



HM Inspectorate  
of Probation

An inspection of youth justice services in

# **Southend-on-Sea**

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HM Inspectorate of Probation, September 2024

# Contents

- Foreword** ..... 3
- Ratings** ..... 4
- Recommendations** ..... 5
- Background** ..... 6
- Domain one: Organisational delivery** ..... 7
  - 1.1. Governance and leadership.....7
  - 1.2. Staff.....9
  - 1.3. Partnerships and services ..... 11
  - 1.4. Information and facilities ..... 13
- Domain two: Court disposals** ..... 16
  - 2.1. Assessment ..... 16
  - 2.2. Planning ..... 17
  - 2.3. Implementation and delivery ..... 18
  - 2.4. Reviewing..... 19
- Domain three: Out-of-court disposals** ..... 20
  - 3.1. Assessment ..... 20
  - 3.2. Planning ..... 21
  - 3.3. Implementation and delivery ..... 22
  - 3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision ..... 23
- 4.1. Resettlement** ..... 25
  - 4.1. Resettlement policy and provision ..... 25
- Further information** ..... 27

### Acknowledgements

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

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### Published by:

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

Follow us on Twitter  
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ISBN: 978-1-916621-70-1

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## Foreword

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

Until January 2023, YJS governance sat with the Southend-on-Sea community safety partnership board. The YJS now has its own distinct board, chaired by the executive director of children and public health, who was instrumental in establishing the board and has a clear vision for its development. Board members have lead areas of responsibility and have links to other strategic forums. However, the board and partnership need to understand better the needs of children known to the YJS, particularly those children who are care experienced and over-represented within the YJS, and work to ensure they avoid their unnecessary criminalisation. Board members also need to review and learn from children's experiences of custody to ensure a collective responsibility for these children is taken by the partnership. Additionally, board members should prioritise developing an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding of the youth justice landscape and context to drive effective improvements and satisfy themselves on the quality of work being delivered. There also needs to be a greater focus upon providing the partnership services YJS children require, such as securing provision and resource to meet children's speech, language and communication needs.















There is no YJS-led multi-agency risk management meeting and it was not clear how YJS children's risks were managed across the different partnership forums. This was evidenced in our inspection of casework, where we found inconsistency in the quality of assessment and reviewing activity to keep other people safe, particularly in post court work. We found information was not used consistently to analyse the level of harm children presented to other people, there was insufficient analysis of what could be put in place to keep other people safe, and this was not responsive to changes. The quality of provision to meet children's resettlement needs also requires strengthening. Improvement in the quality and consistency of management oversight will ensure quality in practice is driven across all of the YJS work.

Staff are motivated in their work and volunteers feel valued and part of the service. Both staff and managers are child-centred, understand their children well and advocate on their behalf. It was pleasing to see plans being co-produced with children, and staff who went above and beyond to support children and encourage children's engagement. In this report we make a number of recommendations which we consider will support the YJS and the management board in delivering high quality youth justice services.



**Martin Jones CBE**  
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

## Ratings

<b>Southend-on-Sea Youth Justice Service</b>		<b>Score</b>	<b>16/36</b>
Fieldwork started June 2024			
<b>Overall rating</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>		
<b>1. Organisational delivery</b>			
1.1	Governance and leadership	<b>Requires improvement</b>	
1.2	Staff	<b>Good</b>	
1.3	Partnerships and services	<b>Good</b>	
1.4	Information and facilities	<b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>2. Court disposals</b>			
2.1	Assessment	<b>Inadequate</b>	
2.2	Planning	<b>Good</b>	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	<b>Requires improvement</b>	
2.4	Reviewing	<b>Inadequate</b>	
<b>3. Out-of-court disposals</b>			
3.1	Assessment	<b>Good</b>	
3.2	Planning	<b>Good</b>	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	<b>Requires improvement</b>	
3.4	Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	<b>Good</b>	
<b>4. Resettlement<sup>1</sup></b>			
4.1	Resettlement policy and provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>	

<sup>1</sup> The rating for resettlement does not influence the overall YJS rating.

## Recommendations

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

### **The chair of Southend-on-Sea YJS management board should:**

1. ensure that its members have the appropriate knowledge and understanding of the youth justice context and landscape to be able to drive improvements which meet the needs of YJS children.

### **Southend-on-Sea YJS management board should:**

2. understand the over-representation of care experienced children and avoid their unnecessary criminalisation
3. review and learn from children's experiences of custody and ensure that the partnership takes collective responsibility for these children
4. make sure that children supervised by the YJS are assessed for and have specific access to services that meet their speech, language, and communication needs.

### **Southend-on-Sea YJS Head of Service should:**

5. review the risk management policy and develop a framework which ensures consistent quality of practice in assessing, planning, service delivery, and reviewing to keep other people safe
6. make sure that resettlement provision and the quality of practice effectively meets children's resettlement needs
7. strengthen the quality and consistency of management oversight so that it drives improvements in the quality of practice across the service.

## Background

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We conducted fieldwork in Southend-on-Sea YJS over a period of a week, beginning Monday 17 June 2024. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began, out-of-court disposals were delivered, and resettlement cases were sentenced or released between 19 June 2023 and 12 April 2024. We also conducted 17 interviews with case managers.

Southend-on-Sea is a unitary local authority on the river Thames estuary in Essex. In 2019 it was ranked 129th out of the 317 most deprived local authorities in England. It is home to 183,100 residents, projected to rise to 192,200 by 2025; 87 per cent of residents classify themselves as white British, with 4.6 per cent white other, 3.6 per cent Asian and Asian British, and 2.1 per cent Black African, Black Caribbean or Black British. Black, Asian, and minority ethnic children were not over-represented at the time of the inspection, although this can fluctuate due to small numbers. Essex police operates across the region, which is covered by three different YJSs. The YJSs work collaboratively in the delivery of training and provision of services, with the heads of service meeting regularly to ensure that strategic partnership arrangements remain strong.

Southend-on-Sea YJS is a multi-agency partnership that is located within the council's children and public health portfolio and sits within the integrated children, youth, and family support (ICYFS) service. The YJS service manager reports to the head of ICYFS who in turn is line managed by the director of children's social work, early help, and youth support. Until January 2023, the governance arrangements for Southend-on-Sea YJS were provided by the Southend-on-Sea community safety partnership board. Following representations from the head of service and the arrival of a new director of children's services, a distinct youth justice management board was established in January 2023. The executive director of children and public health has been chairing the board for 18 months. The service manager is supported by two team managers in reduced hours posts and a senior practitioner. At the time of the inspection, one team manager was on maternity leave and their areas of responsibility and line management had been temporarily reallocated. There are 17.5 YJS staff and 16 volunteers. In June 2024, 34 post-court interventions and 74 out-of-court disposals were open to the YJS.

Analysis of YJS performance data shows that the number of first-time entrants to the formal youth justice system was above the average for the region, and for England and Wales. The proportion of children who reoffend and the frequency with which they do so are also higher than the average for England and Wales. The YJS is co-located with the adolescent intervention prevention team (AIPT) who are multi-disciplined practitioners, including social workers, providing intensive statutory intervention and targeted prevention support to children identified as being at significant risk of all forms of exploitation. The number of children referred for diversion support has increased; this shows that services are intervening with children at an earlier stage, with the intention of preventing offending and reducing the number of first-time entrants.

## Domain one: Organisational delivery

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To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 13 meetings, including with staff, volunteers, managers, board members, and partnership staff and their managers.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows.

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### 1.1. Governance and leadership



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

Requires improvement

#### Strengths:

- Until 2023, the governance arrangements for Southend-on-Sea YJS were provided by the community safety partnership board. Following representations from the head of service and the arrival of a new executive director of children and public health, a distinct youth justice management board was established in January 2023.
- The board chair has been instrumental in setting up the designated YJS management board and has the commitment and knowledge to drive the board forward.
- The board members are mainly the statutory partners; they are of sufficient seniority and consistently attend, and they are integrated with other governance boards both locally and regionally. There are strong youth justice links across strategic and operational, local and national forums.
- The board is still developing and is expanding its membership. Board members are eager to improve the YJS governance arrangements, and recognise opportunities to strengthen the board and embed child-first principles.
- The board understands the YJS's vision, strategy, and key priorities.
- Board members have lead areas of responsibility and are building links with YJS staff through observing areas of practice.
- The YJS has been responsive to the changing profile of the YJS cohort. The head of service developed 'Teams around the YJS' to support children and families through diversion prior to YJS involvement, and exit planning for when interventions with the service have finished.
- The youth justice plan has been developed through consultation with board members, staff, and children.
- There is an increased focus on the voice of children at board meetings, by hearing about children's experiences through videos and case studies.
- The head of service and service manager are proactive in providing information and any matters arising to the board. YJS team managers attend the board to present reports and there is a commitment for practitioners to attend the board regularly.
- All partners are sighted on the risk issues and forward planning for the service.

- At the time of inspection, a team manager was on maternity leave and so areas of responsibility and line management had been temporarily reallocated. However, everyone knew their key areas of practice and there were clear lines of accountability.
- Staff and volunteers feel able to discuss concerns openly and believe that their views can influence positive change.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Induction to the board is supported by meetings with the chair and head of service. As the board develops and new members join, a comprehensive board introductory handbook would help members to understand better their roles and responsibilities.
- The board's oversight and understanding of children on remand and in custody need to improve. There has been an absence of formal partnership reviewing and learning from children's experiences of custody, and the board needs to ensure it takes collective responsibility for these children.
- The profile of YJS children and over-represented cohorts is not widely understood. The YJS has developed an action plan to address disproportionality, but this would benefit from a strategic steer to ensure a collective understanding of the protected characteristics and diversity needs of all children.
- Both the board and partners need to understand better the over-representation of care experienced children to avoid their unnecessary criminalisation.
- There is no speech, language or communication therapist specifically for YJS children. The management board recognises this as a gap and has escalated its concerns. This needs to be a continued strategic focus for the board. Operationally, there are gaps in the partnership arrangements as the YJS has a limited health resource. The probation working arrangements are limiting the ability to meet the needs of the service.
- Board members are not routinely providing data from their own services to promote a holistic analysis of themes and trends across the partnership.
- Development of more robust oversight measures are required to satisfy the board that the quality of work undertaken by the YJS is effective. Oversight should include a more proactive role in monitoring the quality of risk management practice.



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## 1.2. Staff



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

Good

### Strengths:

- Staff are enthusiastic, positive, and motivated in their work. They reported feeling supported by their managers and their peers.
- The management team works well together and is clear about roles and areas of responsibility.
- Staff feel confident to approach managers for advice and guidance.
- There is a good level of diversity within the team with specific diverse needs reflected in the staff group.
- There was evidence in the cases and the focus groups that staff understand the local context and challenges within specific communities.
- The head of service encourages staff retention by providing opportunities for them to learn, grow and develop, such as secondment.; This helps develop staff's skills as well as keeping them motivated to remain in Southend-on-Sea.
- The service proactively encourages staff development and offers management opportunities within the service, as well as supporting staff to complete external qualifications.
- Volunteers feel valued and part of the service. They are routinely invited to team meetings and staff development days. They are supported in their role through individual supervision where their professional and personal development is considered.
- The volunteers go over and above their roles as panel members to share their specialist skills and interests with YJS children. They offer interventions with children who are showing an interest in or displaying a need in the relevant area. This creative approach makes the most of the professional and personal skills and experience of the volunteers. It also highlights their commitment and passion in supporting and engaging children in the service.
- There are weekly management and team meetings and quarterly group supervision sessions to ensure effective communication and dissemination of information.
- Staff feel that the allocation of work is fair and collaborative. Although they perceive workloads as high, they discuss any concerns regarding the volume or complexity of their caseloads with managers and are confident that this results in adjustments and additional support.
- Supervision is regular and effective in balancing service needs with practitioner wellbeing. The diversity needs of staff are supported well.
- There is a comprehensive mandatory and specialist training offer to staff and volunteers. Nearly all practitioners have completed Lucy Faithfull Foundation training on harmful sexual behaviour.
- There was evidence in the cases inspected that staff do all they can to encourage good engagement with the child. Both staff and managers are child-centred and

know their children well. Staff advocate and challenge when appropriate to ensure that children are receiving the services they need.

- Staff and volunteers feel safe to undertake their work. Lone working processes are understood, and managers provide oversight when work is delivered during evenings and weekends.
- Managers recognise good practice through emails and staff receive praise through supervision. Staff feel valued by managers and by their peers, and the service promotes a supportive culture.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Staffing changes have affected management capacity and there was a lack of effective management oversight in some of the cases inspected.
- The impact of training and development opportunities for practitioners is not creating a consistent and shared understanding of factors linked to keeping other people safe.
- There needs to be better management oversight to ensure consistency of practice across the whole staff group.
- There is limited support available for staff managing complex cases; access to clinical support and supervision should be considered for all practitioners.
- Workloads are perceived to be high, due to sickness and staff vacancies which have a big impact on a small service.
- There has been some flux in the staff group, due to cover arrangements and backfill into management posts. This has impacted on capacity and continuity.

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## 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:

- Statutory partners are present and work cohesively to provide services to children. The line managers of partnership staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the complexities of YJS children.
- The governance and structures for work on exploitation at a partnership level are strong. There was good joint working with the adolescent intervention prevention team (AIPT) with whom the YJS is co-located. They are multi-disciplinary practitioners who provide intensive statutory intervention and targeted prevention support to children at risk of all forms of exploitation.
- Victim work is good, and all victims are offered support. There is appropriate information sharing with police, and involvement is victim-led and personalised to their needs and wishes.
- The YJS has one full-time seconded police officer who demonstrates a good understanding of child-first practice. They deliver sessions with children, and have developed positive relationships with care experienced children in local children's homes. This enables them to promote restorative approaches to reduce the criminalisation of care experienced children. Strong operational links with the child-centred policing team has resulted in the introduction of Outcome 22.<sup>2</sup>
- Education, training, and employment provision for YJS children is a strength. The education worker supports schools in undertaking risk and behaviour plans, and facilitates education drop-in sessions for children.
- There is a comprehensive range of partnership forums that work collectively to tackle exclusions, challenge and support schools, and ease access for YJS children to further education. Education providers are responsive to the needs of YJS children. Partnership working is helping to improve schools' capacity to manage them and keep them in learning.
- A high number of YJS children are in school and can access speech, language, and communication provision, although there is no specific worker for the YJS.
- There is a good connection with children's social care and evidence of joint working. Staff understand how to refer a child to children's social care if they are concerned about their safety and wellbeing.
- There is a newly appointed child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) practitioner seconded to the YJS, who provides specialist consultation, assessment, and intervention for children. They are developing their role to provide services that support both children's lower and higher level emotional mental health and wellbeing needs.

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<sup>2</sup> Where police defer prosecution until the accused has been given the opportunity to engage with an intervention activity.

- 'Open road' is the children's substance misuse team. They provide a link worker one day a week for the YJS children and deliver targeted work for children misusing substances, and there is effective communication between the services.
- The service has a good range of reparation projects that respond to the needs of children and their communities. They are offered to all children open to the YJS to encourage them to get involved in positive activities.
- The YJS works with ATF Positive Futures who are commissioned through the violence and vulnerability unit and work with children and families to build their resilience and aspirations. They provide resources and community programmes, some of which are peer-led, and include a variety of activities.
- Feedback from court shows that the relationship with the YJS is strong. Reports are comprehensive and easy to understand, with clear recommendations for the best interventions to support the child.

**Area for improvement:**

- Health services for YJS children are limited. It is acknowledged that the capacity of health provision is struggling to meet demands and there is a commitment to developing the health offer.
- There is no specific YJS-led multi-agency risk management meeting. It was not clear how YJS children's risks were managed across the different partnership forums, and this was reflected in the case data.
- Although there are strengths in most of the victim work, more could be done to formalise the monitoring of the victim's sense of safety.
- The limited provision of a seconded probation officer does not meet the needs of the service. There was no detailed local guidance outlining a staged approach to supporting children to transition to the Probation Service.
- Although the YJS collects the views of children and families, this could be better coordinated to help influence service delivery.

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## 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.

Requires improvement

### Strengths:

- Staff are flexible in how and when they see children, ensuring that their individual needs are considered. They try to use buildings that are accessible, safe, and suitable for children and families. Staff also see children at venues around the area, in schools, and through home visits.
- Staff and volunteers feel safe undertaking their work.
- Practitioners have access to children's social care data systems, and partners have access to their respective IT systems ensuring effective information sharing. Information-sharing protocols are in place and understood across the partnership.
- There is an escalation process for all partners to help them challenge each other. Staff feel supported by managers to raise concerns.
- Performance data is manually produced for the management team. This allows the team to identify and address any issues about data and recording.
- HM Inspectorate of Probation reports are discussed and reviewed against practice in Southend-on-Sea. This supports the YJS in developing learning and considering different options for service delivery.
- Multi-agency critical learning reviews are completed so that the YJS and the wider partnership can share key learning and implement actions.
- The quality assurance and performance framework includes contact with both children and their parents or carers to seek feedback about the service they have received, and to explore what went well and what areas they feel could be improved.

### Areas for improvement:

- YJS policies need to be reviewed, updated, and localised, and should include consideration of how to meet the range of children's diversity needs and take account of their protected characteristics.
- The risk management policy was not up to date, and did not offer the necessary clarity needed to understand the different pathways for managing risk.
- The service does its best to manage the issues and frustrations of working with a poor-quality case management database. There are imminent plans for its replacement, and staff are being consulted about their requirements for the new system.
- Quality assurance of assessing and reviewing in post-court cases needs greater consistency to ensure the safety of others. This should also extend to quality assurance of delivery of work to manage safety and wellbeing in out-of-court disposals.
- Although there has been some evaluation of practice, for example in probation transition arrangements, there is no evaluating of the services provided to children who are in custody and looking at their journey to see what can be learnt across the partnership. This evaluative practice needs to become embedded so that the service can be confident that its work is effective and is shaping service delivery.

## **Involvement of children and their parents or carers**

The YJS has various methods to collate feedback from children, parents or carers. The service's quality assurance and performance framework includes contact with both children and their parents or carers to seek feedback about the service they have received, and to explore what went well and what areas they feel could be improved. Although the YJS collects the views of children and families, this could be better coordinated. There is an increased focus on the voice of children at board meetings, feedback from children is a standard agenda item for the management board and they heard case studies and viewed videos of children talking about their experience of the YJS. A team manager made a recent presentation to the management board on how the voice of the child is captured in the out-of-court disposal process. These different processes, however, need to be better coordinated and embedded to help inform practice and influence service delivery.

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 11 children who consented, and five children replied.

When asked how they rated the service they had received from the YJS, four children responded with two giving a score of 10 out of 10.

Inspectors also spoke to two children and one parent. All felt that their YJS workers had the right skills to do the work and that they had been able to access the right services and support to help them stay out of trouble. They also said that where they were seen was safe and accessible for them.

One child, talking about their case manager, said:

*" They helped me a lot to be a better person and to grow up and be more mature, and to know the reality of things and how things work."*

Another child commented:

*"We spoke about the mistakes I've made, completed worksheets and this helped me a lot to think about my choices and behaviours. I feel like I've had support with everything I wanted, and my life is going to be different moving forward."*

One parent said:

*"I was crying out for help; nobody else would support me until YJS came along."*

*"I just feel like my child has a new start now, they're different and they're not offending. Before we were going through a really, really difficult time and now I feel like we have the support we need. I really don't think they are going to get in trouble again."*

## Diversity

- Southend-on-Sea is home to 183,100 residents, projected to rise to 192,200 by 2025. Of the residents, 87 per cent classify themselves as white British, with 4.6 per cent White other, 3.6 per cent Asian or Asian British, and 2.1 per cent Black African, Black Caribbean or Black British. Twenty-four per cent of the population are aged 0-19 years, and 19 per cent of Southend-on-Sea's children live in low-income families.
- Although Black, Asian, and minority ethnic children were not over-represented at the time of the inspection, this can fluctuate due to small numbers, and they had been over-represented during 2022-2023.
- There was evidence in the cases and the focus groups that staff understand the local context and challenges within specific communities.
- Volunteers are representative of their communities and the service encourages applications from volunteers with lived experience.
- The case data indicates strengths in diversity practices with children, with 14 out of 18 cases showing that diversity issues were sufficiently analysed and 16 out of 18 cases showing that diversity issues were sufficiently addressed as part of planning.
- The YJS created a Disproportionality Action Plan dated April 2024 which includes practitioners recognising disproportionality, ensuring pathways are in place, monitoring data and making sure questions relating to disproportionality are part of gathering children's voices.
- Strategies to address disproportionality, however, need to be developed and substantial analysis needs take place to understand the current picture and to drive a tangible response to ensure that all children with protected characteristics have their needs met.
- The board need to direct the partnership approach to identifying, understanding, and addressing disproportionality within the YJS cohort. Both the board and partners need to better understand the overrepresentation of care experienced children to avoid the unnecessary criminalisation.
- There is no speech, language or communication therapist specifically for YJS children. The management board recognises this as a gap and has escalated its concerns. This needs to be a continued strategic focus for the board.
- Formally reviewing and evaluating areas of work especially in relation to diverse groups was underdeveloped.
- There is an over-representation of girls, although provisions for them are widely understood. Examples were given of how different approaches were used to build relationship with girls and keep them engaged in interventions.
- A high number of YJS children are in school and there is a comprehensive range of partnership forums that work collectively to tackle exclusions, challenge and support schools, and ease access for YJS children to further education.
- Of the 108 children with open interventions at the time of inspection, 31 per cent had substance misuse issues, 27 per cent had emotional, mental health, and wellbeing concerns, 30 per cent had a learning disability or learning difficulty or special educational needs and disability, and 11 per cent were care experienced children living within the YJS area.
- There is a good level of diversity within the team with specific diverse needs reflected in the staff group.
- In the staff survey, all staff who had diversity needs said that these had been met either 'very well' or 'quite well'.

## Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at nine 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.

Inadequate

Our rating<sup>3</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

Does assessment sufficiently analyse:	% 'Yes'
how to support the child's desistance?	100%
how to keep the child safe?	100%
how to keep other people safe?	<b>44%</b>

The inspection found that assessment activity was consistently strong across children's desistance and their safety and wellbeing. Factors for and against desistance were well assessed, case managers had accessed a range of sources from partner agencies and offered an appropriate analysis of children's attitudes towards, or reasons for, their offending. Not all cases, though, evidenced that children's diversity needs had been appropriately considered. Case managers showed an understanding of the child's life experiences and had taken account of their learning needs. They focused on children's strengths and motivation to change, and involved children and their parents or carers in the assessment. In all relevant cases, the victim worker proactively ensured that case managers included the victim's needs and wishes in their assessments.

Case managers identified potential risks to children's safety and wellbeing appropriately. When relevant, children's neurodiversity needs were assessed, and practitioners focused on the trauma some children had experienced in their life. They used information from other agencies consistently to support children's safety, and there was evidence of a good working relationship and joint visits with children's social care. Case managers took account of children's safety in the community, and they considered positive changes that had taken place in the child's life since the offence. There was a clear written record of children's wellbeing and how to keep them safe.

In assessing keeping other people safe, although case managers mostly accessed information from other agencies, including past behaviours and convictions, they did not use this consistently to analyse the level of the risk of harm presented by the child. Inspectors found that staff did not clearly evidence why they had excluded some children's relevant risky previous behaviours and convictions in their current risk analysis. Case managers did not consistently identify and analyse who was at risk and the nature of that risk and, in some instances, there was insufficient analysis of what could be put in place to keep other people safe.

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



## 2.2. Planning



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

Good

Our rating<sup>4</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

Does planning focus sufficiently on:	% 'Yes'
supporting the child's desistance?	100%
keeping the child safe?	100%
keeping other people safe?	<b>78%</b>

The service prioritised allocating cases to case managers who had already worked with the child and their family. There was evidence that planning had been co-produced with children. Planning for the child's interventions showed that the case manager knew the child well, considered their personal circumstances, and understood their motivations and strengths. However, inspectors noted that children's speech, language, and communication needs were not consistently included in planning.

Planning linked to the child's desistance factors was strong. Plans were multi-agency and coordinated with other agencies, for example, considering the child's substance misuse, their engagement with education, and their risk of exploitation. Case managers took account of children's learning styles when creating plans and how best to work with children when delivering interventions. Planning included parents or carers, especially when building on children's strengths and goals. There was a focus on victim awareness work which was evidenced in planning activity.

Planning to keep children safe involved other agencies. Case managers used updated information from partners to make sure that planning stayed relevant to the child's current situation. There was good evidence of multi-agency working with the police, children's social care, and AIPT to keep children safe. Consultations with CAMHS and substance misuse services formed part of the planning process. Regular information sharing and updates from the police enabled practitioners to consider wider safeguarding issues outside of the home. There was clear and detailed contingency planning which was relevant to the child's circumstances.

Planning to keep people safe was sufficient in most cases. It included the impact of offending on wider communities, for example, the effect of drug use in local areas, and weapons awareness work was evident in cases. Although planning included victim awareness work, when there are specific victims there needs to be more consideration of how to keep them safe. Enforcement expectations were clear and formed part of the contingency planning. The service does not have a specific YJS-led multi-agency risk management meeting, and examples of planning with other agencies to manage and reduce the level of risk of harm were on an ad hoc basis. Contingency planning to address escalating concerns about the safety of other people was not sufficiently detailed or relevant to the child's specific circumstances in enough cases.

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

## 2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Requires improvement

Our rating<sup>5</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Does the implementation and delivery of services:	% 'Yes'
effectively support the child's desistance?	100%
effectively support the safety of the child?	67%
effectively support the safety of other people?	<b>56%</b>

Case managers had built strong relationships with the children and their families, and this was evident in children's engagement. All cases demonstrated the high priority that case managers gave to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers. Interventions were creative and tailored to help motivate children. Case managers were involved in multi-agency discussions to ensure that provision was in place for the child when their involvement with the YJS ended. This included the AIPT working with children and families, and YJS volunteers delivering sessions relevant to their skills and experience. There was evidence of reparation activities being used to help children build relationships and facilitate community integration.

In most cases, the case manager identified interventions to manage the child's safety and wellbeing. Although the involvement of other agencies in helping to keep children safe was not evident in every case, there were some examples of joint work with specialist staff, including the education, training, and employment (ETE) worker, and with partner agencies, including substance misuse services, AIPT for work on exploitation, and with the YJS police officer. Case managers felt confident in assessing children's speech, language, and communication needs, but they were aware that provision to meet these was limited. The lack of specific identified speech, language, and communication provision for YJS children meant that their needs were not fully met. Information was shared and interventions adapted to ensure the child was motivated to engage. Case managers understood the trauma that some children had experienced and worked on building the relationship at the child's pace.

The delivery of services and interventions that considered keeping other people safe needed strengthening. There was regular liaison between case managers and the police to share intelligence and updates, and there was evidence of the use of external controls, including doorstep curfews. Sometimes, however, agencies were not working in a cohesive way and, in these examples, issues should have been escalated to a manager. In some cases, relevant interventions were not being delivered to address the child's risk factors and case managers were not always responsive to changes in risk. Potential risks to others were not consistently considered by the case manager, and not enough attention was given to the protection of actual and potential victims.

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

## 2.4. Reviewing



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

Inadequate

Our rating<sup>6</sup> for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on:	% 'Yes'
supporting the child's desistance?	89%
keeping the child safe?	78%
keeping other people safe?	<b>33%</b>

Reviews were completed at key points in the order, and in nearly all cases there was an ongoing review of desistance factors as the order progressed. Children's engagement with interventions and the progress they were making were considered, and there was evidence of case managers adapting interventions and sessions based on reviewing activity to meet the child's needs better. Case managers continued to build on children's strengths and consider changes in their personal circumstances. Reviewing considered the child's motivation appropriately, and in all cases the child's plan was adjusted when necessary. Case managers reviewed the progress the child was making with other agencies, for example, with schools and colleges, although it would be beneficial for more parents or carers to be involved in the reviewing process.

Reviewing of children's safety and wellbeing mostly detailed the changes in children's circumstances. Case managers and partner agencies were involved in multi-agency discussions to ensure that provision was in place for children when their involvement with the YJS ended; this included ongoing CAMHS involvement and AIPT. Case managers were responsive to changes in the child's circumstances. Referral order review panels appropriately reviewed the progress the child was making and reflected on positive changes to their safety and wellbeing. Information was shared across agencies so that all practitioners were up to date with the child's situation. Case managers used children's social care statutory meetings to help them manage any concerns or escalations in the risk to children's safety and wellbeing.

Reviewing to keep other people safe needed strengthening in the cases inspected. In some cases, the inspection found a lack of knowledge from case managers in identifying when a child's risk to others was increasing. They did not consistently identify new risks that were emerging and review the potential impact of these on the level of risk posed by the child. Reviewing did not always take place when there was a significant change and there was not always a timely response or change in approach. There was no YJS multi-agency reviewing panel to monitor and plan for any changes in the child's circumstances that would impact on keeping other people safe.

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

## Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

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

### 3.1. Assessment



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

Good

Our rating<sup>7</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

Does assessment sufficiently analyse:	% 'Yes'
how to support the child's desistance?	100%
how to keep the child safe?	78%
how to keep other people safe?	<b>67%</b>

To help identify children's desistance factors, case managers accessed a range of sources from partner agencies, including from colleagues working in special educational needs and disability (SEND), schools, and the police, as well as AIPT. They offered an appropriate analysis of children's attitudes towards, or reasons for, their offending and focused on children's motivation to change. Case managers included children's strength-based hobbies and pro-social pursuits as part of their assessment. They involved children and their parents or carers in assessment activity and, in nearly all relevant cases, they considered the needs and wishes of victims. Assessment activity took account of the child's diversity; one example had considered the child's identity as of mixed-race heritage and their experience of racial abuse. Case managers identified any barriers preventing children from accessing services to meet their needs.

In nearly all the cases inspected, the potential risks to children's safety and wellbeing were sufficiently analysed. Case managers used information from other agencies to inform their assessment activity, including from children's social care and the police. Assessing showed that case managers had a good understanding of children's risks of exploitation and understood a contextual safeguarding approach, and worked closely with the AIPT. There was evidence in the out-of-court disposal cases that case managers had been allocated children's cases due to their skills. For example, a child with low-level emotional and mental health needs was being supervised by a practitioner who had experience in this area. There was a clear written record of children's wellbeing and how to keep them safe.

In most cases inspected, the potential risks to keeping other people safe were sufficiently analysed. Case managers included children's self-reported behaviours in their assessing and recognised children's risks through their lifestyles, for example, their use of substances. However, information from other agencies was not consistently used to inform assessment activity and, in some cases, there was a lack of understanding of potential risks to others and how to keep people safe.

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

## 3.2. Planning



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

Good

Our rating<sup>8</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

Does planning focus on:	% 'Yes'
supporting the child's desistance?	89%
keeping the child safe?	<b>67%</b>
keeping other people safe?	78%

Planning for children subject to out-of-court disposals was enhanced by the help of the multi-agency out-of-court disposal panel in formulating plans. Planning addressed the child's desistance factors, and case managers took account of children's diversity and learning needs when planning for interventions. They co-produced planning with children and identified what additional support the child required to engage with interventions. Case managers considered children's strengths and aspirations as part of planning. Planning was co-ordinated across agencies and included liaison with education and activity-based agencies. Planning included parents or carers and was proportionate to the type of disposal. The wishes and needs of victims were reflected in planning, which also included victim awareness sessions. As some of the interventions were delivered within a short period, case managers and partner agency staff focused effectively on children's access to mainstream services and opportunities for community integration after the disposal had ended.

Planning for children's safety and wellbeing saw case managers working alongside other agencies, for example, with the supporting family's team, in considering how both the child and their family could be supported. Partnership working was evident in consultations with other agencies, including CAMHS and children's social care, as well as discussions about children's risks in other forums across the partnership. Contingency planning to address escalating concerns about children's safety and wellbeing could have been improved by ensuring that consideration was given to all aspects of a child's life, including risks in their home environment.

Case managers planned the interventions that were needed to manage the safety of other people in most cases. Planning involved other agencies, for example, police, ETE worker, and schools. Contingency planning to address escalating concerns about the safety of other people could have been improved by ensuring that planning was not generic but a response to individual children's situations. However, case managers considered the safety of victims, and there was an example of the victim worker contacting the victim and including their feedback in the child's plan.

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

### 3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Requires improvement

Our rating<sup>9</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Does service delivery effectively support:	% 'Yes'
the child's desistance?	67%
the safety of the child?	<b>44%</b> <sup>10</sup>
the safety of other people?	67%

Case managers could access all the services and interventions available for children on court orders for those subject to an out-of-court disposal. The interventions delivered showed that the case manager had built a strong relationship with the child, and had considered children's diversity needs in nearly all cases. However, the services delivered were not necessarily supporting the child's desistance and some interventions had not been delivered promptly. There were examples of case managers being creative with the interventions and involving agencies that included activities and built on children's strengths and interests. In most cases, practitioners had considered how children could be linked to mainstream services once their interventions had ended, and this included referrals to mentoring in the community with AFT Positive Futures, and working with education, training, and employment providers.

The delivery of interventions to support children's safety and wellbeing in out-of-court disposals was an area of practice that needed strengthening. In too many cases, case managers had not taken account of incidents that could make the child vulnerable and, in some cases, did not follow up concerns with other agencies to ensure they were up to date with the child's circumstances and the risks they could be facing. In a small number of cases, however, information sharing was evident with other agencies, and this included CAMHS and schools.

In most cases, interventions with children to support the safety of other people were managing and minimising the risk of harm. There was evidence of good multi-agency work and appropriate interventions being delivered on anger management, violence, weapons awareness, and victim impact. Case managers were responsive to children's changing circumstances. However, they needed to give greater consideration to how best to protect potential and actual victims when delivering interventions. Overall, the interventions delivered supported keeping other people safe in most of the cases inspected.

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

<sup>10</sup> Professional discretion was applied at the ratings panel increasing this rating from 'Inadequate' to 'Requires Improvement'.

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### 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 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:

- The YJS has a clear preventative offer to children and families, promoting early engagement and support to avoid escalation to the youth justice system. The number of children being referred for these services had increased, showing that services are intervening with children at an earlier stage to prevent offending and reduce the number of first-time entrants.
- The policy and guidance documents specifically focus on not criminalising children who have committed offences because of exploitation.
- The out-of-court disposal panel includes a YJS team manager, a member of the AIPT which includes a social worker, YJS education officer, YJS victim worker, YJS mental health worker, YJS police officer, and a member of the child-centred policing team. If the child is known to children's social care or has been known within the previous 12 months, then the relevant social worker will also attend the panel.
- The panel limits the number of children it will discuss so that it gives appropriate time to each case.
- On receiving the out-of-court referral, the case is allocated to a case manager to complete an assessment. Victim and specialist workers are also informed of the allocations, so that they can check their information to add to the assessment.
- Staff understood the process for out-of-court disposals and felt that their assessments influenced the outcome for the child.
- There was evidence of joint decision-making between the YJS and police at the panel, and the rationales for the disposal outcomes were clearly recorded. If there were any disagreements at the panel, there was a clear escalation process in place.
- Access to services is equitable. Children who are subject to out-of-court disposals have access to the same interventions and services as those subject to post-court orders. Children are supported to access diversionary activities, and exit planning includes opportunities to work with the AIPT on a voluntary basis.
- The data provided to the regional multi-agency scrutiny panel is comprehensive, promoting analysis and evaluation of the use of out-of-court disposals.
- The YJS monitors the reoffending of children subject to out-of-court disposals and reports it to the management board.

**Areas for improvement:**

- The out-of-court disposal policy and guidance do not specifically refer to disproportionality or recognise the over-representation of children with certain protected characteristics. The policy should detail how diversion and deferred prosecution such as the use of Outcomes 20, 21, and 22 can be used to mitigate against the unnecessary escalation of matters to court, especially where a child has diversity needs and vulnerabilities.
- Children and their parents or carers are not directly involved in the evaluation of the out-of-court disposal policy.



## 4.1. Resettlement

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### 4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Requires improvement

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 who had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

#### Strengths:

- The resettlement policy and case management guidance include the principles of constructive resettlement and link this approach with the seven pathways to resettlement.
- YJS staff were proactive in ensuring that contact was maintained with the parents or carers of children while they were in custody. Practitioners took families with them on visits to make sure that they were included in the planning for the child's release back into the community. They supported families and ensured they were meaningfully involved throughout the sentence.
- YJS case managers attended review meetings and regularly visited children in custody in person to maintain and develop their working relationship.
- Staff described communication with the secure estate as effective. Each child was allocated a resettlement worker. There were weekly conversations between the YJS and the establishment.
- The needs of victims were considered, and their views and their sense of safety informed sentence planning and licence conditions.
- YJS staff made joint visits with partnership staff, including social workers and the education worker.
- Release on temporary licence was considered by practitioners to help explore opportunities for children, especially for education, training, and employment. There were good examples where this was used to help children reintegrate into their community.

#### Areas for improvement:

- The management board has not reviewed custodial cases. There has been no collated analysis across the partnership of children in custody to look at their journey and see how agencies could learn from their lived experiences.
- The resettlement policy does not include localised guidance for practitioners and is limited in outlining local practice. There is a reliance on ad-hoc knowledge regarding resettlement practice and procedures rather than detailed guidance.
- The policy does not detail the importance of a personalised approach and how to take into consideration children's protected characteristics. It does not outline how

the YJS will respond to diversity needs or how resettlement planning will support those who have experienced trauma.

- Remand and resettlement policies would benefit from joint reviewing with children's services, police, and the community safety partnership to ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- There is no specific multi-agency resettlement panel to monitor and review the assessments, plans, and interventions for children who will be subject to resettlement.
- There are issues with the availability of suitable accommodation, and in both cases inspected, there was insufficient planning and provision for the child's release.
- Resettlement case data shows that responses to meeting children's resettlement needs must improve.

## Further information

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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.](#)