

Youth justice oversight framework

Youth justice system performance:
oversight, assurance and compliance

February 2025



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Introduction

1. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 identifies two specific monitoring functions for the Youth Justice Board (YJB); these are to monitor the:
 - operation of the youth justice system and the provision of youth justice services
 - extent to which the system aims are being achieved and any such standards met.
2. The youth justice system is a complex landscape, involving numerous services, organisations and agencies. All these need to work in partnership to achieve the system aims of preventing offending and reducing reoffending and truly realise the best outcomes for children, families, communities and victims.
3. This framework provides clarity on how the YJB's monitoring function is fulfilled, outlining how oversight of local youth justice services¹ (YJSs) is undertaken and delivery across the wider system is understood. The framework reinforces putting children at the heart of what we do within the system and achieving better outcomes for them. We call this Child First; and this is the approach that the evidence currently tells us is most effective at preventing offending by children and in turn best reduce the harm caused to communities and victims.
4. The YJB's monitoring activity fully recognises that local services and their statutory and delivery partners are accountable for their own performance and have mechanisms for measuring and scrutinising their performance to ensure delivery and enable improvements. They are also subject to independent inspections by bodies which are expert in doing so, such as HMI Probation, Ofsted and Estyn (amongst others).
5. In 2019, the sector was given a revised set of [standards for children in the youth justice system](#). These national standards are set by the Secretary of State for Justice on the advice of the YJB. The standards align with the evidence base on what is most effective at preventing offending by children (principles of Child First) and the YJB is required to have oversight of and monitor delivery of the standards. Oversight of the delivery of these standards assists the YJB in carrying out the statutory monitoring function and equally allows an assessment of how well a service has operationalised the principles of Child First.
6. This document will outline the approach to overseeing performance of YJSs and brings together, in an overarching performance framework, an outline of:
 - the mechanisms used for oversight of and assurance against performance outcomes
 - how compliance against the terms and conditions of the youth justice core grant (provided to local YJSs on an annual basis) is confirmed
 - how effective practice across the system will be identified
 - when and how support is provided to drive up standards in delivery
 - the responses to persistent poor performance and/or noncompliance against the terms and conditions of the youth justice core grant.
7. This framework will take effect within the 2023/24 business year. This is a new way of working for the YJB and we want to smooth the transition for services and partners to this; we therefore

¹ The statutory definition of a local youth justice service is contained in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In statute these are known as youth offending teams. However, as services have evolved, they have become known by different names. For the purposes of this document we use the term youth justice services.

consider that a review of the framework's operation should be undertaken following a period of three years, allowing for the systems and practices to be embedded.

8. We would encourage feedback through your local YJS governance functions and understand that elements within the framework may need to be modified to reflect learning and support improvements within this timeframe.

Purpose and principles

9. The purpose of this oversight framework is to:
 - ensure priorities across the delivery of youth justice services (YJSs) and wider system partners are aligned
 - identify effective practice and/or where individual YJSs may benefit from, or require, support, and how to provide this
 - provide an objective basis for decisions about when and how intervention is needed
 - drive improvement across the youth justice system through supporting the dissemination and promotion of practice that delivers effective outcomes for children.
10. Several guiding principles support our approach to performance oversight, these are:
 - the best interests of children are a key consideration in all decisions taken
 - that we always seek to work with and through YJSs and local partnerships to address performance concerns and tackle challenges to improvement
 - that local accountability for results is backed by an offer of national improvement support, as appropriate
 - that local decision-making power and accountability for performance is balanced with national interest in a youth justice system that delivers for children, families, communities and victims
 - recognition that the principle aim of the youth justice system is to prevent offending, and as such our approach uses the evidence base of what works to guide expectations.

Approach to oversight

11. This framework emphasises the importance of delivery against both the local priorities agreed between local partners and the national expectations set out primarily through the [standards for children in the youth justice system](#), the terms and conditions of the youth justice core grant, and national [key performance indicators](#).
12. The YJB's monitoring function means it is responsible for monitoring performance; in addition we offer support where problems are identified; escalating issues and helping to develop regional/national solutions where issues cannot be addressed solely at the local level. Our oversight builds an aggregate picture of national performance which we use to offer advice.
13. For individual YJSs we monitor performance using the following four oversight fields:

Service delivery

Considering expectations for strategic and operational delivery as set out in the [standards for children in the youth justice system](#) across five key areas of delivery for children in the justice system: delivery of out-of-court disposals, delivery at court, delivery in the community (court disposals), delivery within custody and then on transition and resettlement; and its corresponding [case management guidance](#).

Service leadership

Governance, finance and use of resources (including people capability and development), partnership engagement and effectiveness.

Local strategic priorities

As expressed through the [youth justice plan](#), required annually, and the effective and appropriate analysis of local data sets to support the needs of children.

Continuous improvement

incorporating service-level responses to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation) inspections (single and thematic), and progress against these, outcomes against national key performance indicators, progress against improvement plans (where appropriate) and activity to support wider sector improvement and workforce development.

14. These oversight fields do not operate in isolation but collectively provide varied sources of intelligence to provide a rounded understanding of service performance. A fuller account of activity considered within each of these oversight fields is at [Annex A](#).
15. The voices of children and victims within our oversight activity is significantly important to enable a real understanding of the value being achieved through the operation of the system. As the YJB does not undertake direct work our oversight uses information on how services and their partnership work collaboratively with the child and incorporate the wishes of victims to ensure their voices are heard. This will include how a service has:
 - incorporated the wishes of the victim in their approaches to working with children
 - any tangible examples of how feedback from children has been used to make effective changes in service delivery

- information about the process undertaken to gather the views and feedback of both children and victims, and how that is analysed for service development.
16. Alongside oversight assurance activity the YJB will also monitor compliance with the terms and conditions of the youth justice core grant. The 'core' grant funding, provided by the Ministry of Justice and administered by the YJB to local authorities, is to be used for the purposes set out in legislation of providing youth justice services². The conditions attached to the grant were reviewed in 2022 and a strengthened set of [terms and conditions](#) implemented in April 2023 (alongside the introduction of this framework).
 17. Assessments of performance across individual youth justice services (YJSs) is led through the YJB's oversight teams which are situated within the Operations Directorates, covering Wales and the North and South of England. These teams maintain oversight of delivery and gain assurance of partnership and service level performance by working collaboratively with local services and strategic partners to gather intelligence. They also lead and coordinate identified support requirements in line with the principles for oversight set out above.
 18. As well as making assessments of performance across individual youth justice services, oversight teams build, maintain, and strengthen relationships with statutory and delivery partners, locally and regionally. These relationships enable the YJB to provide appropriate challenge to policy and process decisions and increase opportunities to influence and create system changes leading to the most effective outcomes for children and our wider communities.
 19. The YJB's oversight activity does not replace the role of local youth justice management boards, which is clearly articulated in the [youth justice service governance and leadership guidance](#) (2021). The YJB's role on the management board reflects its statutory oversight responsibilities and it continues to expect local management boards to take responsibility for all aspects of YJS governance; to lead strategically across relevant partners; and to ensure a high-quality service is provided to all children.
 20. The YJB has strengthened its relationship with the Youth Custody Service (YCS) to focus on strategic engagement that influences direction and improves outcomes for children. We provide a 'critical friend' role providing evidence-based advice alongside supportive and constructive observation. We continue to be acutely aware that children in custody are some of the most vulnerable children in the system, often with complex needs. This shift balances our statutory responsibilities, alongside ministerial expectations of the YJB's delivery and our strategic objective of supporting improvements in local communities, whilst recognising the role undertaken by other organisations within this operational monitoring space. These include YCS HQ, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), Inspectorates and key stakeholder organisations. An outline of the key components of our secure oversight is provided in Annex E.
 21. The YJB's oversight activity does not duplicate the role of the YCS which is responsible for the operational running of the youth secure estate, including delivering and maintaining standards. YJS's have overall responsibility for the case management of the community and custodial elements of a child's order and joint accountability with the establishments for the child's welfare, safeguarding and resettlement. Our role through our oversight activity is to seek assurance that local management boards are working effectively with the YCS, and meeting expectations set out in the standards for children in the justice system and the corresponding case management guidance section on custody and resettlement.
 22. The YJB's quarterly Performance Oversight Board reports into the YJB's Performance Committee (also quarterly) and provides updates on the secure estate from the intelligence gathered from our oversight activity. This includes the identification of risks, areas of challenge and examples of

² The YJB may also from time to time, and with approval from the Secretary of State, provide grants to YJSs for specific purposes, which will be subject to their own specific terms and conditions of payment.

effective practice across the sector, and also from our stakeholder engagement with the YCS. YCS officials attend and report into the YJB Board to provide assurance of YCS delivery performance.

23. There may, at times, need to be flexibility in how the oversight role is carried out. In some cases, this may involve adjusting the specifics of the approach, for example as a response to exceptional circumstances, as was seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, or where there is a need to respond quickly and proactively to unexpected issues, national policy changes or new sector or local pressures.

Oversight framework

24. The YJB undertakes oversight activity to meet its statutory duty to monitor the operation of the youth justice system. This function is undertaken in line with our independence from national and local government and all named statutory partners. The assessments drawn from our oversight activity represent our staff's professional judgement and make a clear statement of our understanding of strengths and areas for improvement based on the standards and performance expectations in place across the system.
25. The oversight process follows an ongoing cycle of:
- monitoring YJS performance against the oversight fields outlined and assigning services to performance quadrants
 - identifying the scale and nature of support needs and/or areas of effective performance and evidence-based practice
 - co-ordinating improvement (and where necessary formal intervention).

Monitoring – oversight and assurance

26. The YJB will monitor and gather insights about performance across each of the oversight fields. The intelligence collected and reviewed will include both quantitative sources such as, but not limited to, national key performance indicators, and qualitative intelligence taken from oversight activity. This includes quality, improvement and performance conversations with services and their strategic delivery partners, and relevant third-party intelligence such as inspections or outcomes against other government supported initiatives.
27. Whilst the sources of intelligence will vary by type, the collection and review of available intelligence will as a minimum be considered quarterly (as outlined below in governance section). Between these quarterly reviews, the oversight teams will monitor progress against agreed plans and milestones and, where required, also report by exception if events or intelligence trigger concerns outside the regular cycle.
28. This intelligence will be used to support ongoing oversight of current performance and service quality (based on the most recent information and insight available) and the historical performance trend to identify patterns and changes; including evidence of improvement or decline in the youth justice system's performance.
29. An outline of the approach to review meetings is provided below. Quarterly oversight assurance review meetings will be undertaken with all services, and where outcomes are of concern and improvement plans required, these will be supplemented by more regular focused review meetings.

Area of review	Assurance review meetings	Focused review meetings
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performance against oversight fields: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ service delivery ○ service leadership ○ local strategic priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progress against the agreed improvement plan actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ track improvement and understand the effectiveness of the

Area of review	Assurance review meetings	Focused review meetings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ continuous improvement • extent to which system partners are working effectively together to deliver and improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ various support measures ○ ensure any support is targeted where it has the greatest impact ○ consider and review support needs • oversight of and support to the service from strategic partners • determined by the specific issues identified in discussion between the YJB oversight team and service leadership
Roles and participation	<p>Led by YJB Oversight Manager with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • senior leadership of the YJS (Head of Service) • YJB Head of Oversight where appropriate 	<p>Led by Head of Oversight/YJB Oversight Manager with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extended senior leadership of YJS (Head of Service, relevant Director of Children's Service and Chair) • representatives from relevant statutory and delivery partners where appropriate and by mutual agreement • YJB Operations Directors where appropriate
Frequency	<p>The default frequency for these meetings may vary according to the performance quadrant classification but as a minimum should be quarterly.</p> <p>The oversight team will engage more frequently where there are concerns.</p>	<p>The default frequency for these meetings may vary according to the improvement confidence or level of support required but as a minimum should be monthly.</p>

30. Key outcomes of the successful implementation of the framework will be that:

- the system operates within a standardised set of expectations with sufficient flexibility to pursue local/regional priorities
- there is early identification of emerging issues and concerns, so they are addressed before they impact on performance or outcomes for children
- ministers are regularly given assurance on the performance of the system, including information on trends and issues affecting performance.

31. An outline of how data is used in support of the framework is provided at [Annex B](#). Data not only helps to direct our understanding on which services may benefit from performance improvement support but also helps us understand where to engage other strategic partners locally, regionally and/or nationally, who impact on the youth justice sector to improve outcomes.

Grant compliance

32. In 2022, the Ministry of Justice provided an uplift in funding for youth justice services; alongside this, we reviewed the terms and conditions attached to the youth justice core grant.

33. The YJB currently requires four sources of information to release youth justice core grant payments. These are the:
 - signed acceptance of terms and conditions, where the YJS agrees to comply with the terms and conditions of grant
 - audit certificate, which confirms how grant from the previous year has been spent
 - annual [youth justice plan](#)
34. These sources of information will continue to be required. In addition, the revised terms and conditions (T&Cs) include grouped areas for compliance within the area of funded activities that cover: governance and leadership, service delivery, data and reporting compliances. These provide clarity on the expectations of services and partners in receipt of the youth justice core grant and are set out in more detail at [Annex C](#).
35. Oversight teams will play a central role in confirming compliance with these T&Cs by each service. The oversight fields described above include the areas for compliance as part of the routine quarterly assurance reviews. On an annual basis oversight teams confirm the compliance of services across all T&Cs.
36. Instances of noncompliance will be considered on an individual basis. In line with the principles of the framework, we will maintain a supportive partnership approach in responding to any concerns regarding noncompliance, with the aim of achieving the best outcomes for children. The section, below, covers escalation processes due to noncompliance with T&Cs of the youth justice core grant and/or under-performance.

Identifying the scale and nature of support needs

37. Oversight teams will make a performance assessment, which will inform the scale and nature of support that may be required across local services and ensure national support capacity is targeted. These assessments of performance will take place quarterly and assign a service within a performance quadrant (as described below).
38. Performance quadrant assessments are determined by a structured professional judgement, considering the intelligence from the oversight fields (as outlined at Annex A). Discussions may be had at a local level with services and statutory and delivery partners to consider the intelligence available against the oversight fields. The performance quadrant assessments are not static and will be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain an accurate reflection. This will include regular review of the level of support that may be required by an area in achieving the most effective outcomes.
39. YJB oversight teams will make recommendations on the quadrant classification and any proposals for national support/improvement needs to the Performance Oversight Board (please see section below on governance). Performance quadrant classifications indicate the scale and nature of support needs and underpin the improvement support provided by the YJB.
40. Ahead of the Performance Oversight Board, YJB oversight teams will discuss performance assessments with services, including areas of strength, where improvement is needed and what support will be offered. Services will be aware of their proposed quadrant rating ahead of the Performance Oversight Board, where ratings and offers of support are ratified. If the service has any concerns about the proposed quadrant rating these should be raised with the relevant Head of Oversight in the first instance.

41. The performance quadrants are described below. There are no expectations against the proportion of services within each quadrant; these classifications are fluid and considered at quarterly intervals.

Performance quadrant	Eligibility	Additional considerations	Outcome
Performance Quadrant one <i>Strong performance</i>	Performance against the oversight fields considered strong. In the top quartile nationally of relevant oversight metrics Strong Youth Justice plan Standards for children in justice delivered well across the board Financial compliance with YJ core grant T&Cs on track ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ inspection outcome (HMIP)	Consistently demonstrates that service has built the capability and capacity required to deliver on its statutory and wider responsibilities Evidence of established improvement capability and capacity The YJS management board plays a strong, active leadership role in supporting and driving effective outcomes in line with their duties and priorities	Lightest oversight arrangements Encouraged to provide peer-to-peer support and spread good practice to other services, partners and providers
Performance Quadrant two <i>Satisfactory performance</i>	The base allocation for YJ service performance. Assessments consider movement into other performance quadrant classifications. These assessments are reviewed quarterly.		
Performance Quadrant three <i>Improvement needed</i>	Performance against the oversight fields raises some concern In the bottom half nationally of oversight metrics A dramatic drop in performance, or sustained poor (bottom decile) performance against one or more areas Youth Justice Plan considered weak and delivery against standards requires improvement Financial compliance with YJ core grant T&Cs off track ‘Requires Improvement’ overall inspection outcome (HMIP and Ofsted children’s social care)	Evidence of capability and capacity to address the issues without additional support, e.g., there is clarity on key issues, an existing improvement plan and confidence on record of delivery against plan and/or agreed actions Existence of other material concerns about a system’s and/or organisation’s governance, leadership, performance and improvement capability arising from intelligence gathered by or provided to the YJB Management Board is working towards addressing known problems with system partners There is collective agreement to support and drive improvement of outcomes in line with their duties and priorities	YJB support further investigation and analysis of the cause or nature of concerns impacting on performance outcomes; supports identification of where service may need assistance. Improvement Plan submission required to the YJB Monthly focused review meetings YJB offer of engagement with YJS and any one-off areas of work/advice which could help improve service YJB advice, guidance and brokering of partnership support locally, regionally and/or nationally as necessary or appropriate Included in Ministerial information report as area of concern Consideration of using cross-government support and/or

Performance quadrant	Eligibility	Additional considerations	Outcome
			intervention powers to support improved outcomes
Performance quadrant four <i>Persistent or significant under performance</i>	<i>In addition to Performance Quadrant 3 criteria</i>		
	Longstanding and/or complex issues that are preventing agreed improvement progress A significant failure in leadership or governance Significant failure in service delivery leading to safety concerns 'Inadequate' overall inspection outcome (HMIP)	Lack of capability and capacity to address the issues without significant additional support Reputational risks to continued poor performance outcomes	Significant concerns regarding services' ability to improve triggers ministerial notification of failure Exploration of use of cross-government intervention powers. YJB improvement support remains.

42. For YJSs in performance quadrants 1 and 2, overall performance and any support needs will be reviewed on a quarterly basis, as part of routine oversight assessments (undertaken within oversight teams) and at the national Performance Oversight Board (detailed in governance section). Where ongoing monitoring suggests that the support needs may have changed, this will trigger a review of the allocation.
43. For YJSs in performance quadrants 3 and 4, there is an identified improvement need or concern. These services are considered 'priority services' and will be notified of the classification. The classification enables the YJB to undertake focused engagement at a service level (or across regional statutory and/or delivery partners) and, where appropriate, provide support on their improvement journey. De-escalation from quadrants 3 and/or 4 can only be achieved through meeting the agreed exit criteria which will be set through the improvement plan agreed with the YJB upon entering these quadrants.
44. Priority service status³ should not be viewed as a punitive measure but is a way in which the YJB are able to target support and guidance to services that would most benefit from it in any given period.

Governance

45. Nationally there is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreed between the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the Youth Custody Service (YCS) and the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB). The MoU sets out the key roles and responsibilities of these three bodies and how they work together in relation to each other and the wider youth justice system.
46. To enable the YJB to undertake its statutory functions related to oversight and evidence-based practice, it operates an internal Performance Oversight Board (POB). The quarterly POB considers the performance of youth justice services through analysing data against national metrics and intelligence collated across various sources including local soft intelligence of how partnerships operate, assessments against expected standards and information from third parties such as

³ It is estimated there would be on average a maximum of 12 – 15 of these at any one time, reflecting the capacity available for YJB active support

inspection outcomes. The POB undertakes the following roles to support the functioning of the performance framework:

- approves the performance quadrant classifications recommended by YJB oversight teams
 - takes decisions against any proposals for national intervention support
 - identifies themes for national or regional strategic activity (effective practice or performance improvement)
 - takes decisions against escalation action with individual services and or their fulfilment of agreed exit criteria
 - identifies national policy issues arising from operational delivery oversight that require intervention with other government departments
 - provides a platform for sharing strong practice and innovation.
47. POB is supported by subgroups, and reports to the Performance Committee, a subcommittee of the formal YJB.
48. The outputs from POB routinely inform the Youth Justice Quarterly Performance Board (YJQPB). This is chaired by the relevant Minister of State at the MOJ and includes representatives from MOJ, YCS, YJB, His Majesty Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) and His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS). The YJQPB meets quarterly to provide the primary route for ministers to monitor performance of the youth justice system. It operates as the governance vehicle for the MOJ's interests in the youth justice system and where collective action on policy issues can be advanced.
49. An oversight summary is also provided to ministers outlining an overview of YJS delivery and any trends and concerns as a regular information source (offered as a standing annex to the YJB Chair's quarterly letter to ministers).

Working with the inspectorate

50. YJSs (and their statutory and delivery partners) are subject to independent inspection activity. The YJB works with inspectorates to make sure that there is alignment between the standards we advise on for the system and the outcomes expected align. We also work to ensure a shared understanding of the intelligence available through our oversight activity and the indicators that show that the system aims are being achieved.
51. For YJSs, HMI Probation inspects each local service at least once during their inspection framework timescale (currently this is a six-year period, 2018 - 2024). Individual inspections may be undertaken as single agency inspections or as full joint inspections, alongside other inspectorate bodies. These look closely at the service being delivered to children and provide judgements on overall effectiveness together with recommendations for improvement, based on the period considered. Alongside the programme of individual inspections, HMI Probation also deliver thematic inspections. These focus on an area of practice or challenge by considering how a selected group of services operate in relation to the chosen theme. These result in findings and recommendations for consideration across the sector.
52. The YJB's oversight and HMI Probation's inspection activities are complementary elements to understanding performance across the youth justice sector; they inform each other and there is active information-sharing between the agencies. An MoU sets out the detail of how our roles work together; this will include the sharing of intelligence from the YJB's oversight of youth justice services in priority status.

53. Significantly the YJB's oversight approach, provides support and challenge to local services in preparing their post-inspection improvement plans, as well as an ongoing understanding of progress against these which is shared with the Inspectorate.
54. The YJB places a requirement on services to describe activity against inspection reports (single and thematic) as elements of their annual youth justice plan; and incorporates tracking against these as a key element of the 'continuous improvement' oversight field (described at Annex A). This enables the YJB to offer an understanding of how well single inspection improvement plans are being achieved and how services respond to thematic inspection findings.

Co-ordinating Improvement

55. Where performance outcomes are of concern, the YJB will work alongside the service to understand the cause or nature of the concerns and establish the seriousness, scale and complexity of the issues faced. This is the work of the oversight teams, led at a service level by the Youth Justice Oversight Manager. This activity is overseen by the Head of Oversight and judgements tested and ratified by the Operations Director before being formalised through the YJB's Performance Oversight Board (as described within the governance section). As appropriate this diagnostic period will involve relevant strategic statutory and delivery partners to identify the factors behind the issues and determine whether local or wider regional support is available and appropriate.
56. The assessment for improvements will consider (amongst other things):
 - a) degree of risks/issues and potential impact
 - b) degree to which the driver of the issue is understood by the service and its delivery partners
 - c) views and buy in of senior leadership at local level to addressing issues
 - d) governance and maturity of improvement approach
 - e) inherent capability and credibility of plans to address the issue
 - f) previous steps taken to support the resolution of the issue
57. Based on this assessment, oversight teams (in collaboration with service leaders) will identify whether the service has additional and specific support needs from the YJB or elsewhere (for example key delivery partners or government departments) and the activity that could be undertaken. It is also at this point, if a YJS is assessed as in quadrant 3 or 4, that the service will submit its improvement plan to the YJB for review. The YJB's review of the improvement plan will include consideration of exit criteria for agreement with the service.

Directly delivered YJB support activity will be coordinated centrally to ensure that the committed activity aligns with the YJB's national capacity to deliver improvement support. The spectrum of potential YJB provided improvement intervention support is outlined at [Annex D](#) and an overview of this is offered in the following diagram.

Service classification and YJB improvement support

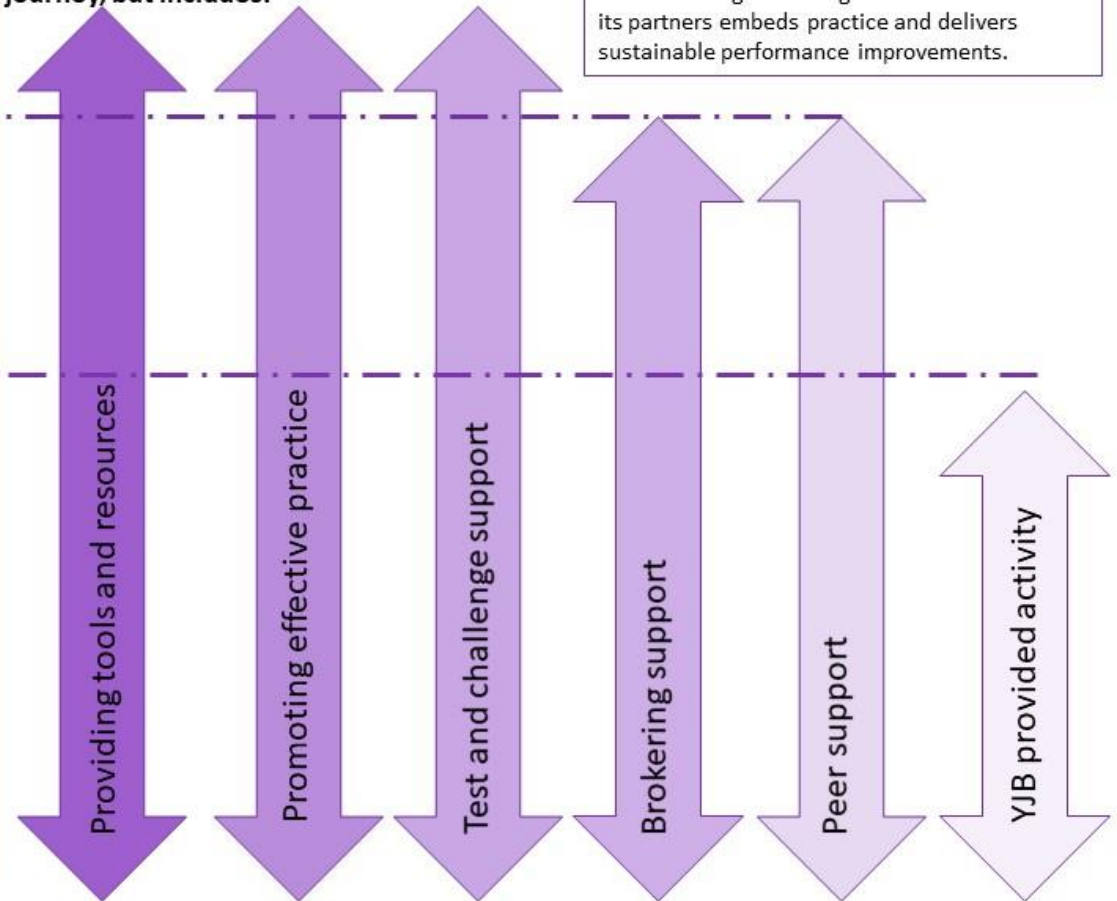
Quadrant 1 services – Strong: encouraged to provide peer-to-peer support and spread good practice to other systems and providers

Quadrant 2 services – Satisfactory (default classification): delivery provides no concern, focus on how to move services from satisfactory to exceptional performance

Quadrant 3 services – Improvement needed: *Investigation and analysis of the cause or nature of concerns impacting on performance outcomes for children; identify where the service may need assistance; offering advice and guidance and broker support and/or direct delivery of intervention support*

Quadrant 4 services – Persistent or significant underperformance
Services ability to improve triggers Ministerial notification of failure - YJB improvement support remains; cross government intervention

Intervention support varies depending on service needs and their improvement journey, but includes:



Data and intelligence can only identify a possible issue, building relationships and trust with Management Boards, Heads of Service and their staff helps to build a wider understanding. Working **with** the service and its partners embeds practice and delivers sustainable performance improvements.

58. At a service level, support needs will continue to be reviewed through the focused review meetings (as outlined above). These are required to:
- track improvement and understand the effectiveness of the various support measures
 - ensure any support is targeted where it has the greatest impact.
59. In line with the principles of the framework, and recognising local accountability for performance, the YJB will work with and through YJSs and local partnerships to address performance concerns. We will support tackling challenges to improvement wherever possible, ensuring that the oversight process is both proportionate and co-ordinated and that the best interests of children continue to be a key consideration in all decisions taken.
60. The improvement requirements for a service will be considered in parallel to other areas of service delivery to children (education, health, social care). This will ensure that support activities and, where they exist, interventions by other national partners are coordinated and mutually reinforcing (please refer to further detail at section on escalation and sanction).

Identifying effective performance and evidence-based practice

61. Effective performance and evidence-based practice are key elements in developing and improving youth justice outcomes. The YJB is committed to identifying and promoting evidence-based practice across the whole of the youth justice system to ensure that work with children, families, victims and the wider community is effective and evidence led.
62. This framework supports our ability to identify practice and is one of the ways in which we demonstrate how we undertake our statutory duty to promote effective practice. Performance quadrant classifications within this framework identify services judged to be demonstrating effective performance. These services will be delivering strongly in all areas across the oversight fields (i.e. performance quadrant 1 services) but services outside of this performance quadrant may also have made notable improvements in outcomes or measures over time.
63. In all cases an examination of how improvements were made could help inform other services, therefore these services will be invited to:
- offer peer support to the development of performance across all services
 - participate in deep dives to gather an understanding of what activity has taken place, how it had an impact and whether it could support continuous improvement in others
 - offer mentoring support to services receiving performance support.
64. YJB deep dive activity will take place quarterly to gather the detail related to the identified practice and/or elements of effective performance. These deep dives will be coordinated at a regional level and may include areas of practice identified within annual youth justice plans or through validations of self-assessments against the national standards for children in the youth justice system.
65. Whilst responsibility for identifying and sharing effective performance and evidence-based practice is a responsibility which sits across the whole of the YJB, our oversight teams have a specific role in both identifying and sharing practice across the youth justice sector.
66. Where effective performance or evidence-based practice has been identified, these will be shared in several ways but include the use of the quarterly Performance Oversight Board (as detailed below in the section on governance). The Board provides a platform to submit practice which has been noted by our oversight teams. This will be peer reviewed by a panel from across the YJB to consider where practice has a specific evidence base and/or evaluation or whether it has the potential or been seen to have a positive impact on overall performance.

Satisfactory progress and quadrant moves

67. The overriding ambition of this framework is to enable the best outcomes for children, communities, and victims. These are collective ambitions and whilst accountability for achieving improvement sits locally, we will work in partnership to achieve this. YJSs should make satisfactory progress against performance concerns and comply with expectations set out for services.
68. Services will be notified as soon as possible by their oversight manager following the ratification of a proposed quadrant move at the quarterly Performance Oversight Board. This will be confirmed in writing by the relevant Director (North England, South England or Wales) If services have any questions or concerns regarding notification of a quadrant move, they should discuss with their relevant Director in the first instance. If services concerns cannot be resolved this will be escalated to the Chair of Performance Oversight Board.
69. Services considered priority through their performance quadrant classifications (3 or 4) will be subject to focused review (alongside routine oversight activity). The requirement for the service to submit an improvement plan upon entry to these quadrants enables these focused reviews to regularly track improvement against the planned trajectory, expected timescales and understand the effectiveness of the impact of various support measures.
70. In line with the principles of the framework, transparency and honesty underpin our relationships. The YJB will make every effort to work with and through youth justice services and local partnerships to address performance concerns and tackle challenges to improvement. Primarily we will seek to understand the blockers to progress; we fully recognise that at times there may be system failures across one or more statutory or delivery partners that are resulting in poor outcomes. We seek to support rectifying these system issues by directly engaging partners locally, regionally and/or nationally, and will use our available levers to influence system changes to improve outcomes for children.
71. YJS support requirements will have been considered in parallel with other areas of service delivery to children (education, health, social care). This ensures that any support activities and, where they exist, interventions by other national partners are coordinated and mutually reinforcing. The actions agreed within individual improvement plans will have been considered as appropriate and proportionate by all parties to remedy concerns against outcomes. The focus will be on delivering improvement activity within a realistic and reasonable timeframe⁴, so that they provide the baseline for judgements against satisfactory progress and review points should be agreed as part of the original improvement planning.
72. The key factors in determining escalation activity are whether a service and its partnership is on track with their agreed improvement milestones, outcomes for children are improving and the service remains committed to their continuous development.
Other escalation triggers would include (but are not limited to);
 - longstanding and/or complex issues that are preventing agreed progress
 - significant failures in leadership, governance or service delivery
 - lack of capability and capacity to address the issues without significant additional support.
73. Escalation at a local level will include engagement with the Director of Children's Services in a locality, reflecting their responsibilities for services to children and upwards to the CEO. Nationally escalation stages against performance are pictured in the following diagram:

⁴ It is recognised that these timescales will vary dependent on the remedy identified. As an example, a service redesign to support staff capabilities and capacity may be the foundation of an improvement programme and would be unlikely to begin to see improvements in outputs for at least 18 – 24 months.

Service performance escalations

Performance Quadrants

Quadrant 1 services – Strong performance

encouraged to provide peer-to-peer support and spread good practice to other systems and providers

Quadrant 2 services – Satisfactory performance

(default classification), delivery provides no concern, focus on how to move services from satisfactory to exceptional performance

Quadrant 3 services – Improvement needed

Investigation and analysis of the cause or nature of concerns impacting on performance outcomes for children; identify where the service may need assistance; offering advice and guidance and broker support and/or direct delivery of intervention support

Quadrant 4 services – Persistent and or significant under performance

Significant concerns regarding services ability to improve

Escalation stages

Routine oversight

- There are no performance concerns regarding these services – performance is reported on routinely
- Effective performance and evidence- based practice are highlighted

Diagnostic and light touch engagement

- In escalation - assessments to consider detail of cause or nature of concerns impacting on performance outcomes with the service (and partners); identify where the service may need YJB assistance; offering advice and guidance and brokering support
- Includes any one-off areas of work/advice which could help improve service

Escalated improvement support

- In escalation – Concerns regarding improvement progress, consider allocation of increased YJB resource potential direct delivery of improvement support; and engaging regional and national actions (delivery partners and OGDs). Local escalation to DCS (Director of Children's Services) and local authority CEO
- In de-escalation – Recognition that progress has been made and there are reduced concerns on the services ability to deliver their improvement plan but requirement for YJB improvement support remains

Notification of failure to Ministers

- Significant concerns regarding services ability to improve triggers Ministerial notification of failure (possible triggering of intervention by OGDs)

74. Where areas of failure are identified as relating to prolonged and persistent issues with key partners the initiation of escalated improvement support will also consider the involvement of the MOJ's Youth Justice Policy Unit and/or Welsh Government as appropriate.
75. Using their ability to mobilise policy levers across government and consider the use of statutory intervention powers of other government departments, such as the Department for Education, the Home Office or the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
76. Whilst justice ministers will be kept routinely engaged with an overview of service performance on a quarterly basis, entry to performance quadrant 4 would result in a notice of failure to MOJ ministers and seek their intervention.
77. **Grant Compliance**
The compliance requirements attached to the terms and conditions of grant are confirmed annually by YJB oversight leads and are elements within the oversight fields against which assurance is regularly gathered. Failures in elements of compliance will be addressed with services in real time and included in judgements against performance assurance, satisfactory progress and escalation activity as outlined.
78. Prolonged and persistent noncompliance with terms and conditions of grant that are a result of a refusal to undertake actions within a service's control could lead to an exceptional sanction of grant funds. The decisions taken in these circumstances will follow the governance pathway outlined in the section above.
79. Withholding grant payment has always been an option available to the YJB and is part of the current grant arrangements. However, we are clear that the approach we take to monitoring grant compliance against the terms and conditions should be supportive and always have the best interests of child as a guiding principle.

Annex A – Oversight fields

The youth justice system involves numerous services, organisations and agencies, who together must work in partnership to achieve the system aims of preventing offending and truly realise the best outcomes for children, communities and victims.

This framework will provide a single consistent approach to monitoring the performance of youth justice services (YJSs) whilst also recognising the flexibility required to support local partnership working and the various local delivery models that are in place across the youth justice system.

The framework emphasises the importance of delivery against both the local priorities agreed between local partners and the national expectations set out primarily through the national standards for children in the youth justice system, the terms and conditions of the youth justice core grant, and the national performance metrics (key performance indicators).

The framework incorporates the following oversight fields:

Oversight field	YJB activity to gather intelligence and make assessments
Service delivery Considering expectations for strategic and operational delivery as set out in the national Standards for children in the youth justice system across five key areas of delivery for children in the justice system; including, delivery of out-of-court disposals, delivery at court, delivery in the community (court disposals), delivery within custody and then on transition and resettlement; and its corresponding case management guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> management board attendance, use of quarterly review meetings and as appropriate focused review to undertake more detailed tracking against: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> national standards self-assessments (submitted 3 yearly) validation activity against self-assessment outcomes standards improvement planning forms a key element of the youth justice plan tracking against identified activity service delivery, data and reporting judgements against terms and conditions of the youth justice core grant (as set out at Annex B) data analysis (incorporates Data Recording Requirements, inclusive of KPIs)
Service leadership Governance, finance and use of resources (including people capability and development) partnership engagement and effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> management board attendance and use of quarterly review meetings and as appropriate focused review meetings to understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> resource management, partnership contributions to service delivery annual review of financial certification (core grant requirement) annual budget and staffing data returns to YJB governance and leadership judgements against terms and conditions of the youth justice core grant (as set out at Annex B)
Local strategic priorities As expressed through the youth justice plan required annually and the effective and appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> youth justice plan submission – annual review against content of plan and outlined priorities – use of the YJS management board and

Oversight field	YJB activity to gather intelligence and make assessments
<p>use of local data sets to support analysis of the needs of children</p>	<p>quarterly review meetings to track progress against plan activities and milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current KPI measures (outlined at Annex B) are understood and tracked by service and key partners • YJB review of Youth Data Summary considering regional comparisons and progress against themselves • consideration of local data sources with live data – how these are used to understand the needs of children and influence policy and practice activity • serious incident notifications – actions to respond and incorporate learning
<p>Continuous improvement Incorporating service level responses to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation) inspections (single and thematic), outcomes against national metrics, captured as key performance indicators and additional measures to support oversight and activity to support sector improvement and workforce development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement activity related to inspection outcomes monitored through management board and quarterly review meetings <p><u>Following a single inspection</u> - YJB to be provided with service Improvement Plan prepared for HMIP and will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor via management board attendance • use of focussed review meetings, as appropriate, more detailed tracking can be in place. • ensure the relevant improvement activity is reflected in the annual youth justice plan and monitor progress against this plan via quarterly review meetings <p><u>Following a thematic inspection</u> – the YJB would expect to see</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a summary of the recommendations from any thematic presented to the management board • further analysis of how this relates to local practice and • the required improvements identified to be incorporated into improvement activity (and youth justice plan as appropriate) • Use of management board and quarterly review meetings to consider service targets against key performance indicator performance - the YJB would expect to see regular analysis of metrics accompanied by deep dives to uncover impact of local practices and required improvements incorporated into improvement activity

Oversight field	YJB activity to gather intelligence and make assessments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of management board to consider service workforce development needs and track supporting activities

Annex B – how does the framework use data?

1. Data plays an important role in understanding local youth justice service performance and how effectively statutory delivery partners are contributing to the performance of the system. All the data currently collected from youth justice services (YJSs) is fully outlined in the [Data Recording Requirements](#)⁵.
2. The Ministry of Justice is introducing an expanded set of key performance indicators (KPIs) which YJSs will be required to record against from 1 April 2023. This extended set of KPIs will include the following:

Accommodation

The percentage of children in the community and being released from custody with suitable accommodation arrangements.

Education, training and employment (ETE)

The percentage of children in the community and being released from custody attending a suitable ETE arrangement

Special Educational Needs (SEND)/Additional Learning Needs

The percentage of children who have an identified SEND (or Additional Learning Need in Wales) who are in suitable ETE and have a formal learning plan in place for the current academic year.

Mental healthcare and emotional wellbeing

The percentage of children in the community and being released from custody with a screened or identified need for an intervention to improve mental health or emotional wellbeing; and of that, the percentage of planned/offered interventions; of that, the percentage of children attending interventions.

Substance misuse

The percentage of children with a screened or identified need for specialist treatment or intervention to address substance misuse; and of that, the percentage of children with planned or offered intervention/treatment; of that, the percentage of children attending intervention/treatment

Out-of-court disposals:

The percentage of out-of-court disposal interventions that are completed /not completed.

Management board attendance

⁵ The Data Recording Requirements for Youth Justice Service describes both how Youth Justice Services (YJSs) submit data to the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) and detail around what is collected and how it's recorded

Monitoring senior partner representation at management boards, and monitoring if partners contribute data from their individual services that identify areas of racial disproportionality.

Links to wider services

The percentage of children who are currently on either an Early Help plan/child protection plan/classified as Child in Need/ Child in need of care of support/looked-after child.

Serious violence

The rates of children convicted for serious violence on the YJS caseload.

Victims

The percentage of victims who consent to be contact by the YJS; of those, numbers of victims who were:

- a) engaged with on restorative justice opportunities
- b) asked their view prior to out-of-court disposal decision-making & planning for statutory court orders
- c) provided with information about progress of child's case (when requested)
- d) provided with information on services that support victims (when requested).

3. In addition to the 10 new KPIs listed above, YJSs will continue to be required to capture data on the 4 current KPIs (first time entrants, reoffending binary rate and frequency rate, and the rate of children in custody) as they provide a helpful overview of how the youth justice system is delivering against its principle statutory aim of preventing offending by children and in understanding the health of the system.
4. The introduction of the extended set of KPIs recognises that that YJSs do not work in isolation and are intended to measure the strength of the local partnership. They can be used to engage partner agencies (and other government departments at a national level) to hold them to account for their contributions to positive outcomes within the youth justice system; bring focus on barriers to desistance and drive progress and improve multi-agency working to focus on risk and need.
5. Caseload recording against data on the existing KPIs will not fully align with the new extended KPI set as current KPIs only record data on the statutory caseload. The MOJ and YJB are considering how to ensure that the recording of these measures is accurate and sustainable going forward.
6. KPI data will be used as part of intelligence oversight. Whilst the new KPIs will begin to be collected from April 2023, there will not be an initial data set available for use until September 2023 at the earliest. Given these timescales the oversight framework will not begin to fully incorporate these additional data sets until the 2024/25 business year, however as data becomes available against the extended set of KPIs it will be one of the sources of intelligence used to assess performance.
7. At its implementation the framework will utilise the existing four KPIs supplemented by further data sets, as outlined below. These will be utilised to understand how performance against the existing KPIs, change over time (current year vs previous year) and compared to their family score (*families are groups of YJ services that have been grouped based on comparable socio-demographic data*).
8. In addition to the 4 existing KPI data, further datasets that are currently included within our oversight are:
 - disproportionality (ethnic over-representation)
 - levels of serious violence within a cohort

- resettlement data
- budget & staffing data
- inspection data

9. These considerations inform discussion at the Performance Oversight Board (POB). They are not routinely shared with services, but the available data will inform regular oversight review meetings.

Annex C – youth justice core grant: compliance against terms and conditions

Ref	Condition	Condition met?
Governance and leadership		
G&L1	Does the YJS have a management board which meet regularly, with a minimum of quarterly fully quorate meetings (four per year)?	Yes/No
G&L2	Does the management board review the YJS's performance and work together to address the needs of the children?	Yes/No
G&L3	Does the management board consist of the statutory organisations required by legislation (police, health, probation and local authorities)?	Yes/No
G&L4	Have the YJB been invited to attend the management board meetings and have the YJB been provided timely board papers?	Yes/No
Service Delivery		
SD1	Does the YJS deliver the full range of youth justice services as specified in relevant legislation?	Yes/No
SD2	Is the service adherent to the YJB case management guidance to deliver services?	Yes/No
SD3	Is the service adherent to the Standards for children in the youth justice system to deliver services to children?	Yes/No
SD4	Where performance concerns have been identified, is the YJS compliant with the additional oversight and support provided by the YJB?	Yes/No/ N/A
SD5	If the service receives funding for the delivery of a Junior Attendance Centre within their	Yes/No/ N/A

Ref	Condition	Condition met?
	core grant allocation, is this funding used for this purpose? Is this service downgraded or restricted to create an underspend?	
SD6	Does the YJS use AssetPlus as the mandated assessment tool for all statutory cases? If not, is there formal agreement to the use of an alternative tool?	Yes/No
Data		
D1	Has the YJS provided the required performance data, as per the relevant YJB Data Recording Requirements ? Have the YJS submitted their key performance indicators to the YJB on a quarterly basis?	Yes/No
D2	Has the YJS transferred all data via the Connectivity framework (this is inclusive of all case management and AssetPlus data sets)?	Yes/No
D3	Do the systems processing children's data and connecting to the Connectivity service meet the Government Minimum Cyber Security Standard?	Yes/No
Reporting		
R1	Has the YJB been notified of all serious incidents, as set out in the Serious Incidents Notification Guidance: Standard Operating Procedure for Youth Justice Services ?	Yes/No
R2	Has the YJS used local data/tools and the YJB's disproportionality toolkit to develop an action plan to address identified or anticipated disproportionality concerns?	Yes/No
R3	Has the YJ service prepared and submitted an annual Youth Justice Plan? This plan must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written following the Guidance published by the YJB. Signed off by the chair of the management board.	Yes/No
R4	Has the YJS published a Youth Justice Plan in line with relevant legislation?	Yes/No

Annex D - YJB provided improvement interventions and support

Depending on the performance issue(s) identified there are several support options the YJB can offer which can be tailored around the specific needs of the youth justice service (YJS). These include but are not limited to:

Intervention support offer	YJB support varies depending on service needs and their improvement journey, but activity could include:
Provide resources and toolkits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Development offer that provides learning and development opportunities to assist YJS professionals to deliver evidence-based services to children, families, communities and victims. This includes a professional framework leading up to degrees as well as specific shorter courses, for example The Child First Practice Award, The Elevate Programme and the *Apprenticeship Schemes (*due to be available in the near future.) • The Youth Justice Resource Hub contains a wealth of materials including toolkits, programmes and resources created by peers across the youth justice sector. • Pathfinder projects provide specific learning and offer a range of tools and materials to support services. • The YJB facilitates a range of opportunities to YJSs, supporting colleagues to meet on a regional footpath to share issues/concerns and effective practice, these include for example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The regional Heads of Service meetings • The Developing Practice Forums • Toolkits including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The disproportionality toolkit assists the service to understand over-representation in their local area of

Intervention support offer	YJB support varies depending on service needs and their improvement journey, but activity could include:
	<p>their ethnic minority cohorts, allowing the service to address specific issues of concern.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reoffending toolkit provides the service with a wealth of data around their current cohort, allowing the service to be more pro-active in preventing reoffending. • The serious violence toolkit offers the service in-depth data around this group of offences enable analysis to support planned actions with partners.
Promoting effective practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing of effective practice across the youth justice sector. • Link high performing boards on a local level to offer support • Use internal and external evidence of effective boards and service provision and share with underperforming services <p>Facilitate peer partnerships to support improvement of specific areas, themes or issues</p>
Test and challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular attendance at management boards in order to act as a critical friend and provide a national overview. • Provide advice and challenge to support partnership boards to act in further understanding issues affecting performance of the service, e.g., funding, instability of partners commitment or lack of resources. Examples include. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer critical friend support over any improvement plans (for example HMIP) • Facilitating management board workshops to reinforce legislative duties, revisit roles and the purpose of management boards, and to also ascertain barriers and offer potential solutions
Brokering support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider data from other sources such as health, accommodation, inspectorates, DfE

Intervention support offer	YJB support varies depending on service needs and their improvement journey, but activity could include:
	<p>to provide a clearer understanding of the issues identified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead or support engagement with key delivery partners where their contributions demonstrate a gap or could promote improvements <p>Identify and pursue national policy conversations that could support system improvements</p>
Peer support	<p>Youth Justice Sector Improvement Partnership (YJSIP) is a tripartite partnership between the YJB, the Association of YJS Managers (AYM) and senior youth justice leaders.</p> <p>The partnership provides improvement support for the sector by the sector and includes activity such as: Peer Reviews, Operational Manager training, coaching and mentoring</p>
YJB provided activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up Task and Finish subgroups to address specific performance concerns • Desk top review of policies and procedures to deliver recommendations • Undertaking interviews with Board members to further understand wider stakeholder concerns • Offer critical friend support over any improvement plans (for example HMIP) • Themed reviews and service/partnership recommendations for improvement <p>Lead and/or support improvement boards or activity areas</p>

Annex E – Secure Oversight – outline of key components

Secure Oversight *outline of key components*

