

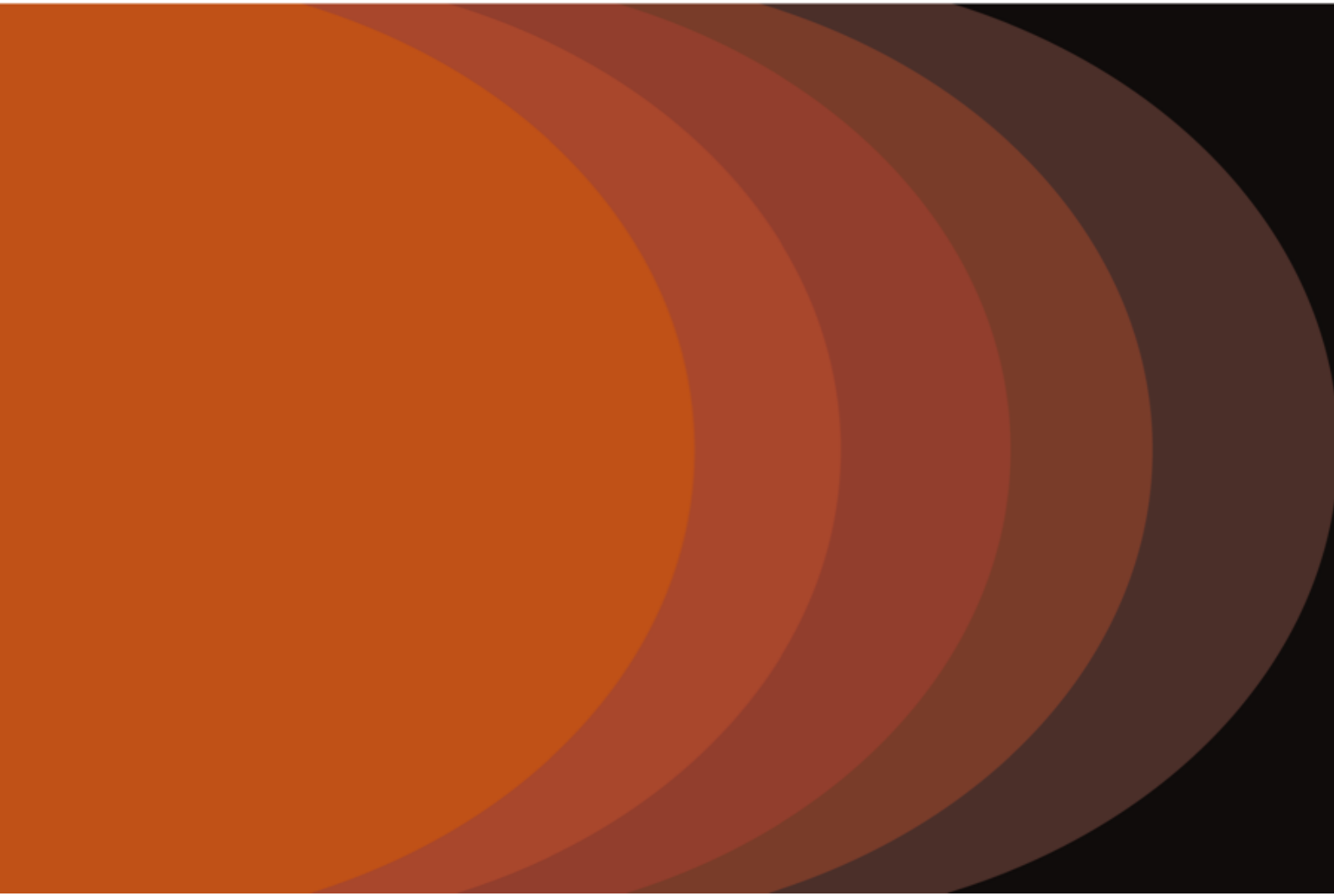


HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in

Royal Borough of Greenwich

HM Inspectorate of Probation, June 2023



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Foreword

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

The YJS is a well-managed and well-governed organisation, and we were pleased to see very good and well-resourced staffing arrangements. The operational staff expressed great pride in their team and organisation, and we considered the working environment to be one in which high-quality work with children was strongly supported. The information, IT and facilities available to support staff undertake their duties were equally strong. There is clear and purposeful leadership, both from the board and through operational management. Partnership working is evident throughout the delivery of services and there are sound arrangements in place with seconded, and co-located, education, health, probation, and police staff.

Post-court work was to a good standard, with work by staff to engage with the issues that led to offending in the first place done well enough with almost every child within the inspection sample. Work on supporting children's safety and wellbeing and addressing the risk of harm that they may present to other people should be delivered more consistently.

In out-of-court disposal work, we were concerned that the assessment and planning of work with the children did not give enough attention to their safety and wellbeing in too many cases. This was also of concern in relation to the risk of harm to others that the children may present. Thankfully, when the case managers engaged with children, the deficits from earlier work were offset by very good work in delivering the requirements of the disposal.

Work on resettlement cases was to a good standard and we found that the documentation to support the delivery of services to children who received custodial sentences was up to date and relevant to the needs of these children.

This is an innovative and aspirational YJS and we saw new approaches to the use of creative arts, and to engaging parents whose children were affected by serious youth violence. The development of a 'guide' service (SHiFT) that sought to meet the children on their own terms, irrespective of their period of involvement with the YJS was another positive.

We have provided six recommendations for the YJS which we think will help to further develop the quality of work being delivered.



Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Royal Borough of Greenwich Youth Justice Service

Fieldwork started March 2023

Score 23/36

Overall rating

Good 

1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

Good 

1.2 Staff

Outstanding 

1.3 Partnerships and services

Good 

1.4 Information and facilities

Outstanding 

2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

Good 

2.2 Planning

Good 

2.3 Implementation and delivery

Good 

2.4 Reviewing

Good 

3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

Inadequate 

3.2 Planning

Requires improvement 

3.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding 

3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

Requires improvement 

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 six recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of youth offending services in the Royal Borough of Greenwich. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth offending services, and better protect the public.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich Youth Justice Service Management Board should:

1. review and develop the out-of-court disposal policies
2. develop consistent methods of assessing and planning for out-of-court disposal work that address the safety and wellbeing of children and the safety of other people
3. develop the range of services available to children diverted from the criminal justice system through 'triage', particularly in relation to wellbeing support, intensive child and adolescent mental health services options, and support with education engagement
4. develop ways of engaging the operational staff group in the work of the management board
5. prioritise the reduction in the number of post-school-aged children who are not in education, training, or employment
6. develop access to facilities that are compatible with working with children with neurodivergent conditions.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in the Royal Borough of Greenwich Youth Justice Service (YJS) over a period of a week, beginning 27 March 2023. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began between 28 March 2022 and 20 January 2023; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 28 March 2022 and 20 January 2023; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between 28 March 2022 and 20 January 2023. We also conducted 22 interviews with case managers.

The YJS is a multi-agency service with case practitioners and specialist practitioners. The team is part of the children and families social care division within the children's services directorate.

The statutory YJS management board is responsible for the management, oversight, and strategic direction of youth justice and prevention services, including performance, thematic issues, staffing arrangements, resourcing, and delivery of services. It is well attended by statutory and non-statutory partners. Political oversight is robust. Both cabinet members for community safety and children's services are members of the YJS management board. The children and young people scrutiny board, as well as the children and young people's partnership, receive regular information about the YJS. The YJS contributes to the development of strategic policy for the council on youth crime and its prevention via this board. Most recently, this has included liaising with community safety colleagues with regard to new duties around serious violence.

The borough's overall crime rate is slightly higher than London averages, with violence against the person and theft being the most common offence types. First-time entrant rates to the criminal justice system are higher when compared with those nationally or in other London boroughs. Since September 2021, the trajectory has been downwards. There are challenges for the service, particularly in the light of serious youth violence.

The rate of reoffending of children working with the YJS is lower than the national and London averages, although the rate of use of custody is above London and national averages. There is clear, disproportionate use of custody for black African and black Caribbean heritage children, but this is not evident at other points in the system.

Partnership working remains strong and there is a positive working relationship with the local youth court. The YJS is part of a six-borough consortium that services Bromley and Bexley Magistrates' Court. This enables collaborative working across the boroughs to develop consistency of practice and efficiencies in relation to court training and communications.

The YJS has a strong track record of innovation and practice improvement. Practice is child focused and underpinned by the Greenwich practice framework. Arts and creative activities form a strong element of youth justice practice, and a number of children have participated successfully in the national Koestler Award scheme. Recent developments within the YJS include a parent champion network, with the aim of supporting the parents of children who are impacted by serious youth violence. The YJS is part of the innovative SHiFT programme. Using relationship-based and systemic approaches, this programme is aimed at children with complex and overlapping health, educational, and social care needs. It is being extended into schools, following a successful Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime funding application.

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. Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows.

1.1. Governance and leadership



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

Good

Strengths:

- The Royal Greenwich Youth Justice Plan (2022–2024) outlines a ‘child first’ approach, based on the four tenets: prioritising the best interests of children, promoting children’s strengths and capacities, encouraging children’s active participation, and promoting a childhood removed from the justice system.
- The board chair, currently the director of children’s services, has an extensive history of direct engagement with youth justice services and brings a wealth of experience to the position. She is a committed leader, seeking to drive improvement from the perspective of a sound understanding.
- All statutory partners are represented on the board at an appropriate level of seniority. There is third-sector representation via the Charlton Athletic Community Trust.
- Board members have a good understanding of the purpose of the YJS, and of how their agencies contribute to its work.
- The disproportionality action plan details actions and areas of focus in service delivery, working with partners and responding to new youth justice board performance measures on racial and ethnic disparity.
- Underpinning the board’s approach is an aspiration to focus on the voice of the child, and there was clear evidence, through responses collated during a designated ‘listening week’ in December 2022, that the board is hearing what children have to say about the services they receive.
- The board members see their role as ‘unblocking’ barriers to services. This is illustrated through a range of activities: securing funding for a full-time probation officer; tackling the exclusion from school of children working with the YJS; developing and maintaining a high level of education support for children working with the YJS; and an extensive offer of direct health intervention.
- There is an experienced and committed team of operational managers who regularly attend and present to the board about the work of the service.

Areas for improvement:

- The board is well sighted on partnership contributions to the work of the YJS (particularly health and education), but this is less so in relation to effective case management, particularly out-of-court disposal work.
- There are some deficits in accessing services for children diverted via the ‘triage’ process, particularly in relation to wellbeing support, accelerated access to more intensive child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) services, and for support with education engagement.
- Over half of staff responding to our survey indicated that they are not very aware of the activities of the management board.

1.2. Staff



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

Outstanding

Strengths:

- There is a committed, knowledgeable, and innovative staff group. This is a highly motivated and energetic team, in equal measure thoughtful and innovative.
- There is an over-arching and clear commitment from Greenwich Children's Services that all staff will have a manageable workload. Both practitioners and managers perceive their workloads to be reasonable.
- The diversity of the staff group broadly reflects that of the local population and this extends to the management group.
- Almost all staff reported that they are suitably qualified and experienced to manage cases allocated to them and all case managers have some form of relevant qualification.
- In our case management inspection, we found sufficient effective management oversight in the majority of cases.
- In terms of meeting the diverse needs of children, the staff group emphasised learning from 'social graces' training in exploring aspects of identity in relation to the children's lives and behaviours.
- The YJS has a workforce development strategy for youth justice service staff, with a strong emphasis on equality, learning and development, management development, staff development, and ongoing professional development.
- There is clear and appropriate focus on performance management.
- There is a strong focus on the wellbeing of staff and an understanding of the secondary trauma associated with the emotional content of supporting children in extremely challenging circumstances. This translates into additional high-quality support arrangements for staff.
- The quality of the induction process is highly regarded.
- Staff reported that the work with managers and within the team strongly reinforces learning and continuous improvement.
- It is evident from the diversity of the management group that there is equitable access to promotion opportunities.
- The service supports innovative approaches and celebrates the strengths of staff, which is mirrored in the work with families. One member of staff observed:
"If we don't celebrate our own strengths, it won't happen with young people".
- Almost all staff feel their individual diversity needs are recognised and responded to.

Areas for improvement:

- Staff provided a mixed response concerning the value of the annual appraisal process.

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:

- Data analysis is a strength, with well-presented information delivered to the board and contained in the youth justice plan, and the whole-service meeting report. There is a clear understanding of the relevant issues among the management team.
- This is supplemented by extensive education data and analysis, and comprehensive health and wellbeing data and analysis.
- All data sets contain analysis of the heritage of children and there is analysis of disproportionate representation, where this exists.
- There are efforts to incorporate the views of children and their families. An initiative described as 'listening week' generated a range of responses to the work of the YJS and these were incorporated into a report for the management board.
- There is strong partnership working. Partnership staff are highly motivated to provide services to the children and their enthusiasm for the work translates into innovative approaches. For example, the parent champion scheme in Greenwich provides training for mentors and creates a voice for parents through developing a parent network. In addition, the SHiFT (individual guide) scheme is being extended to vulnerable children in schools.
- There is an extensive health offer to the children working with the YJS, including a family intervention and clinical health lead (consultant clinical psychologist with CAMHS), YJS nurse, substance misuse service workers, a speech and language therapist, and a liaison and diversion specialist. These personnel are co-located with the YJS team and we saw good evidence of speedy access to services in our case inspection. The health team supports accelerated access to specialist mental health services, where this is required.
- As an addition to substance misuse work, there is a well-developed creative arts programme. This has included Koestler award winning submissions, a range of exhibitions and, for some of the children, a route to personal development through engagement in higher education arts programmes.
- Specialist education staff are available to support the work with children both at school and post-school age.
- There is ongoing analysis and review of the key work programmes of the YJS and there is ample evidence of refinement of processes and initiatives over time.
- Most partnership staff are co-located with the YJS team, fostering a shared ethos and support for work in reducing the prospects of children committing further offences.
- Where serious risks of harm to the child or to other people are identified, the work is overseen by the Greenwich risk and adolescent safeguarding panel multi-agency weekly meeting.

Areas for improvement:

- More needs to be done to keep sentencers informed of the YJS strategy and practice developments, including the range of services available to children.
- The service has a qualified probation officer working in the team, yet, at the time of inspection, there were limitations to the contribution of that post holder to the management of transition to probation work.
- The number of children who are classified as 'not in employment, education, of training' is too high. Although the figures are not remarkable when compared with similarly sized youth justice services, they are considerably in excess of the figure for mainstream children (6.4 per cent² of 16–18-year-olds nationally, 46.8 per cent for the YJS).

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.

Outstanding

Strengths:

- There is an appropriate range of policies guiding the work of the YJS, including an allocations policy, a protocol between the YJS and children's social care services, a transition to probation policy, a referral process, a home visit and working off-site policy, and staff induction processes. These policies are well understood by staff.
- In all policies and procedures, there is consideration of the diversity of the children and staff members.
- Arrangements for contact with children are responsive to the needs of the child. We found no evidence of structural barriers to maintaining high-quality work with the children.
- Most staff reported that the information technology available supports them at least quite well to deliver high-quality services. We identified no difficulties with the exchange of information or with partners or other providers being able to access the relevant systems.
- There is extensive diversity-related information available to the YJS as part of an impressive range of management information. The data is often presented in accessible ways using charts and diagrams.
- Throughout the organisation of the YJS, there is a keen appreciation of the performance measures applied to the work of the service. All staff are acutely aware of the need to improve first-time entrant work to meet the aim of diverting children away from criminal justice processes. Monitoring indicates that this has indeed improved over the past year and our assessment is that this is an evidence-led development of services.

² Calendar year 2021: Participation in education, training and employment age 16 to 18

- Developments in education provision and available health services are underpinned by data and analysis, conveying understanding of the multiple issues faced in the lives of children working with the YJS.
- We found comprehensive quality assurance arrangements based on: case tracking, a monthly information report on performance and quality feeding into quarterly reports to the YJS management board, thematic case audit and tracking, Greenwich safeguarding children partnership multi-agency audits, direct practice observation, the child's voice (via staff supervision), 'what do you think?' assessments, and end of order surveys.
- The children are seen in a range of settings: in the main Greenwich Council office, in community hubs, at reparation projects at different centres, in court, in walk and talk sessions, and in home visits.
- Most staff indicated that services are delivered in a safe environment for children and staff, at least to some extent.

Areas for improvement:

- The environments need to be designed in a way that is suitable to meet the needs of all the children that the service works with, including the sensory needs of children with neurodivergent conditions.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

A range of methods is used to promote listening to children's voices and develop services in line with this perspective. Over the course of the pandemic, the YJS has built on learning and increased the use of the creative arts, to provide children with a variety of ways to communicate to professionals. A multi-arts exhibition was held, entitled 'Are You Listening', which was attended by parents, family and friends, youth justice officers, personal advisers, social workers, senior leaders in children's social care services, and the assistant director for families, safeguarding and social care.

Building on the views expressed through this exhibition, further work was developed with the children, using the Theatre of the Oppressed to work with the police, family and adolescent support service, and youth justice services, exploring oppression, difference, and the experience of stop and search. Children's engagement and concerns have resulted in them being involved in the recommissioning of appropriate adult services and facilitated discussions with the head of inclusion, exploring school experiences and discrimination. Children have attended whole-service meetings to promote the creative art initiatives and take an active role in the development and design of these projects.

Furthermore, a designated 'listening week' in December 2022 sought expressly to gather the views of children and their families about the YJS.

The YJS contacted, on our behalf, children who had open cases at the time of the inspection, to gain their consent for a text survey. We delivered the survey independently to the 14 children who consented, and four children replied. Further to this, we interviewed four children during our fieldwork week.

We asked, does the YJS worker have the right skills to work with you?

One child indicated that he believes his practitioner to have "*more than the right skills*" to support him. He described work completed with the case manager as very impactful to both his life and that of his family. He stated that he is treated respectfully and fairly, and provided with the support he needs. Others said:

" Yes, she's good, she's doing her best".

"My worker is amazing; he goes up and beyond for me. He is still chasing up my personal belongings from when I was arrested. I really appreciate this as he's gone above and beyond his role".

We asked, are the places where you see the YJS worker safe and easy to get to?

Responses included:

"She sees me at the library, which is a safer place for me".

"They take my safety into consideration and complete home visits when I do not feel safe".

We asked, what one thing do you like most about the YJS?

Responses included:

"I've been working with my worker for over a year now, she's really taken the time to get to know, understand and support me as best as she can".

"They got to know me really well, easy to speak to and my worker has tried really hard to get to know me".

We asked, is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Responses included:

"I came here, and they gave me hope; before I didn't have any".

Diversity

There is a good understanding of the complexity of children's lives, and this is supported by detailed information and analysis of the multiple vulnerabilities and risks associated with this group of children. The approach to the diverse heritage of children working with the YJS is summarised in the YJS disproportionality action plan.

In our inspection, we found that diversity was considered sufficiently in the majority of children's cases. In the implementation and delivery of out-of-court disposal work, this was done satisfactorily with almost all the children.

At a board level, alongside detailed analysis of disproportionality related to children's heritage, there is a good understanding of the range of additional vulnerabilities prevalent among children working with the YJS, and these are translated into planned activity through the service improvement plan.

Almost all staff felt that their individual diversity needs are recognised and responded to.

In all policies and procedures, there is consideration of the diversity of the children and staff members.

Within the YJS, diversity information is key to service development and this is expressed in the disproportionality action plan. However, for out-of-court work, the policy does not articulate how children's diverse needs will be incorporated into decision-making or the delivery of services.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 12 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.

Good

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

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	92%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	67%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	67%

In almost all cases, assessment work was sufficiently analytical and supported the desistance of the child. In most cases, the child's diverse needs were analysed sufficiently. In one case, we noted that, '...assessment considers his [the child's] identity in terms of his Muslim background and belief system supporting desistance'. Other professionals and multi-agency networks were utilised in developing an understanding of the child's needs and there was good incorporation of the child's voice in the assessment process. Where necessary and possible, the parent or carer's voice was also evident. There was a clear focus on the child's strengths, and protective factors in their life, such as engagement in education or employment, were identified in all the children's cases. The focus on desistance was a clear strength of the YJS assessment work.

Assessment of children's safety and wellbeing was a more mixed picture. Where it was considered appropriately (in the majority of cases), we found strong multi-agency arrangements and oversight of the children's circumstances, with detailed planning for risks to the child where these could be anticipated. Where vulnerability was identified in the child's life (in a minority of cases), we identified an under-estimation of the classification of safety and wellbeing in too many cases. Case manager judgements too frequently missed important information which would inform the level of risk being experienced by the child, and this included factors within the family and wider concerns about the influence of peers or other negative associations.

With regard to the risk of the child causing harm to others, we found, again, a mixed picture. Where the work was done well (in the majority of cases), we found good multi-agency work; in one case, we noted that, 'the extensive multi-agency oversight, review and planning led to a clear analysis of the risks to others the child presented and there is evidence of forthright sharing of concerns with the child'. However, the classification of risk of harm to others was underestimated in a minority of cases, and this included inconsistent recording or understanding of risk levels within the same case (varying estimates between multi-agency settings, the assessment tool, and case manager interview).

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?	75%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	75%

In line with the strength of assessment work on desistance, planning work was similarly well focused. When plans addressed the child's heritage, this was done well – for example, by consideration of the needs of the child. In one case, we noted, 'relationship-based work through a diversity lens which incorporated topics around diet, culture, discrimination and identity. This assisted in connecting with the practitioner and sharing areas that the child had not been able to talk about before'. Work was planned with appropriate consideration of the child's learning style and, where possible, family members were engaged in the planning of work.

In most children's cases, plans had an appropriate focus on safety and wellbeing. YJS plans linked well to other multi-agency planning processes. In one case, we noted that, 'practice meeting discussions enable holistic work to be planned that incorporates police, education and family to play a part in safety planning'. Where it was necessary, we found, in most cases, personalised contingency planning for circumstances where the risk to the child might increase. In a small number of cases, there were deficits in planning, and these related to poor or absent contingency arrangements.

In terms of risk of causing harm to others, planning was done well in most children's cases. There were active multi-agency processes, including the YJS risk management panel supporting both the recognition of serious harm to others and the ongoing monitoring of identified risks. When done well, the arrangements were to a high standard; for example, we noted that, 'planning demonstrates clear risk management which considers how to keep others safe through the risk panel meeting, safer neighbourhood team, clinical health team and responding appropriately to the need for enforcement'. In another case, we noted that, 'there was a clear contingency plan which positively identified a personalised action plan on how to manage increasing risk of serious harm circumstances'.

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.

Good

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?	92%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	83%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	75%

In delivering services, the child's desistance was supported effectively. This was based on the development of effective professional relationships with the child, positive inter-agency working, and balancing the needs of the child with the necessity to deliver the requirements of court orders.

We found numerous examples of high-quality services being delivered; for example, one inspector noted, 'evidence of effective practice in the delivery of services to promote the child's desistance (he liked music) and was supported to get a job interview at the start of his order through ETE [education, training, and employment] support. It was evident from reading the case file that there was good multi-agency working, emergency reviews were taking place when required, there was evidence of the YJS plan being reflected in social care files and there was strong evidence which promoted a trauma informed approach'. We also found that engagement with supervision was encouraged using appropriate support – through compliance meetings – and, where necessary, taking enforcement action.

In almost every case, we saw effective support of the safety and wellbeing of the child. This was underpinned by the involvement of multi-agency work, with necessary specialist support via mental health services being triggered when the need arose. Involvement in sessions, run by a person with lived experience of the systems within which the children were working, led one child to comment to his case manager that:

"This has given me hope".

The potential to cause other people serious harm was addressed well in most children's cases. Where necessary, this involved the engagement of police colleagues in monitoring, and this was augmented frequently using the multi-agency risk panel to coordinate, review, and plan the work with the child. These were highly responsive ways of working and we saw evidence of adapting work methods to suit the individual needs of the child.

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?	75%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	67%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	67%

In the main, we found good-quality reviewing of cases. There was strong multi-agency involvement in the oversight of many of the children's cases, and this meant that there were active mechanisms of review, which translated into responsive, planned activity where the child's circumstances changed. There was consistent and purposeful oversight of the multi-agency team, providing appropriate levels of case review. In support of desistance, we found that the active review provided encouragement to children's progress and achievement.

In most cases, reviews maintained a positive focus on the child's safety and wellbeing. In situations where family, peer group, further offending, or deteriorating mental health were impacting on the child's safety, these were considered appropriately, and plans revised accordingly. Reviews were less impactful in relation to the safety and wellbeing of the children in a minority of cases. In these circumstances, we found that the process of review had not been activated, or was ineffective, in the light of substantial changes in the child's life – for example, the child being missing from home, being the victim of assault, or reoffending.

Where risk of causing harm to others was reviewed appropriately, this led to positive outcomes for the child. In one case, we noted that, 'a three-month panel meeting was conducted, and risk of harm classification was appropriately reduced to low following the successful completion of risk-focused intervention to reduce the risk of serious harm to others. Reviewing identifies positive and meaningful engagement of the child, increase of knowledge in road safety awareness and strategy work completed in terms of alternative decision making'. In a minority of cases, we were concerned that issues concerning risk of harm to others were not managed well in circumstances where the child moved to another area.

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 16 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of four youth conditional cautions, four youth cautions, and eight other disposals. 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.

Inadequate

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

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	69%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	25%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	38%

The out-of-court disposal processes included three routes to assessment. After an initial sift of information by the out-of-court disposal panel, an indicative decision was made within seven days of receipt of the child's details from the police. For triage cases, the child was allocated to a family and adolescent support service (FaASS) worker, and the case was reviewed and returned to the panel to endorse the appropriateness of the decision within seven days. The FaASS worker was expected to commence assessment using the frequency, intensity, duration, and onset (FIDO) tool. For cautions and conditional cautions, the case was allocated to a YJS worker and either a basic screening (for indicative caution) within seven days, or an AssetPlus (for indicative conditional caution) was required within ten days.

In terms of assessing desistance work with children, we found that most cases were strong in relation to considering personal circumstances, utilising information from other agencies and focusing on the child's strengths and protective factors. In addition, the child and their family members were engaged appropriately in the process of assessment. However, we found little attention to the needs of victims, where there were identifiable victims.

The extent to which assessment work addressed the safety and wellbeing of children was worryingly low. We found that there were gaps in agency checks on children, limited analysis of identified risk factors, and consistent underestimation of the level of risk to which the child was exposed. We thought that the classification of risk was reasonable in less than half of the cases.

For risk of harm to others, the identification and analysis of the potential to cause harm to others were insufficient in too many cases, with little understanding of the offending behaviour and the circumstances which would make the most recent or future victims vulnerable.

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.

Requires improvement

Our rating⁸ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	88%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	56%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	63%

The focus on desistance was well maintained in the development of planned work with the children. We found that case managers had engaged well with the children and their parents or carers in the planning process. Where necessary and appropriate, we found that plans were adjusted to respond to the individual needs of the child. This was done by engaging additional support through speech and language assessment, the use of simple terminology and reinforcement to support the child's comprehension, or consideration of wider family needs such as accommodation.

Planning work did not address the child's safety in too many cases. We found that, while there were safety-related goals, these did not link to other safety work in children in need or child protection plans. Contingency planning work was inconsistent, and there was an absence of planning for future changes in the child's life in too many cases.

We found some good examples of work in relation to plans which focused on the potential risk of harm to others that the child might present. In one case, we found a comprehensive and detailed set of arrangements to address this risk; the inspector noted that, 'there was clear planning reflected in the assessment and on the case file from the case worker. There were referrals made to appropriate services which included [the] substance misuse worker and the risk management panel within the service. There was also a referral made to the clinical health team to discuss the concerns around the young person's emotional health in the multi-agency setting. There was a clear management plan in place for addressing the risk of harm to others, which is well reflected in the case file during planning'.

Again, contingency planning was an area of deficit in too many cases, either being absent from plans or too general to address the personal circumstances of the child.

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.

Outstanding

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

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	88%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	81%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	88%

When staff engaged with the child through the delivery of services, a very different picture emerged. In almost all cases, the work on desistance was of a good standard and the diverse needs of the child were accounted for. The work was characterised by forming good relationships with the children and their families. There was a strong and effective focus on educational engagement, both for school-aged and post-school-aged children. In the context of a relatively short period of engagement, we found that the complexity of children's lives was both understood and addressed, by the case manager or through the involvement of a range of partner agencies.

The safety and wellbeing of the child were addressed sufficiently in almost all cases. The work demonstrated good liaison with children's social care services, and there was strong evidence of multi-agency working to monitor and protect children. Appropriate and necessary safeguarding actions were conducted in liaison with the police, social care services, and mental health services. Case managers knew the children well enough to discharge their professional responsibilities to safeguard the children.

In almost all cases, the risk of harm to other people was managed appropriately. This was achieved through a mixture of positive interventions to develop the children's understanding of the risks and consequences of further offending, work with the children's parents or carers, sharing safety plans with schools, and weapons awareness work. Good attention was paid to the need to have exit plans in place following the period of engagement with the case manager.

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.

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:

- Detail for joint decision-making was clear, with appropriate services represented at the out-of-court disposal panel.
- There was a clear escalation process in operation to provide final decision-making where consensus could not be achieved.
- Decisions were made in a timely manner, with no apparent undue delays in the process.
- Services were offered to all children who were considered by the out-of-court disposal policy.
- All children were reviewed by the panel, irrespective of the outcome, until the end of the period of intervention.
- It was clear, from our inspection sample, that once children began to engage with their worker, the disposals were delivered in a timely manner and to a sufficient standard in almost all cases.
- The 'reducing first-time entrants in Greenwich – final report and action plan' (November 2022) provided detailed analysis of the offences and characteristics of children engaged with the out-of-court disposal system and detailed improvement activity.
- There was an external scrutiny panel whose membership was of sufficient seniority and expertise to support the evaluation of the out-of-court disposal scheme in operation.
- Structured internal monitoring between the police, YJS and FaASS sought to identify and address any issues concerning disproportionality.
- Monitoring of the impact of the scheme demonstrates almost no reoffending following completion of an out of court disposal.

Areas for improvement:

- Eligibility criteria for the range of possible disposals were not outlined clearly in the relevant documentation.
- The policy did not articulate how children's diverse needs would be incorporated into decision-making or the delivery of services.
- The use of assessment work to inform decision-making was limited, particularly in the absence of detailed understanding of risks to the child's safety and wellbeing or the risk of harm they might present to others.
- For children working with FaASS, there was restricted access to education support and limited access to speech and language therapist intervention.

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:

- Resettlement work was strongly evidence based, drawing from research and best practice models.
- There was a comprehensive and clear resettlement policy, based on the five Cs of constructive resettlement and translated into seven pathways.
- The policy articulated how the children's diverse needs would be met.
- There was a clear plan to operationalise the key elements of the policy.
- The resettlement meeting framework established a multi-agency arrangement for engagement in resettlement work, and this was underpinned by mechanisms and expectations with regard to the effective sharing of information.
- By design, the victim perspective was considered actively within the framework of planning and review.
- We found clear evidence of multi-agency planning and review in all the inspected cases.
- For most of the inspected children's cases, accommodation for release was considered appropriately.
- We found good examples of continuity of thought and provision for the children's education, training, and employment needs.
- In most of the cases, healthcare arrangements were well managed, and this was supported strongly by a healthcare assessment on release from custody.
- In cases where there was a designated SHiFT worker, we found that the working arrangement was enhanced considerably by the engagement of a flexible, committed 'guide' to support the child. In this role, there was extensive advocacy of the child's needs while in custody, and this was extended to supervision in the community where this was applicable.

Areas for improvement:

- There was a need to review children's cases to establish contingency arrangements for all eventualities facing the child, particularly where they have been detained for a long period of remand.
- Arrangements for transfer to adult probation services should take into account the complexity of children's lives, areas of unmet need, and maturity. There should be extensive planning of the key resettlement interventions before transfer is enacted.
- More work needs to be done to consider the experiences of children in custody from their point of view.

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.](#)