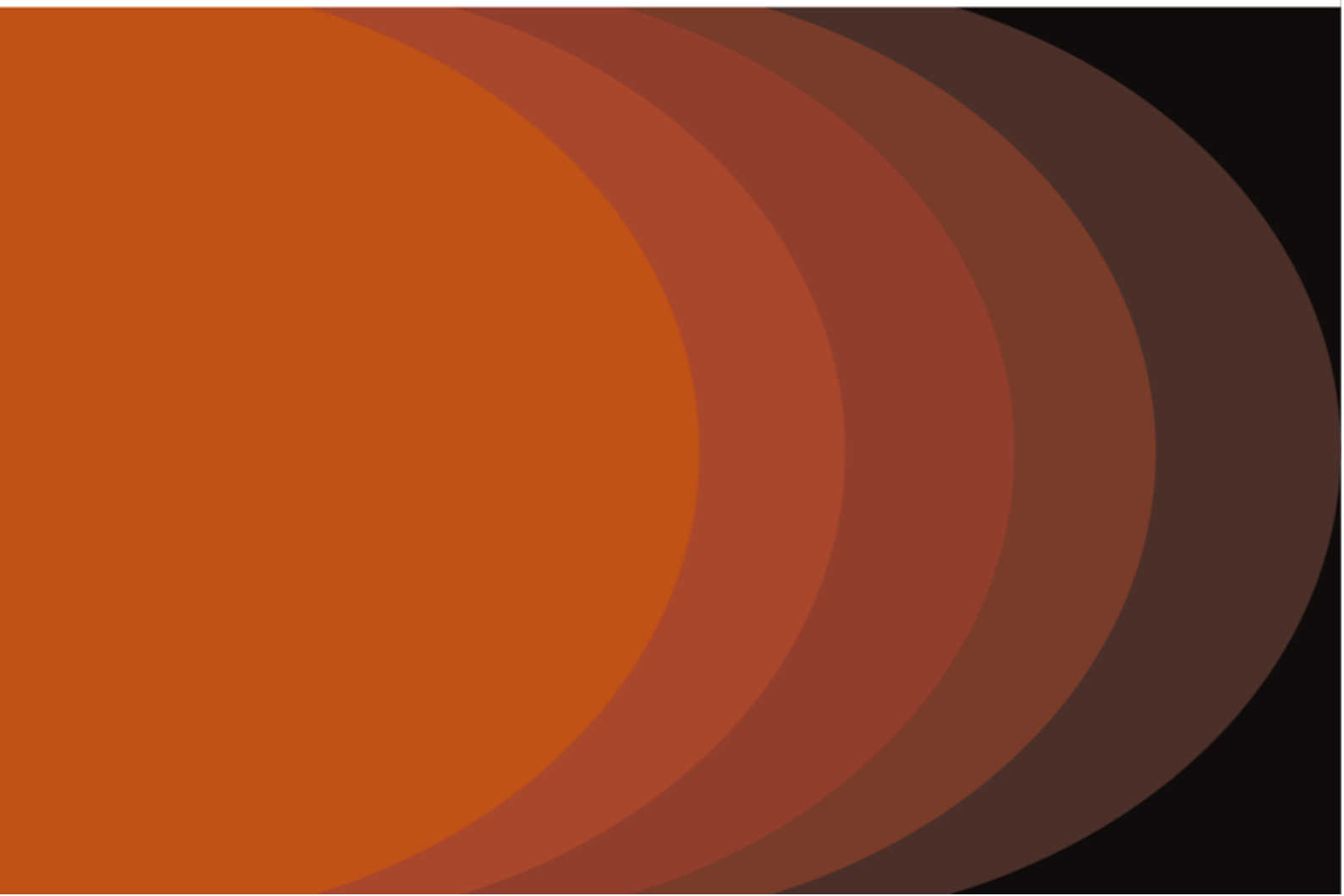




An inspection of youth offending services in
Medway

HM Inspectorate of Probation, June 2020



Acknowledgements

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Vivienne Raine, supported by a team of inspectors and colleagues from across the Inspectorate. We would like to thank all those who helped plan and took part in the inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

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Foreword

This inspection is part of our four-year programme of youth offending service inspections. We have inspected and rated Medway Youth Offending Team (YOT) 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, Medway YOT was rated as 'Requires improvement'.

After a period of uncertainty while the local authority considered outsourcing YOT provision, Medway is slowly but determinedly rebuilding its service to meet the intensive and changing needs of its caseload.

Senior managers drive the direction and ambition of the YOT, demonstrating their commitment to advocate, and achieve the best outcomes, for children. We saw examples of excellent case management and practitioners working well to understand the behaviour of children and their aspirations for the future. There was too much inconsistency in the quality of practice, however, especially relating to girls and those at risk of exploitation, which left us concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a small number of vulnerable children. We also found that service provision was better for children in the community than in custody.

The Youth Justice Partnership Board should act as the backbone of the YOT. Medway's Board has good representation from key agencies, but it failed to show us that it understood the specific issues for children in the YOT caseload or its strategies, as a partnership, to address these needs.

The planned addition of a dedicated YOT data and intelligence officer should enable the Board better to identify the YOT's strengths and areas for development, and improve its focus on evidence-based service provision.














This is a busy YOT, which works well in a number of key areas and is making steady progress to develop its service provision. We have made five recommendations which, once fully implemented, can make a considerable difference to the outcomes achieved for children supervised by this YOT.



Justin Russell

Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

| Medway Youth Offending Service | | Score | 18/36 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Overall rating | | Requires improvement |  |
| 1. Organisational delivery | | | |
| 1.1 | Governance and leadership | Requires improvement |  |
| 1.2 | Staff | Good |  |
| 1.3 | Partnerships and services | Requires improvement |  |
| 1.4 | Information and facilities | Good |  |
| 2. Court disposals | | | |
| 2.1 | Assessment | Good |  |
| 2.2 | Planning | Inadequate |  |
| 2.3 | Implementation and delivery | Good |  |
| 2.4 | Reviewing | Requires improvement |  |
| 3. Out-of-court disposals | | | |
| 3.1 | Assessment | Good |  |
| 3.2 | Planning | Requires improvement |  |
| 3.3 | Implementation and delivery | Good |  |
| 3.4 | Joint working | Good |  |

Executive summary

Overall, Medway YOT is rated as: 'Requires improvement'. This rating has been determined by inspecting the YOT in three areas of its work, referred to as 'domains'. We inspect against 12 'standards', shared between the domains. The standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.¹ Published scoring rules generate the overall YOT rating.² The findings and subsequent ratings in those domains are described below.

1. Organisational delivery



Over the past year, YOT leaders have worked hard to increase the YOT's capacity to deliver a full range of relevant and high-quality services. This followed a period of disinvestment while the local authority explored and then decided against outsourcing youth offending provision.

New initiatives with individual partners are intended to strengthen access to post-16 education and training, and help to address the rise in serious youth violence. The YOT's approach to desistance focuses on engagement and helping children reach their goals, while work takes place in appropriate and risk-assessed environments. The number of out-of-court cases is increasing, and the YOT is committed to making sure that its strategic and operational arrangements for these cases work well. The Youth Justice Partnership Board is underdeveloped, however, and does not drive the direction and ambition of the YOT. It does not have the information necessary to satisfy itself that the YOT is effectively resourced or that children are provided with the quality, range and volume of services and interventions necessary to meet their specific needs.

We interviewed the strategic manager for the YOT, the operations manager and the Chair of the Management Board. We held meetings with other members of the Board and key stakeholders.

Our key findings about organisational delivery are as follows:

- Strong internal leadership drives the YOT's agenda; they advocate for its needs and those of the children under YOT supervision.
- Practitioners are motivated and interested in achieving the best outcomes for those with whom they work.
- The Child First planning approach strengthens engagement.
- Leaders are working determinedly to improve the YOT's access to appropriate resourcing, using external funding sources well to achieve this.

¹ HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards can be found here:

<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

² Each of the 12 standards is scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0–36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows: 0–6 = 'Inadequate', 7–18 = 'Requires improvement', 19–30 = 'Good', 31–36 = 'Outstanding'.

- The YOT makes an effective contribution to out-of-court processes.
- The YOT has a strong commitment to improving service provision, drawing on examples of effective work in other YOTs to help shape its own delivery model.

But:

- The Youth Justice Partnership Board does not focus well enough on the specific needs of children working with the YOT.
- The Board does not drive the vision and strategy of the YOT, provide sufficient scrutiny of service provision or understand the risks to effective service delivery.
- The lack of in-depth needs assessment of children in the YOT caseload leaves leaders without assurance that they are providing the right level and nature of services and interventions.
- Case managers do not have access to a sufficient range of offence-focused interventions that reflect the current evidence base, contemporary lifestyles and trends in offending behaviour among children in Medway.
- There is no strategy or evidence-based approach to working with girls.

2. Court disposals



We took a detailed look at seven community sentences, six of which were referral orders, and five custodial sentences managed by the YOT. We also conducted 12 interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery; and reviewing in each of the 12 cases inspected.³ The quality of the work undertaken needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision to be rated as satisfactory.

In this YOT, assessment, and implementation and delivery were assessed as 'Good' because work on desistance, safety and wellbeing, and to keep other people safe was sufficient in at least 67 per cent of cases. The quality of case reviewing was rated as 'Requires improvement' because only half of the cases inspected met all our standards for this dimension of work. Although planning to support desistance was good, planning to keep the child, and others, safe was sufficient in less than half the cases we looked at and, thus, the overall rating given to this standard was 'Inadequate'.

Our key findings about court disposals are as follows:

- The YOT's Child First approach to supporting desistance encouraged children to participate meaningfully in identifying the work they should complete with the YOT and increased their motivation to engage with practitioners to complete this.
- Case managers undertook thorough and well-considered assessments of how to keep other people safe.

³ We inspect planning, and implementation and delivery, to keep the child themselves, and others, safe in cases where inspectors judge the classification of safety and wellbeing or risk of serious harm to be at least 'medium'. In this inspection, this was applicable to all 12 post-court cases inspected.

- Victims were given sufficient priority throughout the sentence; there was a good level of contact with victims to identify their needs and wishes, and effective work to keep them safe.
- Reparation was managed well; children could access a range of activities that supported the community and helped them to develop skills.

But:

- Assessments and planning for children in custody, who often present the highest risk of harm to others and are also the most vulnerable in terms of safety and wellbeing, were given less priority than for children in the community.
- There was insufficient planning to support safety and wellbeing, and to keep others safe, especially in relation to children at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation.
- Case managers did not consistently analyse or respond well enough to indicators that risks to the child or other people had increased.
- There was regular management oversight of casework, but this did not make enough positive difference to the quality of practice.

3. Out-of-court disposals



We inspected ten cases managed by the YOT that had received an out-of-court disposal. These included two youth conditional cautions, three youth cautions and four community resolutions. This YOT also provides assessment, planning and interventions in some cases where the police have decided on 'no further action', and we inspected the YOT's work in one of these. We interviewed the case managers in all ten cases.

We examined the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance. For the five cases where there were factors relating to serious harm,⁴ we also inspected planning, and implementation and delivery, of work to keep other people safe. In the eight cases where there were relevant factors, we looked at planning, and implementation and delivery, of work to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child. We also looked at the quality of joint working with local police. For each of our standards, the quality of the work undertaken needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision to be rated as satisfactory.

At least 70 per cent of cases inspected met all our standards for assessment, resulting in a 'Good' rating for this aspect of work. The quality of planning was rated as 'Requires improvement'. While it supported desistance well (it was sufficient in nine of the ten cases inspected), it met all our standards to keep others safe in only three of the five relevant cases. Initially, our standards on implementation and delivery, and joint working were both given a rating of 'Requires improvement'.

⁴ We inspect planning, and implementation and delivery, to keep the child themselves, and others, safe in cases where inspectors judge the classification of safety and wellbeing or risk of serious harm to be at least 'medium'. In this inspection, this was applicable to all 12 post-court cases inspected.

Following the meeting of our internal ratings panel, however, we used professional discretion to increase these ratings to 'Good'.⁵

Our key findings about out-of-court disposals were as follows:

- Case managers effectively identified and analysed a wide range of factors to understand the level and nature of risk of harm that a child posed to others.
- Victims were given appropriate priority at every stage of the out-of-court process.
- The staff's focus on building relationships led to the engagement of children in the voluntary activities offered by the YOT.
- The YOT contributed well to decisions about whether and what out-of-court disposals should be made.

But:

- The quality of joint work, especially with children's social care services, to support safety and wellbeing was not always good enough.
- In two cases, the YOT's response to new information had left vulnerable children unprotected.
- The YOT's response to child exploitation was inconsistent and left inspectors concerned about the quality of partnership work to support safety and wellbeing.

⁵ The increase to 'Good' was made on the following basis: the original rating for implementation and delivery was derived from our assessment of five cases. A more positive judgement in one case and an increase of 5 per cent would have raised the overall score for this aspect of work to 65 per cent. The initial rating for joint working was based on the quality of work in two cases. The rating was changed to reflect this and to take account of the YOT's overall performance in delivering its out-of-court work.

Recommendations

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

The Medway Youth Offending Team should:

1. make sure that case managers advocate for the needs of children in custody and that there is sufficient planning and work to support their resettlement
2. strengthen work with partners, particularly children's social care services, to support better the safety and wellbeing of children, paying particular attention to indicators that they are at risk of being exploited by others
3. make sure that planning sufficiently addresses factors linked to safety and wellbeing, and the need to keep others safe, and that this is reviewed and revised to reflect new information and the changing circumstances in a case
4. develop an evidence-based approach to working with girls that takes account of their distinct needs and translates into effective partnership work to support their safety and wellbeing, and protect other people.

The Youth Justice Partnership Board should:

5. strengthen its ambition for the YOT and develop a more coherent and strategic approach to making sure that the provision of services is evidence based and meets the specific needs of children working with the YOT.

Background

Youth offending teams (YOTs) supervise 10–18-year-olds who have been sentenced by a court, or who have come to the attention of the police because of their offending behaviour but have not been charged – instead, they were dealt with out-of-court. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation inspects both these aspects of youth offending services.

YOTs are statutory partnerships, and they are multidisciplinary, to deal with the needs of the whole child. They are required to have staff from local authority social care and education services, the police, the National Probation Service and local health services.⁶ Most YOTs are based within local authorities; however, this can vary.

YOT work is governed and shaped by a range of legislation and guidance specific to the youth justice sector (such as the National Standards for Youth Justice) or else applicable across the criminal justice sector (for example, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) guidance). The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) provides some funding to YOTs. It also monitors their performance and issues guidance to them about how things are to be done.

Medway is a unitary authority, with a youth population of 27,033. Of this, 12.9 per cent identify as black and minority ethnic, compared with 18.3 per cent of children nationally and 8.7 per cent in Medway's neighbouring county, Kent.⁷

Medway has experienced a rise in violent youth offending, gang-based drug dealing and weapons-related incidents. In 2019, Medway YOT supervised a total of 101 children given sentences by the courts. Knife crime constituted 17 per cent of the offences committed by boys; 21 per cent of offences involving violence against the person had been committed by girls.⁸ Of the 12 post-court cases we inspected, 9 involved violence against the person; 5 of these children had been given a custodial sentence. The overall rate of children entering the criminal justice system in Medway, however, is small: only 61⁹ in the 12 months to March 2019.¹⁰ Medway is part of the Kent Police area.

The YOT has experienced an extended period of change and restructure. It was considered for outsourcing for almost a year. The decision was taken in 2017 to keep the service in-house but in the interim partners had withdrawn their investment of specialist provision to the YOT. In 2019, the service was moved into Medway's Public Health Directorate. As head of the Partnership Commissioning, Resources and Youth Justice team, the portfolio of the YOT's strategic manager includes commissioning for Looked After Children and care leavers, transforming care, the Troubled Families scheme, and emotional health and wellbeing. The Chair of its Management Board (the Youth Justice Partnership Board; YJPB) has recently changed and this role is now held by the director of public health.

⁶ The *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* sets out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

⁷ Office for National Statistics. (2012). Census 2011.

⁸ Information provided by Medway YOT.

⁹ Youth Justice Board. (2019). First-time entrants, April to March 2019.

¹⁰ Office for National Statistics. (2019) UK population estimates, mid-2018.

Contextual facts

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 226 | First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in Medway ¹¹ |
| 157 | First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in South-East region |
| 222 | First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in England and Wales |
| 35.9% | Reoffending rate in Medway ¹² |
| 38.4% | Reoffending rate in England and Wales |

Population information¹³

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 277,855 | Total population in Medway |
| 27,033 | Total youth population (10-17 years) in Medway |
| 3,480 | Total black and minority ethnic youth population in Medway (Census 2011) |

Caseload information¹⁴

| Age | 10–14 | 15–17 |
|------------------|-------|-------|
| Medway YOT | 13% | 87% |
| National average | 23% | 77% |

| Race/ethnicity | White | Black and minority ethnic | Not known |
|------------------|-------|---------------------------|-----------|
| Medway YOT | 67% | 30% | 4% |
| National average | 70% | 26% | 4% |

| Gender | Male | Female |
|------------------|------|--------|
| Medway YOT | 83% | 17% |
| National average | 85% | 15% |

¹¹ Youth Justice Board. (2019). First-time entrants, April to March 2019.

¹² Ministry of Justice. (2019). Proven reoffending statistics, October 2016 to September 2017.

¹³ Office for National Statistics. (2012). Census 2011, December 2012.

¹⁴ Youth Justice Board. (2020). Youth justice annual statistics, 2018 to January 2019.

Additional caseload data¹⁵

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| 73 | Total current caseload, of which: |
| 52 (71.2%) | court disposals |
| 21 (28.8%) | out-of-court disposals |

Of the 52 court disposals

| | |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| 42 (57.5%) | on community sentences |
| 3 (4.1%) | in custody |
| 7 (9.6%) | on licence |

Of the 21 out-of-court disposals

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1 (1.4%) | youth conditional caution |
| 7 (9.6%) | youth caution |
| 13 (17.8%) | community resolution or other out-of-court disposal |

Education and child protection status of caseload

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| 12 (17%) | Current caseload 'Looked After Children' resident in the YOT area |
| 1 (1%) | Current caseload 'Looked After Children' placed outside the YOT area |
| 7 (10%) | Current caseload with child protection plan |
| 11 (15%) | Current caseload with child in need plan |
| 10 (14%) | Current caseload aged 16 and under not in school/pupil referral unit/alternative education |
| 13 (18%) | Current caseload aged 16 and under in a pupil referral unit or alternative education |
| 30 (41%) | Current caseload aged 17+ not in education, training or employment |

For children subject to court disposals:

| Offence types ¹⁶ | % |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Violence against the person | 9 (75%) |
| Robbery | 2 (17%) |
| Criminal damage | 1 (8%) |

¹⁵ Data supplied by the YOT, reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

¹⁶ Data from the cases assessed during this inspection.



1. Organisational delivery

Over the past year, YOT leaders have worked hard to increase the YOT's capacity to deliver a full range of relevant and high-quality services. This followed a period of disinvestment while the local authority explored and then decided against outsourcing youth offending provision.

New initiatives with individual partners are intended to strengthen access to post-16 education and training, and help to address the rise in serious youth violence. The YOT's approach to desistance focuses on engagement and helping children reach their goals, while work takes place in appropriate and risk-assessed environments. The number of out-of-court cases are increasing, and the YOT is committed to making sure its strategic and operational arrangements for these cases work well. The Youth Justice Partnership Board (YJPB) is underdeveloped, however, and does not drive the direction and ambition of the YOT. It does not have the information necessary to satisfy itself that the YOT is effectively resourced or that children are provided with the quality, range and volume of services and interventions necessary to meet their specific needs.

Strengths:

- Strong internal leadership drives the YOT's agenda; they advocate for its needs and those of the children under YOT supervision.
- Practitioners are motivated and interested in achieving the best outcomes for those with whom they work.
- The Child First planning approach strengthens engagement.
- Leaders are working determinedly to improve the YOT's access to appropriate resourcing, using external funding sources well to achieve this.
- The YOT makes an effective contribution to out-of-court processes.
- The YOT has a strong commitment to improving service provision, drawing on examples of effective work in other YOTs to help shape its own delivery model.

Areas for improvement:

- The YJPB does not focus well enough on the specific needs of children working with the YOT.
- The Board does not drive the vision and strategy of the YOT, provide sufficient scrutiny of service provision or understand the risks to effective service delivery.
- The lack of in-depth needs assessment of children in the YOT caseload leaves leaders without assurance that they are providing the right level and nature of services and interventions.
- Case managers do not have access to a sufficient range of offence-focused interventions that reflect the current evidence base, contemporary lifestyles and trends in offending behaviour among children in Medway.
- There is no strategy or evidence-based approach to working with girls.

Organisations that are well led and well managed are more likely to achieve their aims. We inspect against four standards.

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.

Requires improvement

Key data¹⁷

| | |
|--|----------|
| Total spend in previous financial year | £655,327 |
| Total projected budget in current financial year (2019/2020) | £692,589 |
| of which, contribution from MoJ | £304,366 |

In making a judgement about governance and leadership, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

Is there a clear local vision and strategy for the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

The YOT has a vision and ambition that:

“through effective partnership working, children at risk of, or involved in, offending will be engaged and supported to lead safe, law-abiding lives. We want them to reach their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community”.

The new chair (Medway’s director of public health) of the YJPB, which oversees the YOT, has a clear and thorough knowledge of issues that affect the health and wellbeing of children in Medway. His challenge to the Board is already leading to developments, such as the reintroduction of the intensive supervision and surveillance (ISS) scheme; however, he is yet to have enough understanding of the particular needs of children working with the YOT to advocate for them effectively.

Key members of the YJPB were relatively new to their Board role at the time of this inspection. They were not conversant with the YOT’s vision or able to articulate their roles, responsibilities and the strengths of working as a Board to help achieve it. The head of service determines the strategic direction of the YOT, enabling change with individual partners but without effective direction, leadership and governance from the YJPB.

Local partnership strategies are often devised and implemented outside the Board and focus on broader groups of children – for example, improving education provision for children looked after by the local authority.

The Board is not focused on, or responding sufficiently to, risks to the service. It does not have a clear idea about the level of resources that the YOT needs, or the benefits that a properly resourced service would accrue.

¹⁷ Data provided by the YOT.

Medway YOT does not have the partnership capacity to manage the complexity of its cases. Discussions at Board level have helped to make sure that statutory partners fulfil their duty to support YOT services – for example, through the provision of a part-time probation officer. The YOT also has the support of a police officer for the equivalent of one day a week, although he is not based with the rest of the team. The role of the YOT police officer, as set out in national guidance, is far reaching,¹⁸ and the Board has yet to satisfy itself that these objectives can be achieved through the current limited arrangements. Other barriers to partners providing the necessary level of resources have yet to be fully explored or addressed by the Board. They need to be, to help the YOT fulfil specific objectives in its strategic plan – for instance, to provide timely, ‘easy and natural access’ to emotional and mental health, and speech and language therapies.

Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?

The YOT has links with a range of partnership boards that can strengthen work to protect children and protect the public. These include the Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership, Kent’s Reoffending and Criminal Justice Boards, and Medway’s Community Safety Partnership.

The service works well with partners, including Kent YOT, to explore external funding sources. One example is their recent successful bid to the Home Office to provide a specialist response to the growth of serious youth violence in Medway.

Children’s social care services have concentrated on improving their internal service provision since being rated as ‘Inadequate’ by Ofsted in August 2019. They would benefit from widening their focus to strengthen the partnership with the YOT. Partnership working is supported by the joint exploitation and high-risk panels. Too often, however, the quality of partnership working at an operational level relies on the strength of the relationship between the child’s social worker and YOT case manager. There are no formal strategies, agreements or policies to strengthen the lines of accountability or describe how the YOT and children’s social care services will work together to support the safety and wellbeing needs of children working with the YOT.

Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?

YOT leaders motivate staff to work well with children. They model the behaviour they expect to see in their staff and create a culture that helps to achieve the YOT’s vision. Managers take a facilitative approach, empowering practitioners to advocate for children, challenge leaders and promote their ideas for effective practice.

The 2019/2020 delivery plan does not help staff to understand their role in meeting the ambitions of the YOT. The objectives in this plan are broad, and so-called outcome measures, such as ‘children feel they have a voice and it makes a difference’, ‘learning improves practice’ and ‘improved education, training and employment’, are hard to measure.

Like other local authorities, the strategic leadership of Medway YOT is part of a busy portfolio for the head of the Partnership Commissioning, Resources and Youth Justice team. This is a small YOT, with limited management tiers to provide effective oversight of its operational delivery.

¹⁸ Youth Justice Board. (2014). *The role of the YOT police officer*.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Key staffing data¹⁹

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent, FTE) | 17.4 |
| Of which, FTE case managers | 12.5 |
| Vacancy rate (total unfilled posts as percentage of total staff headcount) | 11.5% |
| Vacancy rate case managers only (total unfilled case manager posts as percentage of total case manager headcount) | 12% ²⁰ |
| Average annual working days sickness (all staff) | 2.9 |
| Staff attrition (percentage of all staff leaving in 12-month period) | 17.25% |

In making a judgement about staffing, we take into account the answers to the following four questions:

Do staffing and workload levels support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

Caseloads are complex; staff said that they were busy but, generally, workloads are manageable. At the time of inspection, the YOT was expecting caseloads to reduce with the imminent addition of a social work-qualified case manager.

Recognising the increase and complexity of out-of-court work, managers have taken action to balance out-of-court and post-court workloads by introducing the generic case manager role. Case managers attend case allocation meetings that are used to decide roles and responsibilities for each case, and provide additional information – for instance, social worker names. The allocation of out-of-court cases is supported by the provision of written instructions on the specific tasks to be undertaken in each case.

Do the skills of YOT staff support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

Staff across the YOT are interested in the lives of the children with whom they work, and motivated to work creatively with them to achieve the most positive outcomes.

Case managers said that they have the skills needed to advocate on behalf of children and to manage their caseloads. We saw evidence of this in many of the cases inspected. Some complex cases are managed jointly by a manager and case

¹⁹ Data supplied by YOT and reflecting staffing at the time of the inspection announcement.

²⁰ Data supplied by YOT, based on staffing and workload at the time of the inspection announcement.

manager. This helps to ensure that the needs of the children are met and supports the skills development of less experienced case managers.

Despite the level of commitment and confidence among case managers, inspectors asked for immediate remedial action to be taken in two cases and for reassurance about missing information in a small number of other cases. In each event, the YOT responded quickly and effectively to our concerns.

Practitioners have a range of career backgrounds and qualifications. Qualified social workers have a job description that reflects their knowledge and qualification; however, the overall caseload of the YOT has become far more challenging. While efforts are made to allocate the most complex cases to case managers with social work qualifications, this approach has not been sustainable, and cases are often allocated simply on the basis of workload.

YOT staff develop their skills and qualifications – for example, to become qualified social workers or specialists in programmes, or to gain leadership skills. These opportunities are negotiated on an individual staff basis, however, and not all practitioners are confident that they will be supported by the YOT to do this.

Does the oversight of work support high-quality delivery and professional development?

Practitioners value the support they receive from managers and said that, where necessary, adjustments had been made to take account of their individual working needs. They also enjoyed the recognition they receive for good work. Staff have been submitted for the Medway team of the year and Medway staff awards.

Case managers consider that the monthly supervision and management oversight of their cases helps to improve their practice. We found that, while AssetPlus assessment and plans were counter-signed in the cases we inspected, management oversight did not make enough difference to the quality of practice to keep the child or others safe.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

Training and development does not follow a formal workforce learning and development plan. YOT practitioners advised that their training and development needs are being met, however, and that they have attended a range of programmes on AIM3 (Assessment, Intervention and Moving-on project), self-identity theory, safeguarding and positive behaviour support (an approach to supporting positive behaviour in children with more intensive needs).

All practitioners are expected to have participated in case formulation and trauma-informed practice training. The YOT is working with children's social care services to encourage their 'buy-in' to this. It is too soon to conclude whether practitioners have embedded this learning into practice.

Five of the cases we inspected were eligible for MAPPA. MAPPA is included in the YOT's management of risk policy but not all case managers have enough awareness of the relevant processes.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Requires improvement

| | |
|--|-----|
| Percentage of current caseload with mental health issues ²¹ | 33% |
| Percentage of current caseload with substance misuse issues | 54% |
| Percentage of current caseload with an education, health and care plan | 9% |

The YOT is making slow but consistent progress in developing the quality, range and volume of its services. Reparation and victims work are embedded well, and the YOT's commitment to trauma-informed practice is evidenced in its approach to case management and efforts to recruit a specialist to sustain this. As the YOT recognises, however, it currently lacks the data to determine and meet the specific needs of the children it supervises. There are no strategies in place to support the effective provision of mainstream services, to engage effectively with girls or to make sure that interventions used by case managers are appropriate and effective. For these reasons, the YOT's performance against this standard has been rated as 'Requires improvement'.

In making a judgement about partnerships and services, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

Is there a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of children, to ensure that the YOT can deliver well-targeted services?

Managers understand the ethnic background of children living in Medway and the structural barriers (for example, reduced access to relevant post-16 education) facing those who are most likely to come into contact with the YOT.

Disproportionality was identified as a priority area to address in 2019 but, after discussion, the YJPB agreed that this was not a matter for Medway YOT to address. They identified that the issue related to custody rates – specifically, the number of children of black and minority ethnic heritage who were previously unknown to the YOT and whose offences had crossed the seriousness threshold for a custodial sentence. Kent police are supporting a county-wide project to understand the over-representation of black and minority ethnic communities in the criminal justice system, however, and plan to keep Medway's YJPB updated about the learning from this.

Nineteen per cent of children working with the YOT at the time of our inspection were girls, a similar proportion to the total working with the YOT throughout 2019.²² There was no strategy in place that set out how to work with girls, among whom violent offending is increasing. Sixty-two per cent of offences committed by girls in 2019 involved violence towards others.²³ YOT data indicates that 69 per cent of its staff are

²¹ Data supplied by YOS.

²² See footnote 21.

²³ See footnote 21. This percentage was calculated by combining offences involving actual violence against the person, with those involving threatening behaviour and knife crime.

female and yet inspectors found that girls' cases were being allocated to male case managers. Not enough consideration was being given to the girls' thoughts about this, to their specific vulnerability factors or to whether a case manager had the right skills and experience to meet their distinct needs. We judged that this had an impact on the quality of case management.

Service provision is not guided by a comprehensive analysis of the profile of children working with the YOT. The local authority performance and intelligence analyst provides data on request, to support commissioning. She was in the process of compiling data relating to YOT children for Medway Public Health's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Being based outside the YOT, she is less able to understand the intricacies of this work, and is unable to interrogate the YOT's Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) case management system to provide in-depth data to help monitor and inform the YOT's strategic decisions. Performance reports are compiled manually from spreadsheets. The YOT, acknowledging that it should better understand the behaviour and specific needs of the children with whom it works, had recently made a successful bid to fund a YOT data and intelligence officer.

While the YOT's strategic plan includes an objective to provide better access to emotional wellbeing, mental health, and speech and language therapies, leaders are not yet able to draw on relevant data to help them understand the detail and extent of this need. This has left senior leaders linking their decisions about how to resource provision to the demand from case managers for these services, without analysing why the number of referrals is low.

Does the YOT partnership have access to the volume, range and quality of services and interventions to meet the needs of all children?

Victims are provided with a quick and thoughtful service, and the YOT is working to address gaps in provision for victims of children given out-of-court disposals.

Reparation is tailored to the needs of each case, and the child's participation is properly risk assessed and evaluated. Children participate in a range of activities, including structured leisure and learning activities, and projects to support the community, such as repairing bikes and donating them to victims and others who need them.

Example of notable practice:

The YOT's Acorns initiative is a strength, receiving excellent feedback from those who attend.

This is an initiative for parents/carers who suffer domestic abuse from their children. The YOT and early help teams refer to the programme, which, facilitated by two workers (one a trained counsellor), follows a structured approach to helping parents/carers devise strategies to cope and respond effectively to their situations. Following an initial one-to-one assessment, parents/carers are invited to attend 10 weekly sessions, during which visiting specialists provide information about services available to help them. Participants are encouraged to share and discuss their negative experiences and acknowledge their children's positive attributes. Each session ends with guided mediation and relaxation.

Having completed the initial 10 sessions, parents/carers are invited to attend further sessions, to learn how to implement strategies (based on Omer's (2004) approach to non-violent resistance).

The YOT hopes to secure the sustainability of Acorns through the introduction of parent/carer Acorn Ambassadors, who, it is hoped, will encourage the participation of others and progress to facilitating the programme.

The YOT has worked consistently to embed a trauma-informed approach in its practice. Following the case formulation training, it commissioned the short-term help of a forensic psychologist to help practitioners to use their learning. The YOT is now working with the local pupil referral unit (PRU)²⁴ to recruit a permanent forensic psychologist to support a trauma-informed approach in both the YOT and the PRU.

Medway has also reintroduced its ISS scheme. This had fallen into decline, but the YOT and the Medway youth service worked with the Department for Work and Pensions to create an intensive programme to meet the needs of children working with the YOT. Children participating in the scheme are able to earn an accredited award through ASDAN's²⁵ programme, 'Be yourself'.

There is no system in place to make sure that in-house interventions to address offending behaviour reflect the current evidence base. Case managers are using old interventions – for example, the weapons awareness pack – and handpicking from this the sections that meet the needs of their cases.

Are arrangements with statutory partners, providers and other agencies established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services?

The YOT has a strong partnership with Open Road, which provides substance misuse services. Children have good, flexible access to a dedicated YOT substance abuse practitioner, who uses the YOT information technology (IT) recording system to support his own planning and delivery. Open Road's extended service includes awareness raising sessions for children relating to sexual health and the dangers of sexual and criminal exploitation.

Case managers regularly make referrals to an education, training and employment specialist, who dedicates at least one day a week to the YOT. She is highly regarded for her determined efforts to support children, including her attendance at pre-release meetings in the secure estate. Post-16 education and training provision has decreased substantially in Medway, however, and there is too little available to meet demand. More than 40 per cent of children aged over 16 working with the YOT are not in post-16 education, employment or training. The YOT is working with the Looked After Children and leaving care commissioning lead to create alternative provision. This will be available to YOT children who are looked after by the local authority, who comprise about 20 per cent of the caseload.

Medway's Public Health Service has commissioned METRO to provide sexual health services to children across Medway. This provides training opportunities for practitioners, free family planning services, support to men who have sex with men, and programmes of work specifically for boys to support their self-identity and healthy relationships;²⁶ however, this service is not tailored to the specific needs of the girls working with the YOT. Pregnancy and exploitation were critical features in some of the cases assessed during this inspection, yet children are referred to an external provider rather than receiving the necessary joined-up health/YOT approach to address their specific needs and vulnerabilities.

A speech and language therapist provides two sessions a month, assessing the needs of children on the YOT caseload but without the opportunity to contribute to interventions. Child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) nurses visit the YOT once a week, to provide case managers with advice and support. Thirty-three

²⁴ An alternative education provider specifically for children who are unable to attend mainstream school and who are not home schooled.

²⁵ ASDAN is a charity that provides accredited programmes and educational qualifications for children.

²⁶ Information on the Family Information Services Medway webpage.

per cent of children working with the YOT at the time of our inspection were identified (from AssetPlus assessments) as having emotional health and wellbeing/mental health needs. Since July 2019, every child working with the YOT has had an initial CAMHS assessment within 12 weeks of referral. The YOT acknowledges that, thereafter, there can be a long interval before they participate in a neurodevelopmental intervention (up to two years), but less than 10 per cent wait more than 18 weeks before accessing professional emotional wellbeing and mental health services.²⁷ This represents a commendable reduction in wait times from the previous year; however, inspectors heard, from staff and partners, that children were waiting too long for both their neurodevelopmental and trauma-focused therapy. Additionally, children who are not registered with a general practitioner (GP) in Medway have no access to Medway's CAMHS or speech and language services.

Ofsted's recent 'Inadequate' rating for Medway children's social care services reflects wider problems with this service, including the quality of their work with the YOT. This had an impact, especially, on the effectiveness of joint work to assess and address the needs of children leaving custody and to protect those at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation. While there is inconsistency in the quality of engagement between the YOT and children's social care services, there is a clear pathway through which case managers can escalate their concerns.

The YOT has been integral to the success of Medway's out-of-court disposal scheme, helping to shape procedures and guidance to support this. It contributes well to the joint decision-making process, making effective use of an agreed proforma to provide a thorough assessment of factors relating to the offence and the child's lived experience. Out-of-court decisions are well considered and, while there is no limit to how many out-of-court disposals an individual child can receive, decisions are based on the individual circumstances in a case and take account of the number and type of disposals given previously and how well these have been completed. Of the 89 children given an out-of-court disposal between February 2019 and February 2020, only 19 received more than 1, and only 6 received more than 2.²⁸ The reoffending rate among children completing out-of-court disposals has shown an overall downward trend since 2017/2018, and for the fourth quarter of 2018/2019 it stood at 17 per cent.²⁹

Involvement of children and their parents/carers

The YOT listens well to the opinions of its children. For example, children are invited to meetings to share their experiences and views about the YOT. These are videoed and shown to the Board to help inform its discussions. On occasion, they will attend Board meetings in person, to share their thoughts and opinions. We sought the views of children as part of our inspection and received positive feedback from all those responding to us.

YOT staff say that their views are listened to and taken into consideration. The YOT's volunteers are content that their feedback is sought appropriately.

²⁷ Data provided by the YOT.

²⁸ Performance and Intelligence Business Partner: Out-of-court disposals. Analysis of data from IYSS 1/2/19 to 29/2/20.

²⁹ Medway Youth Offending Service Performance Digest Quarter 2, 2019/20.

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

In making a judgement about staffing, we take into account the answers to the following four questions:

Are the necessary policies and guidance in place to enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

YOT staff have access to a range of policies and guidance, and understand these. The majority of the documents are reviewed and updated appropriately.

The quality assurance framework provides effective guidance to case managers about the work to be checked, and how. Quality assurance extends to the Child First planning process, which, it is expected, will be discussed with case managers during their management supervision sessions.

Does the YOT's delivery environment(s) meet the needs of all children and enable staff to deliver a quality service?

The main YOT building has been risk assessed by the local authority. The YOT, with the input of children, has improved the space available for supervision appointments, redecorating this to provide a child-friendly, confidential area. Shared with the Medway youth service, the building also provides a social area and sports hall. These facilities are actively used by the YOT, with the kitchen space utilised to support life skills such as cooking and laundry washing.

YOT workers use a safety questionnaire to learn from children where there are risks to them or others, and identify relevant, safe venues for their meetings. These include Open Road facilities, libraries and other community venues. Referral order panels are moved to alternative venues to meet the needs of the child.

Staff are content that the YOT building is suitable for work with children.

Do the information and communication technology (ICT) systems enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

Although the YOT sits outside Medway's children's directorate, YOT staff have read-only access to children's social care services' information management systems. This is a helpful arrangement in cases where case managers have difficulties in contacting relevant social workers. Open Road substance misuse workers with open YOT cases can access and record information on the YOT IT recording system, and are actively doing so.

Practitioners are supported to work remotely through the provision of mobile IT equipment and phones. Most staff say that their IT systems support their work sufficiently well.

Is analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement?

The YOT demonstrates its interest in promoting improvement, drawing on the information available to support this. It learns from HMI Probation inspections and uses them to improve service provision. It has visited Essex YOS to learn from its positive inspection, and volunteered to participate in HMI Probation's YOT inspection programme pilot.

The YOT works to a quality assurance framework that sets out the specific areas of work to be audited, and how – including the completion of referral order reports and the Pathways and Planning section of AssetPlus. Staff appreciate the benefits that this has brought to their practice. The YOT has been working with children's services to adapt their audit tool, to help to assess and improve the quality of practice across the services.

The YOT's risk management policy provides a comprehensive overview of YOT priorities and processes, drawing on the learning from a recent serious case review to improve escalation processes.

The Board is provided with quarterly performance reports that provide data and commentary on the YOT's performance against national and local indicators. Action is taken to understand better some of the issues this raises – for instance, a task and finish group to explore the prevalence of police 'no further action' decisions. There is no evidence, however, that the Board or YOT has agreed a strategy to address issues in performance.

Where data is available, the YOT draws on this to explore issues and resolve them. An example is the recent paper outlining deficits in the commissioned restorative justice service for out-of-court disposal work.

The YOT has invested considerably to make sure that its Child First planning approach is evidence based. This initiative draws on desistance and identity theory, and has been highlighted as a good model nationally, although its impact has yet to be formally evaluated. There is no system in place to evaluate if the range and effectiveness of services and interventions delivered by the YOT meet the needs of its children.



2. Court disposals

We took a detailed look at seven community sentences, six of which were referral orders, and five custodial sentences managed by the YOT. We also conducted 12 interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery; and of reviewing in each of the 12 cases inspected.³⁰ The quality of the work undertaken needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision to be rated as satisfactory.

In this YOT, assessment, and implementation and delivery were assessed as 'Good' because work on desistance, safety and wellbeing, and to keep other people safe was sufficient in at least 67 per cent of cases. The quality of case reviewing was rated as 'Requires improvement' because only half of the cases inspected met all our standards for this dimension of work. Although planning to support desistance was good, planning to keep the child, and others, safe was sufficient in less than half the cases we looked at and, thus, the overall rating given to this standard was 'Inadequate'.

Case managers demonstrated their interest and motivation in helping children to complete their sentences successfully and safely. The YOT's Child First approach to desistance was firmly embedded, and practitioners were comfortable and skilled at applying it; however, they were not all skilled and competent in supporting safety and wellbeing, and keeping others safe. Some applied their professional curiosity to understand all the factors in their cases, and made determined efforts to work with partners to implement the right interventions. Others were less knowledgeable and able to identify and address issues in their more complex cases, and were not taking sufficient measures to keep the children and their victims safe.

Strengths:

- The YOT's Child First approach to supporting desistance encouraged children to participate meaningfully in identifying the work they should complete with the YOT and increased their motivation to engage with practitioners to complete this.
- Case managers undertook thorough and well-considered assessments of how to keep other people safe.
- Victims were given sufficient priority throughout the sentence; there was a good level of contact with victims to identify their needs and wishes, and effective work to keep them safe.
- Reparation was managed well: children could access a range of activities that supported the community and helped them to develop skills.

³⁰ We inspect planning, and implementation and delivery, to keep the child themselves, and others, safe in cases where inspectors judge the classification of safety and wellbeing or risk of serious harm to be at least 'medium'. In this inspection, this was applicable to all 12 post-court cases inspected.

Areas for improvement:

- Assessments and planning for children in custody, who often present the highest risk of harm to others and are also the most vulnerable in terms of safety and wellbeing, were given less priority than for children in the community.
- There was insufficient planning to support safety and wellbeing, and to keep others safe, especially in relation to children at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation.
- Case managers did not consistently analyse or respond well enough to indicators that risks to the child or other people had increased.
- There was regular management oversight of casework, but this did not make enough positive difference to the quality of practice.

Work with children sentenced by the courts will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

2.1. Assessment

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

Good

Our rating³¹ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

| | % yes |
|---|------------|
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance? | 100% |
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe? | 67% |
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe? | 92% |

The YOT understood the issues linked to desistance and how to keep other people safe. The quality of assessments for safety and wellbeing was variable, and in some cases focused too little on the lived experience of the child. The score for this area of work was 67 per cent, leading to an overall rating for assessment of 'Good'.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?

Work to assess the factors linked to a child's desistance was outstanding.

Engagement was a priority for this YOT. Case managers worked closely with the children, to understand the wider social context and range of factors that had an impact on their lives. They routinely considered their strengths and interests, and their ability and motivation to comply with the requirements of their sentence.

³¹ 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. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

One inspector noted:

“The case manager took account of Mike’s history and complex family dynamics. She identified barriers with his speech, language and communication that had been overlooked previously. Mike’s mother was reluctant to engage with the YOT, so the case manager involved Dad, who had been absent from Mike’s life for some time. As a result, they began to rebuild their relationship”.

In the main, case managers drew on the views of victims and the potential for restorative justice. The YOT’s restorative justice lead contacted victims as necessary, but this was not always considered as part of the overall assessment of desistance.

Overall, case managers did enough to analyse and understand factors linked to desistance in every case, completing their assessments within an appropriate timeframe and recording these well.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

Most of the children working with the YOT were vulnerable. In 5 of the 12 cases we assessed, they had been subject to a child protection plan or Section 47 enquiry during the period we were inspecting. Overall, work to understand the safety and wellbeing factors that had an impact on the children working with the YOT was good.

Case managers consistently analysed the controls and interventions that could help to keep a child safe, drawing on information provided by other agencies.

In some cases, however, they had not identified critical factors linked to a child’s safety and wellbeing, or had not sufficiently analysed the significance of these or their potential impact. Issues relating to child exploitation or adverse childhood experiences were not consistently explored in enough depth.

We agreed with the classification of safety and wellbeing applied at the start of sentence in 8 of the 12 cases. In 4, the level of need had been underestimated. In one of these, a child was placing himself in harmful situations, drinking alcohol to excess and engaging in unhealthy sexual behaviour, and he had revealed feelings of anxiety, yet his safety and wellbeing needs were categorised as ‘low’.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Assessment relating to the need to keep others safe was outstanding, and among the best we have seen during this inspection programme.

Case managers drew consistently on the information available from partners and previous YOT records to identify and understand the risk of harm that a child posed to others.

They made clear the nature and level of harm to individuals – victims of previous harmful behaviour and potential victims – and, in our judgement, made the correct classification of risk of harm in every case.

Assessments were recorded well and reflected the quality of the assessments being undertaken.

2.2. Planning



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

Inadequate

Our rating³² for planning is based on the following key questions:

| | % yes |
|---|------------|
| Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child or desistance? | 75% |
| Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child or safe? | 42% |
| Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? | 42% |

Inspectors saw examples of excellent planning for work in the community, consistent with the YOT's Child First approach. The rating for this standard, however, was driven by insufficient planning for children in custody, and a failure to address specific risks to the children, themselves, and their victims. The scores for this standard allowed us to consider whether to apply professional discretion. After careful consideration, it was agreed that the 'Inadequate' rating was appropriate and accurately reflected the YOT's performance.

Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

Planning to support the child's desistance was good.

There was a distinct difference between the quality of planning for children in a custodial rather than community setting. We found little evidence of meaningful planning for work in custody to support desistance. As we inspected five custodial cases, this made a substantial impact on our overall judgement about the YOT's performance.

By contrast, the YOT's Child First approach strengthened planning to support desistance in community sentences and on licence. Rather than use standard templates to record desistance plans, case managers tailored their planning process to meet the interests, strengths and aspirations of the children with whom they worked. This led to a creative array of plans, some in workbooks, others in spray-painted posters or collages. This increased the engagement of children helped them to identify and 'own' their journey through their sentences, and strengthened their motivation to succeed. Case managers made sure that, although planning was child focused, objectives addressed the priorities identified during their assessment process, such as substance misuse; education, training and employment; mental health; and work to strengthen resilience. Where there were gaps in planning, these related mostly to objectives to help children explore and strengthen their sense of identity or the need to make changes to lifestyles.

Victims were contacted by the YOT's restorative justice lead, and their views and wishes were considered in eight of the ten cases where this was relevant. This helped to shape plans for reparative work and to decide what should be done to help children to understand the impact of their offending on their victims.

³² 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. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Planning to support safety and wellbeing was not good enough. The YOT's performance was negatively affected by the poor quality of planning to safeguard children in custody. Overall, planning was sufficient in only 5 of the 12 cases inspected.

In the community, case managers worked well with partner agencies to align their plans. This meant that YOT and child protection plans, for instance, reflected the priorities of both organisations, providing for a coordinated approach and helping to avoid duplication of work.

Planning included necessary controls and interventions in 6 of the 12 cases. There was too little planning to protect children who were at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation. In one case, a child had drug debts that were not considered; in another, a growing interest in gangs and risk of being involved in county lines were not addressed. Referrals to Medway Vulnerability Panel (the authority's multi-agency meeting for discussing missing children and those at risk of exploitation), or the National Referral Mechanism,³³ were not routinely considered as part of the planning process.

One inspector noted of a vulnerable girl:

“Kyra was at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation, and had asked to be referred to a domestic abuse charity. Neither of these priorities were reflected in the plan to support her safety and wellbeing. It would have been helpful to have convened a multidisciplinary meeting to share relevant information and agree a safety plan for Kyra. The case manager was not aware of the benefits this could bring and had not considered it during the planning process.”

Circumstances for children with complex issues can change quickly. It is important that case managers consider what these changes could be, so that they can respond quickly and effectively. In Medway, the importance of anticipating changes, and tailoring the response to these, was given too little priority. Contingency planning relating to safety and wellbeing was sufficient in only 4 of the 12 cases where it was needed.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Planning to keep others safe was not good enough. It was sufficient in only 5 of the 12 cases assessed.

Planning focused on appropriate work in 6 of the 12 cases, and set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements in 5.

Case managers involved other agencies in 7 of the 12 cases. They set out what needed to be done to manage and minimise the risk of harm that children posed to other people, paying enough attention to the needs of individual victims, again, in 7 of the 12 cases.

Five of the cases we looked at were eligible for management through MAPPA; however, not all case managers had enough knowledge about this process and which cases should be considered for this approach.

³³ The National Referral Mechanism is a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking and ensuring that they receive the appropriate protection and support.

An inspector noted in one case:

“Samuel had committed a serious assault on his girlfriend. The case manager put a plan in place to monitor and manage this risk. However, she did not consider soon enough the need to refer the case to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC),³⁴ so that arrangements could be put in place to support his victim”.

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating³⁵ 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? | 92% |
| Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child? | 75% |
| Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people? | 75% |

The YOT’s approach to desistance was well considered, and focused effectively on engagement and compliance. There was less consistency in the quality of work to keep the child, or others, safe, especially in relation to the effectiveness of work with partners and the availability of timely, appropriate services and interventions. The overall scores for implementation and delivery allowed us to consider whether to apply professional discretion to this rating. The panel was satisfied, however, that the rating of ‘Good’ reflected the YOT’s performance against this standard.

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child’s desistance?

The implementation and delivery of services to support desistance was outstanding.

Case managers worked thoughtfully to prioritise and sequence their work with children. When necessary, they focused first on establishing a relationship with the child, to provide a good platform on which to base other work.

In the clear majority of cases, the YOT made sure that service provision met the needs identified during assessment. Children had good access to substance misuse services. They were less able to access services to strengthen their resilience or their emotional wellbeing and mental health. At least one child had waited too long for an assessment of their neurodevelopmental needs, and there was too little access to therapeutic and psychological alternatives to CAMHS for young children.

³⁴ MARACs are convened to discuss the highest-risk domestic abuse cases. They focus on the needs of the victims, with partners working together to agree and action a safety plan to protect them.

³⁵ 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. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Children were supported well to gain education, employment and training places, but there was too little post-16 provision available to help every child effectively.

Service delivery was tailored so that it took account of specific diversity needs, such as the child's learning style or need to work around other commitments, such as training and employment. Case managers also made sure that their approach to the work built on the child's interests and strengths.

Although the YOT's approach was to use positive measures to encourage engagement, formal compliance measures were used well in each of the six cases where these were warranted.

Children in custody often present the highest risk of harm to others and are also the most vulnerable, in terms of their safety and wellbeing. We found that work for and with those in custody was less effective than work in the community. In one case, however, we noted:

“The case manager helped to make sure Michael received a holistic package of interventions in custody. With his father, she visited Michael frequently, to undertake one-to-one work, such as completing a timeline of events in Michael's past and 'Old Me – New Me', an intervention to encourage him to think about his future. Michael has been supported to participate in the CSCS [Construction Skills Certification Scheme] and a barista course”.

Many children benefit from being introduced to services and activities in the community which will continue to support their desistance once they are no longer working with a YOT. Case managers gave this sufficient consideration in 9 of the 12 cases assessed.

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety and wellbeing of the child?

The implementation and delivery of services to support safety and wellbeing was good.

Case managers focused on monitoring the safety and wellbeing of children with whom they worked, and increased their contact levels as they became more concerned.

As an example:

“Clive's case manager monitored his interest in gang culture and focused on encouraging his other interests, such as music and sport. Together, they completed weapons awareness and emotional management sessions, and built a 'toolbox' of strategies to help Clive remain calm when he experienced difficult emotions. As a result, Clive has gone missing less frequently and is less at risk of being exploited”.

In 9 of the 12 cases, case managers coordinated their work with children's social workers; however, they did not always escalate unsuccessful attempts to engage with children's social care services or seek support from the early help team. Case managers made relevant referrals to partners within appropriate timeframes. In some cases, children received support from METRO for their relationships or sexual health, or from St Giles Trust to support their emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?

The implementation and delivery of services to keep other people safe was good.

The work that was delivered met the needs assessed in the case and there was a consistently good focus on protecting victims.

Licence conditions were well considered during custodial resettlement meetings, and additional requirements were added to reflect either the requests of victims or the YOT's assessment of need.

In 9 of the 12 cases, the YOT made effective use of the services and partnerships available to them. In one, the case manager sought the help of St Giles Trust to help a boy move away from his gang associates and lifestyle. In another, involving violent domestic abuse (see Samuel's case above), a referral to MAPPA resulted in a more coordinated, multi-agency approach to managing the threat of violence by the boy. The referral to MARAC led to the provision of a safety plan to protect his victim.

Appropriate work on knife crime and weapons awareness did not always take place when needed. In some cases, none was delivered. In others, in the absence of an alternative, case managers were selecting and delivering elements of an outdated weapons awareness work programme. The work pack included a DVD, a player for which is not routinely available in homes and other community venues. There was also a lack of specialist support for those on the cusp of gang or county lines involvement.

The YOT's restorative justice worker was routinely involved in delivering interventions, where appropriate, tailoring these to the needs of individual cases to help to raise the awareness of children of the impact of their actions on their victims.

2.4. Reviewing



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

Requires improvement

Our rating³⁶ for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

| | % yes |
|--|------------|
| Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child or desistance? | 83% |
| Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? | 50% |
| Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? | 50% |

Case managers routinely reviewed children's progress towards desistance and adapted their approach where necessary. The rating for this standard, however, reflected the quality of reviewing to support safety and wellbeing, and manage and reduce risk of harm to others. This work was not always reviewed in a meaningful way and did not take enough account of information indicating that risks in a case were escalating. As such, reviewing was rated as 'Requires improvement'.

³⁶ 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. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

Reviewing to support a child's desistance was outstanding.

Case managers reviewed their cases when necessary, not just to meet a YOT target. They understood the significance that a change of worker in a partner agency or an additional conviction could have, and made sure that they involved the child and their parents/carers in reviewing the impact of changing circumstances. This helped case managers to understand changing circumstances, and adapt their plan of work and their approach to delivery to aid compliance and desistance.

We found an appropriate record of the review in every case inspected.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Review of factors linked to safety and wellbeing required improvement.

We expected to see a review in 8 of the 12 cases inspected. While there was a review recorded in all 8, this focused sufficiently on keeping the child safe in only 4.

Case managers were not good at recognising and analysing emerging indicators that a child had become more vulnerable – for instance, in terms of their risk of exploitation by others. In one case, there was an absence of planning for release for a child leaving custody that had an impact on his safety and wellbeing.

In four of the eight cases, the case manager had not involved other agencies or used data from them. In one, a partner agency had shared important information via the IT recording system but the case manager had not seen this.

The evolving circumstances in a case should have led to a change of plan to keep the child safe in seven cases. Case managers had taken appropriate action to adjust their plan of work in only three of these.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

We expected to see a review of factors linked to risk of harm in eight cases. Work in this area required improvement; only four of these cases had been reviewed sufficiently well.

Case managers involved children and their parents/carers in their reviews in six of the eight cases, and recorded this work in seven; however, reviews did not consistently reflect all the needs in a case. In one custodial case, there was no review on release; in another, there was a review of some important factors that led to an adjusted plan of work to keep others safe, but the review was not far-reaching enough.

We would have expected to have seen reviews leading to a change in the plan of work in seven cases, but this took place in only three.



3. Out-of-court disposals

We inspected ten cases managed by the YOT that had received an out-of-court disposal. These included two youth conditional cautions, three youth cautions, and four community resolutions. This YOT also provides assessment, planning and interventions in some cases where the police have decided on 'no further action', and we inspected the YOT's work in one of these. We interviewed the case managers in all ten cases.

We examined the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance. For the five cases where there were factors relating to serious harm,³⁷ we also inspected planning, and implementation and delivery, of work to keep other people safe. In the eight cases where there were relevant factors, we looked at planning, and implementation and delivery, of work to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child. We also looked at the quality of joint working with local police. For each of our standards, the quality of the work undertaken needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision to be rated as satisfactory.

At least 70 per cent of cases inspected met all our standards for assessment, resulting in a 'Good' rating for this aspect of work. The quality of planning was rated as 'Requires improvement'. While it supported desistance well (it was sufficient in nine of the ten cases inspected), it met all our standards to keep others safe in only three of the five relevant cases. Initially, our standards on implementation and delivery, and joint working were both given a rating of 'Requires improvement'. Following the meeting of our internal ratings panel, however, we used professional discretion to increase these ratings to 'Good'.³⁸

Case managers worked creatively to encourage children to participate in interventions to reduce the likelihood that they would reoffend. While focusing on desistance, case managers were mindful of the need to support the safety and wellbeing of the children with whom they worked and help to keep others safe. The issues in some cases were highly complex. In two of these, the YOT had not taken sufficient action to protect the child.

Strengths:

- Case managers effectively identified and analysed a wide range of factors to understand the level and nature of risk of harm that a child posed to others.
- Victims were given appropriate priority at every stage of the out-of-court process.
- The staff's focus on building relationships led to the engagement of children in the voluntary activities offered by the YOT.
- The YOT contributed well to decisions about whether and what out-of-court disposals should be made.

³⁷ See footnote 3.

³⁸ The increase to 'Good' was made on the following basis: the original rating for implementation and delivery was derived from our assessment of five cases. A more positive judgement in one case and an increase of 5 per cent would have raised the overall score for this aspect of work to 65 per cent. The initial rating for joint working was based on the quality of work in two cases. The rating was changed to reflect this and to take account of the YOT's overall performance to deliver its out-of-court work.

Areas for improvement:

- The quality of joint work, especially with children's social care services, to support safety and wellbeing was not always good enough.
- In two cases, the YOT's response to new information had left vulnerable children unprotected.
- The YOT's response to child exploitation was inconsistent and left inspectors concerned about the quality of partnership work to support safety and wellbeing.

Work with children receiving out-of-court disposals will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

3.1. Assessment

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

Good

Our rating³⁹ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

| | % yes |
|---|------------|
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance? | 70% |
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe? | 70% |
| Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe? | 80% |

Generally, the YOT's approach to understanding how to keep others safe was effective; however, case managers did not always take enough account of information from relevant people and partners involved in a case. This had an impact on their ability to analyse and identify all the factors linked to desistance, and the safety and wellbeing of the child. This led to an overall rating of 'Good' for assessment.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?

Assessment of how to support desistance was good.

Assessments were recorded well, and in the majority of cases were completed within an appropriate timeframe. Case managers were thorough, routinely taking account of the child's diversity and family circumstances, their motivation and ability to engage with the YOT, and their strengths and interests. They also sought to understand the barriers to their desistance – for instance, access to education or training. Case managers did not always involve the children and their parents/carers in these assessments, and had only sought their views in a meaningful way in six of the cases

³⁹ 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. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

inspected. Case managers drew on information on YOT records and from other agencies, however, and in eight of the ten cases they had a thorough understanding of diversity factors and the wider familial and social context of the child.

In seven cases, it was important to consider the needs and wishes of victims. This was done sufficiently well in six of these.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

Assessment of how to keep the child safe was good.

In eight of the ten cases, the level of need relating to safety and wellbeing was either medium or high. In nine of these, the YOT had identified this correctly.

In seven cases, the case manager had drawn on assessments and information available, including from other agencies, to identify and analyse all the pertinent safeguarding factors. These included the child's lived experience and traumatic events in their lives.

In one case, an inspector noted:

“Jay was not in contact with his father and had recently had a number of bereavements; relatives he had been close to had died and other close family members had been taken into care. His case manager provided an informative analysis of the impact that this had had on Jay; his sense of isolation and the impact of losing important male role models in his life”.

We found a clear record of the assessment in nine cases.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Overall, the YOT worked consistently well to analyse how to keep others safe. This work was sufficient in eight of the ten cases inspected.

Assessments were timely and recorded well. In three cases, case managers had rightly assessed that there were no factors relating to risk of harm. In five, they had drawn on information from a range of sources, including from other agencies, to identify all relevant factors.

In two cases, assessment was not thorough enough and the need to keep others safe was underestimated. In one of these, the analysis had focused on the index offence, for which there were no indicators of risk of harm; however, the case manager had failed to consider the children's other, more worrying, behaviours. As such, he failed to understand the level and nature of risk that this child posed to others, and the need to protect his victims.

3.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁴⁰ for planning is based on the following key questions:

| | % yes |
|--|------------|
| Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance? | 90% |
| Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? | 75% |
| Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? | 60% |

Planning to support desistance was strong, and planning to keep the child safe was good; however, the YOT needed to take a more effective approach to planning with partner agencies about how collectively they would protect victims. As such, planning to keep other people safe was rated as 'Requires improvement'. This drove the overall rating for planning. As this judgement related to a subsample of only five cases, we gave careful consideration to whether a rating of 'Requires improvement' reflected the YOT's overall performance for planning; the ratings panel agreed that it did.

Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?

This area of work was outstanding. Planning focused sufficiently on supporting desistance in nine of the ten cases inspected.

Planning flowed from assessment; case managers worked effectively to make sure that planning addressed the areas highlighted by their assessments. They prioritised the most important work, sequencing their objectives to make sure that they were proportionate and could be met within the time available to complete the out-of-court disposal.

Case managers used the same Child First approach as they did for post-court cases. This strengthened the engagement of the children and helped to identify what they hoped to achieve while working with the YOT. Case managers included objectives to build on their strengths and interests, and planned an approach to delivery that met their individual needs and learning styles. They also gave sufficient attention to enhancing opportunities for community integration, such as focusing on education, training and employment or local leisure activities.

In one case, the case manager devised work sheets that fitted the learning style of the child. He used colour and pictures, and utilised the children's interest in graffiti to set out his objectives. This strengthened the sense of ownership that the child had of the plan, and his motivation to meet its objectives.

Children and their parents/carers were meaningfully involved in the planning process in seven of the ten cases.

In the eight cases where there were victims to consider, their views and wishes were taken into account in six.

⁴⁰ 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. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Planning to support safety and wellbeing was good.

Case managers gave enough consideration to how to manage and reduce risks in six of the eight cases where there were factors to address. They thought about how the child's circumstances could change, and put effective contingency plans in place to protect their safety and wellbeing in five. In one case in which the child had made it clear that he did not wish to work with CAMHS, the case manager agreed a safety plan with him, to help to monitor and manage his moods.

In six cases, the child had been subject to a child protection plan or Section 47 enquiry during the sentence being inspected. In seven cases, it was important to liaise with children's social care or other practitioners, to align plans to keep children safe; this happened in four cases.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Planning to keep others safe required improvement. Of the five cases where there were risk of harm issues, planning to address these was good enough in three.

Planning focused on keeping victims safe in three cases, and contingency planning was good enough in four.

There was too little liaison with other agencies about roles and responsibilities, and how to coordinate the work. We saw examples of effective joint planning, however – for instance, where the case manager engaged the family and school well to decide on their combined approach to managing the risk of harm that the child posed to others.

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating⁴¹ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

| | % yes |
|---|------------|
| Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance? | 70% |
| Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child? | 75% |
| Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people? | 60% |

The quality of implementation and delivery to support desistance, and safety and wellbeing was good. Case managers encouraged the engagement of children in what, in the majority of cases, was a voluntary intervention. In the main, they worked well with partner agencies to keep the child safe. The initial overall rating for implementation and delivery was driven by our judgement about the quality of work to keep others safe. We applied professional discretion to this rating, taking account of

⁴¹ 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. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

the number of cases on which this was based (a subsample of five cases) and the overall performance relating to this standard. As a result, we uplifted the rating for implementation and delivery from 'Requires improvement' to 'Good'.

Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?

Work to support desistance was good.

The right services were delivered within an appropriate timeframe in seven of the ten cases. In the main, the YOT focused on factors that had been identified as important during the assessment of the child's needs and aspirations, making referrals to substance misuse and education, training and employment specialists.

Case managers did not consistently support children to change their lifestyle, or strengthen their resilience and sense of self-identity. There was enough focus on promoting opportunities for their community integration and access to mainstream services in six of the ten cases inspected.

Case managers were skilled at relationship building. This was particularly important in their out-of-court work, much of which relied on the voluntary participation of the children.

One inspector made this observation:

"Ali refused to even be in the same room as his case manager from the outset. The case manager worked tirelessly to build Ali's trust in him, and eventually he started to open up and engage. He successfully completed 10 hours of reparation, attended the Open Door drug service and was referred to the education specialist to strengthen his functional skills, such as maths and English".

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?

The YOT's focus on keeping children safe was good; we saw effective work in six of the eight cases inspected.

Case managers tried determinedly to engage relevant social workers. We saw examples of strong co-working: shared planning for children on child protection plans, joint home visits and effective coordination of their service delivery with families. In one case, where there were unsuccessful efforts to engage with children's social care services, the case manager liaised with Medway Council's child exploitation lead and delivered the work that the social worker had planned to do. He also notified the police of pertinent issues, agreeing with them that they would monitor the situation.

Conversely, in two cases, the YOT had not done enough to engage with children's social care services. In one, there had been an assumption that the social worker was still engaged in a case and would complete the necessary work to keep the child safe. In another, not enough had been done to contact the social worker until a serious incident sparked a more determined response from the YOT, at which point the case manager learned information that should have been identified previously. Overall, there had not been enough done to manage the escalating risks in this case, leaving a vulnerable girl unprotected.

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?

We inspected the delivery of work to keep others safe in five cases. We judged that this was good enough in three.

It was important to protect victims in four cases, and the YOT gave this sufficient attention in three.

In cases, where factors were managed well, case managers worked effectively with schools to manage and monitor behaviour, delivered appropriate one-to-one work on emotional management and worked with parents/carers to devise safety strategies.

3.4. Joint working



Joint working with the police supports the delivery of high-quality, personalised and coordinated services.

Good

Our rating⁴² for joint working is based on the following key questions, the second asked only in youth conditional caution cases:

| | % yes |
|---|------------|
| Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the child, supporting joint decision making? | 80% |
| Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out of court disposal? | 50% |

The YOT played an integral role in the out-of-court disposal decision-making process, and we judged the quality of its pre-delivery work to be outstanding. In only two cases, however, were we able to inspect how well the YOT worked with the police to implement youth conditional cautions. We found room for improvement in one. This translated to an original overall rating of 'Requires improvement' for joint working. We considered the evidence collected during our domain 1 interviews and the overarching quality of the YOT's out-of-court casework and used professional discretion to uplift this rating from 'Requires improvement' to 'Good'.

Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well informed, analytical and personalised to the child, supporting joint decision-making?

Overall, the YOT's contribution to joint decision-making was outstanding. Of the ten cases inspected, the YOT's recommendations were sufficiently well informed, analytical and personalised to the child in eight.

Case managers completed thorough assessments. They met with the child and their parents/carers to understand the factors in the case and agree how to support desistance. Case managers had helpful templates that enabled them to set out the behaviour of the children, their diversity and familial circumstances, risks and needs. They used their assessments to propose appropriate outcomes, which the joint decision-making panel considered actively when assigning out-of-court disposals.

Usually, the panel accepted the YOT's recommendations. This was not a 'rubber stamping' process, however, and decisions were made on all the information available from a range of relevant agencies. Rationales for the disposals selected were recorded on YOT records, and where the panel allocated a different outcome, the reason for this was included.

⁴² 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. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal?

We made judgements for the two cases involving youth conditional cautions, as these involve enforceable expectations relating to engagement and compliance.

We found in both cases that the YOT met its obligations to monitor compliance and enforce this where necessary. In one, however, the case manager did not liaise sufficiently with the police to inform them about, or to review, the child's progress against the objectives to which they had agreed.

Annexe 1: Methodology

HM Inspectorate of Probation standards

The standards against which we inspect youth offending services are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. These standards are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.⁴³

The inspection methodology is summarised below, linked to the three domains in our standards framework. We focused on obtaining evidence against the standards, key questions and prompts in our inspection framework.

Domain one: organisational delivery

The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance, and the Chief Executive delivered a presentation covering the following areas:

- How do organisational delivery arrangements in this area make sure that the work of your YOT is as effective as it can be, and that the life chances of children who have offended are improved?
- What are your priorities for further improving these arrangements?

During the main fieldwork phase, we conducted 22 interviews with case managers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. We held various meetings, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and information. In total, we conducted 10 meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations and staff. We also attended a presentation about the YOT's parenting and reparation work, and observed an out-of-court disposal joint decision-making meeting. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.⁴⁴

Domain two: court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Sixty per cent of the cases selected were those of children who had received court disposals six to nine months earlier, enabling us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and reviewing. Where necessary, interviews with other people closely involved in the case also took place.

We examined 12 court disposals. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of 5), and we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

⁴³ HM Inspectorate's standards are available here:
<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

Domain three: out-of-court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Forty per cent of cases selected were those of children who had received out-of-court disposals two to five months earlier. This enabled us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and joint working. Where necessary, interviews with other people closely involved in the case also took place.

We examined 10 out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of 5), and we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

In some areas of this report, data may have been split into smaller subsamples – for example, male/female cases. Where this is the case, the margin of error for the subsample findings may be higher than five.

Annexe 2: Inspection results

In this inspection, we conducted a detailed examination of a sample of 12 court disposals and 10 out-of-court disposals. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards: assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery. For court disposals, we look at reviewing; and in out-of-court disposals, we look at joint working with the police. For each standard, inspectors answer a number of key questions about different aspects of quality, including whether there was sufficient analysis of the factors related to offending; the extent to which young offenders were involved in assessment and planning; and whether enough was done to assess the level of risk of harm posed, and to manage that risk.

To score an 'Outstanding' rating for the sections on court disposals or out-of-court disposals, 80 per cent or more of the cases we analyse have to be assessed as sufficient. If between 65 per cent and 79 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then the rating is 'Good', and if between 50 per cent and 64 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then a rating of 'Requires improvement' is applied. Finally, if less than 50 per cent are sufficient, then we rate this as 'Inadequate'.

The rating at the standard level is aligned to the lowest banding at the key question level, recognising that each key question is an integral part of the standard. Therefore, if we rate three key questions as 'Good' and one as 'Inadequate', the overall rating for that standard is 'Inadequate'.

| Lowest banding (key question level) | Rating (standard) |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Minority: <50% | Inadequate |
| Too few: 50–64% | Requires improvement |
| Reasonable majority: 65–79% | Good |
| Large majority: 80%+ | Outstanding |

Additional scoring rules are used to generate the overall YOT rating. Each of the 12 standards are scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; and 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0–36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows:

- 0–6 = Inadequate
- 7–18 = Requires improvement
- 19–30 = Good
- 31–36 = Outstanding.

1. Organisational delivery

| Standards and key questions | Rating |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <p>1.1. Governance and leadership</p> <p>The governance and leadership of the YOT supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.</p> <p>1.1.1. Is there a clear local vision and strategy for the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?</p> <p>1.1.2. Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?</p> <p>1.1.3. Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?</p> | <p>Requires improvement</p> |
| <p>1.2. Staff</p> <p>Staff within the YOT are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.</p> <p>1.2.1. Do staffing and workload levels support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?</p> <p>1.2.2. Do the skills of YOT staff support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?</p> <p>1.2.3. Does the oversight of work support high-quality delivery and professional development?</p> <p>1.2.4. Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?</p> | <p>Good</p> |
| <p>1.3. Partnerships and services</p> <p>A comprehensive range of high-quality services is in place, enabling personalised and responsive provision for all children.</p> <p>1.3.1. Is there a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of children, to ensure that the YOT can deliver well-targeted services?</p> <p>1.3.2. Does the YOT partnership have access to the volume, range and quality of services and interventions to meet the needs of all children?</p> <p>1.3.3. Are arrangements with statutory partners, providers and other agencies established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services?</p> | <p>Requires improvement</p> |

| | |
|--|-------------|
| 1.4. Information and facilities | Good |
| Timely and relevant information is available and appropriate facilities are in place to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children. | |
| 1.4.1. Are the necessary policies and guidance in place to enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children? | |
| 1.4.2. Does the YOT's delivery environment(s) meet the needs of all children and enable staff to deliver a quality service? | |
| 1.4.3. Do the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children? | |
| 1.4.4. Is analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement? | |

2. Court disposals

| Standards and key questions | Rating and % yes |
|--|-------------------|
| 2.1. Assessment | Good |
| Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents/carers. | |
| 2.1.1. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance? | 100% |
| 2.1.2. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe? | 67% |
| 2.1.3. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe? | 92% |
| 2.2. Planning | Inadequate |
| Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents/carers. | |
| 2.2.1. Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance? | 75% |
| 2.2.2. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? | 42% |
| 2.2.3. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? | 42% |

| | |
|--|-------------|
| 2.3. Implementation and delivery | Good |
| High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child. | |
| 2.3.1. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance? | 92% |
| 2.3.2. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child? | 75% |
| 2.3.3. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people? | 75% |

| | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 2.4. Reviewing | Requires improvement |
| Reviewing of progress is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or and their parents/carers. | |
| 2.4.1. Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance? | 83% |
| 2.4.2. Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child person safe? | 50% |
| 2.4.3. Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? | 50% |

3. Out-of-court disposals

| Standards and key questions | Rating and % yes |
|--|------------------|
| 3.1. Assessment | Good |
| Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents/carers. | |
| 3.1.1. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance? | 70% |
| 3.1.2. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe? | 70% |
| 3.1.3. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe? | 80% |

| | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 3.2. Planning | Requires improvement |
| Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents/carers. | |
| 3.2.1. Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance? | 90% |
| 3.2.2. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe? | 75% |
| 3.2.3. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe? | 60% |
| 3.3. Implementation and delivery | Good⁴⁵ |
| High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child. | |
| 3.3.1. Does service delivery support the child's desistance? | 70% |
| 3.3.2. Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child? | 75% |
| 3.3.3. Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people? | 60% |
| 3.4. Joint working | Good⁴⁵ |
| Joint working with the police supports the delivery of high-quality, personalised and coordinated services. | |
| 3.4.1. Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the child, supporting joint decision-making? | 80% |
| 3.4.2. Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal? | 50% |

⁴⁵ The increase to 'Good' was made on the following basis: the original rating for implementation and delivery was derived from our assessment of five cases. A more positive judgement in one case and an increase of 5 per cent would have raised the overall score for this aspect of work to 65 per cent. The initial rating for joint working was based on the quality of work in two cases. The rating was changed to reflect this and to take account of the YOT's overall performance to deliver its out-of-court work.

Annexe 3: Glossary

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| AIM3 | Assessment, Intervention and Moving-on project |
| AssetPlus Asset+ | Assessment and planning framework tool developed by the Youth Justice Board for work with children who have offended, or are at risk of offending, that reflects current research and understanding of what works with children |
| CAMHS | Child and Adolescent Mental Health services |
| Community resolution | Used in low-level, often first-time, offences where there is informal agreement, often also involving the victim, about how the offence should be resolved. Community resolution is a generic term; in practice, many different local terms are used to mean the same thing |
| Court disposals | The sentence imposed by the court. Examples of youth court disposals are referral orders, youth rehabilitation orders and detention and training orders |
| Child protection | Work to make sure that all reasonable action has been taken to keep to a minimum the risk of a child experiencing serious harm |
| ETE | Education, training and employment: work to improve learning, and to increase future employment prospects |
| FTE | Full-time equivalent |
| ISS | Intensive supervision and surveillance is used with children who would benefit from an intense programme of activities to help prevent them from reoffending. |
| IT | Information technology |
| IYSS | Integrated Youth Support Services |
| Local authority | YOTs are often a team within a specific local authority |
| MAPPA | Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements; children serving 12-month custodial sentences for specific violent and sexual offences can be managed through this process. It provides a formal setting for joint agency work in order to add value to the work YOTs and their partners normally deliver |
| MARAC | Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference |
| NRM | National Referral Mechanism The national framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery in order to gain help to support them |
| Out-of-court disposal | The resolution of a normally low-level offence, where it is not in the public interest to prosecute, through a community resolution, youth caution or youth conditional caution |
| Personalised | A personalised approach is one in which services are tailored to meet the needs of individuals, giving people as much choice and control as possible over the support they receive. We use this term to include diversity factors |
| PRU | Pupil referral unit |

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| Risk of serious harm | Term used in Asset+. All cases are classified as presenting a low, medium, high or very high risk of serious harm to others. HMI Probation uses this term when referring to the classification system, but uses the broader term 'risk of harm' when referring to the analysis which should take place in order to determine the classification level. This helps to clarify the distinction between the probability of an event occurring and the impact/severity of the event. The term 'risk of serious harm' only incorporates 'serious' impact, whereas using 'risk of harm' enables the necessary attention to be given to those young offenders for whom lower impact/severity harmful behaviour is probable |
| Referral order | A restorative court order which can be imposed when the child appearing before the court pleads guilty, and where the threshold for a youth rehabilitation order is not met |
| Safeguarding | Safeguarding is a wider term than child protection and involves promoting a child's health and development, and ensuring that their overall welfare needs are met |
| Safety and wellbeing | Asset+ replaced the assessment of vulnerability with a holistic outlook on a child's safety and wellbeing concerns. It is defined as "...those outcomes where the child's safety and wellbeing may be compromised through their own behaviour, personal circumstances or because of the acts/omissions of others" (Asset+ Guidance, 2016) |
| Youth caution | A caution accepted by a child following admission to an offence where it is not considered to be in the public interest to prosecute the offender |
| Youth conditional caution | As for a youth caution, but with conditions attached that the child is required to comply with for up to the next three months. Non-compliance may result in the child being prosecuted for the original offence |
| YOT/YOS | Youth offending team (YOT) is the term used in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to describe a multi-agency team that aims to reduce youth offending. YOTs are known locally by many titles, such as youth justice service (YJS), youth offending service (YOS), and other generic titles that may illustrate their wider role in the local area in delivering services for children |
| YOT Management Board | The YOT Management Board holds the YOT to account to ensure it achieves the primary aim of preventing offending by children |
| Youth rehabilitation order | Overarching community sentence to which the court applies requirements (e.g. supervision requirement or unpaid work) |
| YJB | Youth Justice Board; a government body responsible for monitoring and advising ministers on the effectiveness of the youth justice system. The YJB provides grants and guidance to the youth offending teams |
| YJPB | Youth Justice Partnership Board |



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