



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

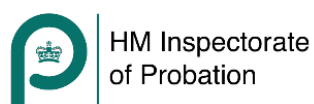
An inspection of youth offending services in
Dorset

HM Inspectorate of Probation, January 2023



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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

HM Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending service work with adults and children.

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.

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

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Foreword

This inspection is part of our programme of youth justice service (YJS) inspections. This was a joint inspection, and we were joined by colleague inspectors from police, social care and education. We have inspected and rated Dorset Combined 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, Dorset Combined YJS was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Good'.

The inspection found that children from the two local authorities covered by the YJS – Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole (BCP) and Dorset – have access to quality resources based upon their needs and these are not restricted by locality. The partnership board ensures that performance, learning, and good practice are effectively shared across the two areas.

As a combined local authority YJS there is an appropriate focus on the quality of services provided by each local authority at board level. However, this must not detract from the need to ensure a collective strategic approach which is effective. For the partnership board to be challenged in its ambition to drive the performance of the service forward, a level of independence in its chairing arrangements could help ensure that all agencies are held to account more effectively.

In terms of partnerships, the YJS receives good health provision, which includes a psychologist, nurses, and speech and language therapists. We found the service to be well supported by Dorset police and police officers were valued members of the team who demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the children coming to their attention. The reoffending of children subject to out-of-court disposals is monitored, however, there is no detailed analysis of the profile of the children who reoffend and the effectiveness of the disposals they were given.

Although there had been a strategic focus on working with schools to support them to implement inclusion strategies, too many YJS children did not have access to full-time education and this needs to be an area of focus moving forward. We also found some disconnect with children's social care. In particular, there were delays in obtaining information as YJS case managers were not consistently invited to children's social care statutory multi agency meetings. Whilst YJS managers and business support officers had access to children's social care records, YJS case managers did not and therefore direct access to social care records would facilitate improved information sharing and communication.

YJS case managers understood the dangers of county lines and recognised when children were at risk of, or were already experiencing, exploitation. However, there was no agreed understanding of child exploitation across the partnership and no clear framework to guide practitioners. For both court orders and out-of-court disposals, case managers need to consider the possible wider risks when assessing children's risk of harm to others, for the quality of work around this standard to be improved.















For out-of-court disposals, it was good to see that the police notified agencies of all the children they encountered. There was also evidence that staff worked in a trauma-informed way and did all they could to engage children and families.

In this report, we make a number of recommendations that we hope will support Dorset Combined YJS to build on its strong foundations and ensure it continues to deliver a high-quality service for children.



Justin Russell, HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service Fieldwork started September 2022		Score	24/36
Overall rating		Good	
1. Organisational delivery			
1.1	Governance and leadership	Good	
1.2	Staff	Good	
1.3	Partnerships and services	Good	
1.4	Information and facilities	Good	
2. Court disposals			
2.1	Assessment	Good	
2.2	Planning	Good	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Good	
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 six recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of youth justice services in Dorset. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth justice services, and better protect the public.

The Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service partnership board should:

1. review the board arrangements to ensure effective strategic partnerships across the combined area and consider whether additional independent chairing arrangements could enhance these
2. develop a shared approach across the partnership to addressing child exploitation and county lines and put a framework in place which promotes effective practice
3. continue to support and challenge all schools to ensure that YJS children receive their full entitlement to education
4. improve partnership working with children's social care by ensuring YJS case manager involvement in all statutory multi-agency meetings and improve their direct access to children's social care records.

The YJS service manager should:

5. analyse the reoffending of children subject to out-of-court disposals and monitor the effectiveness of the disposals given
6. improve the analysis and quality of assessments to ensure there is effective and robust understanding regarding the risk of harm a child can pose to others.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Dorset Combined YJS over a period of two weeks, beginning 26 September 2022. We inspected cases where the sentence, licence or out-of-court disposal began between 27 September 2021 and 22 July 2022. We also inspected resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between these same dates. We conducted 45 interviews with case managers.

Dorset is a county in south west England. Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service (DCYJS) was formed in 2015 and works across two local authorities, Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole (BCP) and Dorset. The service matches the boundaries of the other statutory YJS partner agencies, including Dorset Police, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, NHS Dorset clinical commissioning group (CCG), Dorset HealthCare NHS Trust and the Probation Service (Dorset), who also work across both local authorities. The two local authorities are unitary and were formed in April 2019. BCP is a large urban area, while Dorset comprises a mainly rural area with market towns and a larger urban area in Weymouth and Portland. Dorset Council has a population of about 380,000. Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole together form a conurbation with a population of nearly 400,000.

The YJS is hosted by BCP Council, located in the safeguarding and early help service directorate of children's social care, with links to the Dorset Council children's social care directorate. The YJS is represented across other strategic and operational partnerships both within the local authorities and across the pan Dorset partnerships; and issues impacting on youth offending are prominent on the agendas of these other key strategic groups.

At the time of the inspection there were 54 staff in the YJS. The number of interventions that were open in September 2022 showed that 76 were post court interventions and 64 were out-of-court disposals. The YJS caseload consists of approximately 65 per cent BCP children and 35 per cent Dorset children, with some slight fluctuation. YJS staff are employed through BCP and split into two geographical teams. The YJS specialist workers work across both areas. The service receives funding from NHS England to support the introduction of trauma-informed practice and has a 'trauma champion' to develop this area of work.

The YJS has access to a comprehensive suite of data, analysis of which has led to deep dive reports. These have included a report on the profile of younger children known to the YJS, as well as, monitoring the potential criminalisation of care experienced children. From January 2021 to December 2021, the number of first-time entrants for Dorset Combined YJS was more than the average for England and Wales. Its use of custody was less than the average for England and Wales. From October 2019 to September 2020, Dorset's performance in the proportion of children who reoffend and how frequently they reoffend were both better than the average for England and Wales

Both local authorities understood the risk to the service regarding Covid-19 and reacted quickly and proportionately to support staff, manage the workload, and ensure that children and families were kept safe. Virtual interventions and online programmes were delivered throughout lockdown to children and their families. restorative justice provision had to be varied and 'reparation at home' packs were developed for children to complete. Referral order panels and parenting programmes continued to be delivered virtually and the YJS offices remained open to a restricted number of staff.

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 22 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 YOT supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.

Good

Strengths:

- The Youth Justice Service partnership board is chaired by the Dorset director for children's social care and its membership includes all statutory partners.
- Both local authorities ensure they are equitably represented on the board.
- Board members are clear about the vision for the service and are consulted on its annual priorities.
- Staff ensure that children from the two authorities are treated equitably, have access to resources based upon their needs and this is not restricted by locality.
- Key indicators are split by the local authority areas to ensure that performance, learning, and good practice are shared across both.
- The YJS is represented across other strategic and operational partnerships, both within the local authorities and across the pan-Dorset partnerships.
- The YJS is receiving funding from NHS England to support the delivery of trauma-informed practice.
- The board receives information relating to the service's performance, progress on past plans, learning from case reviews, and inspection reports, as well as deep-dive thematic reports.
- Board members hold each other to account and challenge partner agencies about the resources that are provided to the service.
- YJS team managers regularly attend the management board and staff present specific pieces of work.
- There is a youth justice plan supported by a team plan in which managers lead on specific areas of practice.

Areas for improvement:

- The board chairing arrangements are not rotated. For the partnership board to be challenged in its ambition to drive the performance of the service forward, a level of independence is required that holds all partnership agencies to account.
- While the seniority of the board membership is appropriate, attendance is not consistent.

- Although the youth justice plan references work taking place to look at disproportionality, the service does not have a specific diversity and disproportionality policy. Focus on this area requires a framework that collates the diversity and disproportionality work together, which guides and enables staff to ask appropriate questions about a child’s heritage and their lived experiences.
- Although new board members meet with the YJS service manager and chair of the board as part of their induction, there is no formal induction pack which ensure consistency.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Strengths:

- The YJS has a stable and experienced workforce.
- Allocation of cases considers which staff have previously been involved with the family and prioritises case manager consistency.
- Staff encourage good engagement with the child. Staff and managers are child-centred and know their children well.
- Staff receive regular monthly supervision; clinical supervision is also provided when needed. They reported feeling supported by both their managers and their peers.
- Seconded staff receive supervision from their home agency, who complete an appraisal, and from their YJS line manager.
- There is a comprehensive induction process for new staff and volunteers, and procedures for addressing staff competency.
- There is a workforce development policy, the service keeps comprehensive training records, and staff and volunteers reported that they feel encouraged to take up training opportunities.
- All staff and volunteers have access to courses available through the two local authorities and external providers. Specialist workers had access to joint training provided by the YJS.
- In the cases inspected, management oversight met the needs of the case in 71 per cent of post-court cases and in 72 per cent of out-of-court disposals.
- The YJS uses workshops to develop practice and staff can become ‘champions’ in specific areas.
- Staff development is encouraged through offering management opportunities within the service and support for external qualifications.
- In the staff survey, 95 per cent of the 23 staff who completed it said their views about working for the YJS were listened to and acted on either ‘quite well’ or ‘very well’.

- Staff receive praise and appreciation through emails from senior leaders and supervision with their line managers; team meetings encourage the sharing of positive news and recognition of good practice.
- Staff reported that they felt valued by managers and by their peers, and all 23 staff who completed the staff survey said that exceptional work is 'sometimes' or 'always' recognised.

Areas for improvement:

- Opportunities for staff to learn from the different challenges each local area face need to be further developed to ensure shared learning across the combined area.
- The quality of work to analyse and assess who was at risk and the nature of the risk needs improving and staff would benefit from additional training.
- Staff expressed concerns about how children had been treated by the police but had not effectively raised these at the time with the YJS police officers. It is essential issues are raised and addressed in a timely manner and learning shared is identified.
- The understanding of child exploitation in the area needs to improve. Further training and clearer pathways for responding to child exploitation are required.

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 YJS has access to a comprehensive suite of data, which have been the subject of deep-dive analysis.
- The YJS has two parenting workers. Feedback from parents showed that they appreciated the practical help and emotional support they have been given.
- The YJS can access two separate substance misuse services and both organisations provide link workers.
- The YJS restorative justice practitioners contact every victim to highlight the restorative justice opportunities available. The service is developing interventions with emergency workers. Victim engagement and feedback are reported to the management board.
- Feedback from the court indicated YJS staff give professional advice, allowing the bench to fulfil their role in sentencing while engaging the child in the proceedings.
- The YJS employs two education, training, and employment (ETE) workers who play an effective role in supporting schools and education providers to meet the needs of YJS children. They advocate well and are knowledgeable in the various inclusion and special educational needs and disability (SEND) forums. They are supported by YJS practitioners who use risk assessments effectively in addressing school leaders' concerns about a child's behaviour and educational needs.

- There is good health provision, which comprises a psychologist, child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) nurses, and speech and language therapists. The nurses combine expertise in child mental health and wellbeing with wider nursing expertise in physical health, sexual health, and substance misuse. There was evidence in the inspected cases that the speech and language therapists advocated strongly to ensure that children's needs were met.
- The YJS was well supported by Dorset police with two seconded police constables, a sergeant dedicated to the YJS, and a police inspector. The officers were highly regarded and valued as members of the team by both peers and the YJS management team. They demonstrated good knowledge of the children managed by the YJS, and intelligence was routinely shared by both police and case managers. The police officers attend the risk assessment panels, providing updated intelligence on children being discussed, and contribute to risk management plans.
- The YJS has a full-time seconded probation officer who prepares a transition OASys (offender assessment system) assessment which captures the key aspects from the youth justice assessment. Transition arrangements were good, and the service was well engaged with the multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) process. When young people aged over 18 come to the attention of the Probation Service, contact is made with the YJS to verify if they have been previously known to them.

Areas for improvement:

- The service did not have sufficient data about education exclusions, attainment, destinations, and progress to inform and guide decisions. Both local authorities were, however, enabling YJS staff to access pupil data where needed.
- Both local authority areas have strategic and operational multi-agency meetings to monitor children at risk of or experiencing criminal exploitation. The inspection found, however, that there was no collective clear framework to guide practitioners, including mapping the location of risky areas in the localities, sharing and collating intelligence with other agencies and formulating multi-agency assessments and plans for children and families.
- Both local authorities have been working with schools to support them to implement inclusion strategies. There has been a focus on building schools' capacity to manage YJS children and retain them in learning. Senior managers review and challenge all potential school exclusions, thereby communicating a clear message about keeping children in learning and the risks to the child associated with non-attendance. However, despite this too many YJS children were not getting their entitled access to full time education.
- There were too many YJS children aged 16 or older not in suitable education, training or employment. Although YJS staff worked assiduously, in conjunction with partners, to provide bespoke support, there were insufficient volume, range, and flexibility of options across the combined area to meet the needs of these children.
- Although the quality and effectiveness of partnerships with children's social care were good overall, there was a reliance by children's social care on agency staff from areas outside Dorset, which limited the opportunities for children and their families to receive the necessary support when they needed it.

- YJS managers have direct access to children’s social care records along with the business support, however, the YJS case managers do not. As a result of this, some YJS case managers can experience delays in obtaining information. Additionally, we found examples of YJS practitioners not being invited to children’s social care multi-agency meetings which presented challenges to effective information sharing.

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 full range of policies and guidance, which are understood by staff and reviewed regularly.
- Information-sharing protocols are in place and understood across the partnership.
- There is an escalation process for all partners to help challenge other agencies, and staff feel supported by managers in raising concerns.
- The YJS has two offices, in Poole and in Dorchester. Staff working with children can access community facilities across the geographical area, including community centres and schools, and will visit children at home.
- YJS police officers had access to police and YJS IT systems and were proficient in the use of both. A flagging system on the Dorset Police record management system automatically notifies the YJS police officers when frontline police encounter children. This is considered good practice.
- The YJS case management system enables the service to produce quality data on performance.
- There is a quality assurance and practice improvement policy that outlines the framework for auditing work, and this was evident and impacting in the cases inspected.
- The YJS is involved in multi-agency audits, taking part in multi-agency learning reviews.
- The YJS had completed an intensive feedback exercise through in-depth interviews with some children who had been remanded or sentenced to custody in the past three years.
- There is evidence that the YJS reviews cases when serious incidents occur and learns from the outcomes of inspections to help improve practice.

Areas for improvement:

- Although YJS offices are a safe space for staff, some are not accessible for children and families.
- While the police officer in BCP works alongside case managers in the main office, enabling good joint working through formal and informal information sharing, in Dorset the arrangements are less conducive to joint working.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

As part of the inspection, inspectors met parents of children known to the YJS who were working with the YJS parenting support workers. Their feedback was very complimentary; they said they appreciated the emotional support they received and could ask the workers for advice, as well as learning practical parenting skills.

The YJS has completed feedback through in-depth interviews with a small number of children who had been remanded or sentenced to custody in the past three years. Its aim is to understand the child's journey to custody, their individual experiences, whether they experienced discrimination, and how they had been affected by their contact with the service and other agencies. The findings from this will influence provision in the future.

The YJS ensures that it gets feedback from children and both parents where possible and it uses different ways to do this, including online surveys and self-assessments. Although feedback is recorded, it is not analysed, which is a missed opportunity for the YJS to use what is said to influence the way that services are delivered.

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 31 children who consented, and nine children replied. When asked how they rated the service they had received from the YJS, six responded, with a score of 10 out of 10, with one child saying:

"They understood why I've done what I've done, and they really tried to help me."

When asked how the YJS had helped them stay out of trouble, one child said:

"By offering things to keep you busy and to stop going out causing trouble, giving you lots of opportunities to turn your life around."

While another commented:

"Because they talk through things with me, and even when I went to a secure unit, they made sure they were still there helping me."

Inspectors also spoke to eight children and two parents, all felt that their YJS workers had the right skills to do the work, and all but one said that they had been able to access the right services and support to help them stay out of trouble.

One child, talking about their case manager, said:

"They knew what they were talking about and had a good understanding of my situation. They could say things in a way that young people understand. They listened really well and gave good advice."

Diversity

The inspection found that children from the two authorities are treated equitably and staff ensure that they have access to resources based upon their needs, which is not restricted by their locality.

The caseload at the time of inspection showed 11 per cent were black, Asian or minority ethnic children. Given the balance of the caseload in BCP, black, Asian or minority ethnic children are not therefore over-represented as a whole. The distribution within the caseload shows a higher proportion of children at the court order stage who are black, Asian or minority ethnic children than the proportion of those at the out-of-court stage.

The YJS identified that only two per cent of its workforce are black, Asian or minority ethnic, and therefore has links with local organisations who can provide mentors who can support a child's understanding of their heritage if needed. When considering the child's diversity, worker allocation decisions are taken carefully to be sensitive to children's needs.

The number of girls on the caseload stays within a range of 15 to 20 per cent of the total caseload, which is consistent with national rates. The YJS is working with a small number of children who are exploring their gender identity. The YJS recognises that they have specific needs and are providing an individualised response.

At the time of inspection, the YJS had 140 open interventions, of which 20 per cent were linked to females, 64 per cent had substance misuse issues, 79 per cent had emotional, mental health, and wellbeing concerns, 48 per cent had a learning disability, learning difficulty or were subject to an education health and care plan, and 10 per cent were care-experienced children living within the YJS area. Although the YJS comments on disproportionality in its youth justice plan, it does not have a specific diversity and disproportionality policy.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 23 community sentences and one custodial sentence 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 rating² for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	96%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	88%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	79%

In assessing desistance, case managers showed a suitable understanding of the trauma that children had experienced and its impact on their behaviour and engagement. Assessments collated information from other agencies and appropriately analysed children's factors for and against desistance, including their attitude and motivation for offending. Children's diversity needs were explored and assessments provided a reliable understanding of the child, their family, and their personal circumstances. The views of both parents were prioritised, and case managers focused on children's strengths, and levels of maturity. Case managers had considered the wishes and needs of victims, allowing restorative opportunities to be offered to them.

Cases appropriately identified the potential risks to children's safety and wellbeing and included information from other agencies, for example, health and speech and language. Case managers considered the external factors that could be put in place to support the safety of children.

In assessing children's risk of harm to others, information from other agencies informed the assessment. This included information from the police which was used to help analyse the internal and external controls, and interventions needed to manage the risks that children presented to others. However, there was limited evidence that case managers consistently considered who was at risk, and the nature of that risk and this is an area that needs further development.

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 at web link.](#)

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:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	96%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	96%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	71%

Where possible, cases were allocated to practitioners who had already worked with the child and their family. Planning for the child's interventions evidenced that the case manager knew the child well, considered their strengths, and understood their ability to change.

Planning to support the children's desistance was a strong area of practice. Case managers considered the diverse needs of children and could plan access to the appropriate services. Plans were adapted to the child's needs, and the views of both parents and carers were taken into consideration. Planning was linked to the child's assessed desistance factors and took account of their level of motivation to engage. YJS education workers were part of the plan to keep children motivated while appropriate provision was being found for them or while their education, health and care plan (EHCP) was being reviewed. Planning to take account of the wishes of victims was inconsistent. Restorative justice practitioners worked well with engaging victims and consistency would ensure this was better evidenced in cases.

Planning to keep children safe was strong in most of the cases inspected. Other agencies were involved in the planning process, which built on existing relationships with other professionals, including YJS education officers and complex safeguarding team social workers. Case managers planned for the interventions that were needed to support children and managed the risk to their safety and wellbeing. However, contingency planning to address escalating concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing were not adequately detailed in some cases. This was linked to case managers not being invited consistently to children's social care meetings and so not having all the information about the child's current circumstances.

Planning to manage a child's risk of harm to others was the weakest area of practice in the post-court cases inspected. Planning did promote the safety of other people and addressed the safety of specific victims in most cases. Case managers did use the YJS risk assessment panel and, where appropriate, MAPPAs (multi-agency public protection arrangements) meetings to help inform the planning process.

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 at web link.](#)

However, as some of the wider potential risks around the child’s risk of harm to others had not been identified as part of the assessment, this impacted on the quality of contingency planning. Where there were concerns that the child’s risk to others could increase, contingency planning was not evident in nearly half of the relevant cases.

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:

	% 'Yes'
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child’s desistance?	75%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	88%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	79%

The delivery of services and interventions showed that the case manager had built a strong relationship with the child and their family, and this was evident in the child’s engagement.

To help support desistance, most cases demonstrated the importance that case managers gave to considering children’s diverse needs. The interventions delivered built on the case manager’s understanding of the child, their strengths, and their ability to engage. In all cases, practitioners prioritised developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers. Case managers were involved in multi-agency discussions and meetings to ensure that provision was in place for the child when their involvement with the YJS ended.

Interventions were identified to manage the child’s safety and wellbeing. There was evidence of joint working with specialist staff, including the nurses and the psychologist, as well as early help services, substance misuse workers, and the complex safeguarding team. Inspectors noted excellent work from the education workers, who advocated for children to ensure that they received appropriate provision, and the speech and language therapists, who shared their assessments with education and care providers to help them understand the child’s needs and adapt their services accordingly.

We found some variability in the delivery of services and interventions that considered a child’s risk of harm to others. When considering the risk that some children pose to others, the protection of actual and potential victims was not consistently considered in all cases. However, there was good multi-agency coordination to monitor the risks, and this included MAPPA meetings. The

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 at web link.](#)

communication and information sharing between the YJS police officers and case managers was timely and effective in ensuring all professionals were updated and the child’s risk was being well managed.

2.4. Reviewing



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

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

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child’s desistance?	88%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	83%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	71%

Reviews were completed at key points in the order, and many cases showed ongoing reviewing of desistance factors as the order progressed. It was pleasing that case managers continued to build on children’s strengths, responding to their diversity needs, and considered the changes in their personal circumstances. There was evidence that the focus of interventions changed if needed and the child’s ongoing plan was adjusted when necessary. The reviews considered children’s motivation appropriately as the order progressed, and the child and their parents or carers continued to be involved in the reviewing process.

Reviews of the safety and wellbeing of children detailed the changes in children’s circumstances and case managers responded accordingly. There were examples of professional discussions and meetings with education, health, and some children’s social care social workers. Case managers also used the risk assessment panel to help them manage any changing concerns or escalations in the risk to children’s safety and wellbeing. In nearly all cases, this resulted in adjustments to the ongoing plan of work with children, which reflected the changing circumstances.

Reviewing a child’s risk of harm to others needs strengthening in the post-court cases inspected. Case managers recognised and responded to changes in the child’s circumstances, and the reviewing process included information from, and meetings with, other agencies. However, reviews did not consistently lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan, and work to manage the risk of harm to others remained ineffectively addressed or managed.

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 at web link.](#)

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 35 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of 13 youth conditional cautions, 16 youth cautions, and six community resolutions.

3.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁶ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	86%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	71%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	60%

The YJS used a specific 'brief assessment' tool based on AssetPlus for assessing all children subject to an out-of-court disposal. Inspectors noted that the quality of the assessment depended on the experience of the practitioner and their understanding of the tool. Also, similar to the post-court cases inspected, when considering the risk a child posed to others, case managers did not routinely take into account the wider potential risks, including the nature of the risk and who was at risk.

To help identify children's desistance factors, case managers had accessed a range of sources from partner agencies and offered a sufficient analysis of children's attitudes towards, or motivations for, their offending. They focused on children's strengths and their motivation to change. Case managers involved children and their parents or carers in the assessment, and in all relevant cases the needs and wishes of victims had been considered. Assessments would be further informed, however, if children's diversity needs were taken into account consistently.

Two thirds of the cases identified and analysed sufficiently the potential risks to children's safety and wellbeing. Information from other agencies was used to inform the assessment, and there was a clear written record of children's wellbeing and how to keep them safe.

In the majority of cases, the risks to others were identified and analysed, but as stated above, in a number of cases practitioners were not recognising wider risks to other people or analysing sufficiently children's potential future harmful behaviour. Overall, however, inspectors did find that most cases assessed how to keep other people safe sufficiently.

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 at web link.](#)

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:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	89%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	86%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	80%

Planning for out-of-court disposals was the strongest area of practice when considering a child's desistance, their safety and wellbeing, and the risk they posed to others. Where possible, cases were allocated to practitioners who had already worked with the child and their family. Planning for the child's interventions evidenced that the case manager knew the child well and understood their motivation and their strengths.

Plans addressed the child's desistance factors, and case managers took account of children's diversity needs. Practitioners included children and their parents or carers and made plans proportionate to the type of disposal. They also ensured that plans reflected the wishes and needs of victims, and cases showed good examples of restorative justice work being completed. As some of the interventions were delivered within a short period, case managers appropriately concentrated on children's access to mainstream services and opportunities for community integration after the disposal had ended. This was evident in the work of the education officers and case managers who advocated for YJS children to ensure that they were receiving the appropriate provision relevant to their needs.

Planning to address children's safety and wellbeing was supported by work with substance misuse workers, the YJS health team, and, especially, the speech and language therapists. Although assessments did not always consider the wider risks the child posed to others, practitioners were strong at planning for the child's risk when related to the offence that had been committed. Plans involved other agencies where relevant and case managers addressed the concerns and risks to victims.

Both planning to address a child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others require contingency arrangements to be considered consistently. Case managers need to look beyond the offending behaviour and take into account the potential wider risk factors around the child's circumstances. Overall, however, in most cases planning to address the child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others was sufficient.

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 at web link.](#)

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating⁸ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	83%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	89%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	74%

The delivery of services and interventions was a strong area of practice which built on the assessment and the plans. Case managers could access all the services and interventions available for children on court orders for those subject to an out-of-court disposal. The interventions delivered showed that the case manager had built a strong relationship with the child and their family, and this was evident in the child's engagement with their disposal.

To help support children's desistance, case managers matched interventions to their needs and learning styles, taking account of their diversity. They were also proportionate to the type of disposal. There was good engagement with interventions, which were mainly voluntary, and case managers worked hard to establish effective working relationships with both the children and their parents or carers. Interventions considered a child's speech, language, and communication needs. In most cases, consideration had been given to how children could be linked into mainstream services once their interventions had ended.

The delivery of interventions to support children's safety and wellbeing included doing this alongside other professionals, although consideration was given to not involving too many professionals. There were examples of case managers working in a trauma-informed way and using case consultations with the health professionals to help them deliver sessions that would meet the child's needs. Nearly all the cases inspected showed that the service delivery and interventions supported the safety of children effectively.

In most cases of interventions with children to support the safety of other people, the services delivered were managing and minimising the risk of harm. Case managers, however, need to give more consideration to the protection of potential and actual victims when delivering interventions. Overall, though, the interventions delivered had supported the safety of other people in most of the cases inspected.

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 at web link.](#)

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:

- Children and families can access programmes and projects across both local authorities, ensuring they receive appropriate early intervention work.
- There is an out-of-court disposal protocol between the YJS and Dorset police.
- Frontline police officers do not give community resolutions on the street. Instead, it was good to see that the police notify agencies of all the children they encounter.
- Partnership agencies screen all children on receipt of the notification from the police, and check if the child or family are known. The responses are collated by a police sergeant who then sends them to the YJS team managers with a proposed outcome.
- Based on the screening information, an out-of-court disposal or an allocation for a YJS brief assessment is proposed. If an assessment is needed, then the case manager will visit the child and family and make a proposal based on their assessment.
- An AssetPlus is used where there are concerns about the child's level of risk, or it is a harmful sexual behaviour case.
- Any disagreements regarding the proposed outcome are discussed at the weekly panel meeting, which is attended by the police, the YJS team manager, and representatives from early help. This panel also tracks and reviews out-of-court disposal cases.
- All the interventions and services available to children on court orders can be used for children on an out-of-court disposal.
- When a child does not participate with their disposal, efforts are made to support engagement.
- Dorset Police produces a performance report, which is shared with the YJS Board and management team, that tracks the timeliness of out-of-court decisions from their initial referral to the disposal being given.
- An evaluation of out-of-court disposals was completed by Bournemouth University and Dorset police. One of its recommendations was the development of an intervention specifically looking at assaults on emergency workers, which the YJS has taken forward.
- A local scrutiny panel reviews cases and looks at the consistency of decision-making and outcomes.

Areas for improvement:

- The evidence of police and YJS joint decision-making and the rationale for the outcomes agreed were not recorded clearly or consistently.
- Staff did not always understand the process for the out-of-court disposal or that their brief assessment could influence the outcome for the child.
- The quality of assessing the risk of harm for children who are subject to an out-of-court disposal needs to improve to take account of the wider potential risks and contingency planning.
- While the reoffending of children subject to out-of-court disposal is monitored using the YJS reoffending toolkit and is reported to the YJS partnership board, there is no detailed analysis of the profile of children who reoffend and the effectiveness of the disposals they were given.

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 three cases managed by the YJS that had received a custodial sentence.

Our key findings were as follows.

Strengths:

- The YJS has a resettlement policy, which includes work with children in custody and after release from custody.
- The service manager is proactive in reporting to the partnership board on the timeliness of release addresses being confirmed. Individual case concerns are escalated with social care managers before release to expedite placement decisions.
- YJS staff described communication with the secure estate as good. Each child is allocated a resettlement worker and there are weekly conversations between the YJS and the establishment.
- Case managers attend review meetings and visit children in custody in person whenever possible to maintain and develop their working relationships.
- A YJS nurse and education worker are allocated to all children in custody to ensure access to the right provision, and to assist continuity of care during and after custody.
- The speech and language therapists share with relevant custody professionals the results of their individual assessments of children in custody.
- In the cases inspected, there was sufficient planning to support the child's accommodation on release. The quality of planning was helped by the multi-agency response that was in place, as all the cases were subject to MAPPA.
- The findings from the view-seeking work with children in custody will help the service understand the children's experiences and improve provision.

Areas for improvement:

- The resettlement policy does not contain information on recalling children to custody.
- The YJS does not have a resettlement panel, but children in custody are discussed at the risk assessment panels.
- Provision for children's education, training, and employment is affected by where they will live on release. Any issues should, therefore, continue to be escalated to the board so that accommodation is found promptly.

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.](#)