aimed at reducing disproportionality and maximising positive outcomes for children is progressing well. The inclusion of diversity is firmly integrated into the Youth Justice Service strategic plan (2022/2023). This is supported by a well evidence informed action plan to which it holds itself and its partnership to account. The partnership actively seeks the views of children and their parents and carers and is not afraid of challenging feedback. For example, direct feedback from the girls group resulted in changes to the content of the programme. Children are empowered to take personal responsibility and lead by example. The charity event at the Swindon Town Football Club raising funds for Afghan refugees, in which over 50 children from different lived experiences participated, is a notable achievement and celebration of diversity.

The YJS uses a number of platforms to learn and develop its understanding of effective diversity work. The regular and scheduled 'Let's talk about disproportionality' sessions provide a positive tool that enables staff to develop understanding and confidence. The 'communication passport', which flags the speech and language needs of children is used well to help effective communication.

The diversity of the board and YJS workforce needs to be enhanced. Additionally consideration, analysis, and action are needed across all protected characteristics at a strategic level across the partnership. Diversity information, although not across all protected characteristics, is collected, analysed, learning identified, and action take to address deficits.

The Rapid Assessment Tool used in out-of-court work needs to be reviewed to tighten up the recording and assessment of diversity information. More guidance is needed in the out-of-court policy to help practitioners understand how to address diversity needs.

The YJS has undertaken thematic reviews to improve its understanding of children from different backgrounds. A willingness to learn and develop has introduced staff to the neurodiversity needs of children. The YJS shows courage in overcoming structural barriers that have led to poorer outcomes for YJS children.

Our case findings show that diversity issues are assessed well, appropriate plans produced, and services delivered with a central focus on diversity in most cases reviewed (between 77 per cent and 92 per cent).

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 13 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.

Outstanding

Our rating³ 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?	92%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	100%

Overall assessment work to support children to not re-offending is a strength. Practitioners take an analytical approach to understanding a child's offending and make good use of historical and current information. They understand diversity needs well. We found that practitioners had made good use of information held by partner agencies in their assessment enquiries. Additionally, they sought to understand the child's level of maturity in most cases. Assessment consistently focussed on the strengths of the child. The needs of victims were not always considered robustly enough at the beginning of the assessment process.

Practitioners consistently welcomed and included the voices of children and their parents and carers. This informed their understanding of the causes of the child's offending behaviour.

Assessment activity sought to identify any risks to the child's safety and wellbeing in most cases. Practitioners appropriately collected and absorbed relevant information from other agencies and used it well to better understand the risks to the child's safety.

Assessments to identify all relevant factors linked to keeping other people safe were completed well. We found that practitioners had effectively identified the potential individuals who were at risk from the child as well as the nature of that risk. The consideration of historical information about past offending was robust and information, where held about previous and current behaviours, by other agencies, was used well. This included wider anti-social behaviours, episodes where the child had gone missing, peer associations and family dynamics. Additionally, the impact of potential controls and interventions to mitigate risk of harm to others was explored well.

³ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

2.2. Planning



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

Good

Our rating⁴ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	92%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	85%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	69%

Planning activity to address desistance was individualised and jointly undertaken with the children. In almost every case, planning was proportionate to the disposal and targets agreed were achievable within the timeframes. Plans were aligned with other agencies to prevent repetition and help the child and their family to understand the roles of each service. There was an appropriate balance of attention to both strengths and areas of concern, and practitioners explored the child's motivation and maturity well. In many cases, provision had been put in place to facilitate access to mainstream services, such as working with the Nelson Trust, IPSUM music project and helping the child to secure their CSCS card. Additionally in almost all of the inspected cases diversity needs had been considered. For example, practitioners liaised with the speech and language therapist, the nurse and education worker for guidance on designing a plan that met the child's needs.

Planning to address children's safety and wellbeing was largely done well. Where required, there was effective engagement with other agencies to ensure that plans were aligned, and the role of each service was clear, including attendance at multi-agency and safety and wellbeing panel meetings in the future. Inspectors found that practitioner's analysis of family circumstances and the child's health, including any histories of self-harm was completed well. This helped them to make referrals to specialist services and identify suitable interventions to mitigate risk.

Planning to keep other people safe was variable and requires further development. Too often planning failed to appropriately promote the safety of other people. The specific concerns of actual victims and needs of potential victims were not consistently covered well. Furthermore, much more diligence was needed to gather information from public protection partners especially in cases which had been classified as low to medium risk. Planning did not set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people in almost one third of the inspected cases. The weakest area by far was contingency planning. Here, referrals to the risk management panel and/or taking enforcement action were frequently described as the only courses of response. Some practitioners reported being confused by the risk management plans.

⁴ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁵ 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?	92%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	85%

Practitioners are skilled at developing and maintaining meaningful relationships with children and families that lead to positive outcomes. Children accessed a number of services which addressed areas of concern, including pro-offending identities, education, and emotional wellbeing. They were also signposted to various opportunities to build on strengths and encouraged to access mainstream services which included Iprovefit (a mentoring service) and IPSUM, a music project. In every inspected case, sequencing of interventions and the delivery of services was proportionate and achievable within the timescales.

Practitioners were proactive in overcoming structural barriers when agencies were not meeting the child's needs. In one case, a child from a Gypsy traveller background who had experienced considerable discrimination, was supported to complete a CSCS card on a one-to-one basis with a specialist provider (Disability Experts). In another example, a girl who had been in a controlling relationship was supported by in-house services and a Young Women's Criminal Justice Keyworker from the Nelson Trust.

Delivery to keep children safe was of high quality and effective in almost every case reviewed by inspectors. Planned work was delivered, and work focused on keeping the child safe. This included the risks of possessing weapons, exploitation, and emotional regulation. Practitioners have made good use of specialist services such as, the edge of care team, the YJS nurse CAMHS (and FCAMHS) and speech and language therapy. In one case, advice provided by FCAMHS through case formulation was disseminated to other professionals to support work on keeping the child safe. Interventions involved a whole-family approach, with partners working collaboratively to support the child and family.

Work to keep other people safe would benefit from further quality assurance. Not all cases had been given sufficient attention to the safety and protection of actual and potential victims. Here, victim awareness work was often not delivered in a timely way and information from the daily risk meetings was not always integrated well into the delivery of services.

⁵ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

2.4. Reviewing



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

Good

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

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	100%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	92%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	77%

The reviewing of work to assess the impact of interventions on reducing reoffending is strong. Practitioners carry complete, formal, informal, and dynamic reviews as personal circumstances change. Consideration of a child's strengths and their diversity needs, as well as an analysis of personal and familial circumstances, are visible consistently in casework.

Practitioners consistently reviewed children's motivation and suitably considered any barriers that they identified whether individual or structural. Discussions with children and their parents and carers was evidenced well in almost all the inspected cases. This helped practitioners to gain a fuller understanding of the children's broader day to day lived experiences and empowered parents and carers to actively become involved in their children's supervision.

The quality of reviewing activity in keeping children safe was mostly done well in the cases inspected. Where required, reviewing responded appropriately to changes linked to safety and wellbeing, in particular criminal exploitation, and threats to the child's family members. Information was obtained from other agencies that were involved, and plans were adjusted to support ongoing work. This methodical approach was helping children to better understand how their wellbeing needs were changing. This awareness was helping them to build on the progress they were making. In one case, a referral to a domestic abuse charity was agreed by the child following positive engagements with their case manager and disclosure about the harm they had encountered.

Practitioners did not always respond effectively to changes in factors related to risk of harm. This meant that plans to protect others from harm were not amended. In a number of medium risk of harm cases, we found significant delays in case managers effectively responding to new information from children. Additionally, intelligence from daily risk briefings did not always change what work was carried out to protect others. Written reviews were completed in a timely manner in almost all cases, as required. This ensured that other practitioners involved in delivering risk of harm work had access to up-to-date information.

⁶ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 13 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of two youth conditional cautions and 11 community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in 10 cases.

3.1. Assessment



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁷ 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?	85%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	92%

In all cases, the practitioner had sought to understand the responsibility the child took for their behaviour, attitude towards their offending and reasons for becoming involved in offending. This forensic method enabled practitioners to delve deeper into the child's identity and how adverse childhood experiences may have contributed to their offending. Diversity issues were analysed well, and inspectors found a robust analysis of strengths and areas of concern. The examination of the child's familial and social circumstances was strikingly strong, and practitioners understood the impact of early traumatic experiences on presenting behaviours. Assessments were enhanced by multi-agency case formulations at the YJS OOC panel and consultations from specialist service providers, for example health and education. Practitioners took time to appropriately assess if there were any structural barriers affecting the child's progress.

Practitioners had appropriately used a broad range of information from other agencies to support their assessments of children's safety. In almost all cases reviewed, there was a clear written assessment of the child's safety and wellbeing. Issues around neglect, separation and the impact of poor emotional wellbeing were recognised well. While the risks to others were generally understood well, in just under a quarter of the inspected cases, the analysis of risks to others was not detailed enough and practitioners had not fully used information from all available sources. Intelligence from the police was a strength. Inspectors found that in several cases, practitioners utilised their professional judgements well. This ensured that the needs of victims were understood more fully. Additionally, there was a good focus on potential triggers that could lead to harm being caused to others.

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

3.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁸ 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?	85%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	85%

Planning to tackle desistance took a whole family approach, was personalised, and co-produced with the children. In all the inspected cases, planning was appropriate to the disposal imposed and targets agreed were realistic and achievable within the timeframes. The strengths in the partnership ensured that plans were aligned with those completed by other agencies. There was a proportionate focus on both strengths, protective factors and areas of concern, and practitioners took into account the child's motivation and maturity well. In many cases, services had been included to support access to mainstream services, such as joining a boxing club and the completion of the ASDAN 'Lifeskills Challenge'. In almost all cases, diversity needs had been considered well. For example, practitioners liaised with the education worker, nurse, and speech and language therapist for advice on developing a plan that fully met the child's needs.

Planning to address children's safety and wellbeing was done well overall. There was effective liaison with other agencies to ensure that plans fitted together well, and the role of each service provider was clearly understood, including attendance at future strategy discussions meetings. Inspectors observed good partnership work with CAMHS, U-turn and mentoring services. Practitioners had identified referrals to specialist services, but contingency planning was variable and needs further attention.

While overall planning to keep others safe was sufficient, consideration given to the needs of actual and potential victims was inconsistent. Too often intelligence was not used effectively to inform plans and keep others safe from harm. There were opportunities for external controls to be put in place, but this did not always happen. Relevant agencies were identified in planning to keep others safe and risk management is seen as a shared responsibility among public protection agencies. Planning included information-sharing arrangements and a commitment to future meetings to review risks. In planning to keep others safe, contingency planning was sufficient in most of the inspected cases. However, inspectors found that the OOOD assessment tool did not adequately prompt the practitioner to consider the actions required should risks change.

⁸ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating⁹ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	100%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	85%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	77%

The quality of services delivered to help children to not commit further offences was impressive. We found examples where emotional wellbeing support, pastoral meetings at school, and speech and language interventions were provided, and these were improving the child's emotional wellbeing and supporting desistance. Restorative justice activity did not however always directly link to repairing harm. Many of the letters of apology reviewed by inspectors were suitable with good reflection and empathy from children. Practitioners had regular contact with children and their parents and carers, with high levels of engagement. We found strong advocacy from practitioners to actively support positive education outcomes. Additionally, the Spectra developmental learning programme supporting life and work skills, delivered by the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service, was helping children to build a pro-social identity.

Service delivery to keep children safe was not consistently done well in every case. There were some delays in responses from some partners, including children's social care. Furthermore, in one case a safety and wellbeing plan was not completed, a referral to the MASH not timely and the risk level was not reviewed following the child being assaulted. However, work with partners to keep children safe was generally satisfactory. Although could be enhanced with further examination about effectiveness. Initial deficits in assessment and planning for this work were leaving some children's safety and wellbeing needs unaddressed. The YJS has strong assurance and gatekeeping systems in place which are used consistently well.

In a number of inspected cases, not enough services were delivered to keep other people safe. There was evidence of daily risk briefings taking place but information from these meetings did not always lead to activity. The attention paid to the needs of potential and actual victims needs to be stronger. In one case, inspectors found that mediation with neighbours was explored well and joint interventions with the housing department, were creating safer and healthier relationships. We also found evidence of worksheets being completed and individualised weapons awareness sessions taking place.

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 on our website.](#)

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:

- There is clear protocol in place with Wiltshire Police setting out a locally negotiated out-of-court disposal policy. This includes joint and defensible decision-making.
- The out-of-court policy is comprehensive and supported by guidance notes. It effectively covers pre-panel, at panel and post panel information gathering, eligibility criteria, exceptional offences, enforcement, escalation arrangements, decision making in cases where children have previous offending histories, liaison arrangements with partners and diversion.
- Arrangements are in place to ensure that the voice of victims, children and their parents and carers are included in the decision-making process.
- The YJS has an out-of-court (named locally YRI) multi-agency disposal panel with the appropriate level of representation. This includes, the police, YJS managers, who chair the meetings, youth engagement service practitioners (early help services), restorative justice/victim liaison practitioner and a social work manager.
- Compliance procedures are clear and YJS practitioners can return to the panel when children are not engaging. An independent enforcement officer sits on the panel and is able to hold workers to account. These arrangements work well.
- The YRI panel has access to the same range of interventions that are available for post court cases. Interventions are strength based, future focussed and aimed at achieving positive outcomes for children.
- The YJS uses several comprehensive methods of evaluation across the OOC provision to ensure effectiveness.

Areas for improvement:

- The OOC policy does not provide robust instruction to staff about what effective diversity work looks like. It simply reads, 'to work in a non-discriminatory manner and consider Equality Act legislation at all times'.
- External scrutiny of the YRI panel needs to be enhanced.
- The Rapid Assessment Tool needs to be reviewed to ensure that staff are not confused by the listing of diversity and disproportionality together as areas to explore in the assessment.
- The Rationale screening tool does not allow for diversity and trauma considerations.
- The youth conditional caution information leaflet is not child-friendly.

4.1. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Good

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

Our key findings were as follows.

Strengths:

- The 'Enhanced Constructive Resettlement Policy 2022' is supported by a comprehensive document providing advice on what practitioners should and should not do. Pathways including suitable accommodation, health, ETE all feature well in the policy. The five principles of constructive resettlement are embedded well and support the achievement of positive outcomes.
- An emphasis on developing a pro-social identity is strong and this was demonstrated in all the cases reviewed by inspectors.
- The policy identifies the centrality of the principles of constructive resettlement including well-coordinated services with network partners. The need for effective communication and information exchange with partners, providers and other key stake holders is explicit in the document. The cases we reviewed evidenced this taking place in practice.
- The YJS approach to resettlement ensures that the three domains of risk are discussed and managed appropriately, with referrals to the risk, safety and wellbeing panels including MAPPA screening.
- The resettlement policy has regularly been reviewed and modified in line with the development of the service's operating model. Procedures and processes surrounding resettlement have been revised to reflect the underpinning principles of constructive resettlement as an evidence-based approach to intervention.
- All children in custody are engaged via the ASDAN Lifeskills Challenge accredited resettlement programme. This supports children with identity development, confidence for release from custody and successful onward ETE pathways.

Areas for improvement:

- There has been no specific resettlement training for staff. Practitioners have largely relied on their own experiences and applied learning from other training they have attended.
- There is not enough focus in the resettlement policy on addressing the needs of victims.

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.](#)