

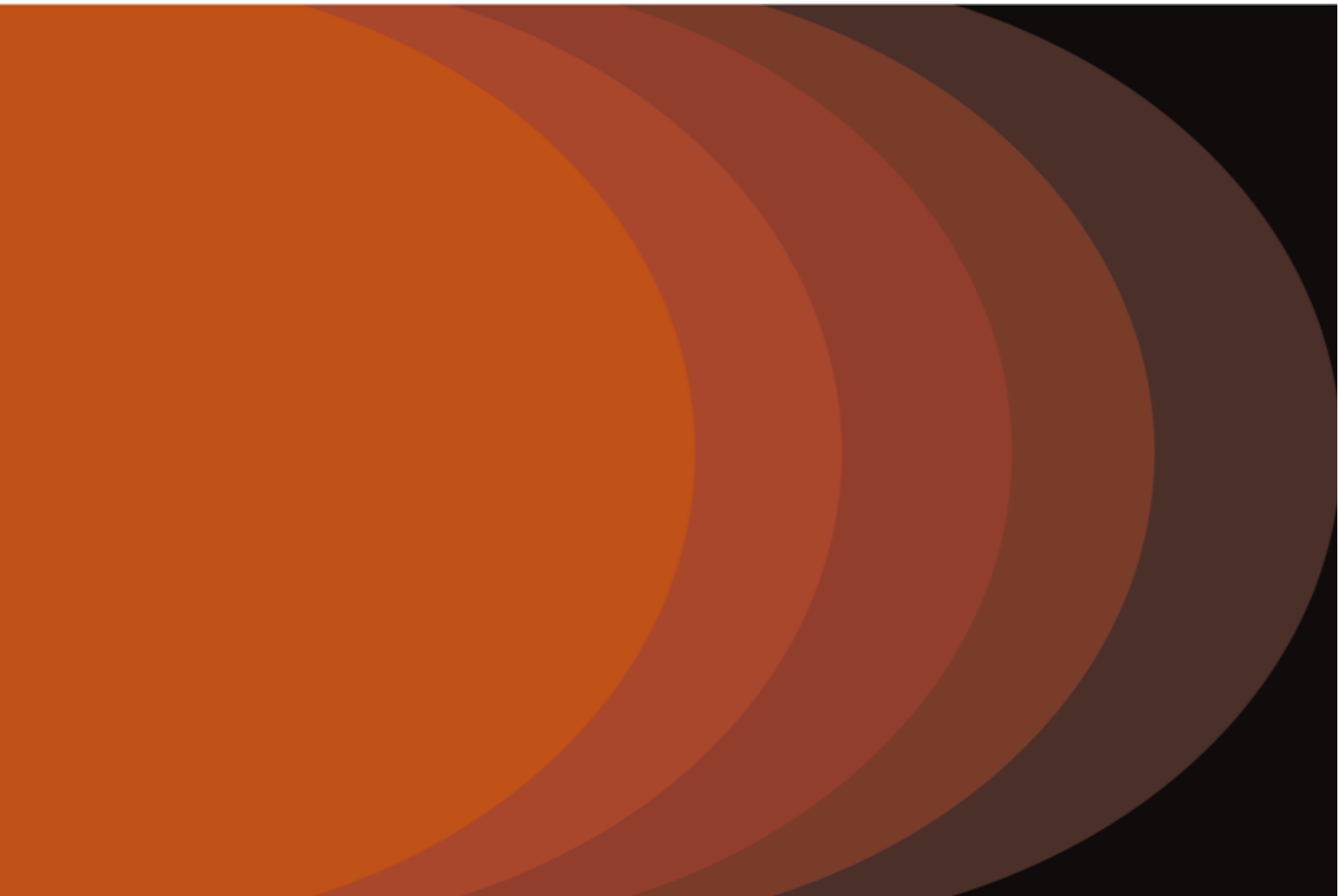


HM Inspectorate  
of Probation

An inspection of youth justice services in

# Redbridge

HM Inspectorate of Probation, May 2024



# Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Foreword</b> .....                                 | 3  |
| <b>Ratings</b> .....                                  | 4  |
| <b>Recommendations</b> .....                          | 5  |
| <b>Background</b> .....                               | 6  |
| <b>Domain one: Organisational delivery</b> .....      | 7  |
| 1.1. Governance and leadership .....                  | 7  |
| 1.2. Staff .....                                      | 9  |
| 1.3. Partnerships and services .....                  | 11 |
| 1.4. Information and facilities .....                 | 13 |
| <b>Domain two: Court disposals</b> .....              | 16 |
| 2.1. Assessment .....                                 | 16 |
| 2.2. Planning .....                                   | 17 |
| 2.3. Implementation and delivery .....                | 18 |
| 2.4. Reviewing .....                                  | 19 |
| <b>Domain three: Out-of-court disposals</b> .....     | 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 |
| <b>4.1. Resettlement</b> .....                        | 25 |
| 4.1. Resettlement policy and provision .....          | 25 |
| <b>Further information</b> .....                      | 27 |

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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 Redbridge Youth Justice and Targeted Prevention Service (YJTPS) 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, Redbridge YJTPS was rated as 'Requires improvement'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Requires improvement'.

Redbridge YJTPS has many of the components needed to deliver high-quality youth justice services. The management board is well attended, with representation from all key statutory partners, many of whom have a sustained commitment to the service. There is also representation from non-statutory and voluntary sector partners, who add value to the partnership. The management board needs to have greater oversight of operational practice to ensure it is consistently of high-quality, robust, and reflects the direction of the strategic partnership.

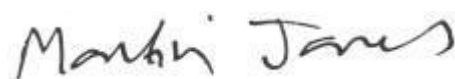
The service is well resourced in terms of seconded partnership staff. The strong relationships with a wide range of partners within the borough enhance service delivery. There is a clear focus on securing appropriate education and training for children, which is supported by senior leaders.

Staff and volunteers are highly motivated, passionate and dedicated to improving outcomes for children. They are well supported in terms of their professional development and progression. Staff feel managers are supportive and approachable. They reported that they felt valued, and that their work is recognised and rewarded.

Desistance practice was a strength across assessment and planning activities, and in the delivery of interventions. This was particularly evident in the work with children who were given out-of-court disposals. However, this was not the case for work to keep children and other people safe. The YJTPS needs to focus on immediate improvement to ensure all current and new risks to and from children are identified and appropriately responded to. There were also shortfalls in recognising and responding to the safety of actual and potential victims, which need to be addressed across all aspects of work delivered by the service.

There is a strong strategic commitment to addressing disproportionality across the partnership. There is encouraging work to tackle disparity 'upstream', for example to reduce school exclusions for Black children. In terms of casework, we saw some examples of high-quality, culturally sensitive approaches. However, these were not embedded across all practice and are an area for improvement.

The YJTPS values the voices of children and families. This is evident in the direct work, the shaping of service delivery and through children and parents attending every board meeting to share their stories and experiences of the service and we considered this was an area of strength for the service.



**Martin Jones CBE**


HM Chief Inspector of Probation


## Ratings


**Redbridge Youth Justice and Targeted Prevention Service**      **Score**      **11/36**  
 Fieldwork started February 2024


**Overall rating**      **Requires improvement**      

### 1. Organisational delivery


1.1 Governance and leadership      **Requires improvement**      


1.2 Staff      **Good**      


1.3 Partnerships and services      **Requires improvement**      


1.4 Information and facilities      **Good**      

### 2. Court disposals


2.1 Assessment      **Requires improvement**      


2.2 Planning      **Inadequate**      


2.3 Implementation and delivery      **Requires improvement**      

2.4 Reviewing      **Requires improvement**      

### 3. Out-of-court disposals


3.1 Assessment      **Requires improvement**      

3.2 Planning      **Inadequate**      

3.3 Implementation and delivery      **Inadequate**      

3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy/provision      **Requires improvement**      

### 4. Resettlement<sup>1</sup>

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision      **Requires improvement**      

<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 10 recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of youth justice services in Redbridge. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth justice services, and better protect the public.

### **The Redbridge Youth Justice Service Management Board should:**

1. provide greater strategic oversight of key areas of service delivery and take a proactive approach to assuring itself that operational practice is consistent, high-quality and robust in relation to children in custody, keeping children safe and keeping others safe
2. monitor the diversity practice within the YJTPS to assure itself a consistent approach is embedded operationally, that reflects the partnership's strategic focus on addressing disparity and disproportionality
3. oversee the review and development of the service's current offer to victims, increase victim consent to support information-sharing and expand the use of support and interventions to ensure the delivery of a high-quality service to victims.

### **The Redbridge Youth Justice and Targeted Prevention Service should:**

4. improve the quality of risk and safety management practice. This should include effective and individualised contingency planning. The service needs ensure these improvements are consistently embedded across all operational practice
5. improve work to keep actual and potential victims safe in both court and out-of-court disposals
6. build on current culturally sensitive and individually responsive practice with children to ensure effective diversity practice is fully embedded in operational practice
7. develop a strategy and specific resources and approaches to meet the needs of girls
8. strengthen and improve the quality and consistency of management oversight, to ensure that children and others are kept safe
9. use data analysis more constructively to evaluate the impact and outcomes of interventions and services to ensure they are effective; use this information to improve the quality of practice, shape service delivery and guide strategic direction.

### **The Metropolitan Police should:**

10. review the use of Outcome 22 in Redbridge as a priority, and work with the YJTPS to ensure that all children are offered and supported to access appropriate diversionary interventions at the earliest opportunity.

## Background

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We conducted fieldwork in Redbridge Youth Justice and Targeted Prevention Service (YJTPS) over a period of a week, beginning on 29 January 2024. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began between 30 January 2023 and 24 November 2023; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 30 January 2023 and 24 November 2023; and resettlement cases that were sentenced between 30 January 2023 and 24 November 2023. We also conducted 33 interviews with case managers or their line managers.

Redbridge is an outer London borough in the north-east corner of the city. It is the eleventh largest borough. It has a population of approximately 310,300 people, an increase of 11.2 per cent since 2011. It has a diverse population: 65.2 per cent of residents come from a minority ethnic background. This increases to 78 per cent for the 10 to 17 population. The five most common countries of birth for residents are England, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Romania; with the five most common languages, other than English, being Romanian, Bengali, Punjabi, Urdu and Tamil. The area is also socio-economically diverse, with 11 neighbourhoods among the 20 per cent most deprived in England and 11 among the 20 per cent least deprived.

The YJTPS is based in the education and inclusion division of the People Directorate of the London Borough of Redbridge. It is managed by a head of service, who is also responsible for the youth service, the Connexions team and the commissioned young people's substance misuse service, Fusion. The service has a committed and aspirational staff team. This includes a variety of statutory and non-statutory partnership staff, either as integral members of the team or through co-location. This demonstrates the local youth justice partnership's commitment to children who are known to the youth justice system. The location of the service in the education and inclusion division has also resulted in a clear focus on tackling and improving education and training outcomes for children who are known to the service.

At the point when the inspection was announced, the levels of reoffending and first-time entrants in Redbridge were higher than the levels for London and England and Wales. The YJTPS is unusual to many similar YJ services, as it currently works with more children who are subject to court-ordered interventions than out-of-court disposals; at the time of the inspection, 57 children were on court orders and nine were subject to out-of-court disposals. In terms of diversity, 70 per cent of children known to the service are from Black and minority ethnic communities. Black and mixed heritage children are significantly overrepresented among children who are subject to interventions. The majority of the caseload is male and over 16 years of age. The borough has a large population of children in care from other local authorities due to the number of care homes there. This is reflected in the caseload, as 18.3 per cent are children in care from other local authority areas.

The YJTPS focuses on early intervention, child-first principles, trauma-informed practice and disproportionality. The whole partnership is committed to addressing disparity and disproportionality; as such, there is evidence of work to tackle these issues 'upstream', such as reducing the number of Black children who are excluded from school. The partnership also takes a proactive stance towards children placed in the borough from other local authority areas.

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

Requires improvement

#### Strengths:

- The YJTPS Management Board sets the direction and strategy for the service, in collaboration with staff, children and partners. There is a clear commitment to reducing reoffending, child-first principles, trauma-informed practice, addressing disproportionality, working collaboratively with children and families, partnership working and restorative justice.
- There is a strategic commitment to meeting the diverse needs of children and addressing disproportionality. This is clearly set out in the disproportionality strategy and action plan 2020-2023.
- The YJS Management Board is aspirational and committed, with appropriate senior representation from statutory and non-statutory partners, including the third sector.
- Children and parents are routinely invited to attend board meetings to share their stories and experience of the service. Board members demonstrated how they have meaningfully used this feedback to inform the service's strategic direction.
- Board members take an active role in advocating for the work of the service. This has facilitated partnership arrangements and supported service delivery in key areas such health, transitions, and education, training and employment (ETE) provision for children.
- The board is well connected to other partnership boards. This ensures that work to support desistance and prevent harm is integrated into wider services for children. This is evident through the youth crime prevention and reduction strategy, the disproportionality strategy and action plan, and the strategic ETE task and finish group.
- The head of service and the service manager are knowledgeable, committed and passionate. They have a genuine desire to achieve the best outcomes for the children and families who access the service.
- The head of service's development of the board has improved connectivity to and from the service. They have ensured that the service manager is a standing member, that operational staff and managers are regularly invited to board meetings, and that board members attend service days and meetings.
- The staff feel their views are listened and responded to by both the YJTPS management board and the leadership team.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Further work is required to fully embed child-first, trauma-informed principles. This was not always reflected in operational language or policies and procedures.
- Board members need to have greater strategic oversight of key areas of service delivery. They rely too much on the service to assure them that delivery is sufficient. This has led to a disconnect between strategic direction and operational delivery. Oversight should include taking a more proactive role in monitoring the quality of risk and safety management practice, to ensure that service delivery to keep children and others safe is effective.
- The board's oversight and understanding of children in custody needs to improve. The board needs to ensure it takes collective responsibility for these children, and improves outcomes and service delivery for them.
- A lack of stability in the leadership team has made it difficult to translate the vision and strategy into operational practice.
- Operational practice to meet children's diverse needs was inconsistent. Board members need to assure themselves that children's diverse needs are being met, particularly those of Roma children, children from Black and minority ethnic communities, children with neurodiversity and girls. A review and refresh of the disproportionality strategy and action plan would help to ensure that the board's strategic aspirations are put into practice operationally.
- The board needs to understand the barriers that are preventing victims from being engaged in restorative justice interventions and take steps to address them. The offer to victims, and uptake of it, needs to improve. This will require the commitment of the whole partnership.
- The board needs to undertake a comprehensive review of its current risk register to ensure that it recognises and encapsulates all the current risks to the service.



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## 1.2. Staff



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

Good

### Strengths:

- The service has a highly motivated and passionate workforce, including volunteers, who are dedicated to ensuring the services they deliver to children and families are the best they can be.
- Although there have been some vacancies over the past 12 months, current staffing levels are sufficient to meet service needs, and workloads are manageable. There are effective contingency management plans for responding to changes in service demand.
- The approach to allocating work considers practitioners' capacity, skills and experience. This ensures that the most appropriate practitioner to work with children and families is identified.
- Staff are ethnically representative of the children they work with: 45.5 per cent of the workforce are of Black and minority ethnic heritage.
- Volunteer panel members feel fully supported and well equipped to complete their roles. They are offered one-to-one support and group supervision, and receive relevant briefings and training, which include knowledgeable guest speakers.
- Operational and senior managers are resolute in managing poor performance. They recognise the impact that poor operational delivery can have on achieving positive outcomes for children.
- There is an embedded culture of learning and development. This supports staff in their learning and promotes opportunities for personal development and progression. We saw multiple examples of staff being given opportunities to progress and develop.
- There is a thorough training plan, which is developed from an annual skills audit. The training offer to staff is wide, varied and relevant to service delivery. It includes diversity and disproportionality and responding to the needs of minority and vulnerable groups. Staff have access to a wide range of training methods, including mentoring, action learning sets, coaching and shadowing. Staff working with children who are engaged in harmful sexual behaviour are AIM-trained and provided with support from a specialist external consultant. There is also an expectation that the children will be co-worked by staff.
- Hard work and achievements are recognised and acknowledged by the management board, senior leaders, and managers, through both formal and informal processes.
- Most staff and volunteers feel that the service considers and responds to their individual diversity needs.
- There is a comprehensive induction programme that covers specific guidance and information on the service, including staff and management expectations, operational policies and procedures, and staff support and development.
- The staff survey indicates that 17 out of 18 relevant staff feel sufficiently experienced and qualified to manage cases, whilst all 25 respondents feel that they fully or mostly have the skills and knowledge needed for their role.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- A reduction in the workforce due to vacancies, sickness, and retirement, mainly within specialist and operational management staff, has resulted in capacity issues. This has had an impact on service delivery and management oversight.
- Recruitment challenges have affected the offer and delivery of work to victims. Without a dedicated resource, this work has been additional to the team manager's responsibilities. This has prevented the service from focusing on and prioritising this work.
- The service has taken positive action to respond to the needs of Roma children. However, case inspection data suggests further development and training are required to ensure that these children's needs are consistently recognised and sufficiently responded to.
- Although practitioners and managers reported that supervision was frequent and supportive, and that actions are set to improve the quality of work, our inspectors found that management oversight was only sufficient in 44 per cent of the cases inspected in domains two and three.
- The case ratings indicate that the recent Asset Plus assessment training has not sufficiently addressed shortfalls in assessment, planning, delivery, or review when considering children's risks and safety. Further training is required to improve the quality of this work and to embed learning.

### 1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Requires improvement

#### Strengths:

- The service uses data to track desistance, reoffending and the safety of children and others.
- There is evidence that the service has analysed and used data to inform its response to diversity and disproportionality. This includes the three-year disproportionality strategy and action plan, and its response to an increase in the number of Roma children known to the service.
- The monthly reoffending tracker meeting is a robust process that provides assurance that children who present the most risk in the community are being monitored and receiving all the services and interventions they require.
- The termly ETE meetings are a positive and constructive forum to oversee the education and training provision for children who are known to the service. Senior leaders attend the meetings, which ensures that children receive the most appropriate ETE provision. There is a strong focus on achieving positive ETE outcomes for children.
- There is a variety of partnership staff within the service, either as integral members of the team or through co-location. This improves the service offer for children.
- The service is held in high regard and there are good relationships with partnership agencies. These are facilitated through co-location and characterised by strong and effective communication as well as healthy challenge.
- There is a clear commitment to and investment in child-first, trauma-informed practice both within the service and across the wider partnership.
- The service has a good range of reparation projects that respond to the needs of the local community. The reparation offer could be further enhanced by giving children the opportunity to gain formal qualifications.
- There are a wide range of statutory, community and voluntary sector services and projects to meet the needs of children who are known to the service.
- There is a strong health offer, which gives access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), speech and language therapy (SALT), a school nurse, and the Fusion substance misuse service. The SALT offer is particularly good. It provides assessment and interventions with children, as well as advising staff and partners of practical strategies to help their children to engage with services and interventions.
- There is an appropriate framework in place to oversee the management of risk and safety of children who are known to the service. This includes multi-agency panels, which are well attended by partnership agencies.
- The relationship with the probation service is strong. There is an effective transition process where eligible children are identified early and engaged in a specific programme delivered by the seconded probation officer.
- There is a good working relationship between the service and children's services.
- There is a strong relationship with Barkingside Youth Court. The court officer is held in high regard by the court and partner agencies, and their work is cited as an example of best practice locally.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- The service needs to improve the way it analyses data to assure itself it is offering the most effective interventions and services for children. It can then use this consistently to ensure the quality and responsiveness of services and to support the development of services at a strategic level.
- The YJTPS gathers information from children about their experience of the service; however, it should develop this further to enable children, parents and carers to shape service delivery.
- The offer for victims needs to be strengthened. The service should work with partners to increase the levels of consent and ensure the offer is comprehensive and fully understood by all. The service also needs to develop mechanisms to ensure that victims' views are heard and responded to strategically. More work is required to investigate and understand the decline in victim engagement and put in place actions to address this.
- While the YJTPS understands diversity and disproportionality, and there are some specialist provision and services available, this needs further development. There is evidence of cultural sensitivity when responding to physical barriers to engaging with and providing services for children and families. However, the service needs to give more consideration to the impact of systemic and structural challenges and the experiences of children from minority or vulnerable groups, and adapt services to meet these needs.
- Work needs to be undertaken to ensure there is a formal and effective offer for girls, in terms of specific resources, provisions and approaches.
- Arrangements are in place to oversee children's risks and safety. However, the cases inspected clearly highlight that the partnership approach needs further development and oversight, to ensure that work to keep children and others safe is effective.

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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.

Good

### Strengths:

- The service has a comprehensive suite of policies, procedures and guidance. These are collated in a staff handbook that is easily accessible to all operational staff and managers.
- The venues, including the Station Road Centre, are accessible and safe for children and staff. Staff can complete their work effectively from both the office and remote locations.
- Most referral order panels are held in person. An online option is only used in cases where it is necessary to meet the needs of children or volunteers. Often this is a hybrid of in-person and online.
- The service has access to effective ICT systems and information-sharing agreements. This enables staff to plan, deliver and record work at the right time, and to share information effectively. The ICT systems also enable the service to produce management information and performance reports.
- The service created a summary of the unmet education, training and employment needs of children known to the service in response to HM Inspectorate of Probation's thematic report. It presented this to the education and inclusion senior management team and YJS management board. The service set up a task and finish group, led by the operational director for education and inclusion. This has resulted in improvements in ETE provision and outcomes for children.

### Areas for improvement:

- Key policy, procedure and guidance documents would benefit from review to ensure they reference the most recent research and effective practice on diversity and disproportionality, specifically in relation to Black and minority ethnic children, children in care, children with SEND, neurodiversity, and girls; and that they truly reflect child-first, trauma-informed principles and practice, paying particular attention to the use of language.
- Given the positive impact of adapting the reception space following feedback from children, the service should consider carrying out further consultation with children on how to make the office more child-friendly.
- There is evidence that the service has analysed and used the evidence base to drive some improvements. However, it needs to evaluate and monitor these improvements to demonstrate their impact on outcomes for children, families, and communities. By undertaking a continuous cycle of analysis and evaluation on the effectiveness of practice and interventions, the YJTPS and the board can be assured of ongoing improvements in service delivery.
- Although the service tracks serious incident reports, it is unclear whether it undertakes formal or informal learning reviews to improve and develop local practice.
- Changes in the delivery of services to victims have not triggered scrutiny of practice or been investigated at an operational or strategic level to identify how to improve uptake by victims. Resolution of this will require a partnership response, including involvement from the Metropolitan Police.

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

The YJTPS is keen for children, parents and carers to contribute to service improvement and has a range of methods for helping them to do this. Children contribute to the assessment, planning, delivery and review of their interventions. The YJTPS asks children for their views on specific areas of service delivery, such as reparation. Feedback from children has contributed to the office reception being improved with artwork, a television and healthy free snacks. Children, parents and carers are routinely invited to board meetings to share their stories and experience of the service. Board members have used this feedback to inform the strategic direction of the service. The service helps children to participate in local consultations. These inform the strategic direction and delivery of services within the borough.

The YJTPS introduced a focused survey in February 2023. Independent youth workers now interview children on their experiences of the YJTPS. The questions were informed by consultation with the speech and language therapist. Feedback on the services for children and approach of staff to meet their needs has been favourable.

The YJTPS contacted, on our behalf, children, parents and carers who had open cases at the time of the inspection to gain their consent to an interview or text survey. Of those, 12 children agreed to the text survey, which was delivered independently, and five children replied. We also interviewed 10 children and one parent. The responses from both the interviews and text survey were overwhelmingly positive. In the text survey, when asked to rate the YJTPS on a scale of one to 10, with one being 'poor' and 10 being 'fantastic', all responses were between eight and 10 in terms of rating the service and how much it had helped children to stay out of trouble.

One child stated:

*“They do what they can to help you and get u [sic] far in life and listen to all your problems.”*

Practitioners were seen as having the skills to support the children they worked with:

*“I think they have the right skills. My worker spent time to understand me, what I was like, what I enjoy, where I have problems and what I would like in my future. It was good that the worker listened and took an interest in me and my plans.”*

Children felt they had access to the right services and support to meet their needs:

*“Helped me with stopping to smoke weed and getting me focused on my future. I had a plan in mind of college and doing an electrical course and they encouraged me with that, made sure I was on track and in the best state of mind to make the most of it all.”*

*“They helped me with SALT and trying to get back into school. I used to be quite shy but not now. I have a mentor as well and she’s there to talk to me about my future and help plan things out with me. I have got my own jewellery making business and she is helping me think about how I can sell this. They helped me get advice from Connexions as well.”*

## Diversity

The population of Redbridge is significantly diverse, with 78 per cent of the population aged 10 to 17 identifying as from Black and minority ethnic communities. Children from Black and minority ethnic communities make up 70 per cent of the current caseload.

The service has made reasonable efforts to ensure that the staff team is representative of the children they work with, and 45.5 per cent of the workforce are of Black and minority ethnic heritage. The strategic managers who attend the management board are also representative of the diverse population of Redbridge and the children known to the service.

The service is committed to addressing diversity and disproportionality at a strategic and operational level. It has a disproportionality strategy and action plan for 2020-2023. This is linked to the local youth crime prevention and reduction strategy, which seeks to reduce disproportionality and prejudice in the youth justice system in Redbridge. A refresh of this strategy is planned for 2024, demonstrating the ongoing commitment.

A team manager acts as the champion for disproportionality and discrimination.

There were some examples of high-quality and effective diversity practice in the cases inspected. This was demonstrated by comprehensive and culturally sensitive assessment, planning, delivery and reviewing, which resulted in positive outcomes for children. However, this was not consistently seen across all inspection activity. There was sometimes a focus on structural barriers to engagement, such as the use of translators or the need to respect religious or cultural observances; rather fully considering the impact of a child's lived experience on their identity and behaviour, and adapting interventions or providing specialist services or projects accordingly. The service needs to ensure that its commitment to addressing diversity and disproportionality is fully embedded in direct work with children and families.

There are some dedicated services for minority groups, including Sparks2Life mentoring, mentoring at Frenford Youth Centre to support children at risk of radicalisation, 'Redlight Busking' for Black boys, a music project for children in care, and a cricket project for Asian boys. However, there was no consistent evidence of these projects being accessed by staff for the children they were working with. This indicated a need to refresh the access pathways to these community groups and projects.

The YJTPS had identified an increase in the number of Roma children who were open to the service. It responded to this by providing specialist training for operational staff and managers, and developing links with a local Roma community group that supports Roma families within the borough. However, there was inconsistent evidence of this support group being used for Roma children and families, or direct work with children being adapted to meet their needs.

The YJTPS needs to ensure there is a formal and effective offer for girls, in terms of specific resources, provisions and approaches.

In terms of addressing diversity and disproportionality within out-of-court disposals, current practice could be strengthened by identifying and targeting the overrepresented minority groups for diversion from the youth justice system. This will ensure that, where possible and appropriate, they are not subject to unnecessary criminalisation.

## Domain two: Court disposals

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

### 2.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

Our rating<sup>2</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

|   | % 'Yes'    |
|---|------------|
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance? | 69%        |
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?            | 63%        |
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?         | <b>50%</b> |

The YJTPS assesses desistance using the '5 P's' model of case formulation, reflecting the trauma-informed practice in the service. Practitioners used a range of information from partner agencies to inform and understand children's behaviour, attitudes and motivation, as well as their strengths and protective factors. The meaningful engagement of parents and carers supported assessment practice. There was evidence of culturally sensitive and responsive assessment activity. However, this was inconsistent. Practice could have been improved by exploring and analysing children's diversity needs more comprehensively, including how these were linked to self-identity. The service needs to address this area, given the impact it can have on effective work with children and families.

Inspectors saw good work to identify adverse childhood experiences, trauma and other safeguarding concerns. There was some evidence that practitioners recognised, analysed and responded well to child exploitation. Collaborative information-sharing and joint work with other agencies were strengths. This was particularly evident in practitioners' work with children's services. However, inspectors did not see consistent evidence that practitioners had explored and analysed all safety and wellbeing factors. As such, this undermined the formulation of a comprehensive assessment of children's safety and the controls to manage the safety of children.

While there were some effective and detailed assessments of the risks that children presented to others, assessments did not consistently capture and analyse all behaviours or previous offending. This, combined with limited information on victims, compromised the analysis of the safety of others, as well as the identification of and response to actual and potential victims. Practitioners needed to demonstrate greater professional curiosity in analysing the controls and interventions to manage the safety of others.

In some cases, we found that the level of risk had been underestimated regarding the safety of children and others. Management oversight processes were not always identifying shortfalls in assessments. These related to risk classifications that were incomplete or not fully evidenced or analysed. It is essential that these processes are reviewed to ensure that assessment activity is consistently of a sufficient quality.

<sup>2</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 on our website.](#)



## 2.2. Planning



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

Inadequate

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

|  | % 'Yes'    |
|--|------------|
| Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance? | 63%        |
| Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?            | 69%        |
| Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?         | <b>38%</b> |

In planning to support desistance, practitioners used activities and services to respond to children's needs, focused on achieving their goals and enhancing strengths. Integrated and co-located services were effectively incorporated in plans. Plans were developed in collaboration with children and parents, using child-friendly language to support ownership and understanding. There were examples of high-quality personalised children's plans, an approach that should be extended across the service. Shortfalls in assessing children's diversity needs were reflected in planning. Only five of the 16 plans sufficiently considered children's diversity. Planning would be improved by better sequencing and increased alignment with other agency plans.

The quality of planning to keep children safe was generally sufficient. Practitioners involved other agencies appropriately. When considering children's safety, there was greater evidence of practitioners aligning planning with other agencies, particularly children's services. Planning for children's mental health and substance misuse needs involved appropriate agencies and actions. This was supported by the co-location of specialist staff within the service. Oversight from the internal risk management panel and the multi-agency panel supported children's safety. While there were some examples of strong contingency planning, this was not consistent. Contingency plans needed to be individualised and specific to the child and their identified risks.

Planning to keep other people safe was affected by shortfalls in assessment. The level of risk to others was often underestimated. This meant that planning to mitigate the risks was impacted, as the child's current or previous behaviours were not always addressed or responded to. In contrast to safety and wellbeing, planning to keep others safe was not consistently integrated or aligned with other agencies' plans or activities to manage risk. Planning for victim work was general rather than individualised. It did not adequately address the specific concerns or risks to actual or potential victims.. While there was some evidence of robust contingency planning, this area of practice needs to be strengthened. It needed to be more specific to the risks identified and actions to be taken by practitioners or partners working with the child.

<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 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 rating<sup>4</sup> 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?     | 69%        |
| Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?    | 63%        |
| Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people? | <b>50%</b> |

Practitioners were skilled at building and sustaining positive relationships with children, reflecting the service's trauma-informed approach. There was a positive and sensitive approach to securing children's engagement. Children's ETE needs were prioritised and responded to in most cases. This included advocating for children, for example, when liaising with providers to secure placements or appealing decisions. Children could access a range of services and activities to support their needs. These were offered by specialist staff within the YJTPS and by wider organisations, such as youth service and mentoring. There were examples of some high-quality practice in terms of interventions being adapted to the children's diverse needs. This included the use of visual aids to reflect a child's learning style, being responsive to individual cultural identity, and proactive attempts to link to specialist community groups. However, this was not consistent across the cases inspected.

The work to keep children safe was variable. There were examples of effective joint work with children's services to support children and families. This focused on the child's needs and was responsive to the parents' needs. There were also examples of effective multi-agency work to respond to child exploitation. This involved the YJTPS, children's services and the police, and included mapping, information-sharing, use of the National Referral Mechanism, and direct safety interventions with children. However, this practice contrasted with examples of disjointed or absent professional networks that did not promote safeguarding or children's safety. Gaps in the service's specialist CAMHS provision led to shortfalls to meeting children's emotional and mental health needs, resulting in some children being placed on waiting lists to access services. It is positive that this specialist provision has now been re-established by the service.

Service delivery to support the safety of others was not consistent. We saw examples of good collaborative multi-agency work and the delivery of effective interventions with children, including weapon and knife awareness, peer relationships and decision-making. However, the quality of liaison and links with the police was mixed. There were delays in exchanging information and limited requests for police checks, that could have improved the management of other people's safety. Practice would also have been enhanced through more use of probation checks and there was insufficient attention paid to the protection of actual or potential victims. This demonstrated the need for a stronger focus on this area of practice and a coordinated partnership response to managing it. Management oversight needs to be strengthened to ensure that service delivery is effective in keeping other people safe.

<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 on our website.](#)

## 2.4. Reviewing



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

Requires improvement

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

|   | % 'Yes'    |
|---|------------|
| Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance? | 69%        |
| Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?            | <b>50%</b> |
| Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?         | 63%        |

Reviews took place at key points within children's orders. They were aligned to formal review processes and carried out in response to changing circumstances. There was evidence of information-sharing between partners and a focus on supporting the child's strengths and protective factors, particularly in relation to engagement with ETE. Practitioners adapted their work in response to children's changing needs, including making referrals to agencies and ensuring that children could access local services. Children and parents were involved in the reviews, including receiving recognition and praise for positive progress. Reviews of desistance could have been strengthened by ensuring that changes and progress were fully recorded and analysed.

In terms of children's safety, the quality of review practice was variable. We saw evidence of effective reviewing that considered information from other agencies; reflected adaptations to practice; involved close collaborative working with partner agencies, particularly children's services; and evidenced increases in the child's risk classification. However, this was not consistent. Crucially, when the risk indicators related to safety were increased, this did not always result in an effective review of risk classification. Consequently, risk management panels did not provide the necessary oversight and service delivery did not manage and mitigate the presenting risks to the child.

Similarly, in terms of keeping others safe there are some areas that need to be dealt with to ensure that risk management is effective. It is essential that new behaviours or allegations are fully explored and assessed, and where relevant, include input from partner agencies, particularly the police and the child.

<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 on our website.](#)

## Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 16 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of four youth conditional cautions, two youth cautions and 10 community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers or line manager in all cases.

### 3.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

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

|   | % 'Yes'    |
|---|------------|
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance? | 81%        |
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?            | <b>50%</b> |
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?         | 56%        |

Assessment activity in relation to desistance was an area of strength. Routinely, practitioners fully analysed the offence and contributing factors using a wide range of sources, including children's services, police, education and health. Assessments captured the voice of the child and their parents or carers, although sometimes the parents' views dominated. Strengths and protective factors were identified and analysed. However, we found shortfalls in relation to diversity practice. While practitioners identified protected characteristics and individual needs, they did not fully analyse them in terms of their impact on the child's lived experience, identity and engagement.

Assessment practice to keep the child safe needs improvement. We saw some examples of high-quality assessments; however, this was not consistent. Where practice was strong, the practitioner had carried out appropriate checks and gathered information; liaised with key partner agencies; and identified and analysed risk factors well. Where practice was not as strong, there was a lack of professional curiosity. For example, practitioners did not liaise sufficiently with partners or fully identify safety and wellbeing factors. This undermined a comprehensive analysis of risks to the child's safety, resulting in these risks being underestimated.

Similarly, assessment activity in relation to keeping others safe was variable and needs to be developed. When done well, practitioners had fully considered and analysed all harm-related behaviours, using a range of information sources. However, where practice was less strong, practitioners had not considered and analysed all offending and behaviours of concern. There was a lack of understanding of the child's motivation and limited information-gathering. As a result, assessments of the safety of others were not consistently comprehensive or robust. This, combined with some confusion from practitioners about how to differentiate risk classifications, resulted in risk being both underestimated and overestimated. This indicates the need for further training and support for practitioners, as well as the need for robust management oversight.

<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 on our website.](#)

### 3.2. Planning



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

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

|  | % 'Yes'    |
|--|------------|
| Does planning focus on supporting the child’s desistance?      | 88%        |
| Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?    | <b>38%</b> |
| Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? | 56%        |

Planning for desistance was comprehensive. Plans were created with children, using child-friendly language. They addressed factors that support desistance. They focused on ETE and on engaging children in protective, strengths-based activities that were sustainable and supported community integration. There were appropriate links to partner agencies and constructive use of the speech and language therapist based in the YJTPS. Planning was also proportionate and deliverable in terms of the nature and length of the out-of-court disposal.

The quality of planning to keep children safe was affected by the shortfalls in assessment. As a result, not all of the identified current risks to children were addressed in planning. This in turn meant that appropriate services were not always in place to promote safety. Contingency planning required strengthening. In some cases, contingency plans were absent. In others, they were generic rather than individualised and specific, without clear actions to keep the child safe. While there was evidence of joint work with partner agencies, this did not support alignment in planning to keep the child safe.

Planning to address the safety of others was mixed. There were examples of planning activity that adequately addressed the current factors contributing to the safety of others, including joint work with key partner agencies such as the police and children’s services. We saw evidence of targeted interventions to address current risks, such as weapons or knife awareness sessions, and the involvement of parents to support external controls. However, this was not consistent. Gaps in assessment contributed to gaps in planning, particularly as not all current risks were identified or addressed. The safety of others was also compromised by a lack of planning to keep actual or potential victims safe. In some cases, contingency planning to manage the safety of others was unclear, indicating the need for training and effective management oversight.

<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 on our website.](#)

### 3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

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

|   | % 'Yes'    |
|---|------------|
| Does service delivery effectively support the child’s desistance?     | 81%        |
| Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?    | <b>31%</b> |
| Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people? | 69%        |

Practice was effective in meeting children’s desistance needs. There was consistent evidence of practitioners building positive and constructive relationships with children and families, and being tenacious when they met resistance. This facilitated engagement, particularly given the voluntary nature of most out-of-court disposals. Interventions focused on addressing the child’s needs. Practitioners liaised and collaborated well with other agencies, including ETE providers, Connexions, Sparks2Life mentoring, SaLT and children’s services. Although not consistent, inspectors saw some culturally sensitive interactions and interventions being adapted to support children’s diverse needs. This included work related to the values and identity of a Romanian child, and exploring a Black boy’s heritage and identity, from physical aspects including his hair and cooking, through to experiences of stop and search. There was evidence of effective exit planning, which sought to achieve sustainable support and community integration to help the child maintain desistance.

The delivery of services to support the safety of children needed improvement. There was evidence professional curiosity was inconsistent when new incidents occurred that indicated a change or increase in risks to a child’s safety. These included new arrests for knife possession or children being in the company of adults who could put them at increased risk of exploitation. We did not always see appropriate action being taken to liaise and share information with key partner agencies, such as the police, probation or children’s services. In some cases, when this did happen it was not timely. Given the over-representation of children in care from other local authority areas within Redbridge, it was positive to see good liaison with the social workers for these children.

Service delivery to keep others safe was variable. The YJTPS needs to focus its efforts on ensuring there is an embedded and consistent approach to this. We saw examples of high-quality, relevant interventions being delivered to address the safety of others, and constructive, collaborative work with key partner agencies such as schools, the police and children’s services. Work was generally delivered as planned and involved parents or carers. While there were some good examples of work with victims, this was not consistent. Shortfalls in service delivery related to interventions not reflecting current risks. As with the issues identified in terms of keeping children safe, there was evidence that practice was not responsive to arrests or new incidents that indicated a change to or increase in risk. This was then not consistently supported by appropriate information-sharing between the service and the police.

Oversight arrangements within the service need to be strengthened in relation to keeping children safe and keeping others safe to ensure high-quality service delivery that is consistent and involves appropriate partner agencies.

<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 on our website.](#)

### 3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision



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

Requires improvement

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

#### Strengths:

- The policy, procedure and protocol documents provide a robust and comprehensive framework to support and guide out-of-court disposal practice.
- There is a commitment to diverting children from the youth justice system using out-of-court disposals, engaging them well, and applying the principles of child-first, trauma-informed practice.
- There are clearly defined eligibility criteria, which are appropriately based on the new National Police Chiefs' Council Child Gravity Matrix.
- The service has put in place a referral mechanism with the police to ensure that children are referred to the Turnaround programme and can access voluntary prevention support.
- Children who are subject to out-of-court disposals have access to the same interventions and services as children subject to post-court orders. This ensures that their needs are met irrespective of the intervention they are subject to.
- The weekly multi-agency joint decision-making panel is well attended. It is made up of representatives with appropriate seniority from the YJTPS, the police, early help, health and the youth service.

#### Areas for improvement:

- The service could consider streamlining the policy and procedure documents to ensure they are applied consistently.
- Work is required to improve the engagement and offer for victims of children who receive out-of-court disposals.
- While it is clear that the service is committed to addressing diversity and disproportionality, this could be strengthened by identifying the over-represented minority groups to be targeted for diversion from the youth justice system. There are limited options for children who do not give an admission of guilt for offences. This can have a disproportionate impact on Black and mixed heritage boys, as they are less likely to admit guilt, which makes them ineligible for an out-of-court disposal. The lack of Outcome 22 or deferred prosecution processes may be disadvantaging some children, particularly those who are overrepresented in the youth justice system.
- Analysis of first-time entrants and out-of-court disposals is required to explore the extent to which children from diverse communities may be over-represented and escalated through the youth justice system as a result of their heritage. This will provide reassurance on the appropriateness of decision-making and outcomes for these children, and will indicate whether any further development is required with other local youth justice services or courts.

- Greater joint discussion and decision-making by the service manager and police inspector would strengthen the escalation process.
- The addition of a children's social care representative as a standing member would strengthen and support the out-of-court disposal panel, as this would enable it to explore thresholds for children's social care involvement to avoid criminalising children unnecessarily.
- The service needs to ensure practitioners are clear about the voluntary and statutory nature of out-of-court disposals, particularly in relation to youth cautions and community resolutions. This will ensure that practitioners understand when and how enforcement action can be taken. The current child and parent/carer leaflet on out-of-court disposals is a positive document. However, it needs to be reviewed to ensure that recipients understand the voluntary nature of community resolutions and youth cautions.
- The service needs to improve the quality of practice in relation to assessing children and keeping them and other people safe while they are subject to an out-of-court disposal. This should be a priority for the management board and the service.
- The planned development of a scrutiny panel is encouraging, as it will provide an external evaluation and review of out-of-court disposal policy and provision. This needs to be prioritised, progressed and supported by the youth justice partnership in Redbridge.
- The analysis of out-of-court disposal data needs to be developed and expanded to enable the service to consider the impact and effectiveness of out-of-court disposals. This will provide reassurance on the appropriateness of decision-making and outcomes, and will enable local practice to be shaped and improved. This needs to include addressing diversity and disproportionality in their broadest sense, as well as considering the views of children, parents, carers and victims.



## 4.1. Resettlement

### 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 one case managed by the YJTPS that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

#### Strengths:

- Resettlement policy and practice are grounded in constructive resettlement, identity shift, child-first and trauma-informed practice. They promote individualised plans and interventions that are responsive to children’s needs and risks.
- The resettlement policy provides clear arrangements for keeping children and others safe, which are overseen by the risk management panel and multi-agency public protection arrangement processes, where appropriate. The importance of victims’ needs and safety is also considered.
- There is evidence of joint and collaborative working between the local partnership and the secure estate to plan resettlement for children, including strong communication between the services, joint attendance at meetings in the secure estate, and supporting parents to attend and engage in meetings.
- Staff and partners genuinely care for their children and families. They know their children well and are dedicated to achieving the best outcomes for them.
- There is a good offer of services to provide constructive resettlement in custody, on release, for six months after the end of a licence and for remanded children who are acquitted. This includes a dedicated resettlement worker who works alongside the case manager and coordinates resettlement activity, including Spark2Life mentoring, community projects such as Barking Football Club and all the specialist services provided by partnership agencies both within and external to the service.

#### Areas for improvement:

- The resettlement policy identifies the need for accommodation, ETE, health care and other support services to be considered and planned for from the start of the custodial sentence. However, the policy states that, for children who require accommodation support from children’s services or housing support, accommodation will be in place at least one week prior to release. This is likely to impact on effective planning for children.
- The policy would benefit from a more detailed response to how the diverse needs of children with protected characteristics will be met and responded to.
- The resettlement policy would benefit from greater clarity about the interface and information exchange between key partners, as well as the escalation processes if shortfalls in practice occur.
- Not all practitioners or relevant partners have received the constructive resettlement training delivered in 2022. A refresh of this training would be beneficial.

- While risk and safety management processes, including considering the needs and safety of victims, are robust in principle, this was not consistently evidenced in practice.
- The resettlement policy and practice would benefit from being reviewed and evaluated to establish what makes local practice effective and what could be improved. This review should include the views of children, parents and carers and consider how children's diversity needs can be effectively met.
- The service should complete an evaluation of children in custody, detailing their needs, risks and safety, with oversight from the board, to ensure the services and provision they access are of the highest quality.

## 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.](#)