



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth justice services in
Wiltshire

HM Inspectorate of Probation, May 2024

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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

HM Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth justice and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth justice service work with adults and children.

We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice and use our data and information to encourage high-quality services. We are independent of government and speak independently.

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

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Foreword

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

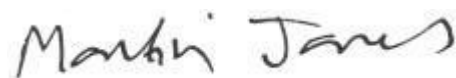
Wiltshire YJS seeks to place children at the centre of its work to meet their needs, promote pro-social identities, and help them to not reoffend, it does this well. Individualised interventions, supported by a trauma-informed approach, ensure that children's diversity needs are understood well, and that measures are put in place to help them flourish. Staff and volunteers are, without doubt, the organisation's most valuable assets. They are optimistic and nurture a 'can do' attitude with children. They are excellent ambassadors for the children they support.

The YJS executive management board is made up of highly dedicated members, who work well to advocate for YJS children in their own organisations. They also mobilise financial resources for the YJS, as evidenced by the additional substance misuse resource to respond to the rise in the number of children using illegal substances. The board chair is passionate, she holds board members to account, recognises what each member brings, and makes appropriate challenge when needed.

Provision of services to support children is broad and there is a range of services available for children. Work linked to supporting children's safety and wellbeing, and the risk to others is, however, variable. This needs to improve. Our inspection found that, across court and out-of-court work, not all staff consistently understood and applied the systems and processes to keep children safe and prevent them from causing harm to others. Furthermore, management oversight was not always effective in identifying shortcomings relating to this aspect of work. During 2023, the YJS underwent a significant management team restructure which by nature resulted in staffing changes. A combination of these issues had led to higher caseloads, and disruption in the management oversight of work, which is likely to have impacted upon the quality of service of delivery.















The active listening to the voices of children and their parents or carers is impressive. Children frequently attend the executive board to provide testimonies of their experience of the YJS. This not only empowers them, but also enables strategic leaders to hear, first-hand, what children think of the services they are receiving.

Wiltshire YJS is an ambitious organisation with considerable strengths, but one which has experienced some recent organisational change. This has contributed to a variability in performance in some aspects of its service delivery. It must now build on its aspirations and use these inspection findings as a trigger to inform change. In this report, we make three recommendations to improve its work further. We trust that they will assist the service as it continues its development journey.



Martin Jones CBE
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Wiltshire Youth Justice Service Fieldwork started February 2024		Score	20/36
Overall rating		Good	
1. Organisational delivery			
1.1	Governance and leadership	Good	
1.2	Staff	Good	
1.3	Partnerships and services	Good	
1.4	Information and facilities	Outstanding	
2. Court disposals			
2.1	Assessment	Requires improvement	
2.2	Planning	Requires improvement	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement	
2.4	Reviewing	Good	
3. Out-of-court disposals			
3.1	Assessment	Inadequate	
3.2	Planning	Good	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Good	
3.4	Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	Good	
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 three recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of youth justice services in Wiltshire. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth justice services, and better protect the public.

The Wiltshire Youth Justice Service should:

1. improve the quality of assessment and planning work to keep children safe and manage the risk of harm they present to others
2. ensure that management oversight is consistently effective in addressing and supporting case managers practice, so that practitioners are clear about what they need to improve and embed this within their practice
3. ensure that robust contingency plans are in place for all children that address their safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Wiltshire YJS over a period of a week, beginning on 26 February 2024. We inspected cases where the sentence began and out-of-court disposals that were delivered between Monday 27 February 2023 and Friday 22 December 2023. We also conducted 38 interviews with case managers.

The YJS sits within Wiltshire Council Families and Children's Services as part of the Young People's Service, which brings the Emerald child exploitation/missing team, YJS, and the children on the edge of care 'stronger families' team together, creating a specialist service for vulnerable children and young people.

Wiltshire has a population of 510,400 (2022 Census), with low population density and wide geographical dispersal. An estimated population of 531,520 by 2030 is expected, driven significantly by the over-65s. Wiltshire is ranked 233rd of 317 local authority districts, where 1 is the most deprived. However, 13.7 per cent of its lower super output areas are in the most deprived 40 per cent of lower layer super output area nationally (for example, Studley Green is in most deprived 10 per cent). In the latest Social Mobility Commission figures, Wiltshire is in the lowest 20 per cent for child poverty and disadvantage.

Wiltshire has a higher-than-average percentage of pupils with an education, health, and care plan (4.6 per cent of all learners) or receiving special educational needs support (14.7 per cent of all learners). (Source: Local Authority Interactive Tool January 2023 School Census).

Black, Asian, and minority ethnic groups account for 14.73 per cent of the school population in the January 2023 School Census, compared with 35.7 per cent across England in the same academic year. (Source: Department for Education Pupil Attendance 2023/24 Autumn Term). Pupil persistent absence rates at secondary schools are lower than in the Southwest and in England overall. Attendance is higher than in the Southwest and the same as in England overall.

In the 12 months ending Q3 of 2023, Wiltshire Local Authority area had the eighth lowest crime rate per 1,000 population (excluding fraud) of all unitary authorities (Wiltshire 49.3, Swindon 73.07) (Source: LG Inform: Crime & Disorder)².

Wiltshire Council is the only local authority in the UK currently to have a fifth category for child protection, 'risk outside the home'. A weekly dashboard enables the YJS to report and monitor visiting and assessment timeliness, supervision frequency, and intervention outcomes. This shows that 70 per cent of the current caseload comprises preventative, non-statutory outcomes, such as youth restorative interventions and voluntary support programmes.

² Information provided by Wiltshire YJS

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 15 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:

- Through effective engagement with the YJS, partners, and stakeholders, the executive board has set the direction and strategy for the YJS. This has been articulated well in the YJS strategic plan (2023/2024).
- The focus on diversity and addressing disproportionate outcomes for children is explicit, with a comprehensive disproportionality and diversity action plan.
- The executive board contains partners at the appropriate level of seniority. Partners engage well at board meetings and are excellent ambassadors for YJS children. The board is led well, with a passionate chair who holds members to account, is inclusive, recognises the talent that each agency brings, and strives to achieve positive outcomes for children.
- The integration of the voices of children and their parents or carers is impressive and has led to service improvements. Presentations by children have been powerful and driven change.
- YJS partnership arrangements support the delivery of effective work with children. The Focussed Deterrence initiative is an excellent multi-agency enterprise supporting vulnerable children who are risk. Local strategic partnerships (community safety, reducing reoffending, serious youth violence) understand the needs of YJS children and appropriately direct resources to meet their needs. For example, additional resources to support substance misuse needs and health outcomes have been secured.
- The head of service is well respected by the executive board and produces regular reports to help members understand the operational performance and needs of the YJS. There is a successful link, and effective dialogue, between the YJS leadership team and the executive board.
- Business risks are understood well by leaders and there are appropriate controls in place to mitigate risk.

Areas for improvement:

- Although all board members have had an induction, there is no standardised board induction package.
- Not all YJS staff are fully aware of the work undertaken by the executive board.
- The ethnicity representation of the board could be enhanced.
- The executive board needs more forensic assurance of the quality of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm work.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Strengths:

- Staffing resources are generally used well, planned, and suitably reviewed to respond to the fluctuating demands and profile of children being supervised by the YJS.
- The workloads of practitioners and managers are reasonable overall, and care is appropriately given to ensure that staff are not overstretched.
- There is an effective strategy which ensures that the quality of work during planned and unplanned absences is not compromised.
- Cases are properly allocated to case managers with suitable skills and qualifications. Co-working of cases offers additional accountability, learning, and development.
- Staff are assisted well in their professional development and progression into other roles. The YJS sponsors paid staff and volunteers to complete apprenticeships and relevant qualifications.
- Staff receive regular supervision, and the staff survey indicated that this was of a good quality. All staff have access to in-service learning opportunities. Training completed by staff in the past 12 months has included harmful sexual behaviour and Assessment, Intervention and Moving-on 3; enhanced case management; trauma-informed practice and case formulation; risk management and intervention planning; resettlement and Department for Education Lifelong Links; and contextual safeguarding and groupwork.
- The partnership collectively promotes and embraces a culture of learning and continuous improvement. Staff are highly determined to deliver positive outcomes for children.

Areas for improvement:

- Some staff report having high workloads.
- Volunteers are not given the opportunity to input into the YJS annual strategic plan.
- A number of the YJS management team are new in post and would benefit from specific management training. Management oversight needs to be more consistent.
- Increased learning, development, and training are required, so that work to address safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others is more consistent.
- Clinical supervision is limited.

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 up-to-date scrutiny of the desistance needs of children. The analysis considers safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm factors as well as diversity needs, and is informed by management information from Asset Plus, audits, thematic inspections, and quality assurance processes.
- Children and their parents or carers attend executive board meetings, to speak about their experiences of the services they have received, and this is used to influence service delivery. For example, it has resulted in the formation of a hub for children at County Hall.
- Access to mainstream and specialist services that support children to desist from offending and keep them and others safe is impressive. These services include a devolved National Referral Mechanism panel, harmful sexual behaviour consultations with child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS); parenting support; Swindon and Wiltshire intervention with families to thrive (SWIFT) – police early help intervention; liaison and diversion service (LADS); speech and language therapy (SALT); CAMHS in-reach; substance misuse (Connect); contextual safeguarding; focused deterrence – supporting serious youth violence intervention, Safer Streets coordination; and education welfare and education, training, and employment (ETE) workers. Specialist mentoring services are commissioned with lived experience and cultural competence, including the Escapeline charity.
- There are well established, embedded, and effective links and relationships with a range of statutory partners, providers, and agencies providing desistance, safeguarding (multi-agency safeguarding hub, Emerald child exploitation/missing team and children on the edge of care 'stronger families' team) and public protection interventions (risk briefing meetings, risk, and safety and wellbeing management panels). Oversight is provided through various memorandums of understanding, service level agreements, and terms of reference for different groups.
- The YJS has effective connections with local sentencers, and this ensures that courts are aware of the services available to support sentencing.
- There is a strong ETE focus, including work with children post-16. Supporting children with ETE is a priority, combined with effective working with local education providers.
- All partners take a child-first, trauma-informed approach to service delivery, with a strong commitment to helping children transition from a pro-offending to pro-social identity.

Areas for improvement:

- There should be greater integration between some YJS plans formulated by the YJS and those held by partners in safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm cases.
- The YJS could do more to identify interventions specifically for mixed heritage children and set up reparation projects that would benefit broader community

groups. There is a need to increase the number of reparation projects and obtain direct feedback from children about their experiences of undertaking a project.

- The current SALT provision is achieving positive outcomes for children, increasing the resource would further enhance this.
- Not all staff know how to access the right services from partners and providers. In our staff survey, four out of 20 staff said that they 'sometimes' knew how to access services.

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:

- The YJS has a suite of policies, procedures, and guidance in place that enable staff to carry out their responsibilities. All staff who responded to the HM Inspectorate of Probation staff survey reported that they understood 'quite well, or very well' the policies and procedures that applied to their roles.
- Policies are regularly reviewed operationally, and changes communicated well in the partnership. The disproportionality action plan is robust, with clear milestones measuring success. It is a tool that the YJS uses effectively to review its processes and outcomes. The plan is comprehensive, with clear targets for what needs to be done and what success would look like.
- Learning is facilitated through self-evaluation, independent scrutiny by others, and application of findings from reviews. This leads to innovation (Lifelong Links pilot, transitional safeguarding project).
- Management information is used well to inform analysis and support performance improvement. Information sharing, memorandums of understanding, and governance arrangements are robust.
- Services for children are delivered in accessible places and safe environments. A hub for YJS children has recently been created at the Trowbridge office at County Hall. It is fresh, welcoming, and contains activities and resources requested by children. The music room there is impressive.
- Information and communications technology access, enabling staff to carry out planning, service delivery, and reviewing, works well. Staff can work effectively from office and remote bases.
- There is a range of quality assurance processes, which include random and scheduled auditing, deep dives, and thematic inspections. The performance and outcomes board arrangements work well.
- There are effective processes in place to ensure that the YJS learns from things that do not go to plan. These include critical learning reviews and audits. Learning is disseminated across the partnership.
- Views of children and their parent and carers are sought formally, at key stages of the supervisory process, on completion of interventions, and at the executive board. The 'child's voice' team and young people's ambassadors add value to learning what works for children.

Areas for improvement:

- Quality assurance of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm casework needs greater consistency.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

Wiltshire YJS has an effective operational engagement and participation approach, which it uses to gather the views of children and their parents or carers. There is evidence of dynamic listening at various stages of the supervisory process, change arising from feedback, and testimonies presented by children and their parents or carers at the executive board. The YJS and its partners are committed to helping children develop confidence in their contributions to improve services. Activities have included workshops with service providers and children and their parents or carers, direct feedback about the quality of services received, and opportunities to modify materials to make them more child friendly. This has produced an environment which values the voices of children and their parents or carers.

The YJS contacted, on our behalf, children who had open cases at the time of the inspection, to gain their consent for a text survey. We delivered the survey independently to the 31 children who consented, and 17 replied. We also spoke to nine parents or carers and four children. Almost all 17 respondents to our text survey gave a score of either eight, nine, or 10 out of 10 for the positive help they felt they had received from the YJS. One child wrote:

“They (YJS) make you realise there's more to life than getting in trouble and ending up in jail and they will help you stay out of trouble.”

In our telephone and face-to-face interviews, 11 out of the 12 children and parents or carers who responded reported that they understood what the YJS is trying to achieve. When asked if they thought the staff had the right skills, 11 out of 12 responded 'yes'. One child said of her YJS officer:

“She was really good. She spoke to me like a friend rather than an authority figure. I have not got in trouble since and that is because of my case manager. She helped me with school which was good and was trying to help me get into education.”

When a parent was asked about whether their child had been able to access the right support to stay out of trouble, the response was:

“My son had issues with his emotional health and school was a demanding thing in his life. He was in and out of school and to be honest I would get very frustrated when trying to talk to the school. The YJS worker listened to me and my worries, listened to my son and then said, 'it's not a problem, I can help' and she did. She was able to help put across the points that I found difficult to school. They arranged a video call with the YJS, me, my son, the health worker and the school. The YJS worker gave suggestions so the school could try different things and that made a real difference. He now attends regularly.”

When asked 'what do you most like about the YJS,' one child replied:

“The whole approach, how they take their time, listen and respond to things.”

There were some quotes from different children and parents or carers which suggested that the quality of relationships that had been established was a clear strength, as evidenced by the collection of quotes below:

“They (practitioners) go above and beyond. They are skilful and help. They communicate well, are always on the end of the phone and take time to listen to both me and my son. It's great that they are there to help when things go wrong. The practitioners manage to make serious topics fun and engage my child.”

Diversity

The information below highlights some of the YJS's data on the diversity of its staff and children.

- 22 per cent of children on the current caseload are girls.
- 79 per cent of staff working in the YJS are female.
- 8.3 per cent of children in the area covered by the YJS are Black, Asian, and minority ethnic, and 14 per cent of children on the current caseload are Black, Asian, and minority ethnic.
- Seven per cent of staff working in the YJS are Black, Asian, and minority ethnic.
- 54 per cent of children on the current caseload have a learning disability, a learning difficulty, or an education, health, and care plan.
- 58 per cent of the current caseload have substance misuse needs.

There is a tangible commitment from the executive board to addressing diversity and disproportionate outcomes for children, as evidenced in the YJS business plan. Services are personalised and this theme is evidenced well in the casework that inspectors reviewed. There is a robust and up-to-date analysis of the children's desistance needs. This analysis considers diversity needs across several protected characteristics.

The out-of-court disposal policy needs to make clearer reference to diversity and how this should be considered in the decision-making process. The resettlement policy makes reference to managing diversity needs through discussions with children and their parents or carers at an early stage of resettlement planning. It promotes a personalised approach and is supported by effective practice guidance. Inspectors found some excellent examples where the children's learning needs (such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), hearing impairments, and autism spectrum disorder) were managed sensitively, calmly, and effectively. The increase in mentoring opportunities for children is a positive addition. Most staff are confident in having conversations with children about their protected characteristics. The YJS has undertaken thematic reviews to improve its understanding of the experiences of children from different lived experiences. It has, and is running, 'listening groups' with girls and children from different racial backgrounds to understand their stories better. The work with Traveller teachers working with YJS Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller, and Boater children is impressive.

The 2023-2025 disproportionality and diversity plan is an excellent example of the YJS leadership actively taking an interest in both strategic and operational aspects of service delivery that maximises positive outcomes for *all* children, irrespective of their lived experiences. Impressively, the plan has been built on the report prepared by David Lammy (*An Independent Review into the Treatment of, and Outcomes For, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Individuals in the Criminal Justice System* (2017)). The YJS is seeking to address a range of issues, including monitoring the YJS Black, Asian, and minority ethnic cohort to explore patterns and trends on offending and their association with ethnicity, the development of a YJS self-assessment tool which includes disproportionality analysis, and data sharing with regional partners to identify disproportionality. The YJS is also seeking to advise and liaise with local solicitors to raise awareness of the implications of no admissions being made at the police station for low-level offences.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 16 community sentences managed by the YJS.

2.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

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

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	94%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	63%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	56%

Assessment work to help children in desisting from further offending was a strength. Practitioners used an analytical approach to understanding the reasons for a child's offending and made positive use of historical and current information. They understood diversity needs and personal circumstances well. We found that youth justice officers had made good use of information held by other agencies in their assessment enquiries. Additionally, they had reviewed the child's strengths and protective factors comprehensively. However, victims' needs were not addressed sufficiently consistently.

Assessment activity did not always identify all the risks to the child's safety and wellbeing. Practitioners mostly gathered relevant information from other agencies and analysed controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, but this was inconsistent. When information was collected (such as from education and police), it was used well to gain a better understanding of the child's safety and wellbeing needs.

Assessments to ascertain all relevant factors linked to keeping other people safe were weaker. In over half the inspected cases, managers did not draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate. We found evidence of under-recording in several cases, especially in the assessment of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm. During interviews with inspectors, while some case managers were able to express a general understanding of these aspects of casework, they were not able to articulate the broader components of effective safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm work.

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

2.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

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

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	75%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	63%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	56%

In most cases, planning activity to support a child's desistance drew sufficiently on available sources of information. This included past behaviours and convictions and involved other agencies where necessary. There was an appropriate balance of attention to both strengths and areas of concern, and practitioners explored the child's motivation and maturity well in almost all the inspected cases.

However, planning to address children's safety and wellbeing was variable. Engagement with other agencies to ensure that safety and wellbeing plans were aligned was not always consistent. For example, the nature of historical involvement with children's social care (self-harm, missing episodes) and domestic abuse within the family was often not forensically considered. Too often, planning concentrated on addressing safety and wellbeing linked to the index offence, rather than wider safety and wellbeing concerns. Contingency planning was also weaker. However, inspectors did find some positive examples of suitable planning to address trauma from sexual assaults and mapping exercises to mitigate exploitation risks.

Planning to keep other people safe was variable and required further development. In just under half the inspected cases, planning failed to promote the safety of other people appropriately. There was a gap in some practitioners' knowledge and understanding of how to carry out work with children who had committed violent offences. This meant that referrals to specialist workers were overlooked. The specific concerns of actual victims and needs of potential victims were not consistently covered well. Furthermore, while the level of engagement with partnership providers was stronger, much more work was needed to gather information from public protection partners, especially in cases which had been classified as low to medium risk. Planning did not set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people in six out of the 16 inspected cases. Again, contingency arrangements needed to be stronger.

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.

Requires improvement

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?	81%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	56%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	50%

Practitioners were skilled at building and sustaining meaningful relationships with children and families to support positive outcomes. Children accessed a range of services that addressed areas of concern (education and emotional wellbeing), including positive use of leisure. They were also signposted to various opportunities to build on strengths and encouraged to access mainstream services. Some were meeting with a mentor through Escapeline, to support them in avoiding being criminally exploited, and taking part in art projects. Practitioners were often creative in their work. In some cases, we found that practitioners had adapted the way they delivered services and were using a range of techniques to engage with children – for example, fidget toys, picture cards, and YouTube clips.

The delivery of work to keep children safe was variable. Planned work was not always offered as proposed. For example, where other agencies were involved in delivering work, this was often coordinated inconsistently, with limited communication or feedback sought by YJS practitioners. Activity lacked structure and there was too much attention on the index offence. The impact of other critical factors – for example, associations with older men known to have considerable criminal backgrounds – was not always considered well. This meant that not all safety and wellbeing needs were understood and considered by the practitioner.

Work to keep other people safe was not consistent and would have benefited from additional management oversight, especially in the effectiveness of the delivery of services to keep other people safe. Practitioners had not sufficiently highlighted the safety and protection of actual and potential victims in all cases. They did not always deliver victim awareness/empathy work in a timely manner or integrate information from risk management meetings effectively into the delivery of services. More professional curiosity and reflection was required when children disclosed new information that could have led to them potentially causing harm to others.

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?	81%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	63%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	69%

When required, work to review the impact of services on reducing reoffending was done well. Practitioners completed formal, informal, and dynamic reviews, as personal circumstances changed. Consideration of a child's strengths and their diversity needs, and an analysis of their personal and familial circumstances, were evident in reviewing activity. Practitioners consistently reviewed children's motivation and appropriately took note of any barriers they had experienced, whether personal or structural. Conversations with children and their parents were evidenced well in most of the inspected cases. This helped practitioners to gain a more complete understanding of the children's broader day-to-day lived experiences, and empowered parents or carers to take part actively in their children's supervision.

The quality of reviewing activity to keep children safe was variable. Where required, reviews did not always respond in a timely manner to changes linked to deteriorations in personal relationships in the home or escalation in substance misuse. Information from risk management and strategy meetings, as part of keeping children safe, was not always assembled thoroughly and used to inform and alter plans. Encouragingly, transitions work with children moving from the YJS to the Probation Service had a suitable focus on safety and wellbeing concerns.

Practitioners' response to carrying out effective work to keep other people safe was better overall, but improvements were needed. The quality assurance process, although applied, did not identify the gaps in this area of work. In just under one-third of inspected cases, plans to protect others from harm were not modified following reviewing. Inspectors found some delays in case managers reacting to new information from and about children. Some concentrated disproportionately on the index offence rather than considering broader relevant behaviours, trauma, and information from parents or carers. Written reviews were not always completed in a timely manner. This meant that other practitioners involved in delivering risk of harm work did not have access to the most up-to-date information.

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

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 24 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of five youth conditional cautions and 19 community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in 22 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?	83%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	67%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	42%

Overall, analysis of desistance was completed well, and practitioners had explored how much responsibility the child took for their behaviour, their attitude towards their offending, and their reasons for becoming involved. This approach allowed practitioners to delve into how children's lived experiences may have contributed to their offending. In a number of inspected cases, inspectors found positive evidence of practitioners' understanding of the impact that adverse childhood experiences had had on children.

Assessment work to identify and analyse risks to the child's safety and wellbeing was not consistently completed as required. Practitioners, while generally accessing information well, did not use the knowledge from other agencies consistently. We identified some failures to consider or respond appropriately to exploitation and domestic abuse concerns and suggest that this is an area that requires additional training, understanding, and attention by the service.

Assessment activity, analysing the risk of harm to others posed by the child required strengthening and was not consistently completed well in all the inspected cases. We found several examples where practitioners had underestimated the risk of harm to others. This included a failure to identify who was at risk and the nature of that risk. Some assessments lacked a clinical analysis, and the context of risk of harm in these cases was not recognised well enough. Information gathering from other agencies about the potential risk of harm to known victims was not done well in almost half the inspected cases.

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.

Good

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

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	83%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	71%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	63%

Planning largely focussed upon supporting the child's desistance. Planning mostly considered key services or identified which agencies would deliver these interventions, and within what timescales. Attention to the child's personal circumstances, including the broader familial and social context, was strong and children's parents or carers were invited to contribute to identifying the interventions that would help their children avoid taking part in further offending. However, the wishes and needs of victims were not always well integrated into planning.

Planning activity promoted the safety and wellbeing needs of children in just under three-quarters of the inspected cases. In the other cases, there was insufficient evidence to reassure inspectors that all staff understood fully what needed to be included in planning to keep children safe. The information contained in planning frequently lacked detail and was often too descriptive. Furthermore, practitioners had not always aligned their plans with those prepared by children's social care to support safeguarding. Additionally, contingency planning was not completed sufficiently well in eight of the 15 cases where it was required.

Planning activity to promote other people's safety was variable. When done well, practitioners generally liaised effectively with other agencies, including police staff in the YJS, and risks to actual and potential victims were included in plans. Contingency planning was too generic in a number of the inspected cases and did not always include the timings of when action might be required. Inspectors found that, in some cases, practitioners had engaged well with the victim worker who had been identified to deliver victim awareness and restorative justice work. Similarly, the planning of work to be done at school was innovative. However, more robust planning, which considered the safety of all actual and potential victims, was needed, helping case managers to ensure that, in their supervision of children, they remained purposeful in reducing harm to others.

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

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

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

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	79%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	71%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	67%

The quality of services delivered to help children to not commit further offences was consistently better. We found examples where work on developing a pro-social identity and participation in positive activities (arts, leisure, and music) were provided, and these were improving the child's wellness and supporting desistance. Reparation work was personalised to the individual child and focused on achieving success. These findings were also reinforced by direct feedback we received from children and parents or carers who spoke to us.

Practitioners kept regular contact with children and their parents or carers, with good levels of engagement. This was not limited to 'check-ins' and information gathering, but also involved delivering a range of interventions that supported the child's maturity and progress, such as effective mentoring support.

Service delivery to keep children safe was generally carried out well. Practitioners made good use of specialist services, such as Connect. In several cases, practitioners used the learning they had acquired about the impact of trauma to support work on safety.

Work with partners to keep children safe was not always consistent, and coordination of this work was variable. Attention is required to solve this variability in practice. Initial gaps in assessment and planning for this work were having an adverse impact on service delivery. The YJS had numerous quality assurance and gatekeeping systems in place, but these were not working well enough.

In 16 out of the 24 most inspected cases, enough services were delivered to keep other people safe. There was evidence of risk management and professionals' meetings taking place. However, the attention paid to the needs of potential and actual victims was an area requiring development.

⁹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision



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

Good

We also inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews. Our key findings were as follows.

Strengths:

- There was a clear protocol in place with Wiltshire Police, setting out a locally agreed out-of-court disposal policy which incorporated joint and defensible decision-making. The YJS had an out-of-court multi-agency disposal panel with the appropriate level of representation. This included the police (including the police early intervention team), YJS managers (who chaired the meetings), the restorative justice/victim liaison practitioner, a substance misuse practitioner, a CAMHS worker, and a children's social care worker from Emerald.
- The disposal panel had access to the same range of interventions that were available for post-court cases. These included harmful sexual behaviour consultations with CAMHS, parenting support, SWIFT – police early help intervention, LADS, SALT, Connect, Safer Streets coordination, education welfare and ETE workers, and specialist mentoring.
- The out-of-court policy was comprehensive and supported by guidance notes. It effectively covered pre-panel, at panel, and post-panel information gathering, eligibility criteria, exceptional offences, enforcement, escalation arrangements, decision-making in cases where children had previous offending histories, liaison arrangements with partners and other agencies, and diversion. A range of diversionary options was utilised as part of the out-of-court disposal provision, and this included the option of Outcome 22¹⁰.
- Provisions were in place to ensure that the voices of victims, children, and their parents or carers were central in the decision-making process.
- Engagement arrangements were clear and YJS practitioners could return to the panel when children were not engaging. The YJS used several comprehensive methods of evaluation across the out-of-court disposal provision to ensure effectiveness.

Areas for improvement:

- The out-of-court disposal policy did not explicitly refer to diversity. The guidance document was not sufficiently strong in relation to diversity, to reflect the out-of-court disposal assessment framework and be robust in meeting the personalised needs of children.

¹⁰ A police outcome code that is used when the police have decided to defer prosecution until an individual has been given the opportunity to engage with an intervention or activity.

- The recently introduced additional scrutiny panel, comprising members from the partnership, to consider solely Swindon and Wiltshire YJS children, was not embedded.
- Information received from the police through the referral document was often in the form of a list, and this caused some confusion when YJS staff were completing their assessments.

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

Strengths:

- The Wiltshire YJS 'policy on resettlement' was supported by a document (*Resettlement of Children and Young People Leaving Custody*) providing comprehensive advice to practitioners. Pathways comprising suitable accommodation, health, and ETE guidance all featured well in the policy. The five principles of constructive resettlement were embedded and supported the achievement of positive outcomes.
- An emphasis on developing a pro-social identity was evident, and this was demonstrated in the cases reviewed by inspectors.
- The YJS forensically reviewed resettlement cases.
- The policy identified the importance of the principles of constructive resettlement, including well-coordinated, personalised services with network partners. The need for timely communication and effective information exchange with partners, providers, and other key stake holders was explicit in the document. The cases reviewed evidenced this taking place in practice.
- The YJS approach to resettlement ensured that the three domains of risk were discussed and managed appropriately, with referrals to the risk, safety and wellbeing panels, including multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) screening where necessary.
- The policy on resettlement had regularly been reviewed and adjusted in line with the development of the service's operating model. Procedures and processes supporting resettlement had been revised to reflect the underpinning principles of constructive resettlement as an evidence-based approach to intervention.
- There was evidence of victim work started in the community being continued in custody.
- Practitioners sought to overcome structural barriers faced by children's resettlement needs.

Areas for improvement:

- Victim work was not sufficiently explicit in the policy on resettlement and practice guidance.

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.](#)