



KEY FACTS

YOUTH INTERVENTIONS: AN INSPECTION OF THE YOUTH JUSTICE AGENCY'S COMMUNITY INTERVENTIONS

SEPTEMBER 2024



WHAT WAS THIS INSPECTION ABOUT?

In Northern Ireland, the Youth Justice Services Directorate within the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) provided a range of interventions to support children, families and victims.

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) examined the approach to the delivery of youth interventions by the Youth Justice Services Directorate. It was the first time we carried out this type of inspection.

We looked at how well interventions met children's desistance needs, as well as their safety and the safety of other people.



HOW DID WE CARRY OUT THE INSPECTION?

Before starting the inspection, we spoke to stakeholders, as well as some children, parents and carers for their views on the types of areas we should look at.

We also met with His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation colleagues to help us in developing a set of expectations for inspecting Youth Justice Services.

During the inspection, Youth Justice Services staff were invited to complete a survey about their experiences of working with the YJA. We visited each of the YJA offices and met with staff, children, parents and carers. We also met with some victims and their supporters.

We looked at a sample of files for evidence of the high-quality services being delivered.

YJA's partners also met with us, for example, the Department of Justice, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Public Prosecution Service, and representatives from Health and Social Care Trusts and the Education Authority.

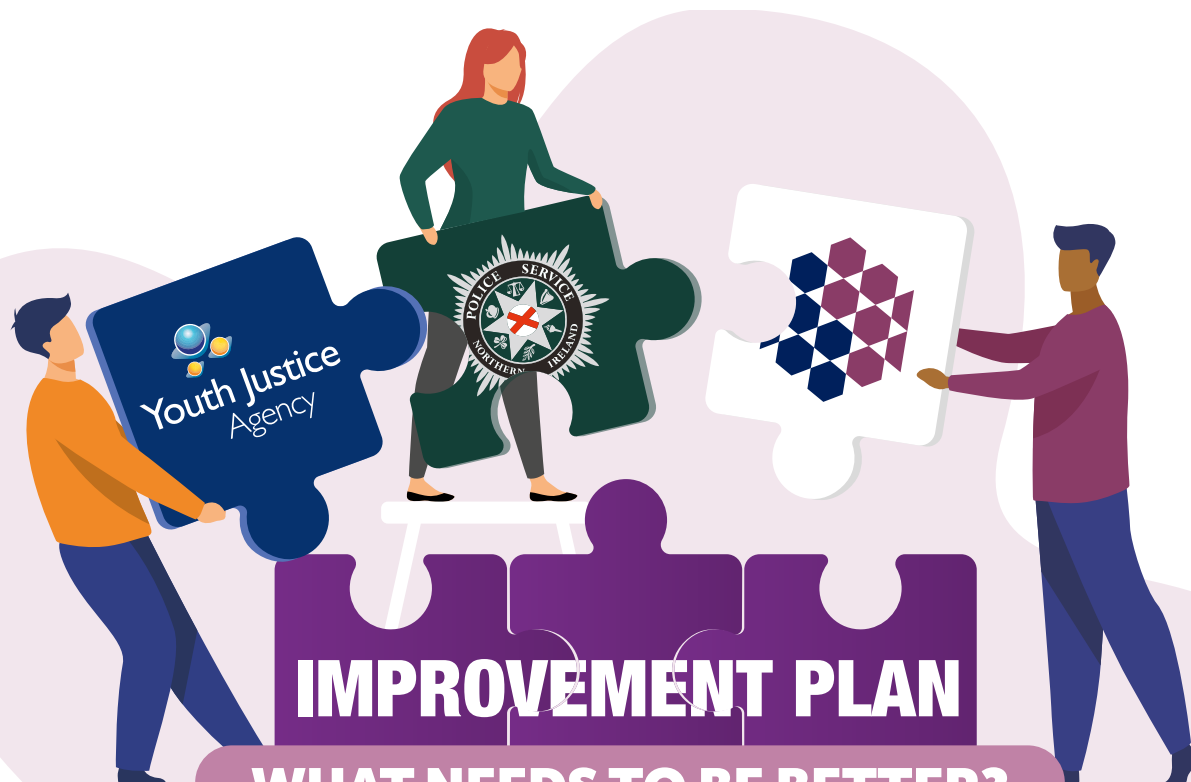


WHAT DID INSPECTORS FIND?

We found lots of strengths that were helping to address often complex and multi-faceted needs and safety factors that related to offending behaviour. They included:

- ✓ dedicated staff built excellent relationships with children, families and victims;
- ✓ staff delivered interventions in a trauma-informed, child-centred way;
- ✓ staff worked with local organisations to find placements that met children's needs;
- ✓ *'Absolutely amazing'* and a *'total lifeline'* are some of the things children and their parents and carers said about the YJA staff;
- ✓ victims and their supporters highly valued the support received;
- ✓ other organisations were really positive about the work of the YJA and its staff; and
- ✓ children and families welcomed Earlier Stage Diversion Support.





WHAT NEEDS TO BE BETTER?

- The Youth Justice Agency, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Department of Justice needs to agree and implement an improvement plan to ensure a shared vision for youth justice, and for them to monitor how this is achieved.
- The Youth Justice Agency, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland needs to agree an action plan to evaluate the approach to Community Resolution Notices with children.
- Regular quality assurance of Youth Justice Service case work.
- The Youth Justice Agency needs to ensure its Needs Assessment Tool is evaluated.
- We have also suggested that further improvements could be delivered by ensuring a shared vision for the delivery of youth justice and improving record keeping especially recording how children had been involved in assessments and their case plan and the level of detail recorded to show the Youth Justice Agency's work to keep children and the public safe from harm.
- Better oversight and planning for Earlier Stage Diversion work would be beneficial.
- It is important that the Youth Justice Agency has sufficient staff in place to meet current and future need.



WHAT NEXT?

We want to see the Youth Justice Agency work with partners to further improve the important support and services it provides.

If you would like to know anything more about us or this inspection please get in touch with:

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