

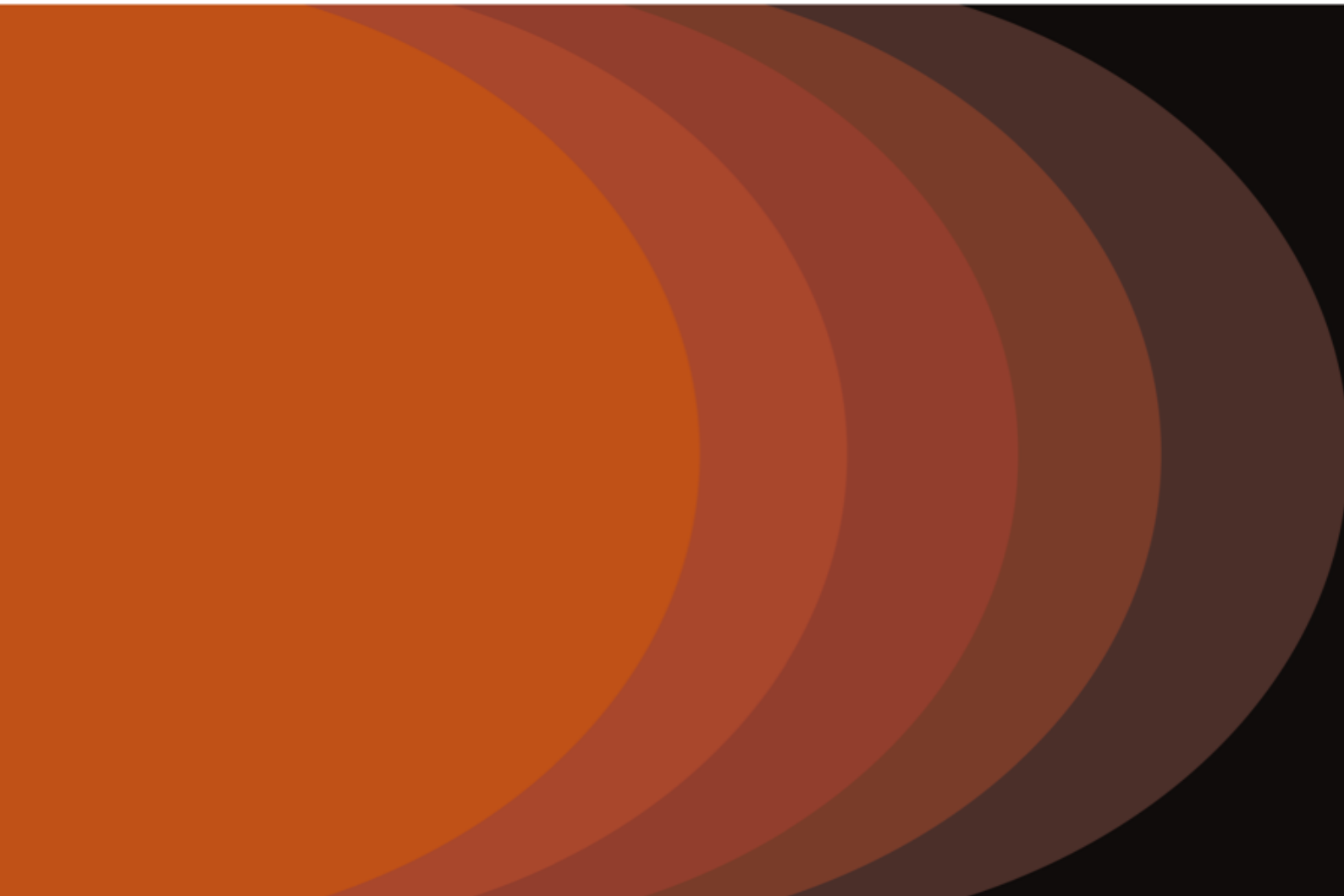


HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth justice services in

Bromley

HM Inspectorate of Probation, January 2025



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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

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

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Foreword

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

Partnership working to provide demonstrable, individualised services for children is striking. Community engagement and innovation are noteworthy, as evidenced by local studies into stop and search, arrangements to prevent and divert children from the criminal justice system, and the commissioning of research with a number of universities. Work to tackle disproportionality is noticeable at both a strategic and operational level. This is integrated into all aspects of the service and leading to better outcomes for children with complex needs.

Leaders and partners have worked productively to create a mature and well-functioning partnership, where there is a clear vision and road map to help children to flourish and achieve their potential. The executive management board is led well by an adept chair, who holds members to account, has formidable, detailed knowledge about the service, has excellent links with other strategic boards, provides trust and motivation, and nurtures a culture of inventiveness. The Bromley Relationship Model (BRM) drives the organisation effectively to achieve positive change for children. Partners carry out their responsibilities eagerly and work together well to overcome structural barriers experienced by children. The health and education offers are strong.

YJS staff know the children they are supervising well. They are firmly focused on helping each child to succeed, and are led well by an insightful, committed, and transformational Head of Youth Justice and Youth Support Services manager. Senior leaders, managers, stakeholders, and operational staff across the partnership gather feedback from children and their parents or carers, and actively use it to improve service delivery.















The partnership has access to a comprehensive range of reports and management information about the profile of children, covering deferred prosecutions, first-time entrants, use of out-of-court disposals, and reoffending rates. This is helping the service to channel its resources towards identified need. However, the service is missing a statutory partner, a seconded probation officer, and the benefits this role brings to effective public protection. The partnership needs to fill this gap as soon as possible. Additionally, the partnership should explore how it can maximise the broader skills and experience that its volunteers bring to the work of the service.

The YJS partnership can be proud of the way it has effectively worked together to build a service that is meeting the needs of children, many of whom have led lives carrying considerable trauma. All staff are to be commended for achieving a positive outcome in this inspection. We trust that the findings in this report will assist the YJS to consolidate and improve further.



Martin Jones CBE
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Bromley Youth Justice Service Fieldwork started September 2024		Score	33/36
Overall rating	Outstanding		
1. Organisational delivery			
1.1 Governance and leadership	Outstanding		
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	Good		
2.4 Reviewing	Outstanding		
3. Out-of-court disposals			
3.1 Assessment	Outstanding		
3.2 Planning	Outstanding		
3.3 Implementation and delivery	Outstanding		
3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	Outstanding		
4. Resettlement¹			
4.1 Resettlement policy and provision	Outstanding		

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

Recommendations

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

The Bromley Youth Justice Service should:

1. provide staff with effective and regular 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 Bromley Executive Management Board should:

2. address its statutory responsibility to include a probation officer in the YJS partnership, so that the expertise and specialist knowledge this role brings will enhance public protection
3. review how best to use its volunteers to ensure that they are consulted on what more they may be able to offer the partnership.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Bromley YJS over a period of a week, beginning 23 September 2024. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began between 25 September 2023 and 19 July 2024; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 25 September 2023 and 19 July 2024; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between 25 September 2023 and 19 July 2024. We also conducted 19 interviews with case managers.

Bromley is a diverse borough, with some of the wealthiest areas in England as well as some of the most deprived. Improving the life chances and outcomes for children in contact with the youth justice service or at risk of becoming involved in crime and antisocial behaviour is the vision of the service. Work is guided by the 'child first' and 'whole system' principle. The YJS is well integrated into borough-wide boards, to ensure that services are joined-up and leading to positive outcomes for children. Strategic plans are well aligned with key documents (for example strategies on violence against women and girls, housing, and children) and boards, including the corporate parenting board, safer Bromley partnership, Bromley safeguarding children's partnership, and social care practice improvement board. There is a focus on improving impact and this is supported by evidence showing significant reductions in the reoffending of its cohort of children – for example, by six per cent for its out-of-court cohort and nine per cent for its court cohort over the past 12 months. The number of prevention cases has increased (from 20 in 2018/2019 to 196 in 2023/2024), and of out-of-court cases has decreased (from 143 in 2018/2019 to 41 in 2023/2024). In the 2023/2024 annual cohort, 86 per cent of children successfully completed their prevention, pre-court, and post-court orders.

Bromley is the largest London borough, covering 150 square kilometres, with a total population of 331,162. The 10–17-year population is 33,497. In 2023/2024, 41 out-of-court disposals were made and there were 30 first-time entrants. A total of 356 children were in care during this period, of whom 256 were care experienced. The reoffending rate in Bromley between October 2021 and September 2022 was 22.6 per cent, compared with 33 per cent in England and Wales. Eighty-five per cent of Bromley's caseload is made up of children between the ages of 15 and 17. Thirty-three per cent of children and young people in Bromley are from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. These children comprise 47 per cent of the YJS caseload.

The characteristics of children open to Bromley YJS, as of June 2024, include: 21 per cent female; 21 per cent assessed as having a substance misuse need; 11 per cent assessed as having emotional wellbeing needs; nine per cent with a child protection plan; 97 per cent pre-16 in full-time education, and 31 per cent post-16 not in education, training, or employment (ETE).

The primary offence committed by children is violence against the person (50 per cent in court orders). The partnership has established a range of interventions to support children at risk of serious youth violence, such as the Your Choice cognitive behavioural programme, funded by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime. Work with the victims of crime is a priority. Between April 2023 and April 2024, 59 victims were referred to the restorative justice worker, with 29 per cent engaging in the range of opportunities.

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 12 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.

Outstanding

Strengths:

- The Bromley executive management board has set an achievable vision and strategy through its effective engagement with the YJS, partners, and stakeholders.
- Links to wider strategic boards support positive outcomes for children.
- Local strategic partnerships (serious youth violence reduction, reducing reoffending, tackling disproportionality, and addressing education progress) understand the diverse needs of YJS children and deliberately direct resources to meet these needs.
- Partners regularly attend board meetings, engage purposefully, and are influential advocates for YJS children. This is evidenced through securing spaces for YJS children on several schemes, including the cadets, individual intervention by senior leaders to achieve positive outcomes for children (education, housing, health), and ensuring that YJS children are given the appropriate priority in accessing services (mental health).
- The executive management board is led well, with 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 seeking ways to embed learning (stop and search thematic audit and partnering with a number of universities to carry out research).
- Effective induction arrangements for board members ensure that senior leaders understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Partnership arrangements are child centred and support the BRM and the delivery of meaningful work with YJS children. Senior leaders understand the safeguarding thresholds 'rainbow' wellbeing model well, and this is built into the aims of the partnership.
- There is purposeful and collaborative engagement between the YJS leadership team, the management board, and pre- and post-order subgroups.
- The partnership promotes openness, transparency, and healthy 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.
- Management information is understood well by the partnership and used appropriately to inform and improve service delivery.
- Children achieve positive health and education outcomes.
- The partnership has well-established links with community providers, who deliver services for children with a range of lived experiences.
- The voices of children, their parent or carers, and victims are used well to inform the vision of the YJS.

Area for improvement:

- Volunteers should be given more opportunities to contribute to the youth justice plan.

1.2. Staff



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

Outstanding

Strengths:

- Bromley YJS provides meaningful pastoral care, professional support, and clinical supervision to support practitioners working with children who have complex lived experiences and vulnerabilities.
- The Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) time is an excellent initiative, providing staff with protected time to learn and grow as a team.
- Staffing resources are planned, used well, and reviewed appropriately to respond to the changing needs and profile of children being supervised by the service. Staff feel invested in the YJS, are highly positive, and are proud of the YJS, and this is leading to strong staff morale. Managers are visible, approachable, and available.
- The workloads of staff and managers, including volunteers, are manageable. There are robust systems in place to ensure that the quality of work during planned and unplanned absences is not compromised. Cases are correctly allocated to practitioners with suitable skills, experience, and qualifications.
- All staff are supported effectively to progress in their aspirations and careers. Internal and external secondments are supported actively and the YJS offers work experience opportunities to students.
- 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 enhance their partnership working. Training completed by staff in the past 12 months has included: safeguarding (at different levels, according to role and experience), domestic abuse, stalking and honour-based violence (DASH) risk assessments, effective practice in working with families, the BRM, child first, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference, domestic abuse effects on children, parental substance misuse, Assessment, Intervention & Moving-on (AIM) 3, Asset+ and quality assurance, child first – practice and principles, and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).
- There is a broad range of effective reward and recognition schemes for staff. There is also a regular 'Friday message' from the Head of Youth Justice and Youth Support Services manager thanking staff for their contribution to the work they have completed each week. 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.

Areas for development:

- A broader spectrum of volunteering tasks should be explored with volunteers.
- The quality of diversity assessments within casework should be more consistent.

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 detailed 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, effectively. This is informed by management information extracted from Asset Plus, audits, internal thematic reviews, and quality assurance processes.
- There is a peer-led conversation hub, providing a structured and effective means by which children can have a voice in the justice system.
- Access to mainstream and specialist services which help children to desist from offending, and keep them and others safe, is strong. Services include a YJS teacher, an ETE lead for children aged over 16 years, an education welfare officer, CAMHS provision, liaison and diversion, a highly skilled speech and language therapist, a safeguarding nurse, substance misuse, positive activities funded by the Jack Petchey Foundation, targeted prevention and diversion, stop and search workshop, several parenting programmes, a girls group, and the Wipers (a mentoring service) workshops and Ether programme mentoring support.
- Children can access tailored and specialised services quickly. There is a strong health focus, whereby the health, education, and professionals panel screen all children and decides which specialist worker is best suited to support each child's needs. Reparation projects are varied, and include bicycle maintenance, gardening projects, foodbanks, community impact days, supporting school holiday programmes, and catering.
- The YJS is a certified examination centre, which allows children to sit functional skills exams at the YJS offices, and gain certificates of achievement awards.
- There are well established links and relationships with various statutory partners, providers, and agencies providing desistance, safeguarding (the multi-agency safeguarding hub, and the missing, exploitation, and gang affiliation (MEGA) panel), 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, and this ensures that courts are fully aware of the services available to support sentencing.

Area for improvement:

- Knowledge and understanding about MAPPA arrangements should be strengthened. The Probation Service has been unable to second a probation officer due to lack of capacity but provides the YJS with financial reimbursement in lieu of the post. While there is a process to transition young adults to the Probation Service, more work is required by both services 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 produced a broad range of relevant policies, procedures, and guidance documents that enable staff to understand and undertake their roles. These have been aligned to linked policies and protocols both within the YJS and with partners agencies.
- Policies are reviewed regularly. We found an extensive list of current policies that apply to the work of the YJS (internal and external), their status, and the scheduling of subsequent reviews.
- Management information capabilities are fully developed. A range of statistical analysis and reporting tools, such as Power BI, is used to collect raw data and turn it into meaningful performance information to inform service improvements. A performance dashboard is kept up to date regularly on local trends, performance, and other critical information.
- Services for children are delivered in accessible and safe environments. The Bromley office is welcoming, inclusive of children from different lived experiences, and provides an impressive space for positive engagement and rehabilitation. Artwork created by children is on display in corridors.
- Where relevant, the YJS provides children with a communication passport. This is a simplified document, highlighting the child's specific needs and what they feel best supports them.
- Access to information and communications technology is reliable and enables staff to carry out planning, service delivery, and reviewing work appropriately.
- Staff can complete their work effectively from office and remote locations.
- There are comprehensive quality assurance, auditing, and monitoring processes in place, and these work well.
- The YJS undertakes benchmark activity against findings from new research and thematic reviews. It has an in-depth recognition of its strengths and capabilities.
- There are effective processes in place to ensure that the YJS learns from things that do not go to plan. These include critical learning reviews and audits. Learning is disseminated well across the partnership.
- Information sharing, memorandums of understanding, and governance arrangements are robust.
- Views of children and their parents or carers are sought formally, at key stages of the supervisory process, on completion of interventions, and at the executive board.
- Stakeholder engagement is strong across the partnership.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

Bromley YJS has effective methods to maximise engagement and participation, which it uses well to gather the views of children and their parents or carers. There is evidence of ongoing listening at various stages of the supervisory process, changes being made in response to feedback, and children and their parents or carers presenting testimonies of their lived experiences at the executive management board. The YJS and its partners are committed to supporting children to develop confidence in their input into improving services. Activities have included workshops with service providers (Youth Ink) and children and their parents or carers, direct feedback about the quality of services received, and opportunities to amend materials to make them more child friendly. This has produced an environment that welcomes, values, and embraces 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 20 children (and their parent or carers) who consented, and 12 replied. We also spoke to six children. All respondents to our text survey gave the work of the YJS a score of between six out of 10 with most scores being between eight and 10 out of 10.

One child wrote:

"I find the service has really helped me. I've been with them 18 months and they have helped me change. I'm no longer getting involved with the police and they helped me with my education and my substance abuse."

In our telephone and face-to-face interviews, all children and their parents or carers who responded said 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 his YJS officer:

"She listens to me, she is flexible, she'll help me and be supportive. She is understanding and I can talk to her if I ever need to."

One parent commented:

"The YJS is here to guide the people who want to do well but don't know how to do well. Also they help transform the lives of those who have struggled in life to find a better purpose."

When asked, "what do you most like about the YJS," children replied:

"How friendly everyone is – it made me want to do voluntary work – I was really sad when my contact stopped, and I wanted to cry before my worker said I was welcome whenever I wanted to come in."

"I enjoyed most of all working on my CV with the education worker because I really wanted to get into work. I didn't understand that some companies need a CV based on that specific job – going to college and getting a job were my intentions from the start and this happened because the worker helped me."

"The actual people that work here – even the ones I don't know – are friendly and will stop and have a conversation with you. They asked me what I wanted to do for reparation and let me choose – I have done lots of different things. Cookery, and we are putting together a presentation for other young people."

Diversity

- The Bromley executive management board is passionate about continually improving its understanding and response to tackling disproportionate outcomes for children. There is robust planning and integration of this work across a range of work streams. The YJS not only actively listens to what children say about the services they are receiving, but also recognises the need for community involvement through its Safer Bromley Partnership, which provides an oversight of all crime reduction work and collaboration with the community and those with lived experience, to develop initiatives to raise awareness of risks and prevention support.
- The partnership has good diversity management information, which it uses well to drive change. The most overrepresented group is Black children, who make up 31 per cent of the offending population but 11 per cent of the 10–17-year-old population, for a 20 per cent overrepresentation in this latter group. Care experienced children make up 14 per cent of the offending population, but 0.5 per cent of the 10–17-year-old population, for a 13.5 per cent overrepresentation in this latter group. Children with an education, health, and care plan make up 6 per cent of the offending population, but 4.9 per cent of the 10–17-year-old population, for a 10 per cent overrepresentation. There is a recognition that within the north and west of the borough, there are higher levels of certain ethnic minority groups. The partnership therefore targets resources to these areas from external funding bids and other youth provisions, and this scheme is effective.
- The dedicated Engage worker supports children with various protected characteristics in the police station, in a three-borough scheme with Croydon and Sutton, thereby strengthening cross-border working. This is leading to better outcomes for children and their parents or carers at an earlier stage, as demonstrated by continuing low numbers in children reoffending. The liaison and diversion worker engages with children at the earliest opportunity, to offer diversion, signposting, and support. This is done through early screening to relevant partner agencies, and direct intervention where appropriate. This has led to better outcomes for these children, such as earlier diagnoses and appropriate planning of care and support. There has been improved proportionality in the use of community resolutions by the police following collaborative challenge at the executive board.
- Services are personalised, and this was evidenced in the casework that we reviewed, although attention is needed to ensure that all diversity needs in the assessment process are fully understood. We saw some excellent examples where the children's learning needs (for example, attention-deficit disorder, autism spectrum disorder, or neurodiversity) were managed sensitively and effectively. The health and education offers are very strong. Every child is offered a health screening, which is completed by a health practitioner. This frequently identifies children with unassessed or unrecognised mental health, neurodiversity, or speech and language needs. This is enabling timely interventions and reducing their likelihood of further offending, while preventing them from being criminalised at an early age. The staff team is diverse, and practitioners are resolute and brave in having conversations with children about the impact that their lived experiences have had on their lives. The YJS, in its referral order and pre-sentence court reports, includes an individualised diversity statement, flagging the bespoke needs of children which may have led to a child's offending. These statements have been informative for those making decisions about the child's interventions.

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 rating² for assessment is based on the following key questions:

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

Overall, assessment activity to support children to not reoffend was a strength. Practitioners took an analytical approach to understanding a child's offending and made good use of historical and current information. We found that practitioners had made good use of information held by partner agencies in their assessment enquiries. Additionally, they sought to understand the child's level of maturity in all the inspected cases. Assessment consistently focused on the strengths of the child. Where required, the needs of victims were appropriately considered at the beginning of the assessment process. The analysis of the child's diversity needs was inconsistent.

Practitioners consistently welcomed and included feedback and accounts from children and their parents or 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 almost all the inspected cases. Practitioners collected and absorbed relevant information appropriately from other agencies and used it well to understand better the risks to the child's safety.

Assessments to identify all relevant factors linked to keeping other people safe were completed well overall. We found that practitioners had sufficiently identified the individuals who were potentially at risk from the child, as well as the nature of that risk. The consideration of historical information about past offending was robust and information about previous and current behaviours, where held, by other agencies was used well. This included carrying offensive weapons, conflict in the home, peer associations, and not being in education or employment. Additionally, where required, the impact of potential controls and interventions to mitigate risk of harm to others was analysed well.

² 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 rating³ for planning is based on the following key questions:

Does planning focus sufficiently on:	% 'Yes'
supporting the child's desistance?	71%
keeping the child safe?	86%
keeping other people safe?	86%

Planning activity to address the reasons for a child's offending was mostly individualised and undertaken jointly with the children. In most cases, planning was proportionate to the disposal, and objectives agreed were achievable within the timeframes. Plans were largely aligned with those of other agencies, to prevent repetition and help the child and their family to understand the roles of each service. There was an appropriate balance of attention to both strengths and areas of concern, and practitioners generally explored the child's motivation and maturity well. Not all cases demonstrated robust attention to planning for the diversity needs of the child. When done well, we found evidence of practitioners liaising with the speech and language therapist, the substance misuse worker, and the YJS teacher for advice on designing a plan that met the child's needs.

Planning to address children's safety and wellbeing was largely done well. Where required, there was effective engagement with other agencies to ensure that plans were aligned and the contribution of each service was clear, including attendance at multi-agency, strategy, and risk and safeguarding panels (RaSP). We found that practitioners' analysis of the child's home circumstances and adverse childhood experiences, including experiences of trauma, was completed well. This helped them to make referrals to specialist services and identify suitable interventions to mitigate risk. Contingency planning was a strength.

Planning to keep other people safe was mostly completed well. The individual concerns of actual victims and needs of potential victims were mostly covered well. Practitioners collected information appropriately from public protection partners, and this helped them to have a broader acknowledgment of the concerns held by other agencies. Planning mostly set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people in almost all the inspected cases. Again, contingency planning was a strength. Here, practitioners had included making timely referrals to the risk and safeguarding panels or MEGA panels and/or taking enforcement action as soon as required when circumstances changed.

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

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating⁴ 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?	86%
effectively support the safety of the child?	86%
effectively support the safety of other people?	71%

Practitioners were skilled at establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships with children and families that led to positive outcomes. Children accessed a number of services which addressed areas of concern, including substance misuse, education, and emotional wellbeing. They were also signposted to various opportunities to build on strengths and encouraged to access mainstream services, which included Wipers, and positive activity programmes, including arts and photography projects. In every inspected case, children were encouraged and motivated to engage with their court orders. This promoted positive engagement. Practitioners were proactive in addressing structural barriers. In one case, a child who had been excluded from school and unable to complete an examination was able to sit this at the YJS with an invigilator. In another example, a child who was struggling to engage with supervision, was encouraged to take part in a graffiti project. Through this activity, the child increased his participation.

Delivery to keep children safe was mostly effective in almost every case we reviewed. Planned work was delivered, and included weapons awareness, exploitation, cannabis use, work with parents or carers, and identity. Practitioners had made appropriate use of specialist services, such as the YJS nurse, CAMHS, and speech and language therapy. In one case, advice provided by the CAMHS practitioner, through case formulation, was disseminated to other professionals, to support work on keeping the child safe. Interventions involved a whole-family, child-first approach, with partners working together to support the child and family.

However, work to keep other people safe could have been improved in two of the seven cases examined, with further quality assurance. Where required, not all cases had been given sufficient attention regarding the safety and protection of actual and potential victims. Here, practitioners had not always fully considered the risks and impact on all actual and potential victims, including members of the child's family.

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.](#)

2.4. Reviewing



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁵ 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?	86%
keeping other people safe?	86%

The reviewing of work to assess the impact of interventions on reducing reoffending was strong. When required, practitioners carried out complete, formal, informal, and dynamic reviews as the child's personal circumstances changed. Consideration of a child's strengths and their diversity needs, as well as an analysis of personal and familial circumstances, were evident consistently across most of the casework reviewed.

Practitioners reviewed children's motivation and considered appropriately any barriers that they identified, whether individual or structural. Discussions with children and their parents or carers was evidenced well in all the inspected cases when reviewing progress. This helped practitioners to gain a more robust understanding of the children's broader day-to-day lived experiences, and inspired parents or carers to become involved in their children's supervision actively. It also allowed practitioners to adjust plans based on 'live' time information.

The quality of reviewing activity in keeping children safe was mostly done well in the cases inspected. Where required, reviewing responded appropriately to changes linked to safety and wellbeing, particularly peer associations and anger arising out of trauma. Information was obtained from other agencies that were involved, and plans were adjusted to support any new work. This systematic approach was helping children to gain a fuller understanding of how their wellbeing needs were changing, and this awareness was encouraging them to build on the progress they were making. In one case, work around self-esteem was completed well and this raised the child's view of themselves. Practitioners did not always respond effectively to changes in factors related to risk of harm, despite gaining useful intelligence and communicating well with other agencies working with the child. This meant that plans to protect others from harm were not consistently amended. However, positive examples included the prioritisation of work around alcohol and drug misuse as this was linked directly to the safety of others.

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

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 11 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of five youth conditional cautions, three youth cautions, two community resolutions, and one other disposal. We interviewed the case managers in 11 cases.

3.1. Assessment



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁶ 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?	82%
how to keep other people safe?	82%

In all cases, the practitioner had sought to establish the responsibility that the child took for their behaviour, their attitude towards their offending, and reasons for becoming involved in offending. This methodical approach helped practitioners to probe deeper into the child's identity and how traumatic events may have contributed to their offending. Diversity issues were not consistently analysed well, but there was an appropriate focus on exploring strengths and areas of concern robustly in all the inspected cases. The consideration of the child's familial and social circumstances was strikingly strong, and practitioners understood the impact of early adverse childhood experiences on presenting behaviours.

In almost all the inspected cases, practitioners had used a broad range of information from other agencies appropriately to support their assessments of children's safety. In all cases reviewed, there was a clear written assessment of the child's safety and wellbeing. Issues around potential exploitation, cannabis misuse, poor parental control, separation, and consideration of undiagnosed neurodiversity needs were recognised well. Intelligence from the police was available through several systems, including daily risk briefings. We found that, in several cases, practitioners utilised their professional judgement to address risk of harm to others well. However, not all the needs of victims were understood fully. In around a third of the inspected cases, the analysis of risks to others was not detailed enough and practitioners had not fully used information from all available sources, and this was an area which required strengthening.

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.](#)

3.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

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

Does planning focus on:	% 'Yes'
supporting the child's desistance?	100%
keeping the child safe?	91%
keeping other people safe?	91%

Planning to address desistance took a whole-family approach, was personalised, and was co-produced with children. In all the inspected cases, planning was appropriate to the disposal, and agreed targets were realistic and achievable within the timeframes. The strengths in the partnership ensured that plans were aligned with those completed by other agencies. There was a proportionate focus on strengths, protective factors, and areas of concern, and practitioners understood the child's motivation and maturity well. In many plans, services had been included to support access to mainstream services, such as enrolling at Bromley College, joining a boxing club, and accessing gym membership. In most of the inspected cases, diversity needs had been considered well. For example, practitioners liaised with the education worker and YJS teacher, substance misuse worker, and speech and language therapist for advice on developing a plan that met the child's needs fully.

Planning to address children's safety and wellbeing was done well overall. There was effective liaison with other agencies to ensure that plans complemented each other well, and the role of each service provider was clearly understood, including attendance at discussion meetings about future strategy. We found good partnership work with CAMHS, Bromley Changes (a substance misuse provider), and the police. Practitioners had identified referrals to specialist services. Contingency planning was generally strong and this was helping practitioners to respond to changes in circumstances in a timely manner. While overall planning to keep others safe was sufficient, consideration given to the needs of actual and potential victims was inconsistent and not robust enough. In a small number of cases, intelligence was not always used effectively to inform plans and keep others safe from harm. There were opportunities for internal and external controls to be put in place, but this did not always happen. Relevant agencies were identified appropriately in planning to keep others safe, and risk management was seen as a shared responsibility among public protection agencies. Planning included information-sharing arrangements and a commitment to future meetings to review risks. In planning to keep others safe, contingency planning was encouragingly strong. This allowed practitioners to adjust their activity and prioritise other interventions.

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.](#)

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁸ 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?	82%
the safety of other people?	91%

The quality of services delivered to help children to not commit further offences was encouraging overall. We found examples where access to education, an educational psychologist, mentoring, conversation cards, substance misuse services, and speech and language interventions were provided, and these supported the child's emotional desistance needs. Many of the communication of apology tools we reviewed were suitable, with good reflection and empathy from children. There was also one positive example of restorative conferencing which had made a difference for both the child and the victim. Practitioners had regular contact with children and their parents or carers, with high levels of engagement. We found strong advocacy from practitioners to support positive education outcomes. Additionally, the arts programme was effective, giving children opportunities to not only develop their artistic capabilities, but also paint images which told their story. This artwork is displayed in the Bromley office and supported children to feel proud about themselves.

Service delivery to keep children safe was not consistently done well in every case. Overall, there was positive engagement between the YJS and allocated social workers from children's social care services, but planned work to keep children safe was not always completed. In one case, exploitation concerns had been flagged but there had been insufficient activity to address all concerns. Work with partners to keep children safe was generally satisfactory, although it could have been improved with further examination about effectiveness. The YJS had strong quality assurance and gatekeeping systems in place, and these need to be applied consistently to ensure that learning is identified. We found evidence of some under-recording, which needed to be addressed. The views of victims in most cases were identified well and shared with children. This was helping children to understand the harm they had caused to others and the emotional impact that their offending was having on victims. The 'One Punch' resource was used well by practitioners, and this was also helping children to have a better understanding of the use of force. We also found evidence of worksheets being completed and children being appropriately referred to risk management panels. There was evidence of daily risk briefings taking place, but information from these meetings did not always lead to effective activity.

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 annex.](#)

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.

Outstanding

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

Strengths:

- There was a robust, evidence-based, child-centred, joint protocol between the Bromley YJS and the Metropolitan Police, explaining how prevention and out-of-court work was to be carried out in the borough. The agreement was realistic, setting out working arrangements, processes, and procedures well. The out-of-court policy covered pre-panel, at-panel, and post-panel information gathering, eligibility criteria, enforcement, escalation arrangements, decision-making in cases where children had previous offending histories, and liaison arrangements with partners to support diversion.
- Deferred prosecution arrangements agreed with the local police were effective and were diverting children to receive interventions that best met their needs and avoided criminalisation.
- Children received meaningful out-of-court services, with strong provision, leading to positive outcomes. Data provided by the YJS showed that 94 per cent of children receiving out-of-court disposals did not reoffend over the course of 12 months, and engagement was strong.
- Effective arrangements were in place to ensure that the voice of victims, children, and their parents or carers was included in the decision-making process.
- Panel arrangements supported timely decision-making and diversion. Interventions started without delay.
- The YJS had an out-of-court multi-agency disposal panel (joint decision-making panel; JDMP) with the appropriate level of representation. This included a designated YJS manager (chair), YJS police officer (joint lead agency), London Borough of Bromley (LBB) early help service representative, YJS nurse, LBB children's social care worker, YJS education welfare officer, targeted youth support worker, YJS parenting worker, and YJS business support officer.
- External scrutiny arrangements of the joint decision-making process worked well and were supported by effective auditing and quality assurance practice.
- Children receiving an out-of-court disposal had access to the same range of interventions that were available for post-court cases. These included knife crime programmes, stop and search workshops, early help family support services, Bromley Changes Young People's Drug and Alcohol Services, NHS liaison and diversion services, a CAMHS worker (providing mental health support), restorative work, ETE, specialist mentoring, and speech and language therapy. Interventions were strengths based and informed by research.
- Attention to tailoring interventions that met the diversity needs of children was largely purposeful.

- Management information was used well to inform service delivery. Children and their parents or carers were involved directly in the evaluation of the out-of-court disposal provision.

Area for improvement:

- The development of internal scrutiny arrangements at the JDMP should be considered.

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

Strengths:

- The YJS had a resettlement policy titled 'Policy and processes for the resettlement of children from custody into the community' (January 2024). The policy was comprehensive, providing advice on the specific role of practitioners. Pathways including suitable accommodation, health, and ETE all featured well in the policy.
- The policy stressed the significance of 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 was explicitly stated.
- Local borough responsibility for the provision of accommodation for resettlement cases was established and unambiguous.
- The significance of applying the BRM, developing a pro-social identity, and providing tailored services to meet the diverse needs of children was integrated well into the arrangements.
- Meeting the needs of actual and potential victims was central to the work with children and embedded as a priority of supervision.
- The executive management board was cited appropriately on resettlement work and understood the needs presented by children who lost their liberty.
- In the resettlement case reviewed, we found positive evidence of effective work across all aspects.
- Risk and safety panels and MEGA panel arrangements were well established.
- The YJS kept up to date with developments at Feltham Young Offender Institution by attending open days and reviewing newsletters with resettlement staff sent by the custodial governor.

Area for improvement:

- More resettlement-specific training was required for YJS staff.

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.](#)