



**YOUTH  
JUSTICE  
SERVICE**

Tower Hamlets and the  
City of London

Tower Hamlets and City of London Youth Justice Service

# Operational Guide to Audit Programme in Tower Hamlets and City of London Youth Justice Service



## 1. Introduction

This is an operational guide for auditors, moderators, managers and frontline practitioners regarding the auditing arrangements in Tower Hamlets and City of London Youth Justice Service (YJS). The auditing activity across the Supporting Families division is called “*Understanding our Practice*” and this document compliments the “*Supporting Families Division Quality Assurance Framework*’.

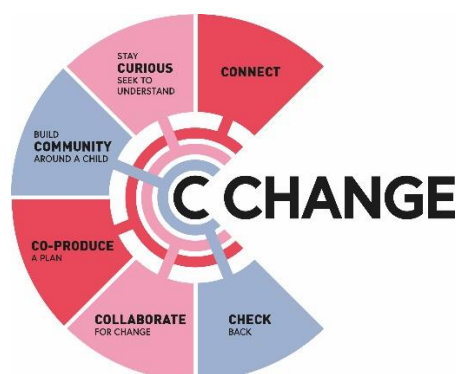
## 2. Practice Framework – ‘Better Together’ (6 C’s) and ‘Child First’

### Better Together (6C’s)

‘*Better Together*’ is Tower Hamlets homegrown practice framework and has been developed collaboratively with staff from across the Supporting Families division. It utilises the ‘6C-Change’ principles providing a shared framework and understanding of how everyone works with children, families as well as each other.

1. **Connection** – building connections and relationships with children and families is key to creating change.
2. **Curiosity** – to understand children’s and families experience.
3. **Community** – culturally competent practice that enables children to live and thrive within caring communities.
4. **Co-production** – enabling and engaging children and families to find their own solutions.
5. **Collaboration** – working with children and families to achieve positive change, resolve conflict and repair harm.
6. **Checking back** – promoting accountability, quality assurance and a culture of learning.

Our audit template “*YJS Understanding our Practice*” has been aligned with the Supporting Families division practice framework ‘*Better Together*’ and is aimed to support practitioners, managers, auditors and moderators in strengthening and developing a deeper understanding of practice expectations and the impact of intervention on children and families when undertaking audits.



## Child First

Child First is the guiding principle for the youth justice system in England and Wales. A Child First approach means putting children at the heart of service provision and seeing the whole child, identifying/tackling the influences on offending and identifying/promoting the influences that help them to move to pro-social, positive behaviour. The Child First principle is made up of the following four tenets.

<b>As children</b>	Prioritise the best interests of children and recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.
<b>Building pro-social identity</b>	Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
<b>Collaborating with children</b>	Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
<b>Diverting from stigma</b>	Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

## Seeing children as children

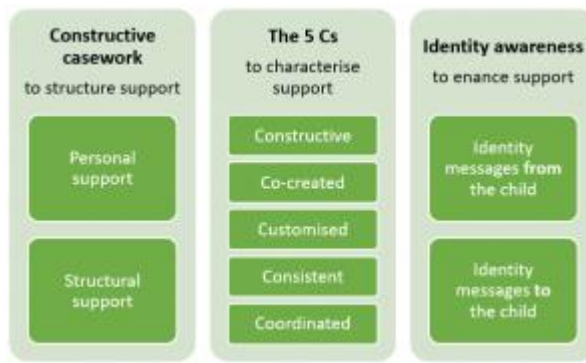
Child First recognises that children are different to adults – they have different needs and vulnerabilities, and they should not be treated in the same way. Furthermore, children should be treated according to their age, development, maturity and abilities. A focus is required on addressing children's unmet needs, overcoming any barriers, and identifying their strengths and creating opportunities for them to realise their potential.

## Developing pro-social identity

Adolescence is an intensive period for identity development, containing a number of important social transitions, and Child First promotes a focus on shifting potentially 'pro-offending' identities to those which are 'pro-social'. Developing a pro-social identity means helping children to see themselves in ways that encourage positive behaviours. Positive relationships with children are crucial for reaffirming their individual strengths and teaching them that they belong, while activities should be constructive and future-focused to help children move forward rather than underlining an offender identity.

A 'Constructive Working' framework has been developed with the specific objective of developing pro-social identities. There are three elements within this framework, as set out in the figure below.



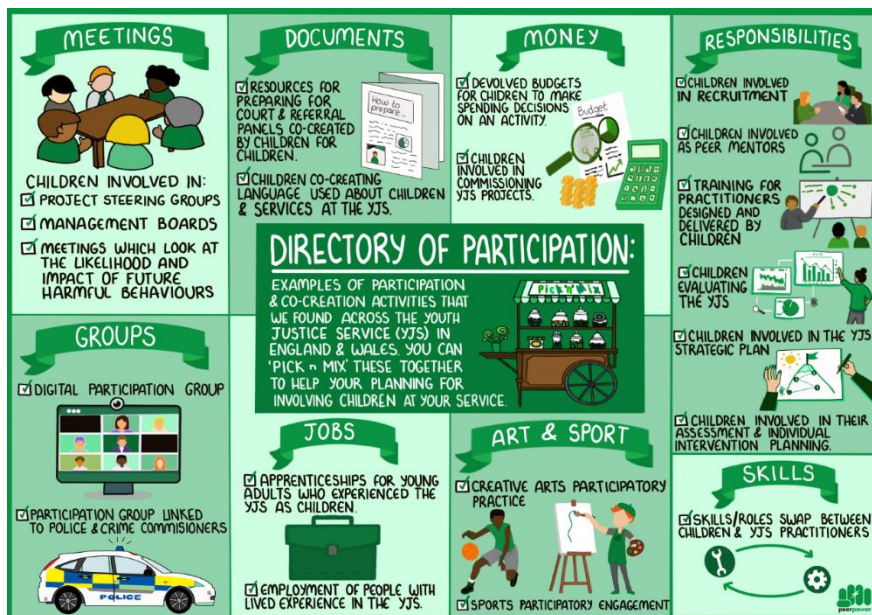


## Collaborating with children

Research evidence tells us that children are more likely to engage where they feel as though they are part of the process. Child First thus promotes youth justice responses that work with children rather than doing to them. Children should have a voice, feel invested in the process, be part of the solution and believe that justice has taken place.

Spaces for collaboration need to be created, with children feeling that engaging with the process will be relevant to their needs, identities, interests and their future, with the potential of bringing real benefits for them. When diversion is used, children should have a clear understanding and expectations – one approach is to establish diversion agreements.

A broad range of participatory practices have been identified.



## Promoting diversion

There is evidence that diversion programmes can reduce offending compared to formal criminal justice processes and can be cost-effective. Child First thus promotes diversion from the formal justice system, with a focus on minimising stigmatisation or labelling effects which can lead to further anti-social and criminal behaviours.

What 'diversion' means in practice can vary, with diversionary approaches and programmes taking differing forms and producing varying results. A focus needs to be maintained upon enhancing the wellbeing of children and promoting their social inclusion. Crucially, diversion requires other substantive services to be available locally, with a range of options in place to address unmet needs and welfare concerns, including through youth work, community activities, and educational interventions. More generally, the research evidence reinforces the importance of working across policy portfolios, (e.g. health, education and housing), with a focus on promoting social inclusion, building family resilience, and ensuring access to universal services and facilities.

The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales has published a **guide to child first** (October 2022). The guide is aimed at those working with children in the youth justice system to support embedding child first principles into all aspects of their role.

### 3. Audit grading definitions "at a glance"

The below is intended to assist auditors and moderators to make their judgements in relation to overall ratings for full audits.

- **Outstanding**: The overall quality of practice and management oversight regarding children subject to an out-of-court disposal and/or post-court supervision is identified as being consistently good as well as there being recognition of exceptional practice. This spans assessment, planning, implementation & delivery, reviewing, case supervision, management oversight and voice of the child. All of which is effectively supporting the child's desistance from offending, safety of the child and safety of others.
- **Good**: The quality of practice and management oversight regarding children subject to an out-of-court disposal and/or post-court supervision is identified as being consistently good. Where there are identified deficits, the auditor considers the overall impact in the context of the case to be low and that the strengths outweigh any deficiencies. This spans assessment, planning, implementation & delivery, reviewing, case supervision, management oversight and voice of the child. All of which is effectively supporting the child's desistance from offending, safety of the child and safety of others.
- **Requires Improvement to be Good**: The quality of practice and management oversight regarding children subject to an out-of-court disposal and/or post-court supervision is identified as consistently requiring improvement to be good. Where there are identified deficits, the auditor considers the deficits to outweigh the strengths. In some circumstances, a particular omission(s) may be important enough to lead to a rating of requires improvement to be good. This spans assessment, planning, implementation & delivery, reviewing, case supervision, management oversight and voice of the child. All of which requires improvement to effectively support the child's desistance from offending, support the safety of the child and support the safety of other people.
- **Inadequate**: In some circumstances, a particular omission(s) may be important enough to lead to a rating of inadequate. This spans assessment, planning, implementation & delivery, reviewing, case supervision, management oversight and



voice of the child. There are identified serious and/or widespread failings that could/do lead to the child re-offending, experiencing significant harm or harming others.

#### 4. Audit Cycle

The youth justice service undertakes auditing activity on a monthly basis which includes a combination of full audits, dip-sample audits and group audits. Below is a summary of the audit cycle which repeats every four months.

Month	Activity
1	Full and Dip-Sample
2	Full and Dip-Sample
3	Full and Dip-Sample
4	Group Audit

#### 5. Audit Cycle Process

The below provides an overview of the steps associated with the auditing process.

Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) are decided upon at the monthly 'Youth Justice Quality and Performance Meeting'. For example, at January's Youth Justice Quality and Performance Meeting the KLOE for February would be agreed.



Liaison with the YJS Senior Data Analyst to identify children to be included in the monthly audit cycle in alignment with the key lines of enquiry.



Auditors receive email communication from the Supporting Families Learning Academy regarding assigned audits as well as this information being communicated to the youth justice service. Auditors have one calendar month to complete their audit which for full audits includes a review of the child's file as well as collaborative reflective discussions with the allocated practitioner, child and parents/carers.



Auditors submit audits to the Learning Academy for moderation. If at point of submission an audit is rated as 'inadequate' the auditor should notify the Head of Service (YJS) as in this circumstance moderation will be undertaken by the head of service.



Moderation of completed audits and summary report related to audits takes place within 3 weeks. There is an opportunity for auditors and moderator to have a collaborative one-to-one reflective discussion regarding moderation outcome.



'*Understanding our Practice (UoP) meeting*' between auditor, allocated practitioner and manager takes place to reflect upon areas of good/outstanding practice as well as agreeing further steps needed to progress work and further improve outcomes for the child and family.



Documents related to the monthly '*Youth Justice Quality & Performance*' meeting circulated to members a minimum of one week in advance. The expectation is that all members review documentation to inform discussion and decision making to further raise standards and outcomes for children.



'*Youth Justice Quality & Performance*' meeting takes place which harnesses areas of good/outstanding practice, opportunities for continuous development as well as actions (including learning campaigns) to further improve standards and outcomes.



Review of actions at an individual child level ('*check back*' from completed audits) as well as reviewing progress of actions identified in Youth Justice Quality & Performance meeting.

## 6. Key lines of enquiry (KLOE) and selection of work for audits

### KLOE

As part of the monthly Youth Justice Quality & Performance meeting the members will identify key lines of enquiry and themes for audits. This is informed by findings from audits (including feedback from children, parents/carers and practitioners) and performance data.

To inform the discussion there is a focus on:

- What is going well (areas of strength)?
- What are we concerned about (areas for development)?
- What are the 'grey areas' where we need more information and assurance?

### Selection of children for audit

Once the key lines of enquiry have been confirmed the YJS Senior Data Analyst will support with identifying children who meet this so that these can be considered for audits.

## 7. Distribution and completion of audits and dip samples

### Dip-Sample Audits

Dip samples are completed primarily by auditors in the youth justice service as well on occasions jointly with other services depending upon the key line of enquiry and theme. For example, a previous dip-sample in relation to substance misuse was jointly undertaken by the youth justice service and commissioned substance misuse service for children.

These are quick dip samples of the records only to test out specific areas of practice in the child's journey. A report regarding the key findings of dip-sample audits is shared with members of the youth justice quality and performance members.

### Full Audits

Full audits are solely completed by auditors in the youth justice service. These are comprehensive audits involving a review of children's files as well as collaborative reflective conversations with children, parents/carers and the allocated practitioner.

### Group Audits

Group audits are conducted four times each year with members of the youth justice service leadership and management team as well as other multi-agency partners where appropriate. There are various benefits that come along with group learning including bringing together an array of perspectives, knowledge, skills, experience, ideas and understanding.

### Completion of audits

- If an auditor is unable to complete an audit, they need to discuss this with their line manager at the earliest opportunity and ask for permission to be exempt.
- It is the expectation that the auditor meets with the allocated case manager or case prevention officer to discuss the journey of the child and the work that has been undertaken. This should





be a conversation about the child's assessed needs, the planning and the difference any support/intervention has made to improving the child's desistance, safety and safety of others.

- The auditor should meet with children and their parents/carers ideally face-to-face however virtually is sufficient where this is not possible. A key focus should be on the quality of the relationship, the way in which the case manager or case prevention officer has sought to understand the unique strengths and context of the child and his or her family, their community, and the effectiveness of the intervention and support in improving outcomes.
- In grading the work, the auditor should use their professional judgement and refer to the grading descriptors. The auditor needs to provide sufficient evidence in their findings to support the chosen grading and be clear on the reasoning and rationale for their decisions.
- As part of completing the audit there should be a meeting with the case manager or case prevention officer as well as the manager to collectively reflect upon identified strengths as well as what is needed to achieve better outcomes for the child. The auditor should provide a SMART action plan for any areas that requiring addressing. Often meaningful recommendations are more likely to involve identifying creative or innovative approaches in relationship-based work to facilitating change, rather than completing processes.

## Moderation

- It is the expectation that all completed audits will be moderated at least one week in advance of the Youth Justice Quality & Performance meeting.
- The moderator will review that the audit has evaluated the quality of work in sufficient depth and that the evaluation of practice is accurate. The moderator will also ensure that recommendations meaningfully address what is needed to improve the work. It is expected that the moderator offers a discussion with the auditor to share their findings and view, particularly when they are not in agreement with the auditor's grades or findings. The moderator will note any disagreement in the audit form, explaining their rationale, as well as any other notes about the practice. This will be sent back to the auditor, deputy head of service and head of service for reflection and learning.
- If a moderator assesses that an audit does not meet the required standard, in line with our restorative values, the moderator will offer to have a curious conversation with the auditor with a view to helping them improve the quality of the audit. The possible scenarios could be:
  - The audit is pretty scant with one liners.
  - Some sections are incomplete or gradings missing.
  - There is a lot of text, but it does not provide evidence for grading and impact on child.
  - An audit has been undertaken without contacting the practitioner.
  - An audit has been undertaken without contacting the child and their parents/carers.

Under no circumstances are moderators expected to re-audit the file. However, they shall have supportive conversations and provide appropriate feedback to auditors and avoid emails as the first response wherever possible.

## 8. Understanding our Practice (UoP) Meeting

### Purpose

The purpose of these meetings is to use audits in an interactive and dynamic way to facilitate learning and practice development. All audits will be supported by an UoP Meeting, to celebrate and reflect on



strengths whilst learning from what worked well. It will also aim to further strengthen the assessment, planning, intervention, reviewing and management oversight of the work to achieve further impactful practice and increased outcomes for the child. The specific output will be an action plan, which is the responsibility of the allocated team manager to oversee completion of identified actions and update on these as part of the feedback loop.

### Who should attend?

The team manager, allocated case manager or case prevention officer and the original auditor.

### When should the meeting take place?

The meetings should take place after feedback from moderation has been received so that both the auditor and moderators' feedback can be taken into consideration. These should take place within 2 weeks of receiving the moderated audit.

<p><b>The audit was graded 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.</b></p>	<p>Where work is graded 'Good' or 'Outstanding' an 'Understanding our Practice (UoP) meeting' will take place to reflect on the areas of strengths. Even in good or outstanding work there may be areas that could be further strengthened to increase outcomes, reflection and learning.</p>
<p><b>The audit was graded 'Requires Improvement'.</b></p>	<p>The team manager is responsible for overseeing that identified actions to further raise standards and outcomes are promptly and robustly addressed.</p> <p>If there are identified safeguarding concerns which need to be addressed these should be raised by the original auditor and/or moderator with the team manager at point of identification without delay.</p>
<p><b>The audit was graded 'Inadequate'.</b></p>	<p>Where the quality of practice is deemed inadequate by the original auditor and/or moderator an email notification should be sent to the allocated team manager, deputy head of service and head of service.</p> <p>The team manager will oversee that identified actions to raise standards and outcomes are promptly and robustly addressed.</p> <p>If there are identified safeguarding concerns which need to be addressed these should be raised by the auditor with the team manager at point of identification without delay.</p> <p>After 4 weeks the Deputy Head of Service will with the allocated team manager convene a further meeting to check on the progress of work and the effectiveness of the action plan.</p>

### Escalation

If there is a difference of opinion with the moderation outcome in the first instance this should be explored collaboratively and restoratively with the moderator. If it cannot be resolved, then the moderated audit will be sent to the Head of Service for a final decision.



## Youth Justice Quality & Performance Meeting

The youth justice quality & performance meeting takes place monthly for which the membership includes the full youth justice leadership and management team as well as representatives from the Supporting Families division learning academy.

A copy of the terms of reference for the youth justice quality & performance meeting is available below.



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## Embedding learning workshops and learning campaign

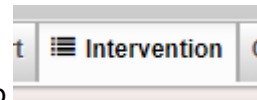
As part of the Youth Justice Quality & Performance meeting, there are a range of actions identified as part to celebrating and sharing both good/outstanding practice as well as further driving standards and outcomes across the service and partnership.

At the monthly youth justice service meeting there is a standardised agenda item to recognise and celebrate examples of good/outstanding practice which often includes positive feedback received from children and families.

Where identified as helpful there may also be bespoke learning workshops and campaigns held with the youth justice service and partnership.

## Recording auditing activity


To record activity relating to audits on a child's record on Childview, take the following steps:

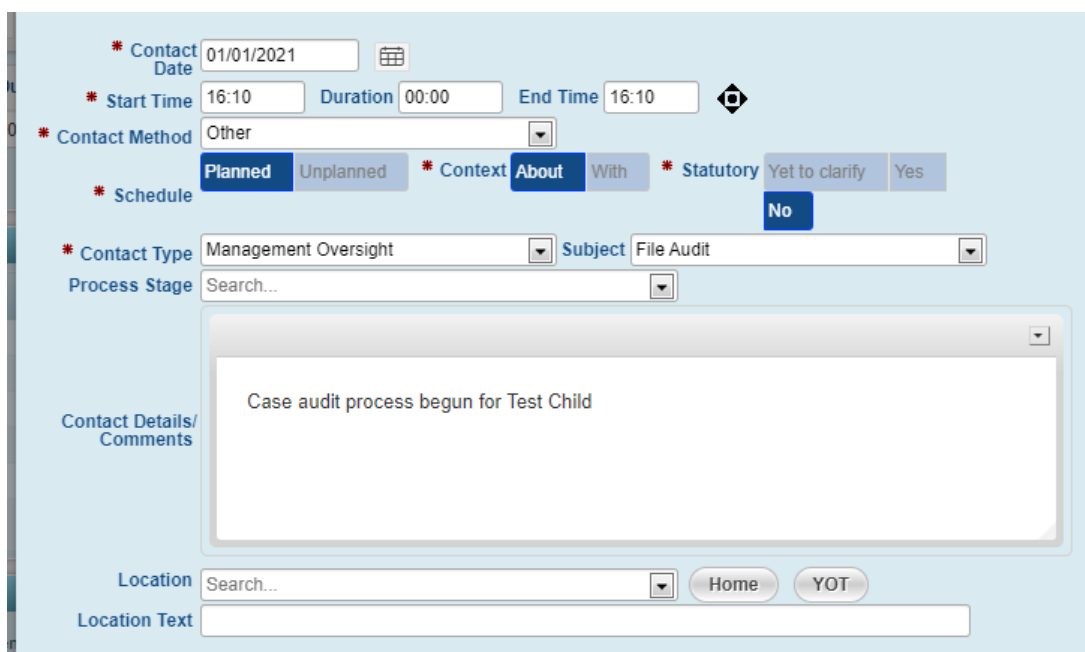


1. Find a child's record and click on the **Intervention** tab
2. Ensure the relevant Intervention is highlighted in blue in the **Intervention Summary** section

	Id	Intervention Type	Start Date	End Date	Main Outcome	Ag
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	33637	Youth Rehabilitation Order (I)	14/02/2019			
	25753	Youth Conditional Caution (I)	01/03/2018	31/05/2018		
	12484	Remand in Custody (YDA) STC (I)	11/12/2013	12/12/2013	Successfully Completed	

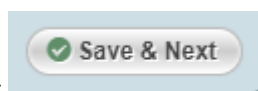
3. Move down the page to the **Contacts** section

4. Click the **CREATE** button on the top right corner of this section 
5. In the **Subject** field, type and select "File Audit"
6. Under **Context**, select "About"
7. Under **Statutory**, select "No"
8. When you get to the **Contact Type** field, select the most appropriate option:
  - a. **Management Oversight** (to record that the file has been audited)
  - b. **Other Case Meeting** (to record feedback between the auditor and practitioner/manager)
  - c. **Young Person Feedback** (if recording the child's feedback)
  - d. **Parent Feedback** (if recording the parent's feedback)
9. Complete all the remaining fields with a red asterisk \*
10. Enter the text of the contact into the **Contact Details/Comments** box



*Example of a completed initial audit contact*

11. Click **Save & Next** in the bottom right corner



12. Click **Save & Exit** in the bottom right of the next page that appears

