

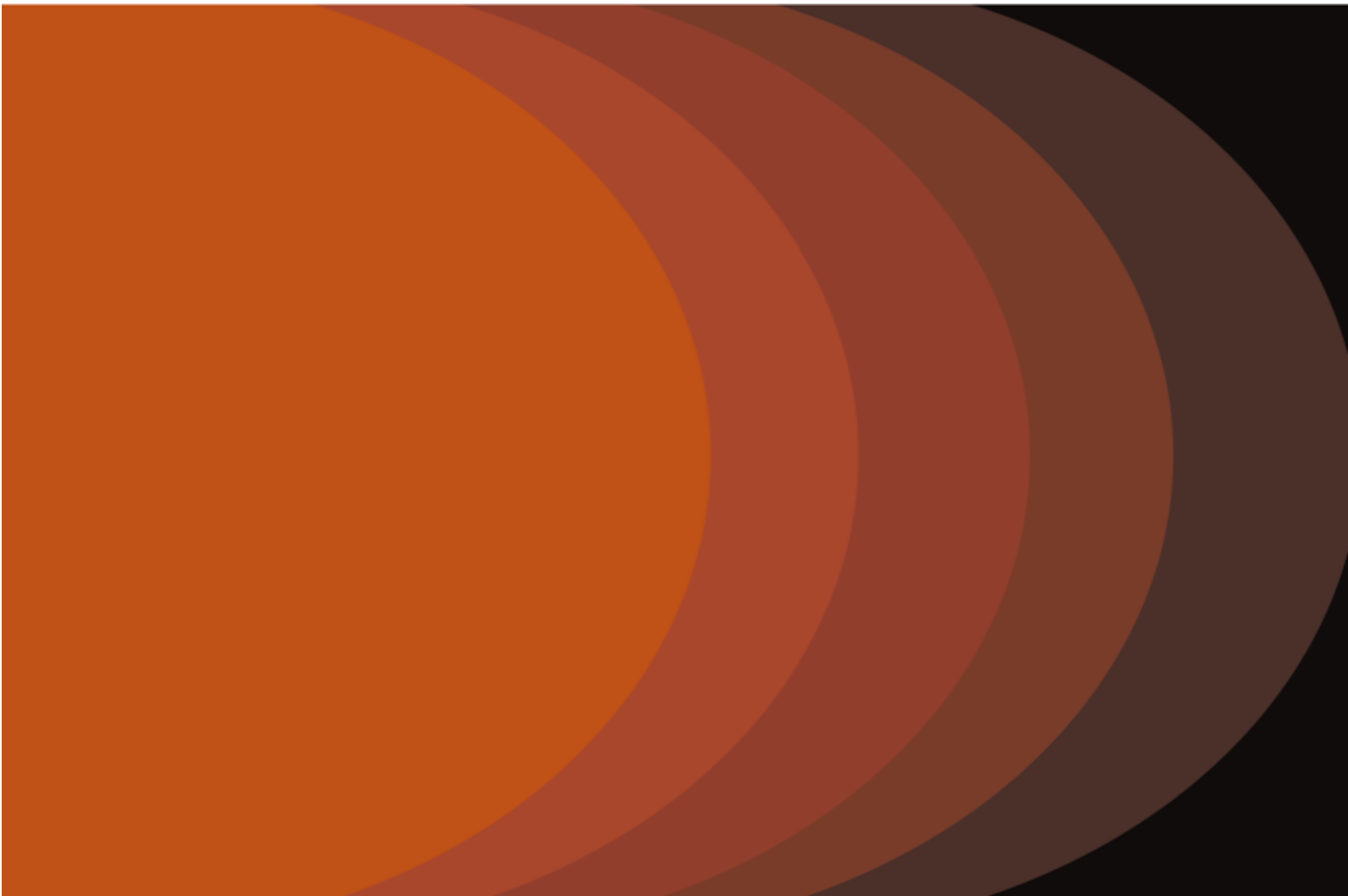


HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in

Barnsley

HM Inspectorate of Probation, May 2023



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

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Foreword

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

The vision in Barnsley is to deliver high-quality services that meet children's individual needs, by taking a child-centred approach and through relational practice. The service does this well. Staff are passionate, committed, and proactive in their engagement of children and families. There is a consistent focus on diversity in all elements of practice, and work to support desistance is strong. The service has developed a wide range of services to meet the identified desistance needs of the cohort and we saw some excellent examples of partner agencies working together to support children and families.

The delivery of services to children on statutory court orders consistently met our standards, across assessment, planning, intervention and reviewing. In every case we saw a strengths-based approach and attention was paid to understanding the child's maturity, ability, and motivation to change. High-quality resettlement work was supported by a good-quality policy that promotes best practice. Statutory case work was well balanced, with children's needs, their safety and wellbeing, and the protection of the public considered equally.

However, practice was less consistent for children who are subject to out-of-court disposals, and these cases currently make up 80 per cent of the YJS cohort. The out-of-court policy is not jointly produced with the police, and police involvement in out-of-court practice was not as strong or developed as we have seen in other youth justice services. Management oversight needs to improve to identify and address deficits in work to support the child's safety and wellbeing and manage risk of harm to others in out-of-court work.















There have been gaps in attendance from some key partners on the board for a prolonged period. This has included inconsistent attendance by an appropriate senior police representative, and commissioning and probation partners attendance has been variable. This meant we could not be confident that YJS children were being consistently advocated for in all services.

The recommendations in this report have been designed to assist Barnsley Youth Justice Service to build on its strengths and focus on areas for improvement.



Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Barnsley Youth Justice Service		Score	19/36
Fieldwork started May 2023			
Overall rating		Good	
1. Organisational delivery			
1.1	Governance and leadership	Requires improvement	
1.2	Staff	Good	
1.3	Partnerships and services	Good	
1.4	Information and facilities	Good	
2. Court disposals			
2.1	Assessment	Outstanding	
2.2	Planning	Good	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Good	
2.4	Reviewing	Outstanding	
3. Out-of-court disposals			
3.1	Assessment	Requires improvement	
3.2	Planning	Inadequate	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Inadequate	
3.4	Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	Requires improvement	
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 six recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of youth justice services in Barnsley. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth justice services, and better protect the public.

The Barnsley Youth Justice Service should:

1. together with South Yorkshire Police, review the out-of-court provision and ensure there is a suitable policy in place that pays attention to risk management and safety and wellbeing, and that this is understood by all staff
2. support staff through training, guidance, and effective management oversight to deliver effective risk management and safeguarding work in all aspects of practice
3. increase and diversify the pool of YJS referral order panel volunteers.

The chair of the Barnsley Youth Crime and Anti-social Behaviour Board should:

4. take the necessary measures to improve the YJS's ability to produce data reports that provide the right level of detail to understand the needs of children on out-of-court disposals
5. further develop the processes to monitor and track progress against all strategic priorities and to oversee the quality of YJS practice.

South Yorkshire Police should:

6. work with the YJS to review the policy and provision for out-of-court disposals and prioritise the consistent attendance of a senior representative at the Barnsley Youth Crime and Anti-social Behaviour Board.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Barnsley YJS over a period of a week, beginning on 24 April 2023. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began between 25 April 2022 and 17 February 2023; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 25 April 2022 and 17 February 2023; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between 25 April 2022 and 17 February 2023. We also conducted 16 interviews with case managers.

Barnsley YJS is part of children's services and sits in the portfolio of the Director for Education, Early Start and Prevention. This aligns the YJS with special educational needs and disability (SEND) services, early help, targeted youth support, and other services in the directorate.

Ofsted's last inspection of children's social care, in 2018, rated children's services as 'Good'. However, a focused visit in January 2023 noted a decline in the quality of practice in some areas. The SEND inspection in 2021 required the local authority to submit a written statement of action. This was also the case following a Joint targeted area inspection, which was undertaken in May 2022. South Yorkshire Police covers the Barnsley area, and its practice was assessed as 'Good' in most areas by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services in 2022.

In 2014, Barnsley YJS introduced a diversion intervention as a direct alternative to youth cautions. This was initiated to reduce the high number of first-time entrants, and offers an intervention before, not after, a youth caution is issued. In 2019 the service introduced a triage panel, which sat in the targeted youth support team. In 2021, the out-of-court disposal team moved under the youth justice service, and since that time the use of Outcome 22 has grown exponentially. Out-of-court disposal cases make up 80 per cent of the youth justice service cohort of children, and the large majority of these are diversionary interventions that will be recorded by the police as an Outcome 22.

Since 2018, the use of youth conditional cautions in Barnsley has reduced by 88 per cent. The use of youth cautions has reduced by 90 per cent, and youth rehabilitation orders by 96 per cent. These reductions are significantly greater than across other Yorkshire areas. Published data shows that reoffending rates for children subject to post-court interventions in Barnsley are lower than the national rates. Additionally, re-offending data gathered by the service using a live tracker for out of court disposal cases is equally positive. Published data shows that the service has performed well against the national key performance indicator to reduce first time entrants. Numbers reduced by 46 per cent between 2017 and 2021 and remain significantly lower than the national average.

The children in the YJS reflect the local community in terms of ethnicity. There is no over-representation of any minority ethnic groups. There is an over-representation of children with SEND, both diagnosed and undiagnosed. The number of girls in the YJS is slightly higher than the national average, and there is a slight over-representation of children in the care of the local authority.

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 12 meetings, including with staff, volunteers, managers, board members, and partnership staff and their managers.

1.1. Governance and leadership



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

Requires improvement

Strengths:

- The Youth Crime and Anti-social Behaviour Board has an agreed strategic plan, produced with input from staff and a group of children, parents, and carers.
- Board members receive detailed performance reports showing changes in the cohort, offending types, and profiles of children.
- The service has been on a continuous improvement journey over the past two years, driven by its high aspirations for children. This is reflected in the vision and strategy which focuses on improving opportunities and outcomes for children through relational practice that focuses on their individual needs. This was evident as a strength in the casework scores for supporting desistance.
- Staff have confidence and trust in the YJS management team.
- There has been consistent board attendance from some board members, such as the Community Safety Partnership, and the Police and Crime Commissioner. The board has some non-statutory members, such as Barnsley College, providing opportunities to address any barriers to children accessing the college
- In response to a high level of need in relation to education, the violence reduction unit is contributing to the funding of a learning mentor in the YJS.
- Governance arrangements include the oversight of delivery plans, and this has translated into effective supervision of post-court and resettlement work.

Areas for improvement:

- There has been inconsistent board attendance by an appropriate senior police representative. Attendance by commissioning and probation partners has also been variable.
- Governance arrangements include the oversight of delivery plans, but this has not translated into the effective supervision of out-of-court disposal work.
- It was not clear how the service is tracking and monitoring progress against some of its strategic priorities, such as improving educational outcomes for children and addressing the disproportionate numbers of children with SEND entering the service.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Strengths:

- Staff are highly motivated to deliver good-quality services to children and their families, to include them in all aspects of work and meet their individual needs.
- Staffing levels are planned and reviewed to meet the changing needs of the YJS cohort.
- Staff have strong communication skills and take a proactive approach to engaging children and families. We received feedback from 19 children and/or their parent or carers, who valued the skills and approach of staff. The staff team has a varied skillset to meet the diverse needs of children.
- Staff training has included trauma-informed approaches, and cognitive behavioural and dialectical behavioural therapy. The management team has completed leadership training.
- There is an effective induction process in place that supports staff to understand their role and responsibilities and sets expectations for practice.
- There has been an audit to establish staff's confidence in cultural competence, and training was put in place in response to this.
- Managers recognise and highlight exceptional work in the 'Wrap' newsletter, 'staff shout out' and 'thank you Thursdays'.
- Staff feel their wellbeing needs are taken seriously, that they receive consistent support from managers and that the service promotes a good work/life balance. Staff feel appreciated and fully engaged with the service.

Areas for improvement:

- The rationale for the current structure is that the higher risk statutory cases are held by the most qualified staff; however, this does not take into account that some of the most complex and high-risk cases currently are out-of-court disposals. An imminent restructure is pending which will align the structure to meet the needs of the service.
- For the past 12 months there has only been one volunteer referral order panel member. Managers have been trying to address this for some time and have recently successfully recruited a further two volunteers.
- Most staff had not had any specific training in relation to identifying, understanding, and managing risk of harm.
- Staff are satisfied with the frequency and quality of their supervision, but it does not consistently enhance the quality of work delivered to children. In out-of-court cases, management oversight was sufficient in less than half of cases. In post-court work, it was effective in two-thirds of cases.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Good

Strengths:

- There is an up-to-date strategic and operational analysis of children's desistance needs. The analysis pays attention to diversity and disproportionality.
- A variety of engaging reparation projects have been developed, which are well coordinated and managed by a motivated lead worker from Remedi.
- The pathways in place for children displaying harmful sexual behaviour reflect best practice.
- The YJS has its full allocated probation officer resource.
- Parenting officers deliver one-to-one and group interventions.
- The boys' group is delivered at Barnsley Football Club, promoting community integration through access to the wider sporting activities available there.
- The YJS group work offer has been developed to offer a range of interventions to meet a spectrum of needs.
- Partnership managers have a broad understanding of the specialist work their staff undertake with YJS children, and there is regular supervision, joint oversight, and communication with relevant YJS team managers.
- Sentencers have confidence in the quality of YJS court work and the bespoke plans that are put in place for children.
- Remedi is commissioned to undertake victim contact and is effective in obtaining the views and wishes of victims. In 2022/2023, 96 victims were contacted and 58 of these engaged with the YJS in some capacity. There were 24 direct restorative interventions.
- There is swift access to CAMHS and to substance misuse services, and access to forensic CAMHS for acute cases. There is a liaison and diversion worker in the custody suite, who can assess children and share information with the YJS to help inform assessments.
- There is a focus on education, with a seconded senior education welfare officer embedded in the team, as well as a learning disability nurse who provides support for children with learning disabilities, speech, language and communication, and neurodevelopmental needs. There is a pastoral education, training and employment mentor who offers intensive support to 10 children and families.
- Most partnership staff are co-located with the YJS team, fostering a shared child-first approach. Access to partnership services is speedy and adds value to the work delivered to children.

- We saw some good examples of work with children's social care, with YJS staff and social workers working closely together to engage children and families and put appropriate plans in place to address identified needs.

Areas for improvement:

- In a small number of cases, inspectors felt there was a role for children's social care, but the case was either closed when the YJS began working with the child, or the safeguarding concerns that were highlighted had not resulted in input or support from children's social care.
- Inspectors noted that the police did not always respond to YJS staff's requests for information in a timely way to support the effective management of risk.

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:

- An appropriate range of accessible policies guides the work of the YJS, including a protocol between the YJS and children's social care, and policies for transition to probation, home visits and working off-site.
- Changes to policies are communicated well; for example, they are shared at Team meetings and in the QA section of the 'Wrap' newsletter.
- Two years ago, the YJS moved to a new location where children are not allowed. This has been a challenge for staff, but they have responded by being child-centred and flexible. They have seen children at school, home, and local youth centres. A new building has been secured that will support and promote the relational approach that the YJS seeks to provide.
- The children and parents we spoke to said that they felt the environments they were seen in were accessible, suitable and safe.
- Twenty-two out of 23 staff responding to our survey felt the IT available to them (such as laptops, Wi-Fi, remote access, and the case management system) worked 'very well' or 'quite well'. One person thought it did not work very well.
- YJS staff have access to up-to-date school attendance data for children who attend maintained schools, and they can also access the children's social care database, which supports their work with children.
- Board members have been involved in undertaking 'deep dive' audits and use the learning to consider how they can improve their own service delivery.
- Feedback from children and their parents or carers is sought at the end of interventions, and emerging themes are identified. The YJS follows a similar process in relation to feedback from victims. Children and their parents or carers have been involved in designing the new building, and children are routinely part of staff interview panels.

Areas for improvement:

- Audit activity had not identified deficits in the quality of risk of harm and safety and wellbeing work in out-of-court disposal cases.
- There are challenges with extracting some aspects of data for out-of-court disposal cases from the current database, for example on desistance needs. This cannot currently be done easily and is impacting on the understanding of outcomes and progress for this cohort of children. While the leadership team are aware of this and are exploring how to improve it, this is currently a knowledge gap.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The board incorporates the views of children and their parents or carers into the local strategy. Children's participation is a key objective and priority in the current strategic plan. Children have been actively involved in designing the new YJS and leaving care premises, providing direct input into how the space should be used and furnished. Some staff that we spoke to said that they were interviewed by children as part of their recruitment and selection process, and that they felt this was an important part of the process.

The YJS contacted, on our behalf, children who had open cases at the time of the inspection, and their parents or carers, to gain their consent for a text survey. We delivered the survey independently to the 20 children, parents and carers who consented, and 12 replied.

When asked how they rated the service they had received from the YJS, eight responded with a score of 10 out of 10, one with nine out of 10, and three with eight out of 10.

One parent told us:

"I give the top score as my daughter's worker has been brilliant. My daughter has now settled back into school and is on the right path for her future. Since she has been meeting with her worker, she has put all her efforts into school exams, stayed within her boundaries and been more settled at home and in school."

One child who gave the service a 10 told us:

"The service the YJS gives me is amazing! Being with them has helped me get a better sense of myself and they have helped me with a therapist to deal with the issues that had been neglected in my life, they have also helped me be able to secure a job placement that will hopefully go from a temporary placement into a permanent one!"

Another parent commented:

"They do everything they possibly can for my son, and they are patient with him as he struggles to trust people and he also has post-traumatic stress disorder."

Seven children, parents and carers responded to our telephone contact and were complimentary about the service they received. Children who are being supervised by the YJS and their parents know what the YJS aims to do. They think the workers have the right skills for the job. All but one respondent felt there had been access to the services the child needed. All felt that the YJS makes sure children are seen in places where they feel comfortable and safe.

Some positive responses from parents included:

"They have helped him get his education, health, and care plan (EHCP) and access CAMHS, which he had difficulties doing via the school. He goes to young men's group and likes it. Barnsley FC will start next week."

"The senior learning disability nurse works with him around getting assessed for autism. She has noticed this and the YOT worker has worked alongside the nurse. We have regular task meetings, and they join this every time."

"They brought all the help I need into house as a family. I honestly think if we had not been involved with them as a service, we would not be where we are now."

Diversity

- Staff are highly motivated to deliver good-quality services to children and their families, to include them in all aspects of work and meet their individual needs. Practice to address diversity was 'Outstanding' across all areas, in both out-of-court and post-court cases.
- There has been an audit to establish the level of staff's confidence in cultural competence, and training was put in place in response to this.
- At a board level, there is, alongside detailed analysis of disproportionality related to educational needs and gender, a good awareness of the range of additional vulnerabilities prevalent among children the YJS is working with. There is a good understanding of the local community and issues that affect it, such as poverty, domestic violence and intergenerational offending and lack of opportunity.
- The gendered approach taken by the service is a strength and recognises the challenges that children can face in establishing their identity in adolescence. Discussion on themes of toxic masculinity and bias, as well as healthy attitudes and relationships, are facilitated by skilled practitioners. Equally, the girls' groups explored the challenges that girls face and the specific experiences that can lead them into offending and what it might take to help them move on.
- The boys' group is being delivered in an area where many of the children involved with YJS live, who may have difficulties accessing the town centre.
- The support available to children from the learning and disability nurse, senior educational welfare officer, learning mentor and soon-to-be-appointed speech, language and communication worker reflected the service's commitment to attending to the needs of children with SEND, who are over-represented in the service.
- The YJS head of service and chair of the board delivered a presentation to the Integrated Care Board on the links between poverty and youth offending. The aim was to encourage health partners to consider whether support might be offered to children and families earlier to try to prevent future offending.
- All staff responding to our survey felt that their individual diversity needs were recognised and responded to.

Areas for improvement:

- Not all policies and procedures pay sufficient attention to diversity issues, for example the risk of harm policy (2023) and the safeguarding policy (2021).
- Evaluation over time would help the YJS and partnership to assess if it is achieving success against its target to reduce the numbers of children with SEND entering the YJS.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at six community sentences and no custodial 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

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	83%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	83%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	83%

Assessment of desistance factors was strong. Staff gained a thorough understanding of children and their wider familial and social contexts. They routinely paid attention to diversity and children's individual needs. In all but one case, they achieved this by liaising effectively with partner agencies to access information they held to help to gain the fullest understanding of the child and their circumstances. Children and their parents or carers were involved in the assessment process in every case, and their perspectives, views and concerns were taken on board.

Assessment of victims' needs and wishes was sufficient in all but one relevant case, which supported and enhanced opportunities for restorative justice. In every case we saw a strengths-based approach and attention was paid to understanding the child's maturity, ability, and motivation to change. In every case, the case manager considered and addressed structural barriers that might impede the child's progress.

Assessment of a child's safety and wellbeing included information from other agencies in all but one case. The YJS had access to the children's social care case management system and could complete checks on past and present contact. Inspectors agreed with the assessed level of risk to the child's safety and wellbeing in every case, and case managers demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the factors that were or could have an impact on the child's safety.

We expect to see an analysis of how other people will be kept safe when there are signs that the child could present a risk of harm to others. There were significant concerns in some of the cases we inspected, and these were analysed consistently well. Case managers considered current and historical issues and behaviours, which in turn resulted in balanced and well-reasoned assessments. In all but one case, inspectors saw evidence that case managers had used information from other agencies and sources, all of which informed active and effective risk management.

2.2. Planning



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

Good

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

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	67%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	67%

Planning set out the services most likely to support desistance in every case we inspected. It was clear how the work would be sequenced accordingly, to prioritise the delivery of interventions to address the child's needs. In every case, planning considered diversity factors, referring to how work with the child should be adapted where this was needed. The child's level of maturity and ability to engage were considered, as were strengths and protective factors that would be developed to promote the child's resilience. Children and their parents or carers were involved in the planning process, which meant the objectives were relevant to them and the areas where they felt support was needed. Planning addressed the desistance factors that had been identified in the assessment in every case.

Planning to support the child's safety met our standards in four out of six cases. In the two cases which were insufficient, there were gaps the work with other agencies to address safety and wellbeing issues, and contingency planning was not as robust as it should have been. In most cases planning with other agencies was done well. Planning meetings promoted coordinated joint working with other professionals and the alignment of plans where children were at risk of exploitation, for example.

Planning to support the risk of harm was done well enough in four of the six cases we inspected, with victims being appropriately considered in all but two relevant case. We saw a good example of the YJS restorative justice worker representing the victim's views which were considered in the planning of interventions. Effective risk planning discussions at multi-agency meetings added to the quality of the plans that were put in place to manage the risk of harm to other people.

² The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating³ 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?	67%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	100%

In all but one case children received all the services they needed to help them to desist from reoffending. The right services were delivered at the right time, and the child's diversity was considered in the implementation and delivery of interventions. Case workers were motivated in their approach, and they engaged well with children and their families to support participation in activities. The work that had been planned for was delivered. In half of cases there were no engagement issues, but in three, there were missed appointments that required action to be taken. In two of them, this was done appropriately.

Good practice example

The delivered interventions were proportionate and child-focused. Interventions are informed by the assessment, and there is evidence of application for funding for a CSCS card twice and a scribe, as the child has learning difficulties. Interventions are appropriate, as they covered key factors like peer pressure, racial discrimination, internal controls, impulsivity, and victim-specific work.

Services and interventions to support the safety and wellbeing of children were well coordinated in every relevant case. The delivery of interventions was well coordinated, and workers were responsive to new and emerging concerns, taking swift action and making necessary referrals.

Service delivery supported the management of risk of harm to others effectively in every case. Services worked well together to prioritise the safety of actual and potential victims and ensure that work was done with children to help them understand the impact of their offending on other people. Cases were discussed at critical risk meetings to ensure that suitable plans were in place and MAPPA processes were applied appropriately.

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.](#)

2.4. Reviewing



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁴ 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?	83%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	83%

Reviewing of progress to support the child's desistance was strong. In every relevant case, a written review of desistance was completed, leading to necessary adjustments in the plan of work in all of them. This responsiveness to changing circumstances helped to maintain children's engagement and ensured that the work delivered was effective and meaningful. Reviewing continued to focus sufficiently on building on the child's strengths, enhancing protective factors, and assessing motivation and engagement levels in every relevant case. We found that children and their parents or carers were meaningfully involved in the reviewing of progress in all relevant cases.

Reviewing identified and responded to changes in factors relating to safety and wellbeing, and we saw examples where risk and professionals' meetings fully supported a coordinated partnership approach to addressing the issues to keep the child safe. Many of the children supervised by the YJS had several vulnerability issues, and this was the focus of the staff's attention. Effective reviewing of service delivery led to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work in most relevant cases, and this was usually done with input from other professionals working with the child.

Reviewing was informed by the necessary input from other agencies to manage the risk of harm posed to others. Inspectors found that case managers consistently completed written reviews, which were supported through the activity of the YJS critical risk meetings. We saw reciprocal sharing of intelligence with the police, and strong relationships between a range of partnership services. As a result, public protection issues were managed through activity that included changes to reporting, additional interventions, and referring to MAPPA in one case where risks were identified to have significantly escalated.

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.](#)

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 two youth cautions, six diversion cases and one other disposal. There were no youth conditional cautions in our sample. We interviewed the case managers in all nine cases.

3.1. Assessment



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

Requires Improvement

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

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	78%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	67%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	56%

Assessment for desistance was strong. Children's personal circumstances were considered, as were their individual diversity needs. Case managers gathered information from multiple sources and used this effectively to identify patterns in the child's behaviour and understand what might be underpinning it. Learning, education and training were noted as a challenge for every child, and over half of the children had issues with their living arrangements. Assessments were informed by input from the child and their parents or carers in every case.

Four of the nine children whose cases we inspected had been subject to section 47 proceedings or a child protection plan at some point during their intervention, reflecting the vulnerability of the cohort. In most cases, the case manager accessed information from relevant agencies regarding any vulnerabilities or concerns about the children's wellbeing. In two-thirds of cases we agreed with the assessed level of concern about the child's safety and wellbeing and judged that the assessment sufficiently analysed the child's safety and wellbeing. In the cases where the assessment did not meet our standards, the case manager been not always verified or sufficiently analysed information to fully understand the risks to the child's safety and wellbeing.

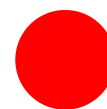
The quality of assessment of risk of harm did not sufficiently meet our standards in five of the nine cases inspected. In too many cases assessments did not identify and/or consider behaviours that posed a risk of harm to other people. Even in cases where the assessed level of risk was appropriately identified, there was insufficient analysis of the risk and what needed to be done to reduce any potential harm to other people. In assessing the risk of harm in out-of-court cases, there was a tendency to focus on the risk of harm relating to the index offence only. In many

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.](#)

cases, this was too narrow and overlooked other concerning and potentially harmful behaviour that also needed to be considered.

Discussion with other professionals did not translate into joint planning to monitor, manage, and address risk of harm issues sufficiently.

3.2. Planning



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

Inadequate

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

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	89%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	44%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	33%

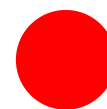
Planning for desistance sufficiently met our standards in most cases. Case managers considered children's individual circumstances and diversity needs, and how to engage them and their parents and carers. Children's strengths and protective factors were identified, and consideration was given to how they could be developed and strengthened further to support desistance. Case managers routinely considered the victims of the offence for which the child was working with the YJS, and we saw evidence of their views and wishes being gathered at the assessment stage to inform planning. Proportionate planning, with input from children and their parents and carers, added to the quality of work.

There were some strengths to the planning that was done to ensure the safety of the child, including working with other agencies to inform planning. However, we found deficits in the quality of contingency planning, which is essential when working with children who are vulnerable and whose circumstances can change quickly. We did not see safety plans in place in some cases where we would have expected to see them, such as when children's living arrangements were unstable or there were concerns about exploitation. Ensuring plans are in place to address changing circumstances will promote a timely response, and it is important that all agencies whose intervention may be required are aware of actions that might be required to support a coordinated response.

Planning to keep people safe was sufficient in only one-third of cases. Despite other agencies being involved, planning did not promote the safety of other people and/or sufficiently address risk of harm factors. Concerns about the safety of others were not effectively considered, and there was scant evidence of how any escalation in risk would be mitigated, which is essential to effective risk planning. The service needs to ensure that patterns and behaviours beyond the index offence are identified and that there is a clear focus on what the concerns are so that planning to manage them can be done effectively.

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

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Inadequate

Our rating⁷ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	78%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	56%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	44%

The work delivered to children to support desistance was the strongest area of implementation and delivery. In two-thirds of cases, the services delivered appropriately focused on the factors that had been identified as linked to offending in the initial assessment. Case managers demonstrated their ability to form effective working relationships with children and families, making sure they were meaningfully engaged. They encouraged children and motivated them to attend appointments, explore their options and participate in interventions. They attended to diversity needs and tailored the approach accordingly to promote participation. There was a focus on community reintegration into mainstream and universal services that could offer ongoing support.

In most of the cases, safety and wellbeing was not addressed well enough in the delivery of services. In one case, there was not enough curiosity about signs and indicators that a child was being exploited. The case manager did not sufficiently advocate for the child or escalate concerns when a decision was made to close the child protection plan when there had been no reduction in risk. In another case, concerns about violence in the family home and the child's emotional wellbeing were not sufficiently considered. The relevant professional was involved in the work to promote the child's safety and wellbeing in just over half of the cases.

Service delivery to manage risk of harm was not responsive enough in five of the nine cases we inspected. Victim issues and emerging risks were not always identified, and the intervention focused heavily on the desistance work that had been identified at the planning stage even if, as in some cases, more concerning issues emerged that required attention.

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.](#)

3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision



There is a high-quality, evidence-based out-of-court disposal service in place that promotes diversion and supports sustainable desistance.

Requires Improvement

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:

- Arrangements are set out to ensure that children are actively and consistently diverted from the justice system, and this is evident in practice, as most cases in the YJS are dealt with out of court.
- An assessment is completed for all children, and the case manager will visit the child and family and take account of their input in decision-making on out-of-court disposal.
- The triage panel is well attended, with representation from CAMHS, education (YJS), early help, Remedi and a substance misuse worker. The panel is co-chaired by a YJS operations manager and a YJS seconded police officer.
- If a child is issued with a first community resolution by the police, this information is shared by the police and used by the YJS and partnership agencies to consider if the child and their family would benefit from the offer of voluntary support.
- The police and YJS use the 'acceptance of responsibility' approach to enable children to receive an out-of-court disposal.
- All the interventions and services available to children on court orders can be used for children on an out-of-court disposal.
- YJS staff understand the process for out-of-court disposals and feel that their assessments, reports, and presence at the triage panel help to influence the outcome for the child.
- Decision-making processes for out-of-court disposals are timely.
- If there are any disagreements at the panel, there is a clear escalation process in place, although it is rarely used.
- There is a South Yorkshire scrutiny panel that reviews cases and looks at the consistency of decision-making and outcomes.

Areas for improvement:

- The policy is not jointly produced with the police, and police involvement in out-of-court policy and practice was not as strong or developed as we have seen in other youth justice services.
- The policy does not make sufficient reference to risk of harm, safety and wellbeing, and arrangements for keeping the child and the public safe.

- Intervention plans that are agreed at the out-of-court disposal panel need to consider how the child and other people will be kept safe.
- Staff would benefit from clear guidance about Outcome 22, including what constitutes acceptable engagement, when action should be taken to address any non-engagement and how managers should monitor the application of the guidance.
- Assessments and delivery of work to children are too often limited to the offence that led to the out-of-court disposal and do not always consider all concerns and past and current behaviours and address them accordingly.
- Planning and implementation and delivery of services to children on out-of-court disposals is 'Inadequate' due to deficits in work to address risk of harm to others and the safety and wellbeing of children.

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 is a comprehensive resettlement policy, with clear expectations of service delivery across the seven pathways and explicit references to diversity.
- The policy highlights the role of the YJS victim support provider and their links to the probation victim liaison officer. It sets out the expectations for victim work in assessing the external controls that should be put in place to keep victims safe.
- MAPPA processes are used effectively, and victims are actively engaged and consulted on licence conditions.
- High-quality guidance and training on constructive resettlement are delivered through the South and West Yorkshire Resettlement Consortium.
- Most staff responding to our survey who hold resettlement cases have had suitable training to work effectively with children leaving the secure estate.
- The YJS reviews its resettlement policy and provision in conjunction with the Resettlement Consortium.
- The YJS has a lead manager and a lead practitioner for resettlement. Both attend Resettlement Consortium meetings that are also attended by a spectrum of professionals, including those from youth justice, health, and the secure estate. This provides excellent opportunities for information-sharing and learning.
- The YJS has positive working links with the secure estate because of their involvement with the consortium.
- Information-sharing and communication between the YJS and the secure estate is strong, reciprocal, and swift.
- YJS partner staff (such as the education mentors, substance misuse workers, youth workers, and complex needs health team practitioners) work well with their counterparts in the secure estate, which leads to continuity of relationships and interventions for children.
- There are clear and accessible referral and intervention pathways in key areas such as accommodation, ETE, and health.

- YJS resettlement practice promotes meaningful contact between case managers, the child, and their parents or carers.
- There was good management of public protection through casework activity and through additional internal and multi-agency risk management meetings.
- Accommodation was secured six weeks before release, with the local authority committing to paying to retain the placement if required.

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.](#)