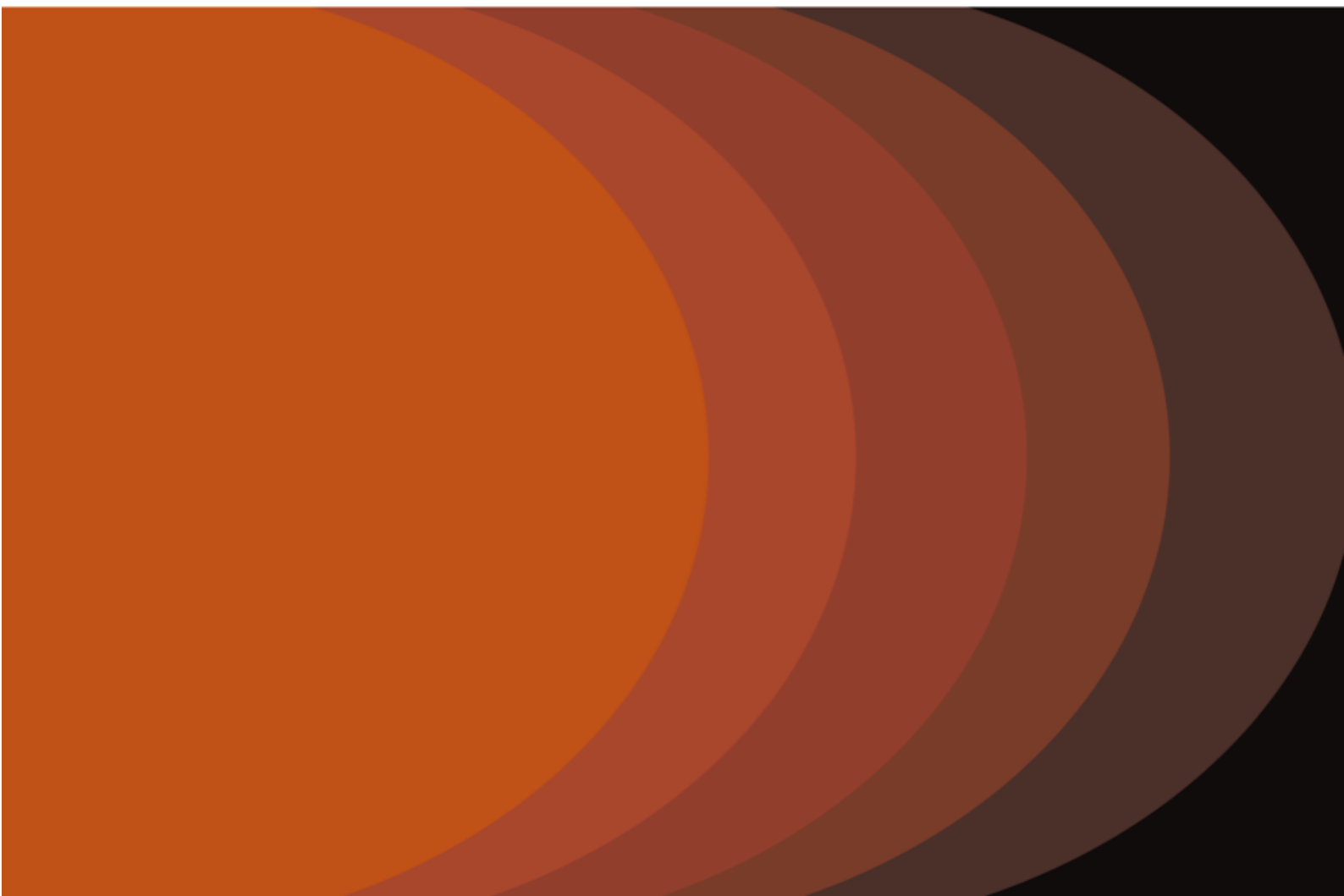




HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in
Southwark

HM Inspectorate of Probation, October 2023



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Foreword

This inspection is part of our programme of youth justice service (YJS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Southwark YJS across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. Overall, Southwark YJS was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Good'.

Board members help set the priorities for the service, and board subgroups exist to address issues of key importance. The YJS is well represented across strategic and operational partnerships, and the board receives high-quality information on the service's performance. Due to the increase in prevention work and out-of-court disposals, the inspection identified that increased reporting and oversight needs to occur so that the board can more closely monitor the performance and outcomes of these disposals. This needs to include increased analysis and understanding regarding children receiving police community resolutions outside of the joint decision-making arrangements and a full review of the use of Outcome 22¹.

Staff are skilled and knowledgeable. There is a clear drive to encourage people from the local community and those with lived experience to be involved with the service and this is reflected with a richly diverse workforce. Volunteers report feeling fully supported and well-integrated into the service. Staff and volunteers indicate they feel valued by managers and by their peers, and there is a strong sense that the YJS is a caring organisation.

The quality of the partnership arrangements was a strength and includes a range of voluntary and community organisations alongside statutory agencies. Health provision for the YJS is of a high-quality. A clinical team which provides psychological and systemic consultations collaborates with YJS specialist workers. There are several projects and programmes which demonstrate the commitment to innovation and the YJSs strong desire to deliver the most effective services. These include a range of reparation projects which are available to all children, and exceptional mentors are utilised to support children and help them to engage. The service could build upon this by further developing its framework around feedback from children to ensure it is used to inform future service provision.

Overall, the interventions delivered in the inspected cases were found to be personalised and creative, showing the high standard of partnership working. Staff advocated for children and families and did all they could to encourage good engagement. Practitioners demonstrated high levels of knowledge and understanding of children's protected characteristics and we found they were confident in asking appropriate questions about a child's heritage and their lived experiences.



Marc Baker
Chief Operating Officer

¹ Outcome 22 is a deferred prosecution involving diversionary, educational or intervention activity

Ratings

Southwark Youth Justice Service
Fieldwork started July 2023

Score 29/36

Overall rating

Good



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

Good



1.2 Staff

Outstanding



1.3 Partnerships and services

Outstanding



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

Good



2.2 Planning

Good



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding



2.4 Reviewing

Outstanding



3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

Requires improvement



3.2 Planning

Outstanding



3.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding



3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

Good



4. Resettlement²

4.1 Resettlement policy and provision

Good



² The rating for resettlement does not influence the overall YJS rating.

Recommendations

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

The Southwark Youth Justice Management Board should:

1. receive regular performance reports on the effectiveness of out-of-court disposals and make sure there is a system in place to look at the consistency of the out-of-court panel's decision-making processes.

The Metropolitan Police should:

2. review the use of Outcome 22 in Southwark and work with the YJS to monitor whether its implementation impacts on the level of disproportionality by ensuring that all children are offered interventions at the earliest opportunity.

The YJS head of service should:

3. put a framework in place so that all feedback from children and families is systematically collated and analysed to help determine future service provision
4. review the policy on knife crime to ensure that the level of risk is determined by the evidence in the child's assessment.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Southwark YJS over a period of a week, beginning 17 July 2023. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began, out-of-court disposals were delivered, and resettlement cases were sentenced or released between 18 July 2022 and 12 May 2023. We also conducted 34 interviews with case managers.

Southwark is an inner London borough, south of the River Thames, which borders Lambeth to the west, Lewisham to the east and Croydon to the south.

Southwark children services, including the YJS, utilise a systemic approach to working with children and families, supported by a team of clinical practitioners experienced in family work. Southwark YJS sits in the children and family's division, alongside family early help. Both services report to the assistant director for family early help and youth justice, who is managed by the director of children's services who is the chair of the youth justice management board. The head of service manages the Southwark extra-familial harm team and the edge of care team alongside the YJS. They are supported in the YJS by two service managers who manage the Intake teams (prevention and out-of-court disposals), and the court and community teams.

At the time of the inspection, the YJS had six teams led by six team managers, but from autumn 2023 that was due to increase to seven teams to incorporate the Turnaround programme. There are 66 staff and 80 volunteers in the YJS. In June 2023, 35 post-court interventions were open to the YJS. 26 out-of-court disposals. The service also manages prevention cases and provides a targeted prevention intervention for children who are not currently supported on an out-of-court disposal or statutory order, and who are ineligible for the Turnaround programme. Such children may have been previously known to the service or may be involved in complex or serious behaviours.

The YJS has access to a comprehensive suite of data across post-court orders and out-of-court disposals, analysis of which has informed deep-dive reports. These include reports on disproportionality and out-of-court disposals. The service also uses 'team targets' as part of its performance management structure, which focuses on each team's performance in order to drive up performance across all areas in the service.

Analysis of performance data for the YJS shows that the number of first-time entrants to the formal youth justice system was above the average for the region and for England and Wales. For reoffending, the proportion of children who reoffend is higher, although how frequently they reoffend is lower than the average for England and Wales.

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 15 meetings, including with staff, volunteers, managers, board members, and partnership staff and their managers.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows.

1.1. Governance and leadership



The governance and leadership of the YOT supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.

Good

Strengths:

- The management board has been chaired by the director of children's services for several years. It has a clear vision for the development of the board going forward.
- Board members help set the priorities for the service through focused workshops and contribute to the youth justice plan.
- The YJS is well represented across strategic and operational partnerships, both within the local authority and across the Southwark partnerships.
- There is a comprehensive board induction pack, supported by a meeting with the head of service.
- The board receives high-quality information on the service's performance, progress on past plans, and learning from case reviews and inspection reports, as well as other deep-dive thematic reports and national performance data.
- There are examples of board members holding each other to account and challenging partner agencies about the resources provided to the service.
- The board often runs subgroups to address issues of key importance, in addition to the quarterly board meeting, including one focused on disproportionality.
- To tackle the number of school exclusions, the board set up a subgroup led by a board member to challenge any decisions where YJS children were at risk of being excluded from school.
- The YJS has a disproportionality policy and action plan which is monitored through the management board. An annual disproportionality report is produced, and several workshops have been held for the management board members.
- An open evening was held, which gave volunteers and board members the opportunity to meet and gain an understanding of each other's roles.
- The YJS has a stable and experienced leadership team, managers lead on specific areas of practice, and their responsibilities are clear.

Areas for improvement:

- There have been changes in the membership of the board and a period of stability is needed for it to be more proactive and better engaged in setting the priorities for the service.
- Due to the increase in prevention work and out-of-court disposals, regular reporting and oversight needs to occur so that the board can more closely monitor performance and outcomes of these work streams, including proactively monitoring disproportionality.
- The board needs to increase analysis and understanding regarding children receiving police community resolutions outside of the joint decision-making arrangements and work with the Metropolitan police to explore the implementation of the use of Outcome 22.

1.2. Staff



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

Outstanding

Strengths:

- The inspection found there is a clear drive to encourage people from the local community and with lived experiences to be involved with the service.
- Staff and volunteers are a richly diverse group who are reflective of the area, this is supported by recruitment from the local community.
- Staff are happy, positive, and motivated in their work.
- The management team works well together to support the team, and staff feel confident approaching managers for advice and guidance.
- Staff and volunteers feel valued by managers and by their peers, and there is a sense that the YJS is a caring organisation where people are supported to take pride in their work.
- The provision for volunteers is excellent. All volunteers receive an induction and are offered the same training as paid members of staff. They receive individual support and are encouraged to apply for paid roles within the service. They report feeling fully supported and integrated into the service.
- There are 80 volunteers, and their roles include referral order panel members, appropriate adults, mentors, and reparation workers. Volunteers start their service by shadowing other volunteers or working closely with experienced staff. All volunteers are given access to Southwark council's learning platform, and the volunteer coordinator plans an annual training programme.
- When allocating cases, managers consider which staff have previously been involved with the child and the family so that they can prioritise consistency of case manager.
- Staff and managers take a child-first approach and know their children well. They do all they can to encourage good engagement with children and their families and this was evident in the cases inspected
- Clinical practitioners provide the necessary structure for the service to have a trauma-informed approach to working with children and families.
- Staff receive regular and purposeful monthly supervision; clinical supervision is also provided when needed. Seconded staff receive supervision and support from both their home agency and their YJS line manager.
- There is a comprehensive induction process for new staff, and procedures for addressing staff competency.
- There is a staff training plan, and staff and volunteers can access commissioned and in-house training courses, as well as training through local educational establishments. They report feeling encouraged to take up training opportunities.

- Staff are supported to reflect on their knowledge and understanding of children’s protective characteristics. They are confident in asking appropriate questions about a child’s heritage and their lived experiences. The cases showed that diversity issues were assessed appropriately in 81 per cent of the cases inspected, and that staff do all they can to advocate and challenge, when appropriate, to ensure children’s needs are being met.
- Staff take responsibility for lead areas within the YJS, and the service actively encourages staff development through offering management opportunities and supporting staff to complete external qualifications.
- Team meetings encourage the sharing of positive information and recognition of good practice, and staff receive praise and appreciation emails from senior leaders and through supervision with their line managers.

Area for improvement:

- The inspection found that knowledge of multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) was inconsistent and not all staff were clear about the process.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Outstanding

Strengths:

- The interventions delivered in the inspected cases were of a consistently high standard and showed the quality of partnership working with agencies such as London Bubble, Jamie's Farm, Roadworks Media, YouthInk, and St Giles Trust, as well as the partners used for delivering reparation projects.
- The YJS delivers a trauma informed weapons awareness programme to YJS children. This project also includes YJS practitioners going to schools and talking to children about the dangers of carrying weapons.
- The YJS is delivering an excellent programme for girls aimed at assisting them to explore their identity and become empowered to succeed in all aspects of their lives. This intervention is available to any girl across Southwark children's services.
- The service has an established relationship with the Wipers organisation to deliver black identity interventions for children, and this was evident in the cases inspected.
- The YJS has access to a comprehensive suite of data analysis, which leads to deep-dive reports.
- The YJS uses 'team targets' as part of its performance management structure. By focusing on each team's performance, areas of improvement are identified and monitored to drive up performance across all areas in the service.
- YJS children assessed as high risk can be discussed at risk management panels and the multi-agency extra-familial harm panel. There are also practice group discussions facilitated by the clinical practitioners, which case managers can use to help them review the interventions and progress they are making with children.
- The YJS works with the community harm and exploitation operational group (CHEOG) to respond to serious youth violence, exploitation, and antisocial behaviour. The YJS CHEOG officer works with older children to support both those being transitioned to probation, as well as those who want to continue their intervention on a voluntary basis after their time with the YJS finishes.
- A police youth integrated offender management (IOM) scheme works with YJS children most likely to reoffend, using both police and YJS staff to undertake joint meetings and home visits.
- As part of the Turnaround project, the YJS is piloting the provision of a family worker and the positive impact of this role is already evident, especially as they work closely with the YJS health and wellbeing officer.
- The YJS Your Choice intervention programme uses intensive cognitive behavioural interventions to reduce reoffending rates and lessen children's

involvement in the criminal justice system. Evaluation will be completed through the Youth Endowment Fund.

- YouthInk are an inspiring organisation who work with the YJS to ensure the voice of children within the justice system and the wider community is heard. Services include the peer support navigator network, led by individuals with lived experience working with children currently known to the YJS.
- The victim liaison workers contact victims to highlight the restorative justice opportunities available. This includes updates on how the child is progressing, signposting to other support services if necessary, views of victims about licence conditions, a letter of explanation or apology, mediation, face-to-face meetings or reparation.
- The YJS has excellent core reparation projects available, as well being able to use other projects ad hoc if a bespoke placement is needed. Reparation is offered to all children open to the YJS, and at each session a mentor attends to interact and engage with them as they are doing their activities.
- There is an exceptional mentoring service using mentors recruited from the local community, with some having lived experience of the youth justice system. In addition to facilitating engagement on reparation sessions, they offer one-to-one bespoke mentoring sessions based on the child's needs and are part of the exit strategy as children's intervention with the YJS ends.
- At their first point of contact with the YJS, the restorative families project offers children and their significant others an appointment focusing on the impact of offending on their key relationships, repairing harm caused, and preparing families to work together.
- The Southwark Alternative Provision taskforce is a Department for Education (DfE)-funded project providing multi-agency specialist support to children attending the pupil referral unit (PRU). The YJS has seconded a staff member and their involvement has led to better working relationships between the organisations.
- The YJS education, training, and employment (ETE) officers oversee children not engaging in education, and work in partnership with case managers and other specialist workers to support their integration into education, training, and employment. They offer support for each individual child as needed and advocate for the child and family. Alongside St Giles Trust, they support post-16 children to encourage and maintain ETE, to ensure that provision is sufficient and the YJS children are welcomed.
- The YJS education leads meet with ETE YJS board members and attend meetings across the partnership to monitor children's engagement with their education provision; they review children where additional support is required to ensure that their education package meets their needs.
- Health provision is of a high-quality and a clinical team provides psychological and systemic consultation, assessment, and interventions. They work in collaboration with other YJS specialist workers, such as speech and language, child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS), education, health and wellbeing, and substance misuse. This multidisciplinary clinical team formulates children's clinical needs, as well as the service and interventions to best help to meet them.

- The Change Grow Live charity provides substance misuse services and supports children and other professionals working with families who require substance use information and support.
- Staff have a clear understanding of the referral process for children's social care interventions, and if they feel that the response from children's services is not appropriate or timely, they appropriately escalate their concerns.
- There is a harmful sexual behaviour forum led by a children's services senior clinical practitioner. With social care colleagues, the YJS delivers AIM3 (assessment, intervention and moving-on) interventions as appropriate.
- The YJS police officers share information and intelligence daily and attend the YJS risk panels, providing updated intelligence on children being discussed.
- A half-time seconded probation officer leads on transitions of young people to the Probation Service. The YJS and the Probation Service deliver the young adult transition programme to all young adults transferring to the Probation Service and adult custodial establishments. When post-18 young people come to the attention of the Probation Service, contact is made with the YJS to verify if they have been previously known to them.
- YJS children coming to court attention will be heard at Croydon court which, as it is shared by a smaller number of youth justice teams from other areas, can be staffed more regularly by the YJS. This will enable practitioners to advocate for all their children who appear in court to get the best outcome for them.
- Feedback from the court states that YJS staff are well prepared for their cases, provide information which the court requires, and that the reports they prepare are of an excellent quality.

Areas for improvement:

- Although there are victim satisfaction questionnaires at the end of interventions with victims, monitoring the safety of victims and how safe they feel could be used to improve this service.
- The local authority has both a strategic and operational focus on building schools' capacity to manage YJS children and retain them in learning. However, more work with schools is needed to reduce the level of school exclusions and get support for children in place at an earlier stage.

1.4. Information and facilities



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

Good

Strengths:

- There is a full range of policies and guidance, which are understood by staff and reviewed regularly.
- Policies have a focus on disproportionality, ensuring that consideration of children's protected characteristics is evident in all areas of practice.
- Information-sharing protocols are in place and understood across the partnership.
- There is an escalation process for all partners to help in challenging other agencies, and staff feel supported by managers to raise concerns.
- The YJS has its own building which it shares with partners and is accessible, safe, and suitable for children and families. Staff also see children at venues around the area, including children's centres and schools.
- The YJS police officers have access to both police and YJS IT systems.
- The case management system enables the service to produce quality data on performance.
- The YJS has a quality assurance framework, case audits are regular with findings reported to the management board.
- The YJS is involved in multi-agency audits and takes part in multi-agency learning reviews.
- There is evidence that the YJS reviews cases when serious incidents occur and learns from the outcomes of inspections to help improve practice.
- Several projects and programmes being delivered show the YJS has a commitment to innovation and evaluation to ensure the most effective services are delivered.

Areas for improvement:

- The case management system's connection can be intermittent, and staff report losing work, which causes frustration.
- Staff report that the wi-fi in the YJS building is poor and this can impact on the interventions they are delivering with children and families.
- The YJS obtains feedback from children, but there is not a current framework which effectively collates and analyses feedback systematically to help inform future service provision.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The YJS gathers feedback from children, parents, carers, and victims in various ways. This includes feedback on reparation projects, completing self-assessments, and using volunteer mentors, as well as YouthInk to capture children's voices. However, the YJS recognises that, although it gathers feedback, it needs to make sure there is an effective process that more fully utilises what is said by children, parents, carers, and victims, and influences the way that services are delivered.

The YJS contacted, on our behalf, children who had open cases at the time of the inspection to gain their consent for a text survey. We delivered the survey independently to the 16 children who consented, and seven children replied.

When asked how they rated the service they had received from the YJS, six responded, with a score of nine or 10 out of 10. One child said about their worker:

"They got me everything I needed, like anger management therapy, my own tutor and a mentor, and my life is becoming a lot better."

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

"They've helped me massively. I was in a dark place before and if it wasn't for them, I would have been dead or in jail. I appreciate them for all the support they've given me."

Inspectors also spoke to three children and three parents. All felt that their YJS workers had the right skills to do the work, and that they had been able to access the right services and support to help the child stay out of trouble.

One child, talking about their case manager, said:

"I have had help with everything I needed. They really helped me with going to college and finding a job."

Another child commented:

"The people here are easy to talk to. Relatable because some of them have had similar experiences to me".

One parent said:

"The worker was exceptional. They went above and beyond and related to my son on his level and related to me on my level. They coached my son and were explicit in terms of what was going to happen. They were clear about the expectations but fair."

Diversity

Southwark is one of the most diverse inner London boroughs with over 120 languages spoken. This diversity is most clearly shown in the adolescent group, with 69 per cent of 10–17-year-old children being of non-white ethnicity. Research has also shown that Southwark adolescents are more materially deprived than residents of other ages; 45 per cent of 10-17s live in wards identified as being in the most deprived quintile of areas, compared to 20 per cent nationally and 38 per cent for Southwark residents overall.

Of the YJS workforce, 65.2 per cent identify as female, 57.6 per cent as black, Asian or minority ethnic, and 4.5 per cent have a declared disability. In terms of the caseload, the YJS is aware of the historical disproportionality of black, Asian and minority ethnic children known to the service and has an action plan to address it. It recognises that disproportionality has reduced in recent performance reporting but, because the numbers can fluctuate, the issue remains one of its key priorities. Based on the school census in August 2022, 73.4 per cent of children in the Southwark area identified as black, Asian or minority ethnic, while at the time of the inspection, the number of black, Asian or minority ethnic children on the YJS caseload was 70.8 per cent.

In 2020, the council implemented the Southwark Stands Together Against Racism programme to address local equality issues. The children and family's division (including the YJS) developed its own plan, and a steering group with representatives from across all service areas meet to monitor it.

Southwark undertook research and identified that various decisions affected disproportionality within the YJS cohort. These factors are being addressed with the relevant partner agencies and include disproportionate use of stop and search of black children by police officers; black children being more likely to get a fixed-term school exclusion; and a lower rate of education, health, and care plans completed for relevant black children than white children.

In early 2022, all YJS staff received cultural competence training to enable them to feel more confident in working with children and families from different ethnic backgrounds. Clinical staff have briefed staff on how to exercise curiosity in asking questions of children to assist their understanding of the child's lived experience. Culture, diversity, and inequality are themes within the ongoing lunchtime sessions run by YJS clinical practitioners.

At the time of inspection, the YJS had 61 open interventions of which 64.3 per cent had substance misuse issues, 78.6 per cent had emotional, mental health, and wellbeing concerns, and 52.1 per cent had a learning disability, learning difficulty or were subject to an education, health, and care plan. An identity questionnaire is completed with children, and the out-of-court disposal review panel has specific questions focusing on the YJS's response to children's diversity needs.

Because of a limited number of placements for children in care in the Southwark borough, none were known to the YJS at the time of the inspection. If the child lives in a neighbouring borough, however, the YJS prioritises keeping and supervising their case to support their connections with their home area.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 16 community sentences managed by the YJS.

2.1. Assessment



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

Good

Our rating³ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	88%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	69%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	81%

Assessment activity was consistently effective across work undertaken to address children's desistance, their safety and wellbeing, and the risk they posed to others.

In assessing desistance, case managers showed a good understanding of the trauma that children had experienced and its impact on their behaviour and engagement.

Case managers collated information from other agencies, and the clinical practitioners reviewed children's health needs. Assessments contained an appropriate analysis of children's factors for and against desistance. Case managers considered children's attitude to and motivation for offending. Children's diversity needs were explored, and practitioners showed a good understanding of the child's lived experiences and heritage. Parents' views were prioritised, and case managers recognised children's levels of maturity appropriately. Case managers had not considered the wishes and needs of victims in some relevant cases, therefore restricting the opportunity for restorative interventions to be offered.

Case managers identified the potential risks to children's safety and wellbeing appropriately and included information from other agencies, for example, children's social care and education. Practitioners considered the external factors that could be put in place to support children's safety. However, in a small number of cases, not all the risks to the child's safety and wellbeing were recognised, for example their potential risk of being exploited.

In assessing risk of harm to others, information from other agencies informed the assessment. This included information from the police that was used to help analyse the internal and external controls. There were clear rationales for the interventions needed to manage the risks that children presented to others, and in most cases, case managers consistently considered who was at risk, and the nature of that risk.

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

2.2. Planning



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

Good

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

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	81%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	75%

The service prioritised allocating cases to practitioners who had already worked with the child and their family. Planning for interventions evidenced that the case manager knew the child well, considered their personal circumstances, and understood their motivation and strengths.

Planning was linked to the child's assessed desistance factors. There was a strong focus on considering children's learning needs, which was helped by the involvement of the speech, language, and communication therapists. Case managers identified appropriate interventions which were then agreed with the child. Health specialists and education workers were part of the planning process and built relationships with the children and their families. Planning included parents or carers, and in most relevant cases took account of the wishes of victims.

Planning to keep children safe was strong in nearly all the cases inspected. Children's safety plans involved other agencies, including working closely with social workers from children's social care. Multi-agency meetings, including the extra-familial harm panel, were regularly used to make sure information was shared and all agencies were up to date with the child's circumstances. Case managers planned for the interventions that were needed to support children, and managed the risk to their safety and wellbeing.

Planning to manage a child's risk of harm to others included thorough contingency planning based on the identified risks in nearly all cases. Case managers used the YJS multi-agency risk management meeting and information from other agencies, where appropriate, in the planning process. However, planning did not consistently promote the safety of other people as it focused too much on the offence and not on the child's other concerning behaviour(s). In some cases, case managers did not address in sufficient detail the safety of specific victims. Overall, though, planning focused sufficiently on keeping people safe.

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

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁵ 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?	88%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	88%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	94%

Case managers built strong relationships with the children and their families, and this was evident in the children's engagement. Most cases demonstrated the priority that case managers gave to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers to help support desistance. Interventions delivered were innovative and tailored to help motivate children. They built on the case manager's understanding of the child, their strengths, and their ability to engage.

There was evidence of the use of partner agencies to build relationships with children, ensuring that interventions were personalised to the child's needs. These included children working with London Bubble, Jamie's Farm, Roadworks Media, YouthInk, St Giles Trust, attending the girl's group, and working with the Wipers organisation to deliver black identity interventions.

All children were offered the opportunity to attend one of the high-quality reparation projects available, which also included a mentor at each session.

Interventions were identified to manage the child's safety and wellbeing. There was sufficient evidence of joint working with specialist staff, including the clinical practitioners, CAMHS worker, speech and language therapists, and the substance misuse workers. There were examples of case managers working in a trauma-informed way and using case consultations with clinical practitioners and health professionals to help them deliver sessions that would meet the child's needs. Inspectors noted some good work with parents or carers to ensure that families were receiving appropriate provision.

The delivery of services and interventions that considered a child's risk of harm to others was strong, and there was good multi-agency coordination to monitor the risks. Inspectors noted, however, that not all staff knew about MAPPAs (multi-agency public protection arrangements). The protection of actual and potential victims was consistently considered in nearly all relevant cases. Communication and information-sharing between the YJS police officers, case managers, and specialist workers was timely and effective in ensuring that all professionals were updated, and the child's risk was being managed well.

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

2.4. Reviewing



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

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

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	94%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	81%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	88%

Reviews were completed at key points in the order, and most relevant cases showed ongoing review of desistance factors in a dynamic manner as the order progressed. It was pleasing that case managers continued to build on children's strengths and considered the changes in their personal circumstances, as well as responding to their diversity needs. There was evidence that the focus of interventions changed if needed and the child's ongoing plan was adjusted when necessary. Reviewing considered children's motivation and engagement, and all cases showed that the child and their parents or carers continued to be involved in the review process.

Reviews of children's safety and wellbeing mostly detailed the changes in children's circumstances. Case managers and partner agencies were involved in multi-agency discussions and meetings to ensure that provision was in place for the child when their involvement with the YJS ended. Case managers used the multi-agency risk management meetings and children's social care statutory meetings to help them manage any changing concerns or escalations in the risk to children's safety and wellbeing.

When reviewing children's risk of harm to others, case managers recognised and responded to changes in the child's circumstances, and the reviewing process included information from, and meetings with, other agencies. In nearly all relevant cases, reviews consistently led to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan, and work to manage the risk of harm to others was addressed and managed effectively.

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

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 16 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of eight youth conditional cautions, one youth caution, and seven community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in 14 cases.

3.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

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

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	94%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	81%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	56%

The AssetPlus assessment tool is used to assess both children on court orders and those subject to out-of-court disposals. However, the quality of assessing children subject to out-of-court disposals was not as strong as the assessment of those on a court order.

At the time of the inspection, the YJS policy was that all knife crime should be assessed as high risk of harm to others on an interim basis. The case was then heard at the multi-agency risk management panel, which may or may not have lowered the level of risk. Although the policy is now under review, it negatively impacted on the quality of assessing activity for out-of-court disposals, since it resulted in practitioners not sufficiently analysing concerns, particularly in relation to the risk of harm to others.

When assessing children's risk of harm to others, there were inconsistencies in the judgements made. In a number of cases the level of risk was not justified in the assessment, and the focus was on the child's behaviours, linked to knife crime, rather than full consideration and analysis of wider concerns and mitigating factors.

To help identify children's desistance factors, case managers had accessed a range of sources from partner agencies. Case managers and specialist workers showed a good awareness of the trauma that children had experienced and its impact on their behaviour and engagement. They focused on children's strengths and their motivation to change, and involved children and their parents or carers in the assessment. In nearly all relevant cases, staff considered the needs and wishes of victims. Children's diversity needs were analysed, and staff showed a good understanding of their lived experiences and heritage.

Most cases identified and sufficiently analysed the potential risks to children's safety and wellbeing. Case managers used information from other agencies to inform their assessments, and there was a clear written record of children's wellbeing and how to keep them safe.

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

3.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

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

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	81%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	81%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	81%

Planning addressed the child's desistance factors, and case managers took account of children's diversity needs. Practitioners included children and their parents or carers and made plans proportionate to the type of disposal. They also ensured that planning reflected the wishes and needs of victims, and cases showed good examples of engaging children in restorative justice work. As some of the interventions were delivered within a short period, case managers, specialist workers, and partner agency staff had an effective focus on children's access to mainstream services and opportunities for community integration after the disposal had ended.

Planning to address children's safety and wellbeing saw case managers working alongside other agencies, including clinical practitioners, CAMHS, children's social care, and education, training, and employment workers. They received information from other agencies, which was evident in the multi-agency risk management meetings, as well as discussion of children's risks in other forums across the partnership. Contingency planning was strong, showing staff were up to date with children's circumstances and ensured all information they receive was analysed so that their response to the child's needs was adapted accordingly.

Case managers planned for the interventions that were needed to manage the safety of other people in most cases, although this could be more consistent. Planning involved specialist workers and other agencies, and addressed the safety of specific victims. Contingency planning to address escalating concerns about the safety of other people was adequately detailed in nearly all cases. Overall planning focused sufficiently on keeping people safe.

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

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁹ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	100%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	88%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	94%

The delivery of services and interventions, in the main, built on assessment and the planning activity. Case managers could access all the services and interventions available for children on court orders for those subject to an out-of-court disposal. The interventions delivered showed that the case manager, specialist workers, and partner agencies had built strong relationships with children and their families, and this was evident in children's engagement with their disposal. The interventions delivered were innovative and creative, showing that staff understood the child's needs.

To help support children's desistance, case managers matched interventions to their needs and learning styles, taking account of their diversity. They were also proportionate to the type of disposal. Case managers worked hard to establish effective working relationships with both the children and their parents or carers. Using high-quality reparation projects, strong partnership working, and the introduction of mentors, there was evidence of children's good engagement with interventions, which were mainly voluntary. There was a strong focus on children's educational needs, with education, training, and employment workers advocating for children who were at risk of school exclusion. In all cases, practitioners had considered how children could be linked to mainstream services once their interventions had ended.

The delivery of interventions to support children's safety and wellbeing in out-of-court disposals showed evidence of case managers working alongside specialist workers and partner agencies, being creative in how to deliver interventions that were personalised to the child and met their needs. In nearly all of the cases inspected, service delivery and interventions supported children's safety effectively.

Case managers ensured that the interventions with children to support the safety of other people were managing and minimising the risk of harm. They considered the protection of potential and actual victims when delivering interventions in all relevant cases. Overall, the interventions delivered had supported the safety of other people in nearly all of the cases inspected.

⁹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision



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

Good

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

Strengths:

- Southwark children services, including the YJS, utilise a systemic approach to working with children and families, supported by a team of clinical practitioners experienced in family work.
- The YJS has a prevention strategy and an out-of-court disposal policy. The service offers a targeted prevention service, as well as the Turnaround project.
- Partnership agencies screen all children on receipt of the notification from the police to check whether they know the child or family.
- Case managers visit the child and family, and make an initial proposal with an intervention plan to the out-of-court disposal panel.
- All interventions and services available to children on court orders can be used for children on an out-of-court disposal.
- YJS staff understand the process for out-of-court disposals and feel that their assessments influence the outcome for the child.
- There is evidence of joint decision-making, and the rationale for the disposal outcomes is clearly recorded. If there are any disagreements at the panel, there is a clear escalation process, although it is rarely used.
- The out-of-court disposal panel monitors and reviews the progress of children.
- A Southwark scrutiny panel meets twice a year and reviews cases that have gone through the out-of-court disposal process.

Areas for improvement:

- A policy decision regarding knife crime negatively impacted on the quality of assessing activity for out-of-court disposals. We found inconsistencies in the judgement ratings for risk of harm and instances where the focus was on the child's behaviours linked to knife crime, rather than full consideration of wider concerns and mitigating factors. The policy is under review and the YJS are further considering the policy in light of inspection findings.
- There is no specific quality assurance process that the out-of-court disposal panel uses to make sure that the decisions they make are consistent.

4.1. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Good

We inspected the quality of policy and provision for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews. To illustrate that work, we inspected two cases managed by the YJS that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

Strengths:

- The YJS resettlement policy, which will be reviewed annually, includes work with children in custody and after release from custody.
- The service is represented on the London resettlement partnership board, where custody issues can be raised at a strategic level, and there are contacts at the secure establishments to resolve any operational issues.
- The YJS has a resettlement panel that discusses all children in custody and agrees a resettlement plan for them. It is a multi-agency forum that determines the sequencing of work that will take place to address the child's needs, and agencies' roles and responsibilities. The panel monitors transitions between the youth estate and the adult estate, as well as resettlement in the community.
- YJS case managers and specialist workers attend review meetings and visit children in custody in person whenever possible to maintain and develop their working relationships.
- YJS case managers work closely with the child's social worker, including joint visits to the establishment and attending review meetings.
- YouthInk visits children in custody to support them through the custody and resettlement process.
- Staff describe communication with the secure estate as effective. Each child is allocated a resettlement worker and there are weekly conversations between the YJS and the establishment.
- In the cases inspected, there was sufficient planning and provision in place to support the child's education, training, and employment needs on release.
- There has been specific training in resettlement work for both YJS staff and partner agencies.

Areas for improvement:

- Planning and provision to meet the health care needs of children in custody is not consistently sufficient.
- Case managers need to ensure that they are taking account of victims and children's diversity needs when considering children's resettlement provision.
- Although the head of service raises individual case concerns with the management board and relevant partners when specific issues need to be escalated, there is no regular reporting to update board members on the timeliness of release arrangements and the plans for children being released, including the availability of education or training on the day of release and access to necessary healthcare.

Further information

The following can be found on our website:

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