



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth justice services in

Bath and North East Somerset

HM Inspectorate of Probation, February 2025



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Foreword

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

Children open to the YJS can expect to receive a strong offer of support. The service is led effectively by a knowledgeable and meticulous management team. There are appropriate resources in place. Staff are skilled and deliver evidence-based interventions. These arrangements are supported by a well-functioning and curious management board and an integrated partnership. Consequently, outcomes for children are positive.

The number of children receiving post-court interventions is relatively low, but the practice we saw was strong and impactful. Assessing and planning activities were undertaken well. We saw good levels of analysis, supported by a genuinely collaborative approach that consistently amalgamated feedback from children and their parents or carers. This resulted in high-quality, bespoke interventions being delivered, which focused on children's individual needs, whilst being appropriately balanced with a thorough consideration of victims and the need to keep the community safe. This activity was dynamic: if changes in concerns were identified, reviews were generally used well to address and develop new plans of intervention.

Practice with out-of-court interventions displayed similar strengths. For example, planning activity was used to strengthen good working relationships with children and other relevant services.

Assessment activity for these out-of-court interventions was not as consistent, however. We were not assured that case managers always clearly identified and analysed all potential factors when trying to ensure the safety of both the child and the community. This is an area for further review and development by the YJS. Other out-of-court arrangements would also benefit from review by the partnership and the police need to ensure decision making for single agency delivered community resolutions is more consistent. Their stated commitment to a review of practice is welcome. Additionally, the broader partnership should also consider how to ensure that a wider range of professionals attend out-of-court disposal panels, to develop good practice further.















If the recommendations in this report are implemented promptly, we have no doubt that service delivery will continue to flourish and that outcomes for children will go from strength to strength.



Martin Jones CBE

HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Bath and North East Somerset Youth Justice Service		Score	26/36
Fieldwork started October 2024			
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	Good	
2. Court disposals			
2.1	Assessment	Good	
2.2	Planning	Good	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Outstanding	
2.4	Reviewing	Good	
3. Out-of-court disposals			
3.1	Assessment	Requires improvement	
3.2	Planning	Outstanding	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Good	
3.4	Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	Good	
4. Resettlement¹			
4.1	Resettlement policy and provision	Good	

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 BANES. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth justice services, and better protect the public.

The Bath and North East Somerset Youth Justice Service should:

1. ensure all children given an out-of-court disposal receive high-quality assessment activity that considers all risk factors that impact on the safety of both the child and the community.

The Youth Justice Management Board should:

2. develop its understanding of quality victim work practice and implement effective local performance indicators
3. facilitate attendance by all key professionals at the joint decision-making panel in line with the Youth Justice Board's national guidance
4. review the use and application of the formal risk register to ensure it is effective in identifying, prioritising, managing and mitigating risks to the YJS.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in BANES YJS over a period of a week, beginning on 21 October 2024. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began between 23 October 2023 and 16 August 2024; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 23 October 2023 and 16 August 2024; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between 23 October 2023 and 16 August 2024. We also conducted 13 interviews with case managers.

BANES YJS is one of five YJSs served by the Avon and Somerset police force area, covering large urban authorities such as Bristol and more rural authorities such as Somerset. There is a collaborative approach to youth justice across this region, but each service has its own unique identity.

BANES itself is a small local authority with a high degree of rurality and an aging population. Bath is the largest urban settlement in the area, housing just over 50 per cent of the population. Smaller market towns such as Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Radstock account for a further 15 per cent of the population in the area.

The authority is one of the least deprived authorities in the country. There are pockets of deprivation, however. The number of children eligible for free school meals doubled from 2,199 (eight per cent) in 2015/2016 to 4,737 (17 per cent) in 2023/2024. Increases in indices of deprivation such as this are reflected in the YJS caseload, and the service delivers interventions to a cohort of children who experience significant difficulties and display multiple complexities. For example, in the year April 2023 to March 2024, 47 per cent of children had an identified substance misuse need, 43 per cent had identified emotional and mental health needs, 76 per cent had identified learning needs and 53 per cent were open to children's social care.

The YJS is based and managed within the local authority and overseen by the head of the young people's prevention service. Her portfolio also includes oversight of the violence reduction partnership coordinator and she reports directly to the director of children's services and education. Staff in the YJS also undertake non-statutory prevention activity with children aged eight to 17 who have been identified as needing early help and who are at risk of offending.

The work of the YJS is mainly with children at a pre-court stage. In the year April 2023 to March 2024, only 22 per cent of the interventions that closed had come to the YJS from the court. There is a strong emphasis on trying to prevent children escalating through the youth justice system. It is of note that 38 per cent of the children finishing interventions in BANES in this period had benefited from an Outcome 22 deferred caution.²

A significant proportion of children open at the point of inspection to the YJS have committed a serious offence. For example, 46 per cent (21/45) of offences are for robbery or violence against the person. Five of these children had possession of a knife and three had committed seven serious violent offences.

² Outcome 22 is one of the Home Office administration codes that the police use to indicate that no further action has been taken in response to an offence, but some form of diversionary or educational activity has taken place.

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.

Good

Strengths:

- The management board have worked proactively with the head of service to develop a child-first vision. Priorities are appropriate and were well understood by everyone we spoke to.
- The board chair is passionate and knowledgeable and has been key to developing effective governance arrangements.
- The board comprises members from all statutory agencies, who have links to relevant strategic forums. Where relevant and appropriate, non-statutory members add value.
- Board members receive a good induction and attend an annual review day to discuss plans for the coming year.
- Board members are well motivated, engaged and proactive and they have visible engagement with the YJS itself. Board members and staff are interacting and communicating effectively with each other.
- The management board is well attended and there is meaningful discussion at this forum. The head of service provides detailed performance information and analysis to help hone deliberation and partners submit detailed reports in line with an annual schedule of review.
- The board is committed to addressing areas of disproportionality, specifically for children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Progress has not been swift, but there is a genuine desire to facilitate whole system change to achieve better outcomes for children.
- The YJS head of service's portfolio also includes the Violence Reduction Partnership. Her links with this partnership are helping the board to develop a strategic response to serious youth violence in the authority.
- We saw evidence that board members proactively advocate for YJS children outside the board. They have developed their understanding of the needs of this cohort by visiting sites such as the youth court and HM Young Offender Institution Parc.

- Healthy challenge is evident at board meetings, and we saw evidence of impact. For example, a task and finish group was set up to tackle concerns about timeliness in the youth justice system.
- The YJS management team set high standards and were respected by everyone that we spoke to. Management oversight was strong in a reasonable majority of inspected cases and has been key to successfully putting the youth justice plan into operation.
- The voice of the child is heard at board meetings and there is evidence that children's feedback has had an impact on the YJS's work.

Areas for improvement:

- Risks to service delivery are known and understood but the current risk register is too lengthy and needs greater focus. It lacks sufficient detail on the appropriate mitigations needed to tackle identified issues.
- There is a lack of focus on the needs of victims at the board and limited evidence of access to meaningful data.
- While staff seemed aware of the vision of the service, they were less clear on the structural barriers that could prevent it from being put into practice. This was reflected in the variable quality of some assessment activity for domain three.
- The board acknowledges that its membership is not representative of all the diverse characteristics of the community and children open to the YJS.

1.2. Staff



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

Outstanding

Strengths:

- This is a well-resourced service. Currently there are no vacancies. Seconded and specialist staff bring value to arrangements and facilitate a genuine multi-agency approach to activity.
- Practitioners are well motivated and enjoy working for this service.
- There are low levels of sickness. Wellbeing support for staff, including responses to individual needs, is strong. This has contributed to the positive picture.
- There is a comprehensive induction programme in place. It was pleasing to see that the induction schedule also includes meetings with children, to understand their views on the services they expect to receive.
- Workload is manageable and there is a structured and considered approach to allocation. Managers have systems in place to ensure that cases are allocated to staff with appropriate skill sets and that capacity is not exceeded.
- There is a small and committed group of volunteers who report that they are well supported and have sufficient work. The YJS has started to recruit more volunteers to increase resilience.
- Business support arrangements are strong and facilitate service delivery.
- Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of evidence-based approaches to the work that they undertake. The use of the enhanced case management and the 'social GRACES'³ models is embedded. This was evident in some of the cases we inspected, particularly in developing an understanding of children's identity.
- Managers help to create a supportive learning environment in the team, emphasising staff development. All case managers have a professional qualification but are continually accessing learning and development opportunities.
- There is a training plan in place that covers all relevant areas of practice development. Training records are kept as evidence of this activity.
- This is a small authority and internal promotion opportunities are limited, but the current head of service was promoted to her current position from within the YJS.
- There are multiple opportunities for formal and informal supervision. We saw evidence that supervision was both reflective and helpful. The senior practitioner role provides an invaluable layer of additional support for practitioners, in addition to oversight from their line manager.

³ The acronym 'social GRACES' (or 'GGRRAACCEEESSS') represents aspects of difference in beliefs, power, and lifestyle, visible and invisible, voiced, and unvoiced, to which we might pay attention in supervision. The 'social GRACES' currently represent gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, ethnicity, education, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation, and spirituality. Developed by John Burnham (2013), this psychotherapeutic approach is intended to generate curiosity and an awareness of therapists' positioning in relation to the aspects of difference for themselves, and to the positioning of their colleagues/clients.

- The service supports an internal peer auditing approach, and this has helped to develop practice.
- Staff feel that they are meaningfully consulted; they had input into the current youth justice plan when it was being developed.
- Reward and recognition for good practice are evident. Staff feel valued, on a personal and professional level.

Areas for improvement:

- There is a lack of diversity within the workforce, but attempts are being made to recruit staff from diverse backgrounds.
- Victim support arrangements are working. However, police and YJS managers need to consider developing more formal agreements to facilitate easier evaluations – of both the workload generated by victim support and the impact of these arrangements on other core police tasks.
- The reparation worker is new in post. Before her appointment, there had been some disruption to reparation work, highlighting the difficulties in maintaining resilience within a small service. This disruption has not had a long-lasting impact, however.
- A very small proportion of staff who responded to our survey had not had an appraisal or said that their appraisal was not valuable. This was by no means a sizeable minority, but as this is a small team, it might suggest a potential area for development. Managers should ensure that they review the comprehensive offer of support on an annual basis to ensure it continues to meet the needs of staff.

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:

- The partnership is well engaged, and partners have a good understanding of the needs of YJS children. There is evidence of a collaborative approach, and we saw and heard of numerous examples where the needs of YJS children had been prioritised.
- Individual agencies have developed their own evaluations of the profile of the YJS children. For example, the police have produced a comprehensive analysis to help them understand the characteristics and outcomes of this cohort.
- The YJS has good access to a range of statutory and non-statutory services across the partnership. We saw referrals being actively made in most instances and evidence of good relationships between operational staff.
- The partnership has developed a very strong approach to ensuring that children's education, training and employment (ETE) needs are met. We saw genuine progress being made for YJS children. In the last 12 months, only a small proportion of them have been permanently excluded and none have been electively home educated.
- The YJS ETE worker's influence was evident in the majority of relevant cases we inspected. She is a strong advocate for these children.
- The partnership has a sophisticated understanding of the impact of serious youth violence. This does not simply rely on the scrutiny of data, but also includes collaboration with partners outside the authority and the review of feedback from children.
- The YJS has good links with the Adolescent and Child Exploitation Team, who oversee the authority's response to harm outside the home. Work is collaborative and multi-agency partnership meetings are well attended, setting appropriate actions to help facilitate children's safety.
- Application of the enhanced case management model is flexible. Facilitators will try to ensure all children can access a consultation if circumstances allow.
- A comprehensive annual report has been produced, which details the work of the YJS nurse. This provided evidence of efficacy and attempts to develop a more targeted offer of support.
- Support from child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and a speech and language therapist (SALT) is available and delivered well.
- Girls are receiving an appropriate response from the partnership and efforts are made to divert them from post-court disposals.
- The YJS's co-location with other children's services teams assists partnership working.

Areas for improvement:

- CAMHS and SALT resourcing does not always match need for those children with lower-level needs and for those whose needs are not acute.
- We saw evidence of good operational activity and support from Avon and Somerset police. More focus is required within the partnership to ensure strategic arrangements are consistent. The current force-wide joint working protocol needs to be reviewed, as does the draft job description for the seconded police officer.
- Positively, there is a probation secondee in post. However, YJS leaders acknowledge that post-transition support for YJS children needs to be developed.
- Interaction between children's social care and the YJS was positive. However, we saw some examples where information-sharing was inconsistent, in that information was not always exchanged quickly enough.

1.4. Information and facilities



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

Good

Strengths:

- There is a suite of appropriate policies and guidance in place. These documents are detailed, and they are reviewed frequently. Staff can easily access these documents on an internal shared drive.
- The YJS delivers interventions in suitable and safe locations. The rurality of much of the authority presents children with transport difficulties, but staff provide lifts and so there is no discernible impact on engagement.
- There are clear expectations for home visiting in the service. This is seen as a key factor in ensuring children are seen in an appropriate environment.
- There is a varied selection of reparation placements, which have appropriate health and safety assessments in place.
- Staff have sufficient access to ICT equipment to allow them to undertake their work efficiently. The ICT policy provides a good level of detail about how to use systems effectively.
- There is a skilled business and performance manager in post, who produces detailed management information. We saw this information being used effectively and it has been key to the development of practice within the partnership.
- There is a robust quality assurance and audit framework in place. Furthermore, this was being used to develop practice among both YJS practitioners and partners through the management board.
- Peer auditing takes place and themes from audit activity have led to offers of training and support for staff.
- We saw evidence of some effective activity to gather feedback from children and parents. The introduction of QR codes has been successful and increased the amount of feedback received.
- We saw evidence that learning from recent HM Inspectorate of Probation thematic inspections had been incorporated into action plans to develop service provision.

Areas for improvement:

- Some policy documents need to refer more explicitly to matters of equity, inclusion and diversity. The YJS should also consider the impact of the overarching anti-racism action plan on how these policies are applied.
- BANES children's services have processes in place to learn from serious incidents, but these were not always sufficiently understood by YJS staff.
- Analysis of data and the impact of victim work is not fully embedded and the YJS needs to use it more rigorously to inform practice.

- The service acknowledges the need to further develop participation and is looking to develop a standalone strategy that draws together all the individual pieces of good work that it is doing.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The YJS is committed to gaining feedback from the children and parents that it works with. We saw evidence of innovative approaches to increase levels of feedback, such as the use of QR codes. Additionally, children sat on recruitment panels for new staff. Feedback had clearly had an impact. For example, the YJS prioritised serious youth violence in the youth justice plan and created practice guidance for working with Black, Asian and minority ethnic children.

The service recognises that, while it is making progress in developing participation, it can do more. It has identified this as an area for improvement in the current youth justice plan. The very high number of children successfully completing interventions in BANES means this ambition to increase participation is one which can be progressed rapidly. This is because the service should have extensive access to information from children's exit interviews, which it can use to advance this work.

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 five children who consented, and two children and a parent replied. We also spoke to five children and four parents directly to understand their experiences of working with the YJS.

Children and parents spoke positively about the work of the YJS, noting that staff often went above and beyond what was required. One child noted that:

“everyone is really friendly and they actually listen to me. I have been able to think about what I have done but also learn about how to do things differently and about who I am as a person. I am now looking forward to my future.”

Another child noted that they had:

“liked learning and understanding about restorative justice and the moral objective of it. It is good how the YJS are involved and attending doesn't feel like a process”.

Crucially, we also heard feedback which reflected the good practice that we had seen and heard about from professionals during fieldwork. For example, one parent advised that there had been:

“a focus on my child's speech and language needs and a referral for help. Also, there was support for parents and attempts to build relationships trust and openness.”

One child talked enthusiastically about support for his health needs:

“Before coming to the YJS I was on the CAMHS waiting list for two years and didn't get the support I needed. I found it hard to talk to anybody about what I was experiencing and that led me into the things that got me into trouble. Working with the nurse has enabled me to find myself again and open new doors and opportunities because I have been able to speak about my feelings. I have had more support now working with YJS than I have ever had.”

Additionally, other children spoke effusively about support from other services, such as Project 28. We heard positive feedback about the YJS ETE worker, which corroborated our own observations about the impact of her role. Children and parents universally told us that staff consistently provided lifts or home visits, again backing up our own conclusions that the rurality of the authority was not having an impact on children's engagement.

Diversity

- Data provided by BANES YJS indicated that, at the point of the inspection, 22 per cent of the caseload identified as minority ethnic. This was disproportionate, given that just over nine per cent of children in the area identified as non-white according to the service's own data.
- The number of children with SEN has been steadily rising in the authority. By January 2024, there had been a three-fold increase in the number of statements of SEN since 2014. There are also disproportionate numbers of children open to the YJS with these needs. At the point of inspection announcement, the YJS informed us that 58 per cent of the current caseload had an identified need. The YJS acknowledges that there are disproportionate numbers of both minority ethnic children and children with SEN in the caseload and has prioritised these areas for action in the youth justice plan. Additional discussions are timetabled at the management board to review progress every six months.
- There is a lack of diversity among staff, but this has not affected their work to explore children's identity, which inspectors assessed was done very well.
- The service has developed an anti-racism action plan, which has been endorsed by the management board. The plan has been informed by previous activity and recommendations from HM Inspectorate of Probation and local criminal justice board. BANES schools have recently introduced a race charter and there is evidence that attempts have been made to align approaches.
- There is an ethnic disproportionality dashboard in place. This provides a detailed analysis of data and subsequent concerns. The dashboard illustrates that mixed heritage children commit serious crimes at a disproportionate rate in BANES. There is an understanding of the factors that contribute to this cohort of children's risk of offending but not a full analysis of the reasons why they are more disproportionately represented in this crime type than other minority ethnic groups facing similar experiences of discrimination.
- The YJS has produced a practice guide for professionals working with Black, Asian and minority ethnic children. This guidance was developed following YJS-facilitated focus groups to get these children's views on how they would like the YJS to work with them. The guide highlights the need to take a conscious approach to discussing heritage in assessments and try to develop an understanding of culture. More broadly within BANES children's services, the use of 'social GRACES' is used to understand the effect of staff identity on the children they work with.
- The violence reduction partnership, Youth Connect (a local third sector organisation) and Project 28 developed a piece of work with girls called 'Galdem', which ran between April 2023 and April 2024. The project was established following a review of Youth Endowment Fund research on young women's and girls' involvement with serious violence. It is hoped that funding can be acquired to continue this work. The numbers of girls on the YJS caseload have fallen in the last three years, although small cohort numbers are a factor in this reduction, as well as targeted support.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at six community sentences and no custodial sentences managed by the YJS.

2.1. Assessment



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

Good

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?	67%
how to keep other people safe?	83%

Assessment to determine children's desistance needs and support desistance was done consistently well by the YJS. Information was gathered and analysed from multiple sources, including the child's family and relevant professionals. There was good use of information gathered from children's previous engagement with the YJS. The voice of the child was present throughout, and a strengths-based approach was evident, which clearly considered relevant equity, inclusion and diversity matters.

There was sufficient focus in assessments on keeping the child safe. While we did feel some case managers underestimated the risks posed by the child, assessments consistently integrated and considered all key factors of concern. This provided a comprehensive understanding about others potentially at risk of harm. Case managers appropriately recognised their role in balancing the need to consider and focus upon harm reduction and achieving safety for others, whilst ensuring a child-first approach was delivered with children.

Whilst assessment activity that analysed how to keep children safe was generally sufficient, it was the least consistent area within this standard. For example, we did not always see evidence that all the information gathered had been fully explored or verified. Additionally, while case managers noted areas of concern, we did not always see sufficient exploration of the detail related to these concerns. This is an area the service would do well to focus on when undertaking future quality assurance and audit activity. Where it was undertaken well, we found case managers showed a good understanding of the potential harm that children faced. They reviewed and analysed information gathered from the child's own experiences and appropriately utilised this alongside information sourced from relevant professionals.

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 on our website.](#)

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?	100%
keeping other people safe?	67%

Case managers focused on building on children's strengths to support desistance. All the components of effective planning were evident, such as appropriate sequencing of activity, targeting of specific objectives and actions, and the consideration of potential areas of support and input from the partnership.

We also saw evidence of bespoke activity to support planning for desistance, such as the use of a 'pre-panel' when a pre-sentence report had been ordered. The panel was used to take into consideration the child's wider support networks. This approach provided the court with a realistic sentence plan.

Additionally, there was assurance that the relational-based approaches that the YJS was promoting were proving to be effective. The good rapport between child and case manager meant that they could have a robust discussion about the challenges and barriers that could impact on planning and how to overcome these. Referral order panel members also helped facilitate these discussions when they were involved.

Likewise, planning also focused sufficiently on keeping the child safe. In every case we inspected we saw evidence that the YJS plan aligned with other safeguarding plans that were in place. This was evident in the joint planning with children's social care, for example. In one instance where concerns about harm outside the home were identified, the YJS and children's services took a shared approach to determining the actions required to safeguard the child. In another instance, the case manager considered their plan within the context of an existing care plan. Such alignment is key, as it ensures partners are not working at cross-purposes have the same understanding of what support is needed, and ensures planning is coordinated and cohesive.

Planning to keep other people safe was undertaken sufficiently in a reasonable majority of cases. We saw evidence that partners were involved and that there was consideration of both victims and the activity required to safeguard the community. Contingency arrangements were not always well considered in these plans, however. This was because case managers did not always consider the full range of possible activities to reduce harm. They sometimes focused only on specific elements of harm and did not always take into consideration all potential risks. There was too much emphasis on presenting behaviours and risks associated with the safety of the child themselves rather than a thorough consideration of previous behaviours towards others and how these behaviours would be managed if repeated. A focus on getting this aspect of planning precise on a more consistent basis should improve the quality of planning activity even further.

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 on our website.](#)

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?	100%
effectively support the safety of other people?	100%

The delivery of interventions was done consistently well. In every case we inspected delivery effectively supported the child and ensured that they received a targeted response that strengthened their desistance, and supported their safety, and the safety of other people.

The development of strong relationships with the child through assessment and planning activity had a positive impact on supporting effective service delivery. Case managers had a depth of understanding which approaches to supervision and support were likely to be most effective and this supported them in engaging the child in a positive manner. For example, we saw that the style of support offered was always reflective of the child's individual needs and so, if a child had difficulties forming relationships with new professionals, the case manager considered this when referring to others. If a child's protected characteristics were key to facilitating good engagement, the child was supported and facilitated to explore and discuss their identity in a safe space.

Service delivery to keep the child safe benefited from a genuine joined-up approach within the partnership. We saw evidence of regular discussion between professionals to understand changes in children's behaviour and potential safety. If a child was hesitant about accepting the support or referral on offer, alternative solutions were discussed and sourced to ensure that all means of reducing harm were considered. We also saw an example of joint sessions with the child and his father. This was a particularly powerful piece of work, given the predominantly female workforce within the YJS. It demonstrated that potential barriers to delivery due to factors such as gender were proactively considered and addressed.

Case managers carefully considered victims when delivering work. In every single case that we inspected sufficient attention had been given to this. Where a victim did not wish to engage in restorative practice, the case manager would carry out targeted victim awareness sessions with the child, which explored the victims' experiences and the impact of these. Given that knife crime was currently or previously featured in many of the cases we inspected, effective victim work was supported by reflective, well-delivered sessions about knife crime.

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 on our website.](#)

2.4. Reviewing



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

Good

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?	83%
keeping other people safe?	67%

Reviewing activity to support the child's desistance was done well in every case that we inspected. In particular, case managers responded well to changes in circumstances and factors linked to desistance. For example, in one instance when a child's motivation deteriorated, the case manager considered alternative approaches to intervention. In another instance, when relationships within the child's family broke down, there was a swift response to review their accommodation needs. These examples reflected a broader responsive approach that we saw within the partnership. The approach also reflected a supportive ethos taken by case managers, one where a focus on encouraging engagement was key to supporting the child's compliance with their court orders. Children were worked 'with', not 'to' and they experienced high support, alongside appropriate strong challenge when required.

There was also a good consideration of the safety of the child when service delivery was reviewed. We saw evidence that if a new partner or service became involved in a child's life this inevitably led to new or refreshed assessment and planning activity.

Furthermore, the use of the enhanced case management model was impactful where we saw it being delivered, as this approach gave case managers a regular structured opportunity to review safety and wellbeing concerns. They could then incorporate this review into a comprehensive and carefully constructed formulation, which was shared with and understood by the wider partnership. The efficacy of this approach reflected regional evaluation feedback which reported positive outcomes for children. This assured us that evidence-based practice was a key consideration for the YJS within the practice that we encountered.

The YJS responded proactively to activity that had the potential to increase harm to others. In one instance a referral to a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) was made after a child was arrested. In another, a sexually harmful behaviour assessment was completed, which resulted in a review of progress. Both these examples illustrate the dynamic approach to harm reduction taken by the YJS. There was no sense that the initial assessment of risk stayed with the child throughout the course of their intervention. Risk management was an evolving activity and interventions were adapted accordingly.

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 on our website.](#)

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 three youth conditional cautions, one youth caution, no community resolutions and two Outcome 22 disposals. We interviewed the case managers in six cases.

3.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

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?	50%
how to keep other people safe?	50%

Case managers used the time allocated for the initial assessment to gain a good understanding of the child's desistance needs. They utilised the 'social GRACES' model well to get a strong grasp of the child's equity, inclusion and diversity needs, and we saw evidence that factors such as race and neurodiversity were well considered and analysed. We also saw evidence that the SALT had been used, where appropriate, to screen for the child's speech, language and communication needs within assessing activity.

In addition to this we saw good collation of information held by other services. Not only were written records accessed and reviewed but relevant professionals were spoken with and case managers utilised this to undertake a meaningful analysis of information. This was particularly notable if the child was currently open to partners.

However, despite this positive practice in relation to desistance, approaches needed strengthening when considering how to keep the child and other people safe. We saw examples where case managers did not consistently use relevant risk or safety information well in their assessments, and we lacked assurance that apparent risks were always clearly identified and analysed. While there was an admirable focus on understanding the impact of previous trauma, some behaviours associated with historical or current activity were not always well analysed and understood. We found instances where case managers relied too much on analysing the current index behaviour, to develop an understanding of the child, rather than fully considering other relevant or pertinent behaviours alongside the current behaviour to gain a holistic understanding of the child and how to keep them and others safe.

Effective joint decision-making panel (JDMP) arrangements are key to supporting initial assessment activity for pre-court disposals. There was assurance that decisions were made collegiately, but the lack of attendance at the JDMP by crucial partners, such as social workers or education workers, meant that the rigorous multi-agency interplay and debate that we often see at panel was not present here. In addition to this, the extended timeframe that the YJS facilitates for initial out-of-court assessment activity did not consistently result in high-quality assessments.

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 on our website.](#)

3.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

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?	100%
keeping other people safe?	100%

The strong collaborative arrangements that we encountered during fieldwork were evident in planning activity which, overall, was done consistently well in this YJS. Both children and their families and the professionals involved with these families were engaged effectively to identify key priorities and this approach played a large part in the positive practice that we saw. So, for example, we saw good planning around how to build a positive relationship, which considered the child's wishes and feelings about where to have appointments. This was aligned with a robust reflection on wider agencies' roles in supporting education or health outcomes.

Additionally, we saw a whole-family approach to planning. This was evidenced by the YJS leading some 'team around the family' planning activity, which helped to potentially widen the professional network and the subsequent offer of multi-agency support. Good relationships were developed during planning activity, which had a positive impact on future engagement.

Furthermore, we were encouraged to see that all planning activity was far more consistent than assessment activity. There was assurance that this was done well to keep both the child and other people safe. Regarding planning to keep others safe, this was aligned with other relevant planning activity, such as child protection planning. Case records evidenced real-time information exchange with other partners and services, which helped to develop well-sourced support. Crucially, contingency planning was also undertaken well in all but one instance. This demonstrated a systematic and efficient approach to considering what to do if circumstances change.

Likewise, case managers effectively completed planning activity for children who potentially posed a risk to others. They looked at how to address concerns related to actual and potential victims. We saw evidence that case managers promoted the child's understanding and awareness of the impact of offending upon the victim or potential victims. Additionally, we also saw case managers go beyond just considering victim awareness, by ensuring that external controls such as liaison with the police or family were used to improve support. They also considered more bespoke activity, such as peer mapping, to manage risks.

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 on our website.](#)

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

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?	67%
the safety of other people?	67%

The YJS has access to a wide suite of services, and the practitioners are skilled and knowledgeable, and so service delivery was normally of a high standard. This was particularly evident in the activity to support the child's desistance, where every question we asked of the YJS was answered positively. We saw a focus on children's strengths. Activity to support educational needs was meaningful and focused and, where appropriate, supported by further screening and support from the SALT.

The YJS made effective use of the partnership to help facilitate additional support. In one case, for example, the case manager made use of a 'trusted adult' from another service who had already developed a rapport with the child. Case managers recognised that the development of these trusted relationships was key to tackling trauma. They looked to build on and develop these relationships, giving assurance that the trauma-informed approach was being operationalised well.

Activity to support the safety of the child and the community was generally done well. However, the YJS did not always work collaboratively with other services when needed or always ensure that relevant risk information was shared and understood appropriately. This impacted on the efficacy of some elements of service delivery.

Nonetheless, these concerns were not sufficient to indicate the existence of a deeper or more systemic problem. If children were themselves at risk, multi-agency forums were used well to address these risks. Arrangements designed to address harm outside the home were well coordinated within the partnership and engaged with by the YJS. We also saw evidence that the YJS's nurse was used effectively to provide support that had not been previously accessed before the intervention had started.

Work undertaken to secure the safety of the community focused more on one-to-one activity than on work delivered collaboratively. Nevertheless, actual delivery was normally done well. Different learning styles were taken into consideration during harm reduction activity and work focused on priorities that had been identified in plans, incorporating new information if it became available.

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 on our website.](#)

3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision



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

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:

- There is an explicit focus on prevention and diversion within the partnership, which is effective. Many children are successfully completing interventions, many are not reoffending and first-time entry rates are low.
- There are appropriate policy and process documents in place, which give a comprehensive overview of how out-of-court disposal (OOC) activity should be implemented and delivered.
- There are genuine attempts to prevent children escalating through the youth justice system unnecessarily. The use of Outcome 22 has been central to this approach and has been used successfully in BANES for some time.
- There are good arrangements in place with the court and children are referred for consideration of an OOC whenever appropriate. Once referred, the partnership takes a flexible approach to decision-making, demonstrating very strong practice through appropriate use of diversionary outcomes. This prevents children referred back from court becoming first-time entrants.
- There is a regular joint decision-making panel (JDMP) attended by the YJS and the police. The YJS prioritises good engagement with children over the timeliness of assessment. The subsequent high levels of engagement suggest that this approach is having a positive impact.
- Children receiving street-delivered community resolutions benefit from Turnaround support if they are not involved with other services already.
- The voice of victims is heard at the joint decision-making panel where possible.
- Planning activity is a strength. We saw clear evidence that the YJS's stated focus on developing this aspect of work was being effectively operationalised by staff.
- The tactical resource group provides an effective regional forum to discuss strategic approaches to decision-making.

Areas for improvement:

- There are gaps in the wider attendance by relevant professionals, such as social workers, at the JDMP. These gaps have impacted on the thoroughness of some assessment activity that we inspected.
- The timeliness of OOC delivery is an issue. We saw and heard of numerous delays to police referrals into the OOC panel. The partnership is aware of this, and plans are in place to address it.
- Information on victims is sometimes delayed in reaching the YJS from the police.

- The YJS is aware that there is racial disproportionality in the OOCDC cohort, but it needs a deeper insight into why this exists. It is beginning to develop this.
- The police are not effectively evaluating the appropriateness of police-facilitated community resolutions. The police themselves have an awareness of potential deficits in single agency decision making and plans are in place to review and address these going forward.
- The quarterly Police and Crime Commissioner scrutiny panel reviews decisions across the whole force area. As such, there is only limited independent review of BANES children, although there is evidence of regular internal YJS audit.

4.1. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Good

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:

- There has been a resettlement policy in place for several years. It is regularly reviewed and updated and provides a good baseline framework for ensuring appropriate activity takes place to support the seven pathways of resettlement.
- There is a good understanding of the principles of constructive resettlement, in theory and in practice.
- Work undertaken with the child we inspected was of a very high quality and all their needs were addressed sufficiently. There was clear evidence of a multi-agency approach. Considerable activity was undertaken well in advance of their release date, ensuring all potential eventualities were planned for and addressed.
- The needs of the victim were appropriately balanced with a child-first approach in the inspected work and proportionate controls to minimise risks were considered and demonstrated the YJS's approach to resettlement sufficiently considered how best to achieve safety for the community.
- The YJS advised they would always offer post-remand voluntary intervention to a child who was acquitted and needed resettlement support.
- The YJS facilitates a well-established multi-agency custody review panel. There is focused review and evaluation of practice at these meetings, which provides assurance that learning activity is taking place on a regular basis.
- The YJS has a good understanding of data for children entering custody. The low numbers of children mean that data needs to be extrapolated with caution, but there have been trends that the service has been able to identify, such as children's involvement with children's social care.

Areas for improvement:

- Some case managers have not used the resettlement policy, due to the low numbers of children entering custody. An accompanying practice document would therefore provide further practical guidance to case managers to keep their knowledge updated.
- There needs to be more explicit mention of equity, inclusion and diversity considerations in the policy to assist practitioners to target activity to reduce the likelihood of disproportionality.

- The YJS has some understanding of why mixed-race children are disproportionately overrepresented in the cohort of children committing serious crime, but this can be developed further.
- The YJS policy was developed by the YJS with minimal input from partners during its development stage. When it is next reviewed, a more collaborative approach with partners would increase their ownership and understanding of relevant resettlement activity.
- The YJS has not considered linking and aligning the resettlement policy with broader children's service transitional safeguarding arrangements.
- A number of staff who responded to our survey who said they worked with resettlement cases noted that they had not received any specific, relevant resettlement training. However, we did see evidence that staff managing complex children received regular coaching, supervision, and guidance from managers.

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.](#)