

Kent Youth Justice Services Inspection – June 2021

Judgement, response, and improvement plan

Foreword

Our commitment to ensuring Kent's Youth Justice services achieve the best outcomes for young people across the county is unwavering.

HMIP judged Kent's youth justice service overall as requires improvement. This overall grading and two elements of the inspection being judged as inadequate has been a very tough message to hear. We are absolutely committed to addressing the areas found to be inadequate as a matter of urgency and have begun to do so.

However, we welcome the constructive findings of the inspection report and have worked with partners and stakeholders to develop this action plan in response to these challenges.

We know that the legacy of the pandemic is being felt across our communities and, in the challenges our children and young people face. Making sure that our practitioners, services and partners have the right expertise and capacity to respond to this complex environment is at the heart of the actions we have set out to meet the challenges highlighted by the inspectorate.

We have demonstrated in some aspects of our work that we can deliver outstanding outcomes. However, there is much work to be done to ensure that outstanding work is consistently delivered in every aspect of our work for all children and young people who are involved with our Youth Justice services. This improvement plan is a contract. We commit to delivering it to the highest standard to give our practitioners the support they need, and in return we ask all our staff to engage with the improvements and hold ourselves and each other to the highest standards.

Together we know that we can rise to the challenges placed upon us, and together we will make sure all children and young people in Kent can feel safe, valued and able to thrive no matter the challenges they face.

Matt Dunkley, Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education
Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services
Dan Bride, Assistant Director - Adolescent and Open Access - West

Introduction

In June 2021 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) undertook a full, virtual, 2-week inspection of Kent Youth Justice Services. Week 1 scrutinised 'evidence in advance' and week 2 (21-25 June), was fieldwork, comprising case work interviews, file audits and stakeholder engagement.

The result of this inspection is that HMIP have judged our services as "requires improvement". We understand and accept this judgement, including the reflections and recommendations set out in [the inspection report](#)¹. This document sets out how we intend to respond to these findings and ensure that Kent's youth justice services are outstanding both in terms of delivery and impact for young people across the county.

What the Inspectorate said

Inspectors recognised the impact of Covid-19 and the Kent variant noting that the service had continued to provide children with consistent access to essential services, such as in-person group sessions and educational and health support.

However, they found some inadequate practice in the quality of assessments, to identify the risk of harm posed by children under their supervision, as well as the planning required to keep children and other people safe. They acknowledged that the outcomes were generally good for the young people, but more focus was needed in young people's plans on the safety of others affected.

HMIP found inconsistencies in the level of management oversight and in the support offered to new staff.

The inspection noted the success of youth justice participation apprentices, who speak to children supervised by the YJS to channel the voice of children into strategic and operational decisions.

HMIP stated that they have "every confidence that these [changes] will be implemented quickly and effectively. There is a lot for Kent YJS to be proud of – it demonstrates outstanding commitment to integrated services, partnerships and to ensuring children under its supervision have access to appropriate facilities". "The inconsistencies should be relatively straightforward to solve".

Our reflections

Kent Youth Justice is a strong partnership which achieves its principle aim of reducing the offending and re-offending of children. HMIP noted our work to support the desistance of offending amongst children as "excellent", and this is reflected in Kent's rate of re-offending (34%) being lower than the national average (38%).

¹ The full report can be accessed online here <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspections/kent-yjs/>

However, as reflected in the overall grading of 'requires improvement', Kent Youth Justice acknowledges that our articulation of assessments and plans were inadequate during the period inspected. We immediately began to address this and have plans to do more

The global pandemic is not the sole reason for the weaknesses identified by HMIP although the impact of the pandemic does provide some context to the operational challenges.

- During the pandemic many partner agencies stopped their delivery of face-to-face interventions and
- The virtual court exceptional delivery model increased the Youth Justice daily duty demands from 2 Courts to 5 Police stations.

Recommendations for improvement

In order for Kent Youth Justice Services to respond to the findings of the inspection, HMIP recommend that we implement an action plan that delivers on achieving the following objectives:

1. Practitioners have the time, knowledge, and skills to meet the needs of their cases
2. Assessment and planning to keep the child and others safe are thorough and give sufficient focus to protecting victims
3. Oversight of case management is applied consistently
4. Staff appraisals are timely and add personal and professional value
5. Staff at all levels understand the activities of the Board (invite observation)
6. Assures itself that out-of-court disposal decisions are proportionate, and that voluntary outcomes maximise opportunities for support without children being criminalised.

In response, our improvement plan will focus on the following four key strategic objectives:

- Creating the capacity and functionality to lead, drive, monitor and assure Senior Managers and the CYJB of operational service improvements, with a particular focus on case management oversight and compliance with KCC and YJB policy, guidance, and standards
- Ensuring that the capacity and development needs of the workforce are understood, and that quality opportunities achieve the development and embedding of appropriate and improved (practitioner and manager) confidence, skills, and knowledge
- Enhancing communication and engagement between the workforce, Managers, Senior Leaders and the CYJB
- Developing a proportionate early intervention offer, with joint decision making between the Police and the Local Authority, as an alternative to the imposition of informal and unilateral Out of Court Disposals (informal Community Resolutions)

All actions and progress will be overseen by the Corporate Director, the Director with responsibility for Youth Justice, and the Youth Justice partnership, via the County Youth Justice Board.

Improvement Plan

Creating the capacity and functionality to lead, drive, monitor and assure Senior Managers and the CYJB of operational service improvements, with a particular focus on case management oversight and compliance with KCC and YJB policy, guidance, and standards

HMIP Recommendations:

2. Assessment and planning to keep the child and others safe are thorough and give sufficient focus to protecting victims
3. Oversight of case management is applied consistently

Outcomes:

- Consistent high quality case management across all teams
- Effective and consistent management oversight of casework
- Youth justice practitioners have the capacity and expertise to consistently analyse all factors in their assessment and planning, relating to risk of harm (including protection of victims), safety and wellbeing

Ref:	Action	Timeframe (start)	Responsible officer
1.1	Create a new YJ Service Manager role to lead and line-manage the YJ Team Managers	Oct 21	Dan Bride
1.2	Set the new Service Manager ambitious but realistic improvement targets in line with the HMIP improvement plan, line managed directly by the YJ HoS, and reporting to the CYJB, specifically: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Team Manager oversight of YJ staff in line with KCC standards, policy and approaches, including the appraisal, development and supervision of practitioners (recommendations 1, 2 and 4) b) Team Manager oversight of practice and performance, in line with YJB standards, policy and approaches 	Dec 21	Dan Bride
1.3	Re-launch the YJ allocations policy - check compliance through audit.	Oct 21 May 22	Dan Bride Kevin Kasaven
1.4	Set practitioner expectations re maximising use of partnerships and support services (e.g., TEP, RJ, ISS, Transition)	Oct 21	Dan Bride
1.5	Develop Core+ reports and templates (including caseload and a service specific supervision template and report)	Dec 21	Katherine Atkinson
1.6	Deliver training and support to staff to utilise above reports	Dec 21	Katherine Atkinson
1.7	YJ engagement in the CSWS Director's review of Team Manager responsibilities and capacity, to understand any barriers to YJ TM effective oversight, and consider workforce succession planning and progression opportunities	Dec 21	Dan Bride

1.8	Service Manager to set expectations of Team Managers re case management oversight responsibilities and accountabilities to KCC and YJB standards.	Dec 21	Dan Bride
1.9	An ICS-aligned but YJ specific supervision template will be created on Core+ to drive consistent quality of supervision, and facilitate reporting/oversight by the YJ Service Manager to the HoS	Dec 21	Katherine Atkinson
1.10	Create and launch with partners (Probation, Police), an Expert Risk Panel to quality assure ROSH and SWb assessments and plans, and to coach improvements by Practitioners and Team Managers – with a feedback loop to monitor progress.	Sept 21	Dan Bride
1.11	Enhance the accuracy and impact of audit of YJ cases by: a) re-launching the YJ audit tool b) additionally using the CYPE audit tool on YJ cases b) QA moderation using the YJ tool c) appreciative enquiry implementation d) QA audit of YJ in May 2022 to provide reassurance and a clear line of sight of practice to the CYJB	Nov 21 May 22	Kevin Kasaven
1.12	Review and dovetail the KCC alert and KMSCP serious incident review process a) to adopt the national YJB reporting process and criteria b) to include incidents of serious harm to others perpetrated by children b) ensure learning from case reviews is shared with CYJB, DivMT and ICS workforce	Nov 21	Kevin Kasaven
1.13	Current cases brought up to the expected standard of RoH and SWb assessment and plans	Oct 21	Dan Bride
1.14	Produce, enhance and rollout a bespoke Adolescent and YJ scorecard, a suite of reports and a service KPI page, including the levels of RoH identified in assessments; supervision RAGS; quality and activity metrics.	Dec 21	Katherine Atkinson
1.15	a) Host a victim voice roadshow (or communities of practice) to re-launch the victim voice processes and the reflection of the impact, wishes and needs of victims in assessments (of RoH) and plans, and the identification of how to keep victims and potential victims safe b) Measure improvements through audit.	Dec 21 May 22	Dan Bride Kevin Kasaven
	Target YJ staff to attend a Communities of Practice on contextual safeguarding approaches to manage harm, exploring coordination with others, including parents.	Dec 21	Kevin Kasaven

Ensuring that the capacity and development needs of the workforce are understood, and that quality opportunities achieve the development and embedding of appropriate and improved practitioner and manager confidence, skills, and knowledge

HMIP Recommendations:

1. Practitioners have the time, knowledge and skills to meet the needs of their cases
4. Staff appraisals are timely and add personal and professional value

Outcomes:

- All staff have sufficient knowledge and skills to manage cases allocated to them
- Practitioners have appropriate and manageable workloads
- Case allocation consistently takes into account diversity of children

Ref:	Action	Timeframe (start)	Responsible officer
2.1	Deliver a 'bitesize bootcamp' to YJ Team Managers re the appraisal framework and People Strategy	Dec 21	Dan Bride
2.2	YJ Service Manager will role model the TCP/PDP good conversation process with Team Managers and hold Team Managers to account for implementation of the standards	Dec 21	Dan Bride
2.3	Alignment of YJ workforce development with CYPE's workforce development workstream/CFKC and the Kent Academy	Oct 21	Dan Bride
2.4	Conduct a knowledge, skills, and development needs analysis of YJ and AEH practitioners and managers (reflecting audit findings, experience and training)	Dec 21	Dan Bride
2.5	Launch a refreshed YJ and AEH workforce development plan, based on the analysis, reporting to the Kent Academy, which addresses the full range of skills and knowledge, commissioning/procuring bespoke opportunities from the YJ budget, if necessary, in addition to CYPE core development opportunities (assessment skills, professional curiosity, trauma-informed language, and management training including appraisals, HR processes, and Kent Manager)	Dec 21	Dan Bride
2.6	YJ Service Manager oversight of the quality of appraisals, PDPs and supervision, in line with ICS policy, and engagement with learning and development	Dec 21	Dan Bride
2.7	Review of YJ service structure, responsibilities, and progression/ succession planning (Apprenticeships) with WFD strategy officer, reporting to Kent Academy	Jan 22	Dan Bride
2.8	Service manager will evidence that Team Managers have appropriate appraisal/PDPs in line with KCC guidance, which reflect their individual needs for knowledge and skills development, and utilises CYPE management and supervision training including Kent Manager, HR appraisal training and supervision.	Dec 21	Dan Bride

Enhancing communication and engagement between the workforce, Managers, Senior Leaders and the CYJB

HMIP Recommendations:

5. Staff at all levels understand the activities of the Board (invite observation)

Outcomes:

- Information consistently and clearly cascades effectively from senior leaders to practitioners

Ref:	Action	Timeframe (start)	Responsible officer
3.1	A YJ communication strategy will be launched within the workforce engagement and development roadshow to maximise opportunities for ongoing and meaningful communication between practitioners, managers, senior managers and CYJB members	Dec '21	Dan Bride
3.2	Team managers, represented at each CYJB, will feedback key messages and decisions to teams	Nov '21	Dan Bride
3.3	Practitioners and Managers (and CYJB Members) will complete the CYJB induction module	Dec '21	Dan Bride
3.4	CYJB to consider inviting observation of CYJB meetings by practitioners and/or sharing recorded meetings	Dec '21	Matt Dunkley (chair)
3.5	Launch a YJ workforce engagement and development campaign, using a suite of in-house (communities of practice, 'Space to Think') and innovative approaches ('Bitesize Bootcamp Bulletins') to drive key ICS and YJ policy & practice messages including supervision, appraisal, and Asset Plus risk assessment, planning and review. This campaign will also enhance communication between senior managers, the CYJB and practitioners	Dec 21	Dan Bride

Developing a proportionate early intervention offer, with joint decision making between the Police and the Local Authority, as an alternative to the imposition of informal and unilateral Out of Court Disposals (informal Community Resolutions)

HMIP Recommendations:

6. [the CYJB] Assures itself that out-of-court disposal decisions are proportionate, and that voluntary outcomes maximise opportunities for support without children being criminalised.

Outcomes:

- Opportunities consistently identified and utilised to divert children away from the criminal justice system and into services better able to meet their needs
- More children who offend will have holistic assessments and preventative support which meets their needs for safety and wellbeing, desistance and manages risk of harm to others
- Consistently good contingency plans which meet the changing safety and well-being needs of the child, and their risk of harm to others

Ref:	Action	Timeframe (start)	Responsible officer
4.1	Outcome 22 will be implemented and launched	Dec 2021	Sam Matthews (Police)
4.2	KCC will offer a triage (via Front Door) and preventative offer (via AEH) to Outcome 22 where appropriate.	Dec 2021	Susannah Beasley-Murray
4.3	Systems guidance will be updated for Front Door and Business Support re triage and inputting Outcome 22.	Dec 2021	Katherine Atkinson
4.4	Operational guidance re Outcome 22 will be available to the YJ workforce.	Dec 2021	Dan Bride
4.5	Front Door data quality will be improved to enable data linkage between EHM and Core+	Dec 2021	Susannah Beasley-Murray