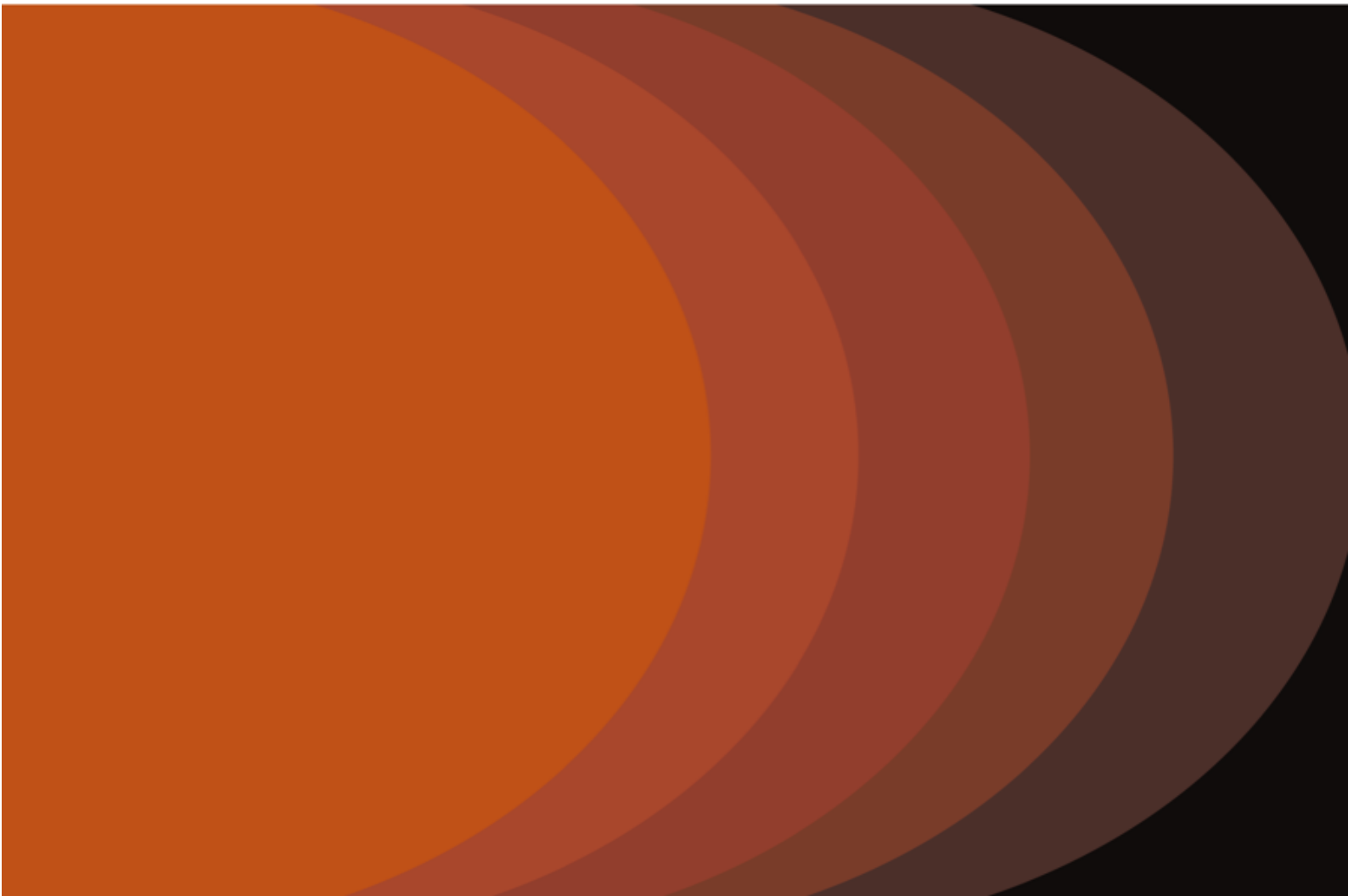




HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth justice services in
Westminster

HM Inspectorate of Probation, September 2024



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

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Foreword

This inspection is part of our programme of youth justice service (YJS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Westminster 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, Westminster YJS was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was not rated, as there were no resettlement cases within the timescale covered by the inspection.

Westminster has a diverse community, with a multitude of different religions, ethnicities and languages. Partnership working to provide tangible, personalised services for children with different lived experiences is exceptional. Community engagement and innovation are noteworthy, as evidenced by the Unheard Fathers project and the reoffending panel, which includes parent champions. Activity to tackle disproportionality is visible at both a strategic and operational level, and action plans are leading to better outcomes for children with complex needs.

Leaders and partners have worked successfully to build a clear vision and road map to help children to live their best lives and achieve their potential. The Youth Crime Prevention Partnership (YCPP) management board is led well by a competent chair, who holds members to account, has excellent links with various departments across local boroughs, provides trust and flexibility, and cultivates a culture of creativity and innovation. There are effective relationships in place. Partners embrace their responsibilities enthusiastically and work together well to overcome any structural barriers experienced by children.

YJS staff are focused on helping each child to thrive, and are led well by a reflective, passionate and forward-thinking service manager. Senior leaders, managers, stakeholders and operational staff across the partnership seek feedback from children and their parents and carers, and actively use it to improve service delivery.

The partnership has access to a broad range of reports and management information about the profile of children, covering first-time entrants, use of out-of-court disposals and reoffending. This is helping the service to channel its resources towards identified need. However, the service is missing a statutory partner, a probation officer, and the partnership needs to prioritise filling this gap as soon as possible. Additionally, it would benefit from reviewing its arrangements for deferred prosecution for children, to ensure that all children are offered the opportunity for diversion from entering the youth justice system at the earliest opportunity. It also needs to strengthen planning activity, particularly contingency planning, for children subject to court disposals.

The YJS partnership can be justifiably satisfied with its work and celebrate the effective way that it carries this out in a challenging environment. All staff must take credit, as the positive outcome of this inspection has been a team effort. We trust that the findings in this report will assist the YJS to improve further.



Martin Jones CBE
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Westminster Youth Justice Service
Fieldwork started April 2024

Score 29/36

Overall rating

Good



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

Good



1.2 Staff

Outstanding



1.3 Partnerships and services

Good



1.4 Information and facilities

Outstanding



2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

Outstanding



2.2 Planning

Good



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding



2.4 Reviewing

Outstanding



3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

Good



3.2 Planning

Requires improvement



3.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding



3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

Good



4. Resettlement¹

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

Not rated

¹ The rating for resettlement does not influence the overall YJS rating.

Recommendations

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

The Westminster youth justice service should:

1. ensure robust contingency plans are in place for all children that address their safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others.
2. provide staff with effective induction training on multi-agency public protection arrangements, which ensures that they have a comprehensive understanding of these arrangements and can apply them when required.

The YCPP management board and Probation Service should:

3. address its statutory responsibility to prioritise the secondment of a probation officer into the YJS partnership, to ensure the expertise and specialist knowledge this role brings is embedded and fully utilised.

The YCPP management board and the Metropolitan Police should:

4. review the arrangements for deferred prosecution, including monitoring the impact of these on reducing disproportionality and ensure that all children are offered and supported to access appropriate interventions at the earliest opportunity.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Westminster YJS over a period of a week, beginning 22 April 2024. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began between 24 April 2023 and 16 February 2024 and out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 24 April 2023 and 16 February 2024. We also conducted 12 interviews with case managers.

Westminster is a diverse borough, with some of the wealthiest areas in England as well as some of the most deprived. There is a strong correlation between deprivation and offending in the borough: Higher numbers of children who offend live in the areas of highest deprivation. Westminster City Council and Kensington and Chelsea Council have arrangements to share children's, adults' and public health services. As part of this bi-borough arrangement, the councils seek 'to deliver excellent services that enable all children and young people to reach their full potential, including the most vulnerable'. Under these bi-borough arrangements, some services are delivered jointly between the two boroughs. Others, including the Westminster YJS, are provided by one borough but with close collaboration.

The vision for the service is underpinned by a relational and trauma-informed attachment, regulation and competency (ARC) approach, systemic practice and contextual safeguarding approaches. The main governance mechanism and strategic planning forum for youth justice is the YCPP. The YCPP acts as the management board that oversees the local delivery of responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 for youth justice services and brings local partners together to address youth crime in a joined-up approach.

The latest mid-year estimate from the Office for National Statistics records that the population of Westminster is around 211,365.²

Characteristics of children open to Westminster YJS as of March 2024 include:

- 94 per cent are male; 88 per cent are aged 15 to 17 years; 8 per cent are aged 13 to 14; 4 per cent are aged 18
- 69 per cent are living in a family home with a parent or carer
- 36 per cent are not in education, training or employment (ETE)
- 57 per cent have a speech, language and communication need or identify as being neurodiverse.³

Of the 76 offences committed between April 2023 and March 2024, the top three categories were:

- 33 violent offences (43 per cent)
- 10 drug-related offences (13 per cent)
- nine robberies (12 per cent).

² Source: Office for National Statistics (November 2023). UK population estimates, mid-2022.

³ Information supplied by Westminster YJS.

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 11 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 YCPP management board has set a stretching yet achievable vision and strategy by engaging effectively with the YJS, partners and stakeholders.
- The YCPP is connected to wider strategic boards, which supports positive outcomes for children.
- YCPP board members and partners know the children open to the YJS well. They support the service by ensuring that appropriate provision and services are available and accessible to address children's diverse needs.
- Partners regularly attend board meetings, engage dynamically and are influential advocates for YJS children. They have made additional funding available for education tutors and provided cross-borough housing placements. Leaders have taken learning from the board back to their own organisations.
- The management board is led well. It has an appropriately challenging and knowledgeable chair, who has substantial experience of working in the youth justice system. Partners are consistently held to account.
- The YJS partnership is innovative and looks for ways to embed learning from strategic decision making and operational findings. For example, it has worked with a games developer on a games library initiative that supports children's literacy, numeracy and creative thinking skills, and provides opportunities for collaboration and having fun.
- Effective induction arrangements for board members ensure that senior leaders understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Partnership arrangements are child-centred and support meaningful work with YJS children.
- Local strategic partnerships (for example to reduce serious youth violence, reduce reoffending and address children's engagement in education) understand YJS children's diverse needs and deliberately direct resources to meet these needs. Following the death of George Floyd in 2020, the partnership took timely action to build trust and confidence with the local community.
- There is purposeful and collaborative engagement between the YJS leadership team and the management board. The 'practice week' initiative is noteworthy.

- The partnership promotes openness, transparency, ownership and constructive challenge, creating safe spaces for all to contribute.
- Business risks to the YJS are understood well by leaders and there are appropriate controls in place to mitigate risk.
- The board members' handbook is accessible and relevant.
- Management information is understood well by the partnership and appropriately used to inform and improve service delivery.
- Children achieve positive health and education outcomes.
- The partnership has well-established links with specialist community providers who deliver services for children with a range of lived experiences.
- The voices of children, their parents or carers, and victims are used well to inform the vision of the YJS.

Areas for improvement:

- Volunteers should be given more opportunities to contribute to the Youth Justice Plan.
- The YJS does not currently have a seconded probation officer and has not had one for some time. Systems are in place to manage the transitions of children from the YJS to the probation service. However, this does not replace what a seconded probation officer would bring to the service in terms of knowledge, skills, understanding and expertise.
- Our decision rules and guidance state that a rating of 'Outstanding' requires that all domain two and three ratings are 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. This was not the case for the domain three cases we inspected. This, combined with evidence from our key and prompt questions, led us to be satisfied that a rating of 'Good' was appropriate.

1.2. Staff



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

Outstanding

Strengths:

- The YJS provides exceptional pastoral care for children, including a weekly 'Friday check-in', access to the 'systemic café' and clinical supervision to support staff working with children who have complex lived experiences and vulnerabilities.
- The workforce is diverse, combining a range of lived experiences, religions and ethnicities.
- Staffing resources are well planned, used effectively and appropriately reviewed to respond to the changing needs and profile of children being supervised by the service.
- Staff morale is high. Staff feel listened to, and are highly motivated and proud of the service. Managers are approachable and available.
- The workloads of staff and managers, including volunteers, are realistic and manageable.
- Comprehensive arrangements are in place to make sure the quality of work is not compromised during planned and unplanned staff absences.
- Cases are correctly allocated to practitioners with suitable skills and qualifications. Joint working of cases provides additional accountability, learning and development.
- All staff are supported effectively to progress in their careers. Internal and external secondments are actively supported.
- Staff receive regular supervision and space for reflective learning to improve their practice. Staff are determined to provide high-quality services.
- All staff have access to in-service learning opportunities on the council's learning platform. This helps them to deliver interventions well to children and to improve their partnership working. Staff are trained in systemic approaches, and their work with children and families is trauma-informed and relational. Training completed by staff in the past 12 months has included: safeguarding (at different levels according to role and experience), autism, active desistance practice, an introduction to adultification, cultural competency, court practice development, trauma-informed practice, diversity, inclusion and anti-racist charter and The Big Word – interpretation and translation.
- The partnership champions and values a culture of learning and continuous improvement.
- Employment opportunities are openly advertised.
- Staff receive a structured and highly comprehensive induction process, combining formal and informal activities and arrangements.
- Volunteers are inspirational and undertake a range of tasks.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Good

Strengths:

- There is a comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the desistance needs of YJS children. The analysis covers safety and wellbeing and risk of harm factors, as well as diversity needs. It is informed by management information extracted from AssetPlus, audits, internal thematic reviews and quality assurance processes.
- Children and their parents and carers are actively invited to provide feedback to support service improvements.
- There is good access to mainstream and specialist services that help children to desist from offending, and that keep children and others safe. These include physical and mental health, a liaison and diversion nurse, Insight (substance misuse), specific mentoring programmes for minority ethnic children (such as WIPERS), online education provision through Tute, and speech and language therapy (SaLT). In addition, children can access the games library, and the Redthread and No Knives, Better Lives workshops and a range of therapeutic interventions.
- Reparation projects are varied and include refurbishment of youth centres, gardening projects, foodbanks, making cards, supporting neighbourhood holiday programmes, and catering.
- The co-location of partner agencies at the Orchardson Street office allows for successful collaboration.
- There are solid links and relationships with various statutory partners, providers and agencies that offer interventions related to desistance, safeguarding (the multi-agency safeguarding hub, exploitation, and Integrated Gangs and Exploitation Unit (IGXU) teams) and public protection interventions (safety, wellbeing and risk management panels). Oversight is provided through various memorandums of understanding, service level agreements, and terms of reference for different services.
- The YJS has strong links with local sentencers. This ensures that courts are properly aware of the services available to support sentencing.

Area for improvement:

- Practitioners need to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of multi-agency public protection arrangements.
- The probation service cannot second a probation practitioner due to lack of capacity, and provides the YJS with financial reimbursement instead. Although there is a process to transition young adults to the probation service, both services need to do more work to ensure that there is a probation officer in the YJS team.

1.4. Information and facilities



Timely and relevant information is available and appropriate facilities are in place to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children.

Outstanding

Strengths:

- The YJS has a wide range of relevant policies, procedures and guidance documents in place that enable staff to carry out their roles. These have been aligned with linked policies and protocols both within the service and with partner agencies.
- Policies are regularly reviewed. Inspectors found an extensive list of current policies that apply to the work of the YJS (internal and external), their status and when subsequent reviews were scheduled.
- Management information capabilities are fully developed.
- Services for children are delivered in accessible and safe environments. The Orchardson Street office is welcoming, inclusive of children from different faiths and ethnicities, and provides a suitable place for positive engagement and rehabilitation. Artwork displayed in the office was co-produced with students from Stanmore College, children open to the YJS and those who were looked after by the borough. This has created an inclusive setting. The garden space, adjacent to the office, adds value by providing an environment for reparation activities, team events and informal engagement with children and their parent/carers.
- Access to information and communication technology is reliable and enabling staff to carry out planning, service delivery and reviewing work appropriately.
- Staff can complete their work effectively both from the office and from remote locations.
- There are a range of robust quality assurance, auditing and monitoring processes in place, and these work well.
- The YJS benchmarks its work against the findings from new research and thematic reviews. It has an in-depth understanding of its strengths and capabilities.
- The YJS has effective processes in place to ensure that it learns from things that do not go to plan. These include critical learning reviews and audits. Learning is disseminated well across the partnership and there is a strong organisational culture for continuous improvement and development.
- Information-sharing, memorandums of understanding and governance arrangements are robust.
- The YJS has introduced an innovative multi-agency Reoffending Panel that includes parent/carer champions.
- The YJS gathers the views of children and their parents and carers formally, at key stages of the supervisory process, on completion of interventions, and at the executive board.

Area for improvement

- The quality of planning for out-of-court work needs to be improved and embedded following the revision of the planning tool.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

Westminster YJS has an effective approach to engagement and participation, which it uses to collect the views of children and their parents or carers. There is evidence of dynamic listening at various stages of the supervisory process, changes being made in response to feedback, and children and their parents or carers presenting testimonies (video recordings/podcasts) at the management board. The YJS and its partners are committed to helping children develop confidence in their contributions to improve services. Activities have included workshops with service providers and children and their parents or carers, direct feedback about the quality of services received, and opportunities to adjust materials to make them more child-friendly. This has produced an environment that values the voices of children and their parents or carers.

The YJS contacted, on our behalf, children who had open cases at the time of the inspection, to gain their consent for a text survey. We delivered the survey independently to the nine children who consented, and two replied. We also spoke to two parents and four children and held a focus group with a group of four parents or carers. All respondents to our text survey gave the YJS's work a score of nine out of 10.

One child wrote:

| *"They (YJS) are friendly, polite, professional and helpful".*

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

| *"My YJS workers get me, they put themselves in my shoes to really understand me. I feel like they really care and give me a lot of their time."*

Comments from parent and carers included:

| *"Anytime I call he will answer, he always helps me and my family."*

| *"They engaged my child with an amazing practitioner, she was able to talk to him when I could not."*

| *"I feel the YJS is more effective than children's social care as they are very available to us and respond to what we need."*

| *"The work they did with my child, changed my life and my son's life."*

| *"They help my child with medication and health problems."*

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

| *"They helped me with my education."*

Some of the feedback from different parents and carers suggested that the quality of relationships that had been established was a clear strength, as evidenced by the collection of quotes below:

| *"I think without the YJS worker my son would be in prison. The communication with the YJS Practitioner is great. I think he (practitioner) goes beyond with his support. They are always responsive and offer help and support. They helped my family communicate with other services. Before coming here, I did not have any support, but they have offered me that."*

Diversity

The YJS's data on the diversity of its staff and children shows that:

- 2.3 per cent of children on the current caseload are girls
- 69 per cent of staff working in the YJS are female
- 63.7 per cent of children in the area covered by the YJS are Black, Asian and minority ethnic, and 93.3 per cent of children on the current caseload are Black, Asian and minority ethnic
- 57 per cent of staff working in the YJS are Black, Asian and minority ethnic
- 62.5 per cent of the current caseload have substance misuse needs
- 50 per cent of the current caseload have emotional wellbeing or mental health needs.

The YCPP management board is dedicated to continually improving its understanding and response to tackling disproportionate outcomes. There is a comprehensive disproportionality action plan 2023-2025. This sets out clear goals, how these goals will be achieved, what the measure of success will be and who the named leads are in the YCPP and lead managers in the partnership.

Following the death of George Floyd in 2020, the partnership fully examined and reviewed its practices and policies and implemented initiatives to reduce disparity. For example, it introduced mentoring schemes for police officers and increased the services available for minority ethnic children. In June 2023 the YJS held an away day to focus on its response to over-representation and to develop an anti-racist strategy and statement. This resulted in a powerful statement that empowers children and tells them that their voices will be listened to. The statement, which is displayed in the foyer of the main office, reads:

- 1. We will listen to your experiences of racism and work towards speaking up for/with you, so your voice is heard.*
- 2. We are anti-oppressive; this means we challenge oppressive practice.*
- 3. We want to understand what life is like for you in Westminster and acknowledge that your lived experiences are important and unique.*
- 4. We know that we don't always get it right and we want to do better.*
- 5. We want to work with you to make change where it matters most.*

Services are personalised, and this was evidenced in the casework that inspectors reviewed. We saw some excellent cases where the children's learning needs (ADHD/ASD/neurodiversity) were managed sensitively and effectively. The health offer is excellent. Every child is offered a screening, which is carried out by the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) clinician. This often identifies children with unassessed/unrecognised mental health/neurodiversity/speech and language needs. This is enabling timely interventions and reducing their likelihood of further offending while preventing children from being criminalised at an early age. The staff team is diverse, and practitioners are tenacious in having conversations with children about the impact that their lived experiences have had on their lives. The staff's understanding and awareness of diversity issues, and confidence in dealing with them, are impressive and leading children to report that they feel their workers genuinely care about their personal traumatic journeys.

Domain two: Court disposals

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

2.1. Assessment



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

Outstanding

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

Does assessment sufficiently analyse:	% 'Yes'
how to support the child's desistance?	100%
how to keep the child safe?	86%
how to keep other people safe?	100%

Overall, assessment work to support children to desist from offending is a clear strength. Practitioners look in detail at the reasons for a child's offending and make positive use of historical and current information. They understand diversity needs well. We found that practitioners had made good use of information held by partner agencies in their assessments. Additionally, they sought to understand the child's level of maturity in every inspected case. Assessment consistently focused on the child's strengths. Practitioners considered the needs of victims, where they had identified these, at the start of the assessment process.

Practitioners consistently welcomed and included the voices of children and their parents and carers. This informed their understanding of the causes of the child's offending behaviour.

Assessment activity sought to identify any risks to the child's safety and wellbeing in most cases. Practitioners appropriately sought and included relevant information from other agencies and used it well to better understand the risks to the child's safety.

Assessments to identify all relevant factors linked to keeping other people safe were completed well. We found that practitioners had effectively identified the individuals who were potentially at risk from the child, as well as the nature of that risk. Practitioners considered information about past offending. Information held by other agencies about children's previous and current behaviours was used well. This included information on intent to use violence, carrying weapons, wider anti-social behaviours, lifestyle, peer associations and affiliations, and family dynamics. Additionally, the impact of potential controls and interventions to mitigate risk of harm to others was explored well.

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

2.2. Planning



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

Good

Our rating⁵ for planning is based on the following key questions:

Does planning focus sufficiently on:	% 'Yes'
supporting the child's desistance?	100%
keeping the child safe?	71%
keeping other people safe?	71%

Planning activity to address desistance was personalised and completed jointly with children. In almost every case, planning was proportionate to the disposal and targets agreed were achievable within the timeframes. Plans were aligned with other agencies to prevent repetition and help the child and their family to understand the roles of each service. There was a suitable balance of attention to both strengths and areas of concern, and practitioners explored the child's motivation and maturity well. In many cases, practitioners had helped the child to access mainstream services, such as working with the WIPERS, joining a gym and producing podcasts. Additionally, in all the inspected cases, the planning to meet children's diverse needs was exceptional. For example, practitioners liaised with the speech and language therapist, the liaison and diversion worker and education worker for guidance on designing a plan that best met the child's needs. Planning consistently took the child's views into account, and those of their parent or carer. This maximised children's engagement.

Planning to address children's safety and wellbeing was largely done well. Where required, practitioners liaised well with other agencies to ensure that their plans were aligned and that the role of each service provider was clear, including their responsibility for attending multi-agency and safety and wellbeing panel meetings. Inspectors found that practitioners' analysis of the child's lived experiences, and of their health, including any history of self-harm, was completed well. This helped practitioners to make referrals to specialist services and identify suitable interventions to mitigate risk. Contingency planning could have been stronger with greater attention to individualised planning.

Planning to keep other people safe was variable and requires further attention. Practitioners generally covered the specific concerns of actual victims and needs of potential victims well. However, they did not consistently gather information from public protection partners. Planning did not set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people in two out of the seven cases inspected. Again, contingency arrangements were variable. Practitioners frequently referred to the risk management panel and/or taking enforcement action as the only courses of response. More comprehensive and broader arrangements were needed to support potential changes in circumstances.

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

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁶ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Does the implementation and delivery of services:	% 'Yes'
effectively support the child's desistance?	100%
effectively support the safety of the child?	86%
effectively support the safety of other people?	86%

Practitioners are accomplished at developing and maintaining meaningful relationships with children and families that lead to positive outcomes. Children accessed a number of services that addressed areas of concern. These included pro-offending identities, education, substance misuse, propensity for violence, and emotional wellbeing. They were also signposted to various opportunities to build on their strengths, and were encouraged to access mainstream services, including mentoring and sports programmes. In every inspected case, sequencing of interventions and the delivery of services were proportionate and achievable within the timescales. Practitioners were proactive in ensuring that services were personalised, and that children did not feel overwhelmed by the number of workers they needed to see. Accounting for the diversity needs of children was excellent. In one case the practitioner showed considerable patience and sensitivity given the complex learning needs of the child. They used the support of other services effectively, including children's social care (CSC), IGXU and ETE.

Practitioners delivered high-quality and effective work to keep children safe in almost every case reviewed by inspectors. They delivered planned work and work focused on keeping the child safe. This included the risks of possessing weapons, exploitation, racism, and emotional regulation. Practitioners have made good use of specialist services such as Early Help, the CAMHS practitioner and SaLT. Partnership working and transition work were robust. In one case, the child became an adult during their order and the practitioner spent a lot of time liaising with children and adult social care services to ensure that the child had meaningful access to social care support. Despite being misdirected on multiple occasions, the practitioner was persistent until the child was allocated a social worker. Work to keep other people safe was done well overall, but not enough services were delivered in all the inspected cases. Where relevant, practitioners had paid sufficient attention to keeping actual and potential victims safe. The involvement of public protection partners was again strong. Intelligence from the police was used well and practitioners appropriately accessed the risk, safety and wellbeing panels.

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

2.4. Reviewing



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

Outstanding

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

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on:	% 'Yes'
supporting the child's desistance?	100%
keeping the child safe?	100%
keeping other people safe?	100%

The reviewing of work to assess the impact of interventions on reducing reoffending is very strong. Practitioners complete formal, informal and dynamic reviews as the child's personal circumstances change. They consider the child's strengths and their diversity needs, and analyse personal and familial circumstances.

Practitioners mostly reviewed children's motivation and considered any barriers, where required, that they identified, whether individual or structural. Discussions with children and their parents and carers during reviewing were evidenced well in all the inspected cases. This helped practitioners to gain a richer understanding of the children's wider day-to-day lived experiences and empowered parents and carers to get actively involved in their children's supervision.

Reviewing activity to keep children safe was done very well in the cases inspected. Where required, reviewing responded appropriately to changes linked to safety and wellbeing, in particular new evidence of grooming, non-compliance with curfew requirements and threats to the child from others. Practitioners obtained information from other agencies that were involved, and adjusted plans to support ongoing work. This systematic approach was helping children to better understand how their wellbeing needs were changing. Additionally, this awareness was helping children to build on the progress they were making.

Practitioners responded effectively to changes in factors related to risk of harm in most of the inspected cases. This meant that they amended plans to protect others from harm when required. Intelligence from daily risk briefings and agencies involved with the child was used well. Written reviews were completed in a timely manner in all the inspected cases, as required. This ensured that other practitioners involved in delivering work to manage risk of harm had access to up-to-date information.

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

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected six cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of two youth conditional cautions and four youth cautions. We interviewed the case managers in five cases.

3.1. Assessment



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

Good

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

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

In most of the inspected cases, the practitioner had sought to understand how much responsibility the child took for their behaviour, their attitude towards their offending and their reasons for becoming involved in offending. This approach enabled practitioners to probe deeper into the child's identity and how adverse childhood experiences may have contributed to their offending. Practitioners analysed diversity issues well, and inspectors found a robust analysis of strengths and areas of concern. Their examination of the child's familial and social circumstances was strikingly good, and practitioners understood the impact of early traumatic experiences on children's presenting behaviours. Assessments were mostly enriched by multi-agency case formulations at the YJS out-of-court disposal panel and consultations from specialist service providers, for example emotional wellbeing and education. Practitioners took the time to assess whether there were any structural barriers affecting the child's progress.

In most cases practitioners had accessed a broad range of information from other agencies to support their assessments of children's safety. In almost all cases reviewed, there was a clear written assessment of the child's safety and wellbeing. Practitioners recognised any issues around discrimination, separation and the impact of poor educational experiences. The risks to others were generally understood well but the reviews required more comprehensive detail to include the broad range of risks. Most practitioners used information from available sources correctly. Intelligence-gathering from the IGXU was a strength. Inspectors found that, in several cases, practitioners used their professional judgement effectively. This ensured that victims' needs were understood more fully. Additionally, safety and wellbeing panels were used well to support assessments and there was an appropriate focus on potential triggers that could lead to harm being caused to others.

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

3.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁹ for planning is based on the following key questions:

Does planning focus on:	% 'Yes'
supporting the child's desistance?	100%
keeping the child safe?	83%
keeping other people safe?	50%

Planning to tackle desistance took a child-first, trauma-informed and whole-family approach. In almost all the inspected cases, planning was appropriate to the disposal imposed and targets agreed were realistic and achievable within the timeframes. The strengths in the partnership ensured that YJS plans were aligned with those completed by other agencies. There was a proportionate focus on strengths, protective factors and areas of concern, and practitioners took into account the child's motivation and maturity well. In the cases we inspected, services had been identified to support access to mainstream services, such as gym membership, the games library and services to help develop business skills. We also found the child's diversity needs had been considered well. For example, practitioners liaised with the education worker, CAMHS practitioner, and speech and language therapist for advice on developing a plan that comprehensively met the child's desistance needs.

Planning to address children's safety and wellbeing was done well overall. However, practitioners did not consistently liaise with other agencies to ensure that plans fitted together well, or fully understand the role of each service provider. Inspectors observed good partnership work with health (managing anxiety) and CAMHS. Practitioners liaised with schools and carried out joint home visits. Practitioners had identified referrals to specialist services, but contingency planning was too broad and not always linked to identified risks.

Planning to keep others safe was variable. Some practitioners did not sufficiently consider the needs of actual and potential victims. Too often, information obtained from public protection agencies was not used effectively to inform plans and keep others safe from harm. There were opportunities to put external controls in place, but this did not always happen. Contingency planning to keep others safe was weak. The use of the out-of-court disposal planning tool did not adequately prompt the practitioner to consider all the actions required for effective planning to support the safety of others. This tool had been used in some of the inspected cases, but was later revised.

⁹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available 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 rating¹⁰ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Does service delivery effectively support:	% 'Yes'
the child's desistance?	100%
the safety of the child?	100%
the safety of other people?	83%

The quality of services delivered to help children to not commit further offences was impressive. We found examples where educational support, victim awareness work and health interventions were provided, and these had encouraged the child to build a pro-social identity and desist from offending. Many of the letters of apology/ explanation reviewed by inspectors were detailed and demonstrated empathy and reflection from the children. Practitioners had regular contact with children and their parents and carers, with high levels of engagement. We found strong advocacy from practitioners to actively support positive desistance outcomes. Additionally, the mentoring provision (from the Future Men and WIPERS charities) was helping to build children's confidence and develop their life and work skills.

When required, service delivery to keep children safe was consistently done well. However, responses from some partners were delayed, in particular responses from children's social care. In contrast, the quality of work and liaison with staff from the Early Help team was strong. Practitioners engaged well with schools to maximise children's attendance and worked effectively with IGXU staff to provide preventative interventions. Collaboration with parents and carers was exceptional, as evidenced by the feedback given in a focus group that inspectors held with family members.

In one inspected case, not enough services were delivered to keep other people safe, when required. Overall, there was evidence of daily risk briefings taking place but information from these meetings did not always lead to activity. Generally, practitioners paid attention to the needs of potential and actual victims. In one case, inspectors found that the practitioner had made valuable use of the risk, safety and wellbeing meetings. It was evident that the network had been monitoring the child's risk meticulously. Additionally, work had been undertaken with parents to increase the monitoring of potential weapons that their child may have had access to.

¹⁰ 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.](#)

3.4. 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:

- A comprehensive, evidence-based, child-centred joint protocol between Early Help, Westminster YJS and Westminster Police details how prevention and out-of-court work are to be carried out in the borough. The agreement is achievable, and sets out working arrangements, processes and procedures clearly.
- The out-of-court policy covers pre-panel, at-panel and post-panel information-gathering; eligibility criteria; enforcement; escalation arrangements; decision-making in cases where children have a history of previous offending; and liaison arrangements with partners to support diversion.
- Effective arrangements are in place to ensure that the voice of victims, children and their parents or carers is included in the decision-making process.
- Children receive meaningful out-of-court services – provision is strong and leads to positive outcomes.
- Panel arrangements support timely decision-making and diversion. Interventions start without delay.
- The YJS has an out-of-court multi-agency disposal panel with the appropriate level of representation. This includes the YJS police officer, the YJS senior practitioner, who chairs the meetings, the Early Help access practice manager, the mental health practitioner, the Youth Justice Service Liaison and Diversion nurse, the restorative justice lead and Turnaround children’s social care.
- Scrutiny arrangements of the joint decision-making process work well and are supported by effective auditing and quality assurance practice.
- Children receiving an out-of-court disposal have access to the same range of interventions that are available for post-court cases. These include knife crime programmes (No Knives, Better Lives), stop and search, improving a child’s understanding of the law, Early Help Family Support, Insight (substance misuse individual, group and family support), NHS Liaison and Diversion (offering mental health screening and support), a CAMHS worker (providing mental health support and treatment in acute cases), family therapy, specialising in family work and systemic therapy, restorative work, ETE, specialist mentoring and speech and language provision through SaLT.
- Interventions are delivered using a strengths-based approach. Practitioners use the ‘One Page’ profile tool effectively to collect direct feedback from children about their perceived strengths and challenges. Letters written to children following their meetings with the educational and child psychologist are punctuated with affirmation and hope for the future.

- Practitioners pay particular attention to ensuring that interventions are tailored to meet children's diversity needs.
- Management information is used well to inform service delivery. Children and their parents and carers are directly involved in evaluating the out-of-court disposal policy.

Area for improvement

- The YJS has a commitment, shared by all staff, to addressing the over-representation of vulnerable groups and responding to children's diverse needs. This could be enhanced by introducing a deferred prosecution process, such as Outcome 22.

4.1. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision

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

Not rated

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews. This standard has not been rated because there were no resettlement cases that fell within the inspection timeframes.

Strengths:

- The 'Westminster Resettlement and Custodial Sentences Procedures' (January 2024) document is comprehensive. It provides advice on what practitioners should and should not do. Pathways such as suitable accommodation, health and ETE all feature well in the policy.
- The policy emphasises the principles of constructive resettlement, including well-coordinated services with partners. The need for effective communication and information exchange with service providers and other key stakeholders is explicit.
- There is a comprehensive policy for children with special educational needs who are in custody and have an education, health and care plan (EHCP).
- The local council's responsibility for providing accommodation for children who are being resettled is unambiguous.
- The importance of developing a pro-social identity and providing tailored services to meet the diverse needs of children is emphasised in the arrangements.
- Meeting the needs of actual and potential victims is central to work with children and is a priority of supervision.
- The YCPP management board handbook includes a helpful section on resettlement work.
- There are a range of activities on offer as part of resettlement. These include evening activities, a neighbourhood sports programme, half-term weekday interventions and opportunities to gain qualifications, for example in first aid, and coaching (i.e. boxing level one, football, basketball).
- Multi-agency risk assessment panel arrangements for resettlement work have been clearly articulated. The risk and safety/wellbeing panel template is detailed providing clear instruction.
- The YJS keeps up to date with developments at Feltham YOI by attending open days and reviewing newsletters with resettlement staff sent by the custodial governor.

Areas for improvement:

- More staff should be encouraged to attend open days at Feltham YOI.
- The resettlement policy needs to refer to a broader range of protected characteristics.

Further information

The following can be found on our website:

- [inspection data, including methodology and contextual facts about the YJS](#)
- [a glossary of terms used in this report.](#)