



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth justice services in

Newcastle

HM Inspectorate of Probation, February 2025



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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

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

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Foreword

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

Over the past 24 months, Newcastle YJS has experienced a number of challenges which has impacted upon their ability to deliver a consistent quality of service to children. We found an organisation where historically there had been very little succession planning for business continuity, inconsistent approaches in management oversight and high staff turnover. Additionally, the service has experienced team bereavement, following the tragic deaths of two staff members. However, despite the sizeable adversities faced, Newcastle YJS is moving forward positively, and we found evidence of a newly formed management team, a competent head of service, and a motivated staff team willing to learn.

The current leadership team and partners have worked constructively to develop a clear vision and shape a plan to help children flourish. A new operating model has been implemented, and there is a sense of purpose, progress and a focus on the future. Innovation is evident in the effective participation with children, the successful use of the Future Focus team, the use of music therapy to increase emotional resilience, and the level of mapping completed to identify individual needs of particular groups of children. Additionally, consistent leadership is now enabling staff to improve service delivery. The partnership board is led by a knowledgeable chair, who understands the challenges faced by the YJS and is ambitious for YJS children. Partners take their responsibilities seriously and work together to overcome structural barriers experienced by children. Feedback is actively sought from children and their parents and carers to improve their experience of the service. However, the Board needs to assure itself on the quality of work being delivered by the YJS and needs a more forensic analysis of performance data, particularly in relation to court work.

This inspection found variability in the quality of work carried out in statutory orders regarding assessment and planning for children's safety and wellbeing and the potential to cause harm to others. Inconsistent attention was being paid to the needs of actual and potential victims. Contingency planning was also variable, and it was clear that work needed to significantly improve. Encouragingly, the YJS has recognised some of these areas and is already introducing advice, guidance and new processes to develop practice.

After experiencing considerable challenges in its recent past, Newcastle YJS is a rapidly improving service. It can now rightly be proud of the progress it is making. In this report we make five recommendations to improve its work further. We trust that they will assist the service as it continues its development journey.

















Martin Jones CBE

HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Newcastle Youth Justice Service
Fieldwork started November 2024

Score 16/36

Overall rating	Requires improvement	
1. Organisational delivery		
1.1 Governance and leadership	Requires improvement	
1.2 Staff	Good	
1.3 Partnerships and services	Good	
1.4 Information and facilities	Good	
2. Court disposals		
2.1 Assessment	Inadequate	
2.2 Planning	Inadequate	
2.3 Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement	
2.4 Reviewing	Inadequate	
3. Out-of-court disposals		
3.1 Assessment	Good	
3.2 Planning	Requires improvement	
3.3 Implementation and delivery	Outstanding	
3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	Good	
4. Resettlement¹		
4.1 Resettlement policy and provision	Good	

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

Recommendations

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

Newcastle Youth Justice Service should:

1. improve and embed the quality of assessment and planning work to keep children safe and manage the risk of harm they present to others, specifically in post-court disposals
2. enhance the quality of assessment and planning work to ensure it fully considers the needs of actual and potential victims
3. ensure robust contingency plans are in place for all children that address their safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others.

The Newcastle Partnership Board should:

4. ensure and satisfy itself that the quality of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm work, improves and is of a consistently high quality.

Northumbria Police should:

5. review the police referral form provided to the out-of-court decision-making panel so that it pays explicit attention to diversity and trauma.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Newcastle YJS over a period of a week, beginning 11 November 2024. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began between 13 November 2023 and 06 September 2024; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 13 November 2023 and 06 September 2024; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between 13 November 2023 and 06 September 2024. We also conducted 34 interviews with case managers.

Newcastle YJS is one of six youth justice services that cover the Northumbria Police area. Newcastle is home to 311,976 people. The population is 49.4 per cent male and 50.6 per cent female. Approximately 26 per cent of people identify as an ethnicity other than White British, and this increases to 38 per cent in school-age children. There are 62,892 children aged 0–18 years, around 21 per cent of the Newcastle population. Of these children, 42 per cent are eligible for free school meals.

The number of children in care has reduced but, at 100.1 children per 10,000, it remains above the national average. Of the current case load, 20 per cent are girls, 14 per cent are children from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, and 44 per cent have additional learning difficulties or are on an Education, Health, Care Plan (EHCP). Of the children aged under 16 working with Newcastle YJS, 78 per cent are in full-time education. Of those children aged 17 or 18, 31 per cent are not in education, training, or employment.

Newcastle YJS is a multi-agency partnership in the children and families directorate. It currently manages a caseload of 104 children. Of these, 26 per cent of cases are prevention, 22 per cent are out-of-court disposals and 52 per cent are court disposals. The dedicated service manager role is managed by the assistant director for children's social care and early help. The YJS Partnership Board which is chaired by the director of children and families, provides governance of the YJS.

Newcastle YJS works collaboratively with other regional services to deliver training and provide interventions. In the past 12 months, all case managing staff have moved to work across the full range of youth justice work. The service has 12 case managers, a probation officer and two youth justice support officers. In addition to statutory partners, Newcastle YJS has specialist posts including an education officer, parenting officer, a substance misuse worker, a performance analyst, a focused deterrence officer, and two prevention workers.

Newcastle YJS aims to achieve the aspirations set out in the Council Borough Strategy 2022–25, particularly in supporting Newcastle to be a 'healthy caring city'. The service is also committed to working with partners to ensure it is consistently using restorative justice, strengths-based and trauma-informed approaches to underpin all its practice areas.

The re-offending rate in Newcastle YJS is 22.4 per cent compared to 33 per cent in England and Wales. The first-time entrant rate in Newcastle YJS is 160 per 100,000, compared to 165 in England and Wales. For children subject to court orders: 27 per cent are for violence against the person, 40 per cent for burglary, 7 per cent for theft and handling stolen goods, 7 per cent for criminal damage, 13 per cent for motoring offences, and 7 per cent for other indicatable offences.

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 12 meetings, including with staff, volunteers, managers, board members, and partnership staff and their managers.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows.

1.1. Governance and leadership



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

Requires improvement

Strengths

- There is evidence that the YJS has effectively engaged with partners, stakeholders, and the partnership board, to set a clear strategy. This is articulated well in the 2024/2025 business plan.
- Senior leaders have an appropriate focus on diversity, and there are comprehensive arrangements supporting the need to address disproportionate outcomes for children.
- Innovation and evidence-based initiatives drive service delivery. There is a culture of learning, and application of learning, to improve services. The leadership team promotes transparency and constructive challenge.
- The youth justice partnership includes partners at appropriate levels of seniority. Partners are active in their contribution and positive ambassadors for YJS children in their own services.
- Board induction and training arrangements are strong and a comprehensive members handbook supports these.
- The knowledgeable director of children's services chairs the board and has good links with a range of other boards across the city, providing high support and challenge, holding partners appropriately to account.
- Local strategic partnerships (community safety, reducing re-offending, serious youth violence) understand the needs of YJS children and appropriately direct resources to meet their needs.
- The head of service is highly influential, and this enables the partnership to achieve positive outcomes for children.
- There is effective engagement between the leadership team and the management board. This creates a positive organisational culture and enables the service to grow.
- The management information presented to the board is accessible, informative and current. Inspectors consistently found examples of reports evidencing reviews of impact, at both a strategic and operational level.

- Leaders understand business risks well and there are appropriate controls and action plans in place to mitigate risk.

Areas for improvement:

- Board members should take part in casework reviewing and quality assurance activity.
- The board should undertake a more forensic analysis of the performance data on court work.
- The board needs more diverse ethnic representation to improve understanding of people with different lived experiences.
- Some board members have attended meetings with YJS staff but could do more to increase their visibility.
- Not all volunteers are given the opportunity to input into the YJS business plan and other policies. There needs to be more dialogue with volunteers to maximise the skills they could potentially bring to the YJS.
- The newly formed management team needs time to embed so that consistent oversight is provided to staff supervising children.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Strengths:

- Staffing resources are effectively planned, used appropriately and suitably reviewed to respond to the changing needs and profile of children being supervised.
- Staff have access to a wellbeing assessment tool to support their mental health and build resilience.
- There is a structured and comprehensive induction process, consisting of formal and informal activities and arrangements. New employees can shadow staff completing youth justice tasks as they develop their learning. Practitioner and manager workloads are realistic and ensure that staff are not under unrealistic pressure.
- Cases are appropriately allocated to practitioners with suitable skills and qualifications. Joint working of cases provides additional accountability, learning and development.
- Staff are supported well in their professional development and progression into other roles. This investment is now helping future succession planning. Employment opportunities are openly promoted. There is a breadth of reward and recognition arrangements for staff.
- Staff receive regular case management supervision, coupled with reflective and clinical supervision. This supports them to develop and reflect on the quality of work they deliver to children. Staff are motivated to deliver high-quality services.
- All staff have access to in-service learning opportunities on the council's learning platform. This training helps them to deliver interventions to children and enhance their partnership working. In the last 12 months, staff have completed training including: harmful sexual behaviour, report writing, out-of-court disposals, enhanced case management, trauma recovery model, autism and cultural competence.
- Arrangements to address poor performance are in place and, where required, have been used by YJS managers.

Areas for improvement:

- Consistent messages from managers need to embed so that practitioners are clear about what is expected from them in relation to effective work in the assessment and planning of work to support safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others.
- Recruitment and consolidation of qualified and experienced staff, and stabilisation of the workforce is a priority for the coming year.
- The YJS management team has only been together since August 2024 and is still embedding. Stabilising this team is a key priority for the YJS in

2024/2025. The YJS has managed these challenges sensitively and professionally.

- The workforce is predominantly White and female. More work is needed to establish a diverse workforce, especially in its ethnicity mix.
- Management oversight of post-court casework is inconsistent (only 54 per cent in our inspection sample was judged effective).
- The learning opportunities provided to upskill staff are not yet making the difference needed in all aspects of service delivery.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Good

Strengths:

- There are up-to-date analyses of the portfolio and the needs of children. These cover desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm factors as well as diversity needs across some protected characteristics. This is suitably informed by management information dashboards, Asset Plus, audits, thematic reviews and quality assurance reports.
- Children and their parents and carers are actively encouraged to provide feedback, and this is used well to improve operational service delivery.
- The YJS has all the required statutory staff. This includes health, education, employment and a probation officer.
- There is impressive access to specialist and mainstream services that help children to desist from offending and keep them, and others, safe. This includes mental health support and mentoring, psychologist support, projects supporting children experiencing loneliness, first aid training, six months paid work experience programmes, Rising Stars - Post 16 education support, speech and language therapy (SaLT), Future Focus (building emotional resilience) N-tar (substance misuse) and accredited qualifications.
- The variety and volume of reparation activity is progressing well. All interventions build on the strengths children possess. Music therapy is a notable asset and achieving positive outcomes for children.
- There are well-established, embedded, effective links and relationships with a range of statutory partners, providers and agencies providing desistance, safeguarding and public protection panels. Oversight is effectively provided through various memorandums of understanding and service level agreements.
- Partners collaborate well together to ensure that there is positive engagement with children and their parents and carers.
- Restorative justice and reparation work is strong.

Areas for improvement:

- Following the reintroduction of the youth court user group, effective relationships need time to embed.

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:

- The YJS has a wide range of relevant policies, procedures and guidance documents that enable staff to understand and undertake their roles. These are aligned to linked policies and protocols both within the YJS and with partner agencies.
- Policies are regularly reviewed. Inspectors found an extensive list of current policies that apply to the internal and external work of the YJS, and when subsequent reviews were scheduled.
- Services for children are delivered in accessible places and safe environments. These include reparation activities as well as direct work with children in buildings. Lone working policies operate well, and staff feel protected. Office spaces used to see children are clean and tidy. Relevant and appropriate information is displayed, and children have taken an active part in painting urban art images. This has encouraged a sense of ownership and comfort in the spaces where interviews take place.
- ICT access, enabling staff to carry out service delivery, largely works well. Staff can work effectively from office and remote bases.
- There is a range of comprehensive quality assurance processes including random and scheduled auditing, deep dives and thematic reviews. Auditing is completed by peers and managers across the partnership.
- There are effective processes in place to ensure that the YJS learns from things that go wrong. These include critical learning reviews and audits.
- Views of children and their parents or carers are sought both formally, at key stages of the supervisory process and on completion of interventions.
- There is strong stakeholder engagement across the partnership.
- Feedback from children and parents or carers was very positive during our inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Based on our case inspection findings, quality assurance and audit activity is not always translating into consistently good quality case practice.
- More explicit guidance is needed to ensure that all staff understand what is expected of them. Staff need to be suitably supported by managers to make the right decisions in their coverage of safety, wellbeing and risk of harm work.
- The YJS recognises that the current case management system is not as effective as it needs to be. As a result, the YJS is in the process to migrating to the Child View case management system.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

Newcastle YJS has designed an effective approach to participation, which it uses to gather the views of children and their parents or carers. There is evidence of ongoing listening at various stages of the supervisory arrangements and changes being made in response to feedback. Engagement is reinforced by bespoke listening events, direct feedback about the quality of services received, and opportunities to amend resources to make them more child friendly. This has produced an ethos that advocates the voices of children and their parents or carers.

The YJS contacted, on our behalf, children who had open cases at the time of the inspection to gain their consent for a text survey. We delivered the survey independently to the 27 children who consented, and 15 replied. All respondents, bar one, who responded fully to the survey gave the YJS's work a score of between eight and 10 out of 10. We also spoke to two children and two parents and carers.

One child wrote:

"I've been working with my worker from the YJS - she's really been helping me, and I feel with her helping me things are getting better".

Other responses included:

"The support has been really good, and my mental health has improved so much since being with YJS".

"They helped me with a lot - building a new CV, helping with employment, my relationship at home and overall I enjoyed working with my worker just chatting in general is enjoyable".

In our telephone and face-to-face interviews, children and parents spoke positively about their experiences of working with the YJS. When asked if they thought they understood what the YJS was aiming to do, one replied:

"When I first became involved, everything was explained to me. I fully understood why the YJS would be working with me, what they would and could help me with and how long my YCC would be for. In the first session I met my worker and a police officer and that's when they talked to me about signing the YCC and what it all meant. It was all very clear. Once that was done, I sat down with my worker, and we started to plan out what the work would look like. I was fully involved and felt listened to and respected. I made some suggestions about what areas of my life I would like help with, and my worker was able to talk to me about what they could offer me to help me, so I didn't get into trouble again."

Comments from parents and carers included:

" They [staff] have been good. My son has ASD and they have been really structured and consistent with him which is what he needs. He likes meeting them and has learned a lot about internet safety."

"The worker has referred my child to Newcastle Foundation, and he loves going there. They also helped get a SALT assessment which was needed. They have referred to Streetwise to ensure he continues to get support after they have closed. The Education Officer has helped my child return to school and helped me communicate with them when I have felt they have not listened to me. I have had years of difficulties with them but since the YJS have been involved and supporting me there has been some improvement."

Diversity

Newcastle Youth Justice partnership board takes an active approach to meeting the diverse and individualised needs of YJS children. There is effective ownership focusing on areas of disproportionality and services delivered. The YJS cites youth justice disproportionality findings with other relevant outcomes for children, such as school exclusion, experience of criminal exploitation, and the lived experiences of prejudice and its impact on children's identity.

The coverage of disproportionality in the Youth Justice Business Plan 2024/2025 is strong. A recently designed diversity and inclusion policy (June 2024) is comprehensive. It provides excellent content and context to support the service to improve its work with children who have experienced trauma because of their backgrounds.

Diversity information is collected and reviewed to identify areas where there have been disproportionate outcomes for children. More recently, the service introduced a girl's group in response to the uptick in girls within the caseload, and the council is looking to introduce sessions for GRT children at a youth centre with committed funding.

Services are personalised and delivery which considers diversity needs is strong. Inspectors found some exceptional examples where the learning needs of children, due to autism or neurodiversity, were managed thoughtfully and well. Notably, the work with children who had a dual diagnosis was impressive. Staff are generally confident in having conversations with children about their lived experiences. Their understanding, awareness, and confidence in dealing with diversity issues is noteworthy and supported well by appropriate training for staff. Not only is there a commitment to addressing diversity and disproportionate outcomes for children, but there is also evidence of the YJS tackling structural barriers. Children can access a range of mentors from Humankind and benefit from the Focused Deterrence initiative. However, assessment and planning are weaker, and this is an area that needs greater focus.

Staff who identify as having a diversity need find their needs are generally met well. However, a small number of staff members believe the service could do more. Reasonable adjustments, such as adapted furniture and software on laptops for staff are made in a timely manner.

The out-of-court panel assessment report prompts practitioners to consider diversity. However, the referral document used by the police does not explicitly cover diversity and the experience of trauma. Additionally, there could be better ethnic minority representation across the board and partnership staff.

Inspectors found several examples of effective services to support the personal circumstances and diversity needs of children. Of note is the music therapy offered to children by the charity Nordoff and Robbins where children are enabled to write lyrics about their lived experiences. Inspectors directly witnessed the powerful impact that this has in increasing emotional resilience among vulnerable children. Some had also performed their songs at partnership board meetings.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 12 community sentences and one custodial sentence managed by the YJS.

2.1. Assessment



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

Inadequate

Our rating² for assessment is based on the following key questions:

Does assessment sufficiently analyse:	% 'Yes'
how to support the child's desistance?	85%
how to keep the child safe?	69%
how to keep other people safe?	38%

Overall, assessment work to support children to not reoffend is strong. In almost all of the inspected cases, practitioners sought to understand the child's level of maturity and level of motivation. Assessment consistently focused on the child's strengths. Encouragingly, practitioners invited and included the voices of children and their parents and carers. This appropriately informed their understanding of the causes of the child's offending behaviour.

However, work to consistently analyse children's diversity needs across a broad range of protected characteristics needed developing.

In almost two thirds of the inspected cases, assessment activity sought to identify any risks to the child's safety and wellbeing. Practitioners appropriately gathered and included relevant information from other agencies and largely used it well to better understand the risks to the child's safety. However, not all safety concerns were comprehensively considered. For example the impact of family members who had ill health and mistrust of professionals.

Assessments to identify all relevant factors linked to keeping other people safe were not consistent. We found that practitioners had not effectively identified all the individuals who were potentially at risk from the child, as well as the nature of that risk, in all the cases where this was relevant. In a third of the cases reviewed, the needs and wishes of victims were not identified. Information held by other agencies about children's previous and current behaviours was not used well. This often included information about carrying weapons, alleged offending, emotional regulation, involvement in serious organised crime and school exclusions. More attention was needed to explore the impact of potential supports, controls and interventions to mitigate risk of harm to others.

² The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

2.2. Planning



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

Inadequate

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

Does planning focus sufficiently on:	% 'Yes'
supporting the child's desistance?	85%
keeping the child safe?	54%
keeping other people safe?	38%

Planning activity to address desistance was individualised and completed jointly with children. In almost every case, planning was proportionate, and targets agreed were achievable within the timeframes. Plans were largely aligned with those completed by other agencies to prevent repeat offending and help the child and their family understand the roles of each service. There was a suitable balance of attention paid to both strengths and areas of concern, and practitioners explored the child's motivation and maturity well. In some cases, practitioners had helped the child to access mainstream services, such as the HAF project (summer activities during school holidays), the Humankind charity (mentoring), and accessing local youth provision in the community. In some cases, planning to meet the diversity needs of children could have been stronger. For example, fully understanding and appropriately responding to language barriers within the family. Planning activity mostly took the child's views into account, and those of their parent or carer. This supported effective engagement.

Planning to address children's safety and wellbeing needs to become more embedded into practice. Where required, practitioners did not always liaise well with other agencies to ensure that their plans were aligned, and that the role of each service provider was clear. This includes their responsibility for attending multi-agency, and safety and wellbeing, panel meetings. Inspectors found that practitioners' analysis of the child's personal circumstances and of their health, including any history of emotional wellbeing and education, training and employment (ETE) needs, was mostly completed well. This helped practitioners make appropriate referrals to specialist providers and identify suitable interventions to mitigate risk. Contingency planning was weak. Actions identified were often too broad and processes that needed to be followed were not clear. A stronger focus on specific activity was needed and supported by attention to each identified risk.

Planning to keep other people safe was variable and requires further attention. Practitioners' understanding of the specific concerns of actual victims and needs of potential victims was weak. In too many of the inspected cases, information from public protection partners was not sought in a timely way. In some cases, there was no clear pathway as to how harm related factors would be managed. The monitoring of external controls was also not always clear i.e. liaison with the police and mapping activity. Risk management planning needed to improve as did the quality of joint work with other agencies involved with the child. Additionally, all harmful behaviours, including potential sexual offending needed a forensic focus to ensure the safety of others.

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

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁴ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Does the implementation and delivery of services:	% 'Yes'
effectively support the child's desistance?	77%
effectively support the safety of the child?	62%
effectively support the safety of other people?	62%

Practitioners were established at developing and preserving effective relationships with children and families. Children accessed a number of services that addressed areas of need and concern. These included pro-offending identities, heritage, education, substance misuse, and emotional wellbeing. They were also signposted to various opportunities to build on their strengths. The sequencing of interventions was not always structured in a way to maximise positive outcomes for children. For example while children are supported to access sports programmes, this does not always follow work to help them integrate into sports teams in the community. Practitioners were, however, active in ensuring that services were personalised, and that children did not feel overwhelmed by the number of workers they needed to see. Accounting for the diversity needs of children was positive. In one case, following a child's disclosure of traumatic events, the practitioner showed considerable determination in supporting them to build emotional resilience.

Work to keep children safe needs to be more consistent. Where planned work had been identified, this had largely been delivered well. For example, the risks of carrying weapons, groupwork, criminal exploitation, experience of prejudice, and anger management. Practitioners also made good use of specialist services such as substance misuse and the psychologist from Future Focus. However, the involvement of other organisations in keeping children safe was not consistently coordinated well. Practitioners should have involved partner agencies much more and followed up referrals which had not been actioned. In one case, active risks were not monitored and a child in need plan was terminated with no change in circumstances or progress. The latter needed challenge but there was none.

Work to keep other people safe was variable. Where relevant, practitioners had not consistently paid sufficient attention to keeping actual and potential victims safe. For example where the child and the victim were attending the same school, not enough attention had been given to understanding all the risks to the victim. Additionally, much more focus was needed, in some cases, on understanding the lifestyles and associations children had with rival groups. Encouragingly, inspectors found some good examples of effective weapons work being delivered and risk management meetings used well to review risks and agree actions. The outcome from these meetings were helping children to appreciate the progress they were making.

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

2.4. Reviewing



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

Inadequate

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

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on:	% 'Yes'
supporting the child's desistance?	85%
keeping the child safe?	46%
keeping other people safe?	77%

The reviewing of work to assess the impact of interventions on reducing reoffending is a strength. Practitioners complete formal, informal and dynamic reviews as the child's personal circumstances change. They focus on establishing trust in relationships, affirming children when they have achieved positive outcomes and provide flexibility in complex home and personal circumstances.

Practitioners mostly reviewed children's motivation and considered any barriers that they identified whether individual or structural. In most of the inspected cases, discussions with children and their parents and carers during reviewing (and direct feedback from parents or carers to inspectors) were generally evidenced well. This helped practitioners establish a more complete understanding of the children's broader day-to-day lived experiences and empowered parents and carers to become actively involved in their children's supervision.

Reviewing activity to keep children safe needs to improve. Where required, reviewing did not always respond appropriately to changes linked to safety and wellbeing, in particular deteriorating family circumstances, threats of harm, exploitation, unhealthy associations with older children and misuse of drugs leading to an overdose. Practitioners did not always gather information from other agencies that were involved, nor revise plans to support ongoing work. A more methodical approach is needed to address and recognise changing vulnerabilities.

Practitioners did not always respond effectively to changes in factors related to risk of harm. For example, allegations of associations with older men and criminal activity. This meant that they sometimes failed to adjust plans to protect others from harm when required. In the vast majority of inspected cases, written reviews were completed in a timely manner, as required. This ensured that other practitioners involved in delivering work to manage risk of harm had access to up-to-date information. Of note was the timely attention that practitioners gave to intelligence suggesting that children were becoming involved in organised crime.

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

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 20 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of six youth conditional cautions and fourteen Outcome 22's. We interviewed the case managers in 19 cases.

3.1. Assessment



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

Good

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

Does assessment sufficiently analyse:	% 'Yes'
how to support the child's desistance?	100%
how to keep the child safe?	60% ⁷
how to keep other people safe?	65%

In all the inspected cases, the practitioner had sought to understand how much responsibility the child took for their behaviour, their attitude towards their offending and their reasoning for becoming involved in offending. This approach allowed practitioners to delve deeper into the child's identity and how adverse lived experiences may have impacted their offending. Practitioners analysed the individual speech and communication needs well and inspectors found a positive analysis of personal strengths and areas of concern, such as emotional anxiety. Their exploration of the child's familial and social circumstances was detailed, and practitioners understood the influence of early traumatic experiences on children's presenting behaviours. Assessments were well supported by multi-agency case discussions at the YJS out-of-court disposal panel and consultations from specialist service providers, for example substance misuse, and health.

In most cases practitioners had accessed a broad range of information from other agencies to support their assessments of children's safety. However, when required, practitioners needed to liaise more effectively with the Probation Service to gain an understanding of any supervisory conditions necessary. In most of the cases reviewed, there was a clear written assessment of the child's safety and wellbeing. Practitioners recognised threats posed to children, self-harm, criminal exploitation and the impact on decision making from additional learning needs.

The risks to others were not consistently understood and assessing required more detailed information about the child's emotional stability, their wellbeing and possession of items that could potentially be used in harmful behaviours. Specifically, future risks were not always understood well. Most practitioners used information from available sources correctly. Intelligence-gathering from the police was a

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

⁷ Professional discretion was applied at the ratings panel increasing this rating from 'Requires Improvement' to 'Good'.

strength and this provided some critical information to support effective assessments. Inspectors found that, in several cases, practitioners used their professional curiosity well to test their analyses of repeat behaviours. As a result of information provided by the victim worker at the joint decision-making panel, victims' needs were understood more fully.

3.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

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

Does planning focus on:	% 'Yes'
supporting the child's desistance?	100%
keeping the child safe?	70%
keeping other people safe?	55%

Planning to address desistance took a child-first, trauma-informed and whole-family approach. In most of the inspected cases, planning was appropriate to the disposal imposed and targets agreed were realistic and achievable within the timeframes. There was a proportionate focus on strengths, protective factors and areas of concern, and practitioners considered the child's motivation and maturity well. In many cases, services had been identified to support access to mainstream services, such as boxing and art sessions, thinking skills, fire safety and careers advice. Parents and carers were also signposted to relevant support services. In almost all cases, the child's diversity needs had been considered well. For example, practitioners liaised with the education worker, the SaLT practitioner and the psychologist from Future Focus for advice on developing a plan that fully met the child's desistance needs.

Planning to address children's safety and wellbeing was generally done well. However, when required, practitioners did not consistently liaise with other agencies to ensure that plans fitted together well or fully understood the role of each service provider. The latter finding was reinforced by some practitioners reporting in the staff survey that they did not always know how to access services. However, inspectors observed good partnership work with health (managing anxiety) and N-tar. Practitioners proactively liaised with schools and carried out joint home visits with other professionals when necessary. Contingency planning was weak overall, too broad in far too many cases and not always linked to identified risks.

Planning to keep others safe was variable and needs to improve. Some practitioners did not sufficiently consider the needs of actual and potential victims. Too often, information obtained from public protection agencies was not used well to inform plans and keep others safe from harm. There were opportunities to introduce internal and external controls, but this did not always happen. Contingency planning, to keep others safe was weak. In this area of work not all risks were fully considered and there was no consistent approach to identify broader risks to others, for example family members.

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

3.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.	Outstanding
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Our rating⁹ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

Does service delivery effectively support:	% 'Yes'
the child's desistance?	100%
the safety of the child?	90%
the safety of other people?	90%

The quality of services delivered to help children to not commit further offences was strong. We found examples where educational support (autism card), emotional resilience interventions, confidence building, offending behaviour conversations and attendance at a gym had been provided. These had encouraged the child to build a pro-social identity and desist from offending. Many of the letters of explanation reviewed by inspectors were suitable and demonstrated empathy and good reflection from children. Practitioners had regular contact with children and their parents and carers, with high levels of engagement.

When required, service delivery to keep children safe was done well. However, in a small number of inspected cases, responses from some partners were delayed and some practitioners did not follow up queries in a timely manner. On the other hand, the quality of work and liaison with the SaLT practitioner, the psychologist and education worker was good. Practitioners within the partnership engaged positively with schools to maximise children's attendance and attainment. In one case, following the issuing of an Outcome 22 disposal, the child was unhappy at a school she was attending and felt unsafe. The practitioner worked with the education worker to secure an alternative education provider leading to the child feeling more confident.

Collaboration with parents and carers was notable, as evidenced by the feedback given to inspectors. In all but one of the inspected cases, where required, enough services were delivered to keep other people safe. Overall, there was evidence of risk management meetings taking place and information from these meetings leading to activity to keep others safe. Generally, practitioners paid better attention to the needs of potential and actual victims. Inspectors found some good examples of work where practitioners had carried out effective victim awareness work and this had been combined well with the One Punch intervention delivered by the seconded police officer. Additionally, work had been undertaken with family members to increase the scrutinising of potential weapons carrying that their child may have had access to. In one example, the practitioner had sourced a 'safety box' to keep knives in.

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 in the data annexe.](#)

3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision



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

Good

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

Strengths:

- There is a shared protocol in place with Northumbria Police and all the youth justice services in the region. This is supported by a localised policy for Newcastle, which includes joint and defensible decision-making. It effectively covers pre-panel, at panel and post-panel information gathering, eligibility criteria, enforcement, and escalation arrangements.
- The voice of victims is a notable strength in the decision-making process.
- The YJS has an out-of-court multi-agency disposal panel with the appropriate level of representation. This includes a YJS team manager (Chair), YJS police representative, early help advisor, restorative justice worker, YJS case manager, Future Focus practitioner, YJS family worker, YJS victim liaison officer, a community volunteer and a representative from SEND and health.
- Escalation processes are in place and, when required, used effectively.
- The deferred prosecution offer is a notable strength and achieving positive outcomes to avoid the criminalisation of children.
- The effective meeting of the complex desistance needs of children is strong.
- External scrutiny of the panel is completed at a pan-regional level and provides effective quality assurance.
- Engagement procedures are clear and YJS practitioners can return to the panel when children are not engaging.
- Children subject to out-of-court disposals have access to the same range of interventions that are available for post-court cases. These include, a knife awareness programme, SaLT, Future Focus (building emotional resilience), N-tar (substance misuse) and wider community-based services such as Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service education programmes.
- The wider prevention offer, in particular turnaround, is embedded and impressive.
- The YJS collects, and has access to, considerable management information.
- Quarterly meetings between the police and YJSs in the region are held to consider aggregate information on the numbers of children and characteristics of those receiving each disposal type. This supports effective monitoring and evaluation and contributes to any decisions regarding strategic changes needed in policy or practice.

- The YJB PDAT assessment tool has been implemented and staff have been appropriately trained to use this tool.
- There are regular contact points with parents, carers, and children to obtain feedback.

Areas for improvement:

- There is little evidence of out-of-court work regularly featuring at the partnership board.
- Diversity and trauma considerations need to be strengthened in the police referral document provided to the panel.
- A more explicit focus is needed in the regional policy to cover a broad range of protected characteristics.
- In the cases we inspected, inspectors identified that the quality of planning to manage safety to others needs to be improved.

4.1. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Good

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

Our key findings were as follows.

Strengths:

- Newcastle YJS has a resettlement policy in place (dated July 2024). Robust guidance is included to provide clarity for practitioners. Pathways including suitable accommodation, health, ETE, and constructive use of leisure all feature well in the policy.
- The policy emphasises the significance of constructive resettlement including well-coordinated services with partners. The need for effective communication and information exchange with service providers and other key stakeholders is explicit in the document.
- The significance of developing a pro-social identity and providing personalised services is integrated well into the arrangements.
- Inspectors found examples of staff having overcome structural barriers faced by children with a broad range of lived experiences.
- Case findings largely triangulate positive resettlement outcomes for children.
- Managers used escalation processes when required.
- Staff involved in resettlement activity gave examples of effective engagement with the voice of the child for example in licence conditions and release on temporary licence (ROTL) arrangements.
- There has been some deep dive activity and thematic analysis of resettlement work. This focused on a disproportionate increase in the number of minority ethnic children being remanded into custody.

Areas for improvement:

- Staff mostly undertake generic training and practitioners could be provided with learning opportunities to explore resettlement work.
- The policy does not specifically refer to the broad range of protected characteristics and guidance for practitioners needs to be more explicit.
- Meeting the needs of actual and potential victims is central to work with children and is clearly identified as a priority of supervision. However this was not consistently evidenced in the cases reviewed.

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.](#)