



HM Inspectorate  
of Probation

An inspection of youth justice services in

# Norfolk

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HM Inspectorate of Probation, January 2025

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## 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: 978-1-916621-79-4

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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 Norfolk 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, Norfolk YJS was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Outstanding'.

Governance of the YJS is provided by a strong management board. They are led by an experienced independent chair, who is skilled and knowledgeable and has sufficient authority to hold the local authority and wider partnership to account. Board members are motivated to provide the necessary strategic steer for the service, have developed mature relationships, and understand well the work of the YJS and the challenges that practitioners face. The board uses data to drive reviews and evaluation of service provision, and has developed strategies to address the disproportionality amongst children who come into contact with the YJS. However, the board and partnership need to understand better those children who are care-experienced and overrepresented within the YJS, and work to ensure they avoid their unnecessary criminalisation.

The YJS health provision is strong, and there are solid relationships with both children's social care and targeted youth support services, which support cohesive and coordinated delivery of services. There does, however, need to be a continued focus on providing the partnership services to meet the education, training, and employment needs of YJS children. It was pleasing to find that the service has many ways of engaging children's participation and capturing their views, the service can build upon this by ensuring children's views are consistently analysed and utilised to inform and influence future service provision.

We found consistently high-quality work to plan and deliver interventions in relation to children's desistance. However, there were inconsistencies in the quality of assessment activity to keep other people safe, particularly in post-court work. Work with victims needs to be reviewed so that their feedback can help to better embed victim work and restorative approaches across the service. The quality of provision for resettlement work was excellent, with structures that supported staff and partners to meet children's resettlement needs.

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. The service promotes a child-first and trauma-responsive approach, and it was pleasing to see this was evidenced in work we inspected. Staff were creative in delivering interventions, and went above and beyond what was required to support children and encourage their engagement. In this report we make a number of recommendations which we consider will further support the YJS and the management board in delivering high-quality youth justice services.



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

## Ratings

### Norfolk Youth Justice Service

Fieldwork started October 2024

Score 22/36

#### Overall rating

Good 

#### 1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

Good 

1.2 Staff

Good 

1.3 Partnerships and services

Good 

1.4 Information and facilities

Good 

#### 2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

Inadequate 

2.2 Planning

Good 

2.3 Implementation and delivery

Requires improvement 

2.4 Reviewing

Requires improvement 

#### 3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

Good 

3.2 Planning

Outstanding 

3.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding 

3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

Good 

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

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

Outstanding 

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

### **Norfolk YJS management board should:**

1. understand the overrepresentation of care-experienced children and avoid their unnecessary criminalisation
2. ensure that high-quality education, training, and employment provision is available for all children known to the YJS
3. review the work with victims and use their views to better embed victim work and restorative approaches across the service.

### **Norfolk YJS head of service should:**

4. improve the quality of practice where children present a risk of harm to others and strengthen the consistency of management oversight to ensure it drives improvements
5. put in place a framework to collate and analyse children's participation and feedback to help influence future service policy and provision.

## Background

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We conducted fieldwork in Norfolk YJS over a period of a week, beginning Monday 14 October 2024. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began, out-of-court disposals were delivered, and resettlement cases were sentenced or released between 16 October 2023 and 09 August 2024. We also conducted 59 interviews with case managers.

Norfolk is the most easterly county in the UK and shares borders with Lincolnshire, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire. The county capital is Norwich. Norfolk has seven district council areas and is made up of rural agricultural land with the four main urban population clusters of Norwich, King's Lynn, Great Yarmouth, and Thetford. Norfolk's population is around 916,000 with 167,000 under 18 years of age. It has a predominately white population (94.7 per cent). English is the main language for 95 per cent of residents, with Polish, Lithuanian, and Portuguese the other main languages. In 2023-2024, there were 1,180 incidents of under 18-year-olds arrested in Norfolk, an increase of five per cent from the previous 12 months.

The YJS has completed a needs analysis of the YJS cohort which highlighted that Black and mixed-heritage and 'other' ethnicity children are overrepresented compared with the 2021 Census. There is also overrepresentation of care-experienced children, girls, and those with special educational needs. Between September 2023 and August 2024, the most common offences were violence against the person, then criminal damage, followed by theft and handling, and then drug-related offences. During this period the YJS undertook 393 interventions with 349 children; 136 were post-court interventions and 257 were out-of-court disposals. Analysis of YJS performance data shows that the number of first-time entrants to the formal youth justice system was below 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 higher than the average for England and Wales.

The YJS is part of Norfolk County Council's children's social care, family help, and high needs directorate. The YJS head of service is also responsible for the targeted youth support service (TYSS), which is a youth work provision supporting children at risk of extrafamilial harm. The YJS head of service reports to the assistant director for family help and high needs. The YJS management board is chaired by an independent chair whose experience includes policing and is also an independent representative of the Norfolk safeguarding children's partnership. The board chair has direct access to the chief executive of the local authority and to the chief constable of Norfolk Police. The head of service is supported by two service managers for youth justice, each holding specific operational and strategic duties. There are seven operational managers, and the service is split into three teams for pre-court disposals, for post-court orders, and a partnership team.

The YJS is co-located with TYSS and is embedded within the wider delivery of prevention and diversion in Norfolk. There is also a parenting team which offers specialist support to parents of children known to the YJS to consider wider family issues present within the home, and offer appropriate support and interventions to meet this need. 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 14 meetings, including with staff, volunteers, managers, board members, and partnership staff and their managers.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows.

### 1.1. Governance and leadership



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

Good

#### Strengths:

- The YJS management board has an independent chair. He has the commitment and knowledge to drive the board forward and has sufficient authority to hold the local authority and wider partnership to account. He is supported by the director of children's services who offers direct support and advice at regular one-to-one meetings.
- Board membership includes both statutory and non-statutory partners of sufficient seniority. They are integrated with other governance boards both locally and regionally. There are strong youth justice links across both strategic and operational local and national forums.
- There is a board induction pack which includes the YJS vision and strategy, the anti-racism statement, and the board protocol.
- There is evidence of board members holding each other to account and challenging partner agencies. We found mature arrangements in which board members were motivated to provide the necessary strategic steer for the service.
- The youth justice plan is based on a strategic needs assessment of the service. To help set the strategic priorities and operational actions, the management board heard from practitioners, and children and families. The service has co-produced with children a child-friendly version of the plan.
- The board uses data to drive reviews and evaluation of service provision. It receives a comprehensive suite of performance information, and uses local data to identify and respond to emerging trends.
- Current board members have lead areas of responsibility for the strategic priorities on which they report. There is an education subgroup chaired by the board member for education to enable more analysis and discussion about the quality of education provision for YJS children.
- The board monitors the diversity of children known to the YJS and receives an annual disparity report. Strategies to address disproportionality have been developed, and analysis takes place to ensure that children with protected characteristics have their needs met.

- The board has regular oversight and an understanding of children on remand and in custody.
- Staff attend the board and board members have attended training with staff. We found strong links between the board and staff. Board members understand the work of the YJS and the challenges that practitioners face.
- The YJS has a stable and experienced leadership team. Managers lead on specific areas of practice and their responsibilities are clear.
- The board was presented with a self-assessment of the service which monitors how the strategy of using a trauma-informed approach is being embedded across the partnership.
- The YJS operationalises its vision to prevent children from entering the youth justice system and divert them away from formal outcomes at the earliest possible opportunity.

**Areas for improvement:**

- There are various plans to address school exclusions and the quality of alternative provision, although the impact of these strategies was limited at the time of the inspection.
- Although the board is rich in the data received, both it and wider partners need to better understand the overrepresentation of care-experienced children to avoid their unnecessary criminalisation.
- Hearing the voice of children is a priority area for the board and the YJS has many ways of capturing their voice and enabling them to participate in influencing service delivery. However, these activities need to be better analysed and collated, as it is not currently clear how they influence the evaluation and review of service policy and provision.
- Probation membership of the board has been inconsistent, although the current interim head of the probation delivery unit (PDU) has now expressed their commitment to attending and contributing to the board.



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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:

- YJS staff presented as knowledgeable, motivated, and committed to achieving positive outcomes for children. We found high levels of morale, and a staff team that valued one another and their managers.
- The management team is approachable and available. There is an individualised approach to supporting practitioners and volunteers. Team meetings and development days promote staff engagement.
- There is a good level of diversity within the team, and there was evidence in our inspection fieldwork that staff understand the local context and challenges within the specific communities across Norfolk.
- The volunteer coordinator is proactive in trying to recruit volunteers who are representative of their communities.
- The YJS has undertaken a recruitment campaign for an apprentice, and has encouraged applications from children with lived experience of the youth justice system, particularly those from minority ethnic communities.
- Allocation of work takes account of staff qualifications, experience, and individual staff needs. Staff felt that this was done fairly and collaboratively.
- The staff group is stable and there are examples of staff progressing from frontline practice into management positions. Members of the team have been funded and supported to complete external qualifications.
- Supervision is regular and effective in balancing service needs with practitioner wellbeing. The diversity needs of staff are supported well.
- All volunteers receive annual one-to-one supervision, which looks both at the development of their volunteering and future opportunities. Regular group supervision is delivered by the volunteer coordinator, who was described as supportive and inclusive. Volunteers felt integrated with the service and valued by all its members.
- Clinical supervision is available for all staff, although limited due to a gap in the psychologist provision. There is a recognition that, as part of a child-first approach, practitioners can be appropriately supported to manage any vicarious trauma they experience.
- The YJS has a comprehensive induction process. This provides opportunities for new staff to engage in all relevant generic and specialist training, with both staff and volunteers feeling supported during their induction period.
- All staff have an annual performance development plan agreed with their managers, which links to corporate and service-specific goals.
- The workforce development strategy takes account of the youth justice skills and knowledge matrix completed by staff, which identifies strengths and areas for development.

- Staff access mandatory and specialist training modules through the YJS, partners, and county council. They feel encouraged and supported to take up training opportunities.
- The service uses cross-grade working groups to encourage development and progress specific areas of practice. Some have been introduced as a result of analysis in the 2024 disparity report, including a working group reviewing work with girls known to the service.
- There are regular management, full service, and team meetings to ensure effective communication and dissemination of information.
- 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 at team meetings and 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:**

- There are gaps in understanding the factors linked to a child's risk of harm to others. The court disposal case data shows that in assessing, implementing, and reviewing a child's risk to others, practitioners and managers need to develop a consistent understanding and knowledge base.
- In the cases we inspected, we found a difference in the quality of management oversight between out-of-court disposals and post-court orders. The area of particular concern was assessing a child's risk of harm to others, where the quality of practice and levels of skills and knowledge need to improve.
- Due to the structure of the service, children can move between case managers in different strands. This does not ensure continuity and consistency for the child in line with the child-first approach. However, managers are flexible and try to prioritise the needs of the child.

### 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 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 addressing exploitation and serious youth violence at a partnership level are strong. There was good joint working with the targeted youth support service, who are co-located with the YJS. The community tension and local mapping meetings meant partners could offer a rapid response to emerging concerns in the localities.
- For those children who are overrepresented in the YJS cohort, the data has been used to impact on the delivery of partnership services. It is regularly analysed through the disparity report and working groups to inform service delivery across the partnership.
- The service has a girls group work programme in partnership with the Tender healthy relationships organisation. This programme has been especially adapted to support girls with a background of violence offences.
- Dedicated restorative justice and victim workers are developing the offer to victims, and have focused on increasing the uptake of support for victims and the number of restorative interventions.
- Reparation sessions are varied across the county and are tailored to the child's needs as much as possible, considering the large geographical area.
- There is a strong parenting offer, with workers engaging families known to the YJS and those known to be involved with serious youth violence.
- The YJS education, training, and employment (ETE) officers work closely with the schools and the Inclusion team to monitor those on reduced timetables and advocate for those in alternative provision.
- The YJS has employed a higher-level teaching assistant to work with children who are post-16 and not in ETE. He completes initial assessments of literacy and numeracy, and tries to get children to work to functional skills level 1. Linked with the child's wider social and emotional difficulties, he improves their confidence, tailors sessions, and builds rapport to encourage engagement.
- There is a good health offer to the YJS. The health team includes a clinical psychologist, mental health practitioner/occupational therapist, assistant health practitioner, speech and language therapist, and substance misuse workers. Depending on need, an enhanced health assessment and/or psychological case formulation is completed for working with the child. The enhanced health assessment includes physical needs as well as sexual health.
- The health team includes a clinical psychologist, mental health nurse, assistant health practitioner, speech and language therapist, and substance misuse workers. Depending on need, an enhanced health assessment and/or psychological case formulation is completed for working with the child. The enhanced health assessment includes physical needs as well as sexual health.

- The speech and language therapist completes assessments to understand each child's communication needs. All staff complete a speech and language skills audit, and a training package has been developed.
- There are three seconded police officers who lead on the triage of children for out-of-court disposals. They are also involved in contacting victims and work directly with children and families, and do joint visits with practitioners if required.
- 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 clear framework for working with children displaying harmful sexual behaviour.
- Although the YJS was without a seconded probation officer for four years, and this was escalated on many occasions, there is an interim PDU head of service, and this gap has been filled; the new probation officer was due to start after the inspection.
- In the absence of a seconded probation officer, transitions work has been undertaken by one of the YJS service managers who has probation experience and holds monthly transition meetings to discuss older children who could move to the probation service.
- Feedback from court shows that the relationship with the YJS is strong. There are good lines of communication, and the court has faith and trust in the YJS. Sentencers stated that the YJS offers a child-first ethos and provides a good depth of knowledge about the children who appear at court.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- While the YJS has a strategic response to addressing disproportionality with a detailed operational action plan, there is no clear strategic response across the partnership, although there are pockets of targeted work.
- Too many YJS children are excluded from school, and provision is described as poor for post-16-year-olds with colleges not being supportive of YJS children. However, the standard of education, training, and employment for YJS children is a priority for the service and the partnership, so that they can drive improvements and ensure that children's needs are met.
- The desire to improve work with victims and better embed restorative practices comes from the restorative justice and victim workers; there is a lack of strategic analysis and oversight to prioritise this area of practice.
- The reparation workers are building up the projects but are finding limited opportunities; a more strategic approach to this area of work could help develop community engagement and projects.
- The three substance misuse workers also carry a YJS caseload, which detracts from the substance misuse provision that they can offer. These are historic arrangements, and the roles are being reviewed.
- A disproportionate number of children subject to youth justice supervision are known to social care, especially care experienced children. Although there are plans to address this overrepresentation, the partnership needs to better understand the journey of children in care and to ensure they are not being unnecessarily criminalised.

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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 YJS is co-located with a number of other children's teams in the main offices, which has helped multi-agency working and communication.
- Staff are flexible in how they see children and families, and offer them all the opportunity to make contacts in their homes, schools, YJS office or community venues. Case managers take a personalised approach to encourage engagement, and ensure children feel comfortable and safe.
- All the office bases used by the YJS have rooms accessible for meeting children. They are as child-friendly as possible, and in some cases, children helped to design and decorate the space.
- Staff can agile work across the region, and staff and managers have a shared understanding of lone working processes and feel safe.
- All policies have been recently updated to include the YJS anti-racist statement. Policies and guidance, including local procedures and processes, reflect current practice and have a focus on the diverse needs of children.
- The YJS has access to the education management system and receives data from children's social care, which is recorded on ChildView, the youth justice information management system. The YJS also receives information to identify children at risk of exploitation and unaccompanied asylum seekers to enable proactive joint working.
- Information-sharing and governance arrangements are robust across the partnership, supporting the effective flow of information.
- The YJS responds to audits, deep-dive analysis, and changes in effective practice. The annual disparity report and subsequent action plan are directly effecting changes in practice.
- There is a suite of dashboards, developed using ChildView data, most of which are available to staff. All the dashboards are designed to be interactive to enable staff and managers to extract performance information, and identify and address any issues about data and recording.
- A performance and quality assurance strategy sets out the framework for performance monitoring and audit activity. It outlines the various processes, including supervision and management oversight, performance data, service user and stakeholder feedback, and external inspection.
- The YJS was part of the HM Inspectorate of Probation remand thematic inspection and developed an action plan which it has progressed to ensure it has implemented the recommendations.
- The service reviews HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection reports against practice in Norfolk to consider different options for service delivery.

- Critical learning reviews are completed and presented to the management board so that the YJS and the wider partnership can share key learning and implement actions.
- Children’s diversity issues were sufficiently analysed and planned for in most cases inspected. There is a focus on child-first approaches, and use of the annual disparity report to analyse the protected characteristics of all children; this drives improvements to practice and informs future service delivery.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Quality assurance of assessing, delivering services, and reviewing in post-court cases need greater consistency to ensure the safety of others.
- Although the YJS seeks feedback from children and families in various ways and is developing the participation of children in the service to help it develop, these activities need to be better analysed and used to review and evidence the effectiveness of services.
- The police system is accessible, but does not include a flag for children known to the YJS so that information can be quickly shared from police in the community to YJS police officers.

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

The YJS has various methods to encourage the participation of children and families, and to hear their feedback about experiences of being involved with the YJS. Hearing the voice of children is a priority area for the board, and the YJS is trying to incorporate children's views in as many areas as possible. This includes children and families attending the board to talk about their experiences of the service, staff presenting case studies, and co-producing a children's version of the youth justice plan. The YJS has many ways of capturing the voice of children and enabling them to participate in influencing service delivery. However, these activities need to be better analysed and collated, as it is not clear if they influence the evaluation and review of service policy and provision.

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 19 children who consented, and eight children replied.

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

Inspectors also spoke to seven children. 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 the places in which they were seen were safe and accessible for them.

One child, talking about their case manager, said:

*"My worker knows what to do to help me in the right way. My YJS worker has got to understand me and know me. They have definitely got the right skills to work with young people."*

Another child commented:

*"They see me weekly and spend time getting to know me. That's really what helps because they spend time to understand me and I don't feel awkward when I'm talking to the worker. My worker is really nice, they explain things really well and clearly."*

Another child said:

*"I know a lot of work and preparation is being done to make sure things can go well in my future, so my worker has worked with me to understand what type of licence conditions would help me, what type of training can help me, and how I can make the most of my life."*

A parent commented:

*"Our youth justice worker was excellent with our child who has complex needs, and worked round this to find a way for him to understand what was needed. They always kept us informed and always helped us when we asked questions."*

## Diversity

- A needs analysis of the YJS cohort highlighted that Black and mixed-heritage and 'other' ethnicity children are overrepresented compared with the 2021 Census. There is also overrepresentation of care-experienced children, girls, and those with special education needs.
- The annual disparity report was presented to the board in June 2024 and highlighted that Black and mixed-heritage children, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, and Eastern European children were overrepresented. Girls were overrepresented in comparison with the average national data, but there had been a decrease since last year. The number of care-experienced children was increasing, and school exclusion numbers show trends in disproportionality.
- The analysis of breach data shows that certain ethnic minorities were twice as likely to be breached as white British children. The YJS has made its enforcement policy more robust, and where breach action is instigated for a child from an ethnic minority background this must be agreed with a senior manager.
- Stop-and-search and arrest data are looked at as part of the stop-and-search scrutiny process. This looks at data and cases of individuals who have been stopped more than twice in the last couple of years, as well as the police officers undertaking the stops. It views stop-and-search body-worn video footage and feeds back to police officers about the quality of interactions.
- The board monitors the diversity of children known to the YJS. Strategies to address disproportionality have been developed and there is analysis to ensure that children with protected characteristics have their needs met.
- Progress from the annual disparity report includes: updating quality assurance tools; guided conversations delivered to parents of minority group children; disparity working groups introduced; YJS anti-racist statement developed; training on working with girls commissioned; and a multi-agency remand scrutiny panel established.
- The service uses working groups which include all staff roles to encourage development and progress specific areas of practice. Some have been introduced following the analysis in the disparity report, including one reviewing working with girls known to the service. A girls group work programme in partnership with the Tender health relationships organisation has been especially adapted to support girls with involved in violence offences.
- Although the board is rich in data, both it and partners need to better understand the overrepresentation of care-experienced children to avoid their unnecessary criminalisation.
- The YJS is recruiting an apprentice role, encouraging children who have been known by the YJS who have lived experience and/or are from an ethnic minority background.
- There is a good level of diversity within the team, and evidence in the cases and the focus groups that staff understood the local context and challenges in the specific communities across Norfolk.
- In the staff survey, most staff who had diversity needs said that these had been met either 'very well' or 'quite well'.
- The case data indicated in 45 out of 58 cases, diversity issues were sufficiently analysed; and in 42 out of 58 cases, they were sufficiently addressed as part of planning. Although positive, it is essential this is achieved consistently, to ensure all children's diverse needs are being considered and supported.



## Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 23 community sentences and no custodial 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>2</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

Does assessment sufficiently analyse:	% 'Yes'
how to support the child's desistance?	78%
how to keep the child safe?	61%
how to keep other people safe?	<b>39%</b>

The inspection found that assessing for post-court orders was the area that needs most improvement. Assessment activity was stronger when considering children's desistance. 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. Case managers showed an understanding of the child's life experiences and considered how the trauma they had endured impacted on their emotional wellbeing. They focused on children's strengths and motivation to change, and involved children and their parents or carers in the assessment. In most relevant cases, the restorative justice and victim workers proactively ensured that case managers included the victim's needs and wishes in their assessments. Not all cases, though, evidenced that children's diversity needs had been appropriately considered, and this was an area requiring greater focus.

When relevant, children's risk of exploitation was recognised, and practitioners focused on children's emotional wellbeing. In most cases, information from other agencies was used to support children's safety, and there was evidence that practitioners included parents or carers when considering how to keep children safe. 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. However, case managers did not consistently identify potential risks to children's safety and wellbeing appropriately, factors such as experiencing loss and potential exploitation were not consistently considered in understanding how to support children to be safe.

In assessing children's risk of harm to others, case managers did not always access information from other agencies, including that on past behaviours and convictions, and use it consistently to analyse the level of harm presented by the child to others. Inspectors found that staff isolated the assessing of risk to the current offending behaviour, rather than considering other relevant previous behaviours. They did not clearly evidence why they had excluded some children's relevant risky previous

<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 in the data annexe.](#)

behaviours and convictions in their current risk analysis. By not considering previous behaviours, assessments missed some key actions, including how risk to others would be considered and addressed. Case managers needed to identify triggers and motivating factors in the child's past behaviours, and recognise wider risks to other people to analyse children's potential future harmful behaviour more appropriately.

## 2.2. Planning



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

Good

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

Does planning focus sufficiently on:	% 'Yes'
supporting the child's desistance?	83%
keeping the child safe?	78%
keeping other people safe?	<b>65%</b>

There was evidence that planning had been collaborative and 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 addressing children's diversity needs was 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 engagement with education, and the potential for parenting work to be completed with families. Case managers took account of children's learning styles when creating plans, and how best to work with them when delivering interventions. This included the importance of building relationships with children and understanding their lived experiences. 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 and multi-agency meetings, which were used to make sure that information was shared, and all agencies were up to date with the child's circumstances. Case managers used this 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 children's social care and health practitioners to keep children safe.

Case managers used the YJS multi-agency risk management meeting and information from other agencies, where appropriate, in planning to keep other people safe. There were good examples of planning to manage and reduce the level of risk of harm by using police intelligence to monitor children's behaviour in the community. However, planning promoted the safety of other people and considered the safety of specific victims in too few cases, and contingency planning to address escalating concerns about the safety of other people was too generic and not sufficiently detailed or relevant to the child's specific circumstances in enough cases.

<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 annexe.](#)

## 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:

Does the implementation and delivery of services:	% 'Yes'
effectively support the child's desistance?	91%
effectively support the safety of the child?	83%
effectively support the safety of other people?	<b>57%</b>

Case managers had built strong relationships with the children and their families, and this was evident in children's engagement. Nearly 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. There was evidence of staff using trauma-informed interventions that showed they understood the child's needs. 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 involvement with the higher-level teaching assistant, working with TYSS, and the parenting officers delivering interventions to families. There was evidence that some reparation activities were used to help children build relationships and facilitate community integration.

Interventions were identified to manage the child's safety and wellbeing. There was a multi-agency approach to safeguarding, and evidence of liaison and coordination with other agencies and specialist staff, such as children's social care, health practitioners, clinical psychologist, speech and language therapist, substance misuse practitioners, and the education, training, and employment workers. 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. Relevant interventions to address the child's risk factors were not consistently delivered, and case managers were not always responsive to changes in risk. The protection of actual and potential victims was not always considered. However, there was a multi-agency approach to monitor risks, and the communication and information-sharing between the YJS police staff and case managers was timely.

<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 annexe.](#)

## 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:

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on:	% 'Yes'
supporting the child's desistance?	91%
keeping the child safe?	78%
keeping other people safe?	<b>57%</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 was considered, and there was evidence that case managers adapted 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 health services.

Reviewing of children's safety and wellbeing mostly detailed the changes in their 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 health and parenting provision. 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, we found that case managers did not consistently identify new risks that were emerging and review their potential impact 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. However, where progress had been made this was evidenced, and parents or carers were kept up to date and included in the reviewing process.

<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 annexe.](#)

## Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 35 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of four youth conditional cautions, one youth caution, 11 community resolutions, and 19 other disposals. We interviewed the case managers in 33 cases.

### 3.1. Assessment



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

Good

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

Does assessment sufficiently analyse:	% 'Yes'
how to support the child's desistance?	97%
how to keep the child safe?	83%
how to keep other people safe?	<b>63%<sup>7</sup></b>

Assessing out-of-court disposals is completed by staff in the out-of-court disposal strand and for the inspected cases they used their own assessment tool, although they have now implemented the YJB prevention and diversion assessment tool.

To help identify children's desistance factors, case managers accessed a range of sources from partner agencies, including education, training, and employment workers, children's social care, and the police. Case managers understood the child's life experiences, and involved them and their parents or carers in assessment activity. They offered an appropriate analysis of children's attitudes towards, or reasons for, their offending and focused on their motivation to change. Case managers included children's strength-based hobbies and pro-social pursuits as part of their assessment. In most relevant cases, they had considered the needs and wishes of victims. Assessment activity took account of the child's diversity issues; one example involved the case manager recognising the child's neurodevelopmental needs and using easy-read documentation with them. Case managers identified barriers preventing children from accessing services and advocated for provision that met their needs.

In most 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 impact of previous trauma that children had experienced. Assessing showed that case managers had a good understanding of children's risks of exploitation, understood a contextual safeguarding approach, and worked closely with the TYSS. There was a clear written record of children's wellbeing and how to keep them safe.

In too many cases, the potential risks to keeping other people safe were not sufficiently analysed. There was a lack of consideration of how previous risky behaviours influenced the current risk assessment. For example, police intelligence linked to previous concerns regarding a child's harmful sexual behaviour was not consistently considered when assessing the current level of risk posed by the child.

<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 annexe.](#)

<sup>7</sup> Professional discretion was applied at the ratings panel increasing this rating from 'Requires Improvement' to 'Good'.

## 3.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

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

Does planning focus on:	% 'Yes'
supporting the child's desistance?	91%
keeping the child safe?	86%
keeping other people safe?	<b>83%</b>

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 the child's diversity and learning needs when planning for interventions. This included translating documents into a child's first language so they could better understand the work being planned. 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 coordinated 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, social workers and residential placement staff. Partnership working was evident in consultations with other agencies, including education, training, and employment provisions and the clinical psychologist, 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 considering all aspects of a child's life, including risks in their home environment. In the inspected cases, planning happened alongside children, and case managers were creative in their discussions to engage children and families in the planning process.

Case managers planned the interventions that were needed to manage the safety of other people in nearly all cases. Planning involved other agencies, for example, police, education, training, and employment workers, and health professionals. Contingency planning to address escalating concerns about the safety of other people could have been improved by ensuring that it was not generic but a response to individual children's situations. However, case managers considered the safety of victims, and there were examples of the victim workers contacting victims for their views and feeding this back to case managers.

<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.

Outstanding

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?	97%
the safety of the child?	89%
the safety of other people?	<b>86%</b>

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 the work delivered was creative and inspiring, with staff co-producing interventions with children. They made use of local activities encouraging children to be active within their community and use their time constructively.

To help support children's desistance, case managers had considered the children's diversity needs in nearly all cases, and ensured that interventions were proportionate to the type of disposal. There was good engagement with interventions, which were mainly voluntary, and case managers worked hard to establish effective working relationships with both the children and their parents or carers. There were examples of case managers working with the education workers and health practitioners on behalf of children to make sure that they were receiving appropriate provision that met their needs. In nearly all cases, practitioners had considered how children could be linked to mainstream services once their interventions had ended.

The delivery of interventions to support children's safety and wellbeing in out-of-court disposals showed evidence of case managers working alongside specialist workers and partner agencies, including the speech and language therapist and voluntary organisations. Case managers were encouraged and supported by managers to be creative in how to deliver interventions that were personalised to the child and met their needs. In nearly all cases inspected, service delivery and interventions supported children's safety effectively.

Case managers ensured that the interventions with children to support the safety of other people were managing and minimising the risk of harm. They worked collaboratively with other professionals, including sharing information at the local mapping meetings on child exploitation. They considered the protection of potential and actual victims when delivering interventions in most relevant cases. There was evidence that case managers and the restorative justice and victim workers considered together the appropriateness of a restorative approach in relevant cases.

<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.](#)



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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 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 YJS and TYSS have 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 prevention and diversion support has increased, showing that services are intervening with children at an earlier stage to prevent offending and reduce first-time entrants.
- Norfolk YJS has an out-of-court disposal protocol with Norfolk Police. It also has out-of-court disposal policy and procedure which specifically refer to disproportionality and recognise the overrepresentation of children with certain protected characteristics.
- The YJS has a local out-of-court disposal steering group which includes police representatives, and receives detailed data and analyses trends, patterns, and any overuse of specific disposals. An overview of out-of-court disposal data is also shared with the management board.
- The panel limits the number of children it discusses so that it can give appropriate time in each case, and it considers the lowest outcome for the child with interventions that will meet their specific needs.
- For suitable 'no comment' and silent interviews, Outcome 22 deferred prosecution is also used to enable equal access to diversion.
- Before the multi-agency diversion panel meets, the YJS police officers triage all notifications from the police to determine whether they should go to the panel. The rationale for these decisions is scrutinised by the YJS operational managers.
- The multi-agency diversion panel is chaired by the YJS service area manager and co-chaired by the police. It is attended by the YJS operational manager, restorative justice and victim worker, YJS police officer and team managers from the partner and community focus, and social care teams.
- Case managers have three weeks to complete the assessment and will visit the child's home and liaise with other agencies.
- There must be a unanimous decision on the outcome from all members of the panel. Neither the case manager nor the chair vote but both take part in the discussion. If the final decision is not unanimous then it is escalated for an agreement to be reached. Escalation processes were understood during the focus group meetings and, generally, panel members feel comfortable to share their views.

- There is a wide range of strengths-based interventions available for children. In the inspected cases, planning and delivering services for children's desistance and to keep children and others safe were very strong.
- The local joint out-of-court disposal steering group ensures that there is adherence to the policy and practice. This group recently took part in a workshop to review the effectiveness of the diversion panel, based on feedback from practitioners and panel members. It has identified next steps for development, and an action plan has been produced and presented at both the management board and the steering group.
- The steering group reviews the performance and quality of the out-of-court disposal process. It monitors the reoffending rates of children, looks at their profile, and understands which groups of children are overrepresented. It also agrees which areas of practice need auditing and further analysis; these have included a pre-court risk audit report and a joint audit looking at police charging decision-making.
- The Norfolk criminal justice out-of-court scrutiny panel is the forum which scrutinises oversight of police decision-making. A joint Norfolk and Suffolk panel reviews both adult and youth decision-making.

**Areas for improvement:**

- There are gaps in understanding the factors linked to a child's risk of harm to others. The out-of-court disposal case data shows that practitioners and managers need to develop a better understanding and knowledge base in assessing a child's risk to others.
- The out-of-court disposal panel does not include any representatives from education or health. This arrangement should be reviewed to ensure that both the education and health needs of children are fully discussed and considered prior to the panel making its decision.

## 4.1. Resettlement

### 4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Outstanding

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews. To illustrate that work, we inspected six cases managed by the YJS that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

#### Strengths:

- The YJS has a resettlement policy which includes an anti-racist statement and a diversity statement. The policy covers the principles of constructive resettlement and local guidance to ensure accommodation, education, training, and employment, health needs, and the responsibilities for children's social care are identified from the outset of the child's sentence.
- The policy recognises the importance of working alongside the parenting workers to make sure that family and carers are involved in reviews when their children are in custody. It also focuses on victims and how they inform the licence conditions.
- When a child is at risk of being remanded, the YJS will hold a risk of remand meeting which includes all professionals involved with the child, looking at a package of interventions to keep them out of custody.
- The YJS holds at risk of custody meetings when there is a risk of custody. These are multi-agency and consider proposals for a robust community package that will manage the risk. If custody is inevitable, then it is the start of the process of monitoring and reviewing the assessments, plans, and interventions for children subject to resettlement.
- The YJS has resettlement specialists who are also allocated alongside the case manager to custody cases, which ensures specialist advice, guidance, and support. There are plans to deliver more resettlement training.
- YJS staff work alongside parenting workers to ensure that contact is maintained with the parents or carers of children while they are in custody. Practitioners take families with them on visits to make sure that they are included in the planning for the child's release back into the community. They support families and ensure they are meaningfully involved throughout the sentence.
- YJS case managers attend review meetings and regularly visit children in custody in person to maintain and develop their working relationship.
- YJS staff do joint visits with partnership staff, including social workers.
- Staff described communication with the secure estate as effective. Each child is allocated a resettlement worker. There are weekly conversations between the YJS and the establishment.

- Release on temporary licence is considered by practitioners to help explore opportunities for children.
- Remand, custody, and resettlement are standing agenda items for the board, and it reviews all remand and custodial cases. It knows the profile of children on remand and in custody, how they are being kept safe, what their needs are, and what services will be required from partner agencies on their release.
- There has been a partnership review and learning from one child's experience of custody, and the board takes collective responsibility for these children.
- Quality assurance of resettlement cases is included in the overall quality assurance processes, and this had impacted positively on the quality of work in the inspected resettlement cases.
- The YJS has learnt and implemented changes from its involvement in the HM Inspectorate of Probation remand thematic inspection, and this has had a positive impact on its standard of resettlement work.
- There have been two deep-dive analysis reports of children in custody to look at their journey and see how agencies could learn from their lived experiences. Further analysis of more children's experiences (including other protected characteristics) would lead to a much richer set of findings that could influence future service delivery across the partnership.

## 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.](#)