

# Scrutiny Report



9 September 2021

## OUTCOME OF THE HMIP INSPECTION OF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE IN MILTON KEYNES

Name of Scrutiny Committee	<b>Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee</b>
Report sponsor	<b>Councillor Jane Carr</b> Cabinet Member for Tackling Inequalities and Child Poverty
Report author	<b>Dr Mac Heath</b> Director of Children's Services

Exempt / confidential / not for publication	<b>No</b>
Council Plan reference	<b>Ref number / Not in Council Plan</b>
Wards affected	<b>All wards / list individual wards</b>

### Executive Summary

This report is to feedback on the recently published inspection outcome following an inspection of Milton Keynes Youth Offending Service (YOS) as part of Her Majesty's Inspection of Probation's (HMIP) four-year programme of youth offending service inspections. The Inspection rated Milton Keynes YOS across three broad areas of its work, referred to as 'domains': 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. The team inspected against 12 'standards', shared between the domains. Overall, Milton Keynes YOS was rated as 'Good'.

The standards are based on established models and frameworks and scoring rules which generate the overall rating. The findings and subsequent ratings were based on fieldwork undertaken by the Inspection Team, conducted through off-site analysis of case files alongside phone and videoconferencing. The core part of the inspection took place between 24 May and 27 May 2021.

The inspection took place just as the service was implementing several significant changes to its management and leadership arrangements and during a time when the pandemic continued to offer challenges to the service and the young people we were working with. However, the key findings of the report highlighted:

- The changes being undertaken were noted to be largely positive and designed to align multi-agency work and build on the existing strong partnerships.
- The Management Board had a clear and shared vision for children, but a more detailed understanding of how the YOS works will assist with decision-making for the future.
- Work with children who are subject to court orders is sound, based on good, insightful assessments, clear planning, and access to a wide range of support and interventions.
- Changes in the child's life, offending and risk to others are identified quickly and responded to effectively, however, work is sometimes undermined by the lack of safe and confidential spaces to work with children.
- Out-of-court disposal work focuses on diverting children from involvement with criminal justice services at the earliest possible stage and helping them desist from offending.
- A wide range of support is used to support children and give them better chances to achieve and attain and the service is prepared to develop and use different approaches to support children who are trying to deal with some significant negative life experiences.
- Planning to protect victims was inadequate and the approach to victims is underdeveloped and does not always respect their expressed wishes or put their safety a parallel footing as the safety of the child.

It is positive that during significant service change, and a global pandemic, the inspection has found Milton Keynes Multi-agency Youth Offending Service to be 'Good' and endorses the direction of travel for the service as we respond to the concerns for young people in a growing city. This is alongside the growing national and regional challenge of knife crime and serious youth violence amongst young people but also gives the opportunity to highlight where further improvements can be made and developed.

# Key Findings

The 12 Standards that make up the grading of the three core domains within the inspection, which in turn gives the overall rating, are outlined as below.

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

As a result of these inspection findings, three recommendations were made:

The Milton Keynes Youth Offending Service should:

1. review the way in which victims of crime are contacted and supported so that their expressed wishes are respected and that planning to keep them safe is effective

The Milton Keynes Management Board should:

2. provide safe and confidential premises for children and staff to meet and undertake necessary work

The National Probation Service should:

3. recruit a probation officer to be deployed in the Youth Offending Service.

It is positive to note that several strengths in each domain were identified and evidenced to be making a real difference to children and the recommendations made will assist as we continue to manage the impact that Covid 19 has had on our young people and the services that support them. The areas acknowledged as 'Outstanding' within the service demonstrated the sustained difference being made for young people and their outcomes. The success of children and young people being diverted from the Criminal Justice System, alongside the low level of repeat offenders, were clear evidence as a committed, strong multi-agency achievement.

However, in a few cases, one of the issues that prevented effective risk management planning in Out of Court disposals was that of timeliness. There were delays between the offence and the decision on the disposal, or the time elapsed to undertake the assessment. In these situations, where the young person was identified as having harmed someone, swifter planning and action were needed to manage and reduce the opportunity for the child to repeat the harmful behaviours. Further, planning did not always include the wishes of victims. These were not always known or, where the victim had expressed their views, they were not always followed up.

Although it was acknowledged that the challenges brought by Covid, e.g., the capacity and timeliness of the court, and the difficulty in the Pandemic of being able to undertake the usual visiting approaches, the difficulties in meeting young people and their families, etc., played a part in the findings in this area we accept this area, across agencies, is not good enough at present and plans are being implemented to mitigate these matters and address the issues raised.

## **Summary**

In many ways the timing of this inspection came at the most difficult time. We had high Covid rates in MK which mean the inspection had to be undertaken virtually, the service had recently moved out its Hub building that it had been operating out of for several years and was in the first month of a new management arrangement whilst a number of partner agencies and services were continuing to be impacted by Covid restrictions. This of course included the

difficulties in some case of being able to meet and work as constructively as we would like with young people and their families.

Despite these however the endorsement that the service is 'Good' is testament to the skills, experience, and commitment to all those working in and supporting our Milton Keynes Youth Offending Service and the impact that all involved professionals and agencies are having in the outcomes for our young people.

**Mac Heath**

Director of Children's Services

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## Youth Offending Team Action Plan

Action	Person to complete	Target Date	Progress	WORDING IN YJ PLAN	Status (RAG)
1. Develop Youth Offending Strategic Board (YOSB) membership for inclusion of a representative from Court (e.g. Chair of the Youth Panel)	Chair of the YOSB	July Strategic Board Agenda Item	Work to develop the YOSB Membership for inclusion of a representative from the Court (e.g. Chair of the Youth Panel)		
2. Introduce specific partner feedback slot relevant to the YOT at each YOSB Meeting to encourage greater participation and dialogue	Chair of the YOSB YOSB Members	July Strategic Board Agenda Item	To strengthen the effectiveness of the YOSB in its internal and external facing roles, we are introducing a specific partner feedback slot at each YOSB Meeting to encourage greater reflection, participation, and dialogue		
3. Share the work and focus of the YOT / Youth Justice Plan across key partners to increase insight and understanding of the work of the service (example CSC)	YOT Manager YOSB Members	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2021 onwards	Sharing the work and focus of the YOT/Youth Justice Plan across key partners to increase insight and understanding of the work of the service. Youth Justice Plan due to be shared with Community Safety Partnership Following 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2021 Meeting		

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## Youth Offending Team Action Plan

Action	Person to complete	Target Date	Progress	WORDING IN YJ PLAN	Status (RAG)
4. Identify and implement access to venues to work safely and effectively with young people	YOT Manager YOSB Members	July Strategic Board Agenda Item	Exploring access to further safe places so that staff can work safely and effectively with children and victims		
5. Develop broader use of Youth Offender Panel Members to enhance the service the YOT offers	YOT Manager	Proposal for October Strategic Board Meeting			
6. Develop agreed and consistent method for capturing current staff workloads as CV reports give different results	YOT Manager	30 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Identified that next version of Child View has greater functionality to achieve this.		
7. Target recruiting needs to be in place to increase the diversity of the staff team to better reflect the demography of Milton Keynes and the young people and families the service works with	YOT Manager	30 <sup>th</sup> July 2021 (in place for next recruitment)	Exploring targeted recruitment approaches to increase the diversity of the staff team to better reflect the demography of Milton Keynes and the children and families who work with the service		

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## Youth Offending Team Action Plan

Action	Person to complete	Target Date	Progress	WORDING IN YJ PLAN	Status (RAG)
8. Establish succession planning for key roles including the BS+I Manager	YOT Manager BS+I Manager	27 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	Establishing succession planning for key roles. BS+I Manager developing BS+I staff to undertake several key parts of the role.		
9. Supervision records need to have consistent SMART targets	YOT Management Seniors Team	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	Approach implemented in Staff Supervision so that targets are SMART. YOT Manager has sampled a number of cases completed after QA Audit and Inspection and verified SMART targets being used but some remaining gaps exist.		
10. Develop a single document reflecting identified specific desistance needs and evidence around gaps in services reflecting and quantifying unmet needs	YOT Manager	By October Strategic Board Meeting	Developing a single document Desistance and Unmet Needs Profile reflecting identified specific desistance needs and evidence around gaps in services reflecting and quantifying unmet needs. Desistance information has commenced but the data around unmet need needs further development.		
11. Resolve lack of access to CAMHS Worker and Physical Health provision	YOT Manager YOSB Members	July Strategic Board Agenda Item	Resolving lack of access to appropriate Physical Health provision. CAMHS Post is resolved		

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## Youth Offending Team Action Plan

Action	Person to complete	Target Date	Progress	WORDING IN YJ PLAN	Status (RAG)
12. Establish an automated system to highlight policies / procedures due for review and update	YOT Manager	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	New process is in place		Green
13. Establish a regular audit methodology to continue to drive forward and monitor professional practice	YOT Manager	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	Establishing a regular audit methodology to continue to drive forward and monitor professional practice. Initial draft not yet finalised. Requires further meeting with Sophie Marshall to complete		Yellow
14. Introduce in house learning review process for swift learning to identify early lessons in relevant cases	YOT Manager	31 <sup>st</sup> July 2021	Introducing inhouse learning review process for swift learning to identify early lessons in relevant cases. As highlighted process is partially complete and is being aligned to local, national and YJB expectations		Yellow

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## Youth Offending Team Action Plan

From Youth Justice Plan:

Action	Person to complete	Target Date	Progress	Status (RAG)
A. Enhancing the connection between the YOSB and the front-line service delivery to improve effectiveness and coordination	Chair of the YOSB YOSB Members YOT Manager	July Strategic Board Agenda Item	See points 2 & 3 in Action Plan above.	
B. Strengthening our services to victims of crime	YOT Manager	30 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	See Point a) below in HMIP Inspection Actions. The Victim service offered specifically relating to CRs has been reviewed and improved so that this is a core part of the service. Considering surrogacy victim processes and also looking at the work of Oxford YOS which has been identified as a model of best practice. Key gap remains getting victim permission for contact as part of YOT1 referral from the Police	
C. Developing mechanisms to capture the voice of children, parents/carers, victims and our partners	YOT Manager	October Strategic Board Meeting	The current approach by Participation Team has started this process along with approaches used in ESP and case planning. Need to further embed model	

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## Youth Offending Team Action Plan

From HMIP Inspection:

Action	Person to complete	Target Date	Progress	Status (RAG)
a) Review the way in which victims of crime are contacted and supported so that their expressed wishes are respected and that planning to keep them safe is effective	YOT Manager	30 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	See Point A above in Youth Justice Plan Actions. The Victim service offered specifically relating to CRs which was the specific area of concern has been reviewed and improved so that this is a core part of the service. Key gap remains getting victim permission for contact as part of YOT1 referral from the Police	
b) Provide safe and confidential premises for children and staff to meet and undertake necessary work	YOSB Members	Strategic Board Agenda Item		
c) Recruit a probation officer to be deployed in the youth offending service.	National Probation Service	Strategic Board Agenda Item		