

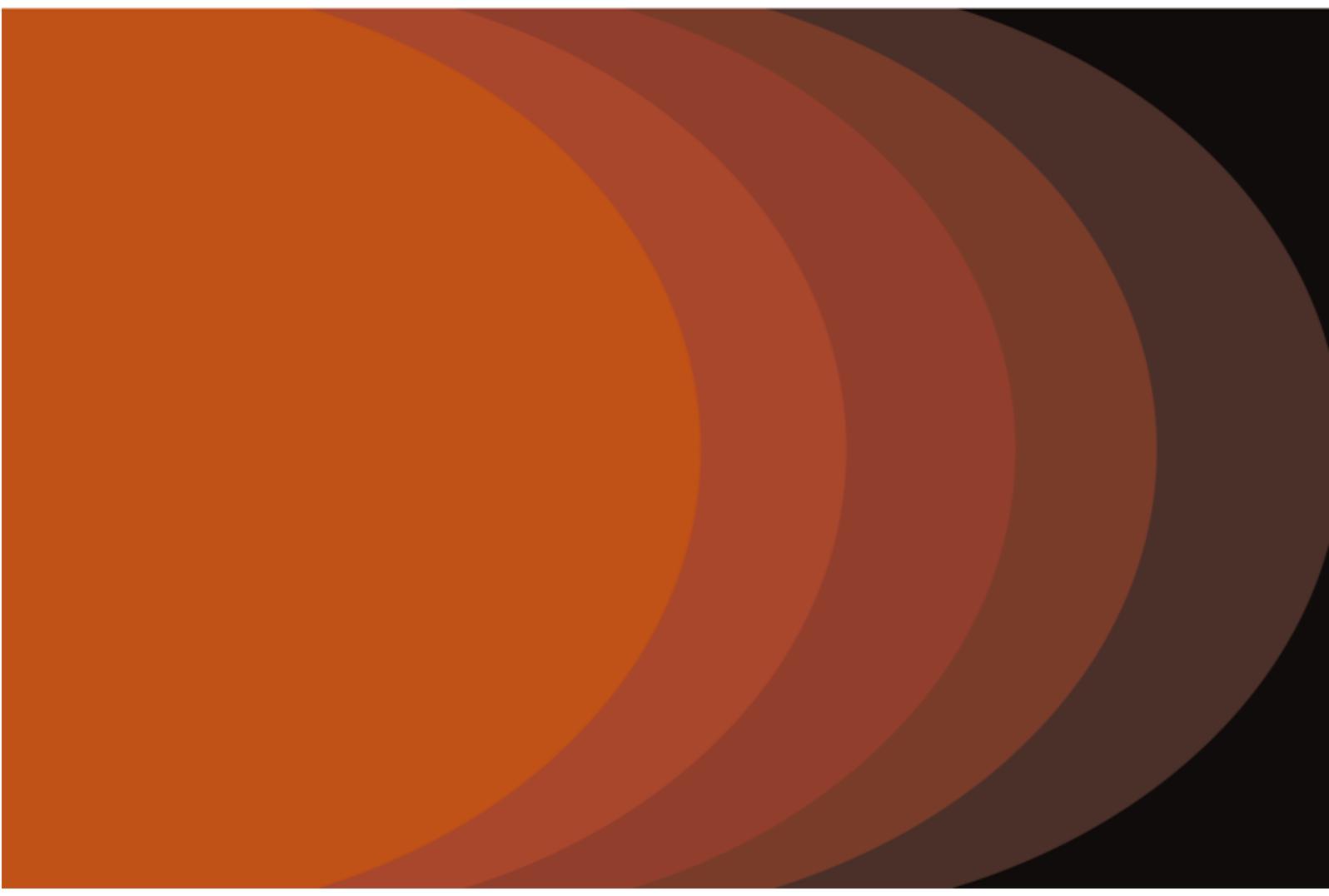


Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in

Neath Port Talbot

HM Inspectorate of Probation, May 2022



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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending service work with adults and children.

We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice and use our data and information to encourage high-quality services. We are independent of government and speak independently.

Please note that throughout the report the names in the practice examples have been changed to protect the individual's identity.

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Foreword

This inspection is part of our programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Neath Port Talbot Youth Justice Service (YJS) across three broad areas: 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. Overall, Neath Port Talbot YJS was rated as 'Good'.

The inspection recognises that significant progress has been made to move Neath Port Talbot YJS from the lowest rating in its last inspection to where it is now. In effect the service has moved through two of the inspectorate's ratings boundaries in a short space of time and that is to be commended. It is clear the council and its partners have taken the findings from the last inspection seriously and have prioritised setting up a new youth justice service, securing the relevant resources required for children known to the service, and developed performance management systems. This has been achieved with the engagement of staff and is testament to the effective governance and leadership arrangements that are in place for the YJS.

The inspection found an effective service, with strengths apparent across assessment and service delivery for court orders. Assessing and planning for desistance and safety and wellbeing in out-of-court disposals were also strong areas of practice. However, improvements were required in reviewing court orders and managing and mitigating the risk of harm to others for children on an out-of-court disposal.

The YJS's arrangements for governance and leadership are rated 'Outstanding' and its staffing, partnerships, and information and facilities are 'Good'.

Neath Port Talbot YJS has been operational since 01 April 2019, after the disaggregation of Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service. The YJS has focused on developing the board, and board members were fully immersed in the work of the YJS and understood their roles and responsibilities. There were also robust processes in place for the board to hear children's views. The inspection found, however, that the panel for out-of-court disposals (the Bureau) is not multi-agency and is not consistently presented with all the assessment information relevant to children and their families.

The partnership completed a gap analysis to review the resources for the newly formed YJS, which led to a better understanding of local youth justice issues and resulted in increased provision. Further work needs to be done, however, as too many children who are known to the YJS have experienced or are experiencing exclusion from school, and the pathways to accessing suitable, high-quality post-16 education, training and employment provision are unclear.

The YJS has worked closely with education and children's services to ensure that children and their families continue to be supported during the Covid-19 pandemic. Each member of staff has been offered the opportunity to discuss working practices going forward.

The inspection recognised that the service is still developing its performance data; however, the performance reports do not allow for an analysis of the children who are subject to the different interventions to help target service provision. Although reports on disproportionality have been completed, their findings have not impacted on practice.

The service has invested in two excellent and innovative intervention programmes (the K9 project and Equine Facilitated Learning programme), which are highlighted in this report. The YJS also has a consultant social worker, who provides space for staff to come together and reflect on their practice. Staff felt supported by their managers and were encouraged to take up training opportunities.

In this report, we make a number of recommendations that we hope will support Neath Port Talbot to build on its strong foundations and ensure it continues to deliver a high-quality service for children.



Justin Russell, HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Neath Port Talbot Youth Justice Service

Score 25/36

Fieldwork 13 to 17 December 2021

Overall rating

Good



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

Outstanding



1.2 Staff

Good



1.3 Partnerships and services

Good



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



2. Court disposals

2.1 Assessment

Outstanding



2.2 Planning

Good



2.3 Implementation and delivery

Outstanding



2.4 Reviewing

Requires improvement



3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

Good



3.2 Planning

Outstanding



3.3 Implementation and delivery

Requires improvement



3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

Requires improvement



Executive summary

Overall, Neath Port Talbot YJS is rated as: 'Good'. This rating has been determined by inspecting the YJS in three areas of its work, referred to as 'domains'. We inspect against 12 core 'standards', shared between the domains. The standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.¹ Published scoring rules generate the overall YJS rating.² The findings and subsequent ratings in those domains are described below.

Organisational delivery

The YJS's arrangements for governance and leadership are rated as 'Outstanding'. The arrangements for partnership and services, staffing, and information and facilities are rated as 'Good'.

The YJS has been operational since 01 April 2019, after the disaggregation of Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service. Neath Port Talbot began hosting a stand-alone youth justice service and a new management board was created. The YJS's corporate governance structure is incorporated within the council's children's services directorate.

The inspection recognises that significant progress has been made to move Neath Port Talbot YJS from the lowest rating in its last inspection to where it is now. In effect the service has moved through two of the inspectorate's ratings boundaries in a short space of time and that is to be commended. It is clear the council and its partners have taken the findings from the last inspection seriously and have prioritised setting up a new youth justice service, securing the relevant resources required for children known to the service, and developed performance management systems. This has been achieved with the engagement of staff and is testament to the effective governance and leadership arrangements that are in place for the YJS. The clarity of focus and attention to detail has contributed to the significant progress that has been made.

The management board is chaired by the Neath Port Talbot Director of Social Services, Health and Housing and they have been the Chair since the Board's inception. The YJS has focused on developing the Board, and Board members are fully immersed in the work of the YJS and understand their roles and responsibilities. There are processes in place for the Board to hear children's views, and this is done either through children's attendance at Board meetings or through video recordings.

Staff are comfortable with their workload, receive regular supervision and feel supported by their managers. The service has a consultant social worker, who provides space for staff to come together and reflect on their practice regarding a particular case or about their work more generally. Staff feel encouraged to take up training opportunities. It was noted that there has been no recent training, briefings or

¹ HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards can be found here:

<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

² Each of the 12 standards is scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0 to 36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows: 0–6 = 'Inadequate', 7–18 = 'Requires improvement', 19–30 = 'Good', 31–36 = 'Outstanding'.

conversations regarding diversity, especially the impact of being involved with youth justice services for girls and for black, Asian and minority ethnic children.

The service could offer more to volunteers to help them integrate into the team, and further training should be considered so that they remain up to date with youth justice developments and practice.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, each member of staff was offered one-to-one catch-up meetings with the principal officer and their views were considered regarding working practices going forward.

Since the disaggregation, the YJS has developed its performance data and local reports are being used to establish a trend for the service. The YJS performance reports combine prevention work, out-of-court disposals and court orders; however, there is no breakdown of the profile of children who are subject to these different interventions. Although the YJS has provided diversity training focusing on race and gender and completed analysis reports, these have had little impact on staff's understanding of how a child's diversity can influence their involvement with youth justice services.

On setting up the new service, the partnership completed a gap analysis to review the resources. As a result, partners developed a better understanding of local youth justice issues and the specific needs of the children known to the service. This included developing exploitation clinics with Better Futures, who provide consultation to practitioners for cases involving exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour. Inspectors also saw examples of two excellent and creative interventions, the K9 project and Equine Facilitated Learning programme.

Inspectors found that too many children who are known to the YJS have experienced or are experiencing exclusion from school. For children over 16, the pathways to accessing suitable, high-quality education, training and employment provision are unclear.

The facilities available to YJS children at BASE15 are good and there are plans to develop them further in conjunction with children and families. There is a local authority participation officer, who works alongside the YJS lead for participation. YJS children are involved in the majority of participation programmes and all children are contacted at the end of their intervention to gather feedback. However, the YJS does not collect victims' views to help influence the services they receive.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows:

- Board members are fully immersed in the work of the YJS and understand their roles and responsibilities.
- New Board members receive an induction into their role along with an induction pack.
- Children attend or make representation at every management Board meeting.
- Management Board members attend YJS team meetings.
- The service has a consultant social worker to ensure staff have the appropriate skills to meet the complex needs of YJS children.
- The YJS has a strong partnership with children's services.
- Staff do all they can to encourage good engagement and compliance from children.
- There are examples of two excellent and creative interventions, the K9 project and the Equine Facilitated Learning programme.

- All partners completed a gap analysis to review the resources for the YJS, which led to a better understanding of local youth justice issues and increased resourcing.
- The YJS has a resettlement policy in place, which includes resettlement process guidance for staff.
- The YJS has a new resource centre, which was named by children.

But:

- Performance reports do not allow for an analysis of the children who are subject to the different interventions to help target service provision.
- Although the YJS has provided diversity training focusing on race and gender and completed analysis reports, these have had little impact on staff's understanding of how a child's diversity can influence their involvement with youth justice services.
- There has been a gap in the YJS's education, training and employment provision and too many children who are known to the YJS have experienced or are experiencing exclusion from school.
- The pathways to accessing suitable, high-quality post-16 education, training and employment provision are unclear.
- Volunteers are not given opportunities to integrate with the team.
- The YJS does not collect victims' views to help influence the services they receive.

Court disposals

We took a detailed look at three community sentences managed by the YJS. There were no custodial sentences within the time period. We also conducted three interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery of services; and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, to keep the child safe, and to keep other people safe.

Our key findings about court disposals were as follows:

- Assessments were strong in the areas of desistance, safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others. They took account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and their ability and motivation to change.
- When making assessments, case managers considered the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context, and information from other agencies.
- When planning for the child's safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others, the child's risks were addressed, and other agencies were involved appropriately.
- Staff focused on developing and maintaining an effective relationship with children and their parents or carers and they encouraged and enabled the child's compliance with the court order.
- When reviewing, case managers identified and responded to changes in the child's circumstances and considered the child's motivation.

But:

- Staff did not regularly take account of a child's diversity needs when completing assessments.
- When assessing a child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others, staff did not clearly analyse the controls and interventions required to manage and minimise the identified risk.
- Staff did not consistently set out the contingency arrangements to manage the child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others in the cases inspected.
- When case managers reviewed safety and wellbeing, they did not consistently respond to changes in circumstances and adjust the ongoing plan accordingly.
- Other agencies were not always involved in the reviewing of a child's safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others.

Out-of-court disposals

We inspected three cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of one youth caution and two community resolutions. There were no youth conditional cautions in the time period. We interviewed the case managers in three cases.

We examined the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, to keep the child safe and to keep other people safe. The quality of the work undertaken for each factor needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision to be rated as satisfactory.

We also inspected the quality of policies and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews.

Our key findings were as follows:

- An assessment was completed on all children prior to the out-of-court disposal being given.
- When carrying out an assessment, case managers considered the child's strengths and protective factors, and their level of maturity, and ability and motivation to change.
- Assessing and planning for desistance and safety and wellbeing were significant strengths.
- As part of the planning process, case managers set out the opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services following completion of the out-of-court disposal work.
- Where a victim had been identified, their needs and wishes were taken into account.
- The views of parents or carers were considered as part of the assessment and planning process.

But:

- The Bureau (out-of-court disposal panel) is not multi-agency and is not consistently presented with all the assessment information relevant to children and their families.

- The Bureau analysis report, which includes the profiling of children, does not monitor ethnicity.
- There is no separate analysis and monitoring of out-of-court disposals to ensure service provision meets the needs of these children at an early stage.
- Other agencies were not sufficiently involved in planning to manage and minimise a child's risk of harm to others.
- When delivering services, case managers did not consistently identify the factors that were most likely to support the child's desistance and take account of the child's diversity issues.

Recommendations

As a result of our inspection findings, we have made five recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of youth offending services in Neath Port Talbot. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth offending services, and better protect the public.

The Chair of the YJS Management Board should:

1. review the format and purpose of the Bureau so that it has the relevant information and input from the necessary agencies to ensure that the out-of-court disposal meets the needs of the child.

The YJS Management Board should:

2. analyse the number of exclusions that children known to the YJS receive and work with schools to make sure that the children are receiving their statutory education in a setting that best meets their needs
3. ensure that high-quality education, training and employment provision is available for children aged over 16.

The YJS principal officer should:

4. use performance reports and data analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of out-of-court disposals to ensure that children are offered appropriate interventions at the earliest opportunity
5. use the analysis relating to diversity and disproportionality to enable conversations and discussions to take place that recognise the impact of the criminal justice system on girls and black, Asian and minority ethnic children, and target provision accordingly.

Background

Youth offending teams (YOTs) work with children aged 10 to 18 who have been sentenced by a court, or who have come to the attention of the police because of their offending behaviour, but have not been charged – instead, they were dealt with out of court. HM Inspectorate of Probation inspects both these aspects of youth offending services.

YOTs are statutory partnerships, and they are multidisciplinary, to deal with the needs of the whole child. They are required to have staff from local authority social care and education services, the police, the National Probation Service and local health services.³ Most YOTs are based within local authorities, although this can vary.

YOT work is governed and shaped by a range of legislation and guidance specific to the youth justice sector (such as the National Standards for Youth Justice) or else applicable across the criminal justice sector (for example, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements guidance). The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) provides some funding to YOTs. It also monitors their performance and issues guidance to them about how things are to be done.

Neath Port Talbot is in Wales and includes two towns: Port Talbot, which is on the coast and industrialised, and Neath, which is inland and a Welsh valleys community. The population consists of approximately 140,300 people. Those who identify as white equate to 138,500 people and those who identify as black, Asian and minority ethnic equate to 1,600, which is 1.1 per cent of the population. The proportion of people who can speak Welsh is 22 per cent, according to the 2021 annual population survey.

The most recent published figure shows that the number of first-time entrants in Neath Port Talbot reduced during 2019. The service has calculated this for the 12-month period covering 2020/2021 and it shows that the number of first-time entrants was consistent with previous years. This means that Neath Port Talbot is below the average for Wales.

Although the percentage of the YJS cohort who reoffend has remained steady since 2019, it is still above the Welsh average for the same time period. During 2020/2021 Neath Port Talbot had three custodial sentences, which due to the small number of cases nationally was above the average for Wales. The performance reports presented to the management board have led to specific requests for themed audits. These have included child sexual exploitation, gender data regarding boys and girls, violence against the person, accommodation and homelessness.

HM Inspectorate of Probation inspected Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service in October 2018. Neath Port Talbot was part of this service, alongside Bridgend and Swansea. The inspection report was published in March 2019 and the service disaggregated in April 2019. This allowed each area to focus on its own geographical and demographic profiles and tailor services to meet the specific needs of children in its own locality. On 01 April 2019, Neath Port Talbot began hosting a stand-alone service for youth justice and early intervention and a new management board was created.

³ The *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* set out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

Contextual facts

Population information⁴

100	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in Neath Port Talbot ⁵
167	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in England and Wales
56.3%	Reoffending rate in Neath Port Talbot ⁶
35.6%	Reoffending rate in England and Wales
144,386	Total population Neath Port Talbot
12,780	Total youth population (10–17 years) in Neath Port Talbot

Caseload information⁷

Age	10–14 years	15–17 years
Neath Port Talbot YJS	17%	83%
Wales average	23%	77%
England and Wales average	22%	78%

Race/ethnicity ⁸	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
Neath Port Talbot YJS	97%	1%	0%
Youth population (10–17 years) in Neath Port Talbot	97%	3%	0%
Wales average	87%	10%	3%
England and Wales average	69%	28%	3%

Gender	Male	Female
Neath Port Talbot YJS	76%	24%
Wales average	83%	17%
England and Wales average	85%	15%

⁴ Office for National Statistics. (2021). *UK population estimates, mid-2020*.

⁵ Youth Justice Board. (2021). *First-time entrants, January to December 2020*.

⁶ Ministry of Justice. (2021). *Proven reoffending statistics, October 2018 to September 2019, year*.

⁷ Youth Justice Board. (2021). *Youth justice annual statistics: 2019 to 2020*.

⁸ Data supplied by the YJS.

Additional caseload data⁹

25	Total current caseload: community sentences
2	Total current caseload in custody
70	Total current caseload of out-of-court-disposals (including youth conditional cautions, youth cautions and community resolutions)
44%	Percentage of current caseload with a child in need plan or child protection plan or who are looked after children
44%	Percentage of current caseload with a learning disability or learning difficulty or subject to a Statement of Additional Learning Need or Individual Learning Plan
46%	Percentage of current caseload in a pupil referral unit, alternative education, on reduced timetables or not in education, employment or training

For children subject to court disposals (including resettlement case):

Offence types¹⁰	Percentage
Violence against the person	67%
Drug offences	33%

⁹ Data supplied by the YJS, reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

¹⁰ Data from the cases assessed during this inspection.

1. Organisational delivery

Neath Port Talbot Youth Justice Service is part of the council's children's services directorate. The YJS's integration with partners is assisted by the principal officer having strategic responsibility for Route 14+ (leaving care and after care services) and youth homelessness.

The inspection recognises that significant progress has been made to move Neath Port Talbot YJS from the lowest rating in its last inspection to where it is now. In effect the service has moved through two of the inspectorate's ratings boundaries in a short space of time and that is to be commended.

The council and its partners have taken the findings from the last inspection seriously and have prioritised setting up a new youth justice service, securing the relevant resources required for children known to the service, and developing performance management systems. This has been achieved with the engagement of staff and is testament to the effective governance and leadership arrangements that are in place for the YJS.

The management Board is chaired by the Neath Port Talbot Director of Social Services, Health and Housing since its inception in April 2019. New Board members receive an induction into their role from the YJS principal officer, along with an induction pack that includes an outline of the function of the Board and an explanation of the data sets used. The YJS has focused on developing the Board, and inspectors found that Board members were fully and proactively immersed in the work of the YJS and understood their roles and responsibilities. Board members and YJS leaders advocated positively for the YJS and have been crucial in driving forward the change we have seen. The YJB National Practice Guidance for England and Wales, which was published in December 2021, notes that the service's management board governance pathway and its induction pack are good practice guides.

A safeguarding report is produced for the Board on a quarterly basis and includes information on a range of safeguarding data. Although the service had commissioned extremism training, it was disappointing to note that its plans for tackling disproportionality and promoting diversity on a wider basis were not included in the strategic plan.

The inspectors found evidence of the management Board challenging both the probation service and the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) regarding their resourcing of the YJS. The Chair had escalated the Board's concerns about the delays in court proceedings for children to members of the judiciary. There are processes in place for the board to hear the children's views and this is done either through children's attendance at board meetings or through video recordings. Communication from the board is shared at the management and team meetings and board members attend team meetings.

Staff are comfortable with their workload, receive regular supervision and feel supported by their managers. The service has a consultant social worker who provides space for staff to come together and reflect on their practice regarding a particular case or about their work more generally. Staff feel encouraged to take up training opportunities. Further training is required for staff in AIM3 harmful sexual behaviour and for new staff in screening for speech, language and communication concerns. Although the YJS has provided diversity training focusing on race and gender and

completed analysis reports, these have had little impact on staff's understanding of how a child's diversity can influence their involvement with youth justice services.

The service could offer more to volunteers to enable their integration into the team and should consider providing further training so that they are up to date with youth justice developments and practice. The development of mentors to work with children was identified as a gap in provision.

During the Covid-19 pandemic each member of staff was offered one-to-one catch-up meetings with the principal officer and their views were considered regarding working practices going forward.

While Neath Port Talbot was part of the Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service, it did not have its own YJB performance data. Since the disaggregation, local reports are being used to establish a trend for the service. The YJS performance reports combine prevention work, out-of-court disposals and court orders, although offence type is analysed separately. However, there is no breakdown of the profile of children while they are subject to these different interventions.

'Better Futures' provides monthly consultations with practitioners for any of their cases involving exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour. Inspectors saw examples of two excellent and creative interventions, the K9 project and Equine Facilitated Learning programme, which are outlined later in the report.

After the disaggregation of Western Bay YJS, the management board and all partners completed a gap analysis to identify the resources for the newly formed YJS. As a result, partners developed a better understanding of the local youth justice issues and the specific needs of children known to the service.

The inspection found that too many children who are known to the YJS have experienced or are experiencing exclusion from school. For children over 16, the pathways to accessing suitable, high-quality education, training and employment provision are unclear. YJS staff reported that there is a lack of suitable accommodation for YJS children and this is especially relevant when it is needed on an emergency basis. Additional resources have been bid for through the Strategic Homelessness group.

The YJS has the appropriate policies in place and guidance on these is available. The facilities available to YJS children at BASE15 are good and will be further developed in conjunction with children and families. Partnership staff feel part of the team and reported good communication and information-sharing with case managers. The YJS has a quality assurance framework in place and thematic and case audits are completed on a multi-agency basis. There is evidence that the YJS reviews cases when serious incidents occur.

There is a local authority participation officer who works alongside the YJS lead for participation. YJS children are involved in the majority of participation programmes and all children are contacted at the end of their intervention to gather feedback. However, the YJS does not collect victims' views to help influence the services they receive.

The YJS has a resettlement policy in place, and the guidance sets out the initial planning and review processes. Although there is no resettlement panel, all resettlement cases are listed at the YJS risk review meeting. There is practice guidance for case managers on recalling children to the secure estate when they are on licence. Staff reported that access to suitable accommodation and post-16 education, training and employment provision can be a challenge when children are

released from custody. The YJS has the Enhanced Constructive Resettlement Practice Guidance in place, which was reviewed in October 2021.

Strengths

- Board members are fully immersed in the work of the YJS and understand their roles and responsibilities.
- New board members receive an induction into their role, along with an induction pack.
- Children attend or make representation at every management board meeting.
- Management board members attend YJS team meetings.
- The service has a consultant social worker to ensure staff have the appropriate skills to meet the complex needs of YJS children.
- The YJS has a strong partnership with children's services.
- Staff do all they can to encourage good engagement and compliance from children.
- There are examples of two excellent and creative interventions, the K9 project and the Equine Facilitated Learning programme.
- All partners completed a gap analysis to review the resources for the YJS, which led to a better understanding of local youth justice issues and increased resources.
- The YJS has a resettlement policy in place, which includes resettlement process guidance for staff.
- The YJS has a new resource centre, which was renamed by children.

Areas for improvement

- YJS performance reports do not allow for an analysis of the children who are subject to the different interventions to help target service provision.
- Although the YJS had provided diversity training focusing on race and gender and completed analysis reports, these had little impact on staff's understanding of how a child's diversity can influence their involvement with youth justice services.
- There has been a gap in the YJS education, training and employment provision and too many children who are known to the YJS have experienced or are experiencing exclusion from school.
- The pathways to accessing suitable and high-quality post-16 education, training and employment provision are unclear.
- Volunteers are not given opportunities to integrate with the team.
- The YJS does not collect victims' views to help influence the services they receive.

Organisations that are well led and well managed are more likely to achieve their aims. We inspect against four standards.

1.1. Governance and leadership



The governance and leadership of the YOT supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.

Outstanding

Key data¹¹

Total spend in previous financial year	£993,090
Total projected budget current for financial year	£1,008,020

In making a judgement about governance and leadership, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

Is there an effective local vision and strategy for the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

The inspection recognises that significant progress has been made to move Neath Port Talbot YJS from the lowest rating in its last inspection to where it is now. In effect the service has moved through two of the inspectorate's ratings boundaries in a short space of time and that is to be commended. The council and its partners have taken the findings from the last inspection seriously and have prioritised setting up a new youth justice service, securing the relevant resources required for children known to the service, and developed performance management systems. This has been achieved with the engagement of staff and is testament to the effective governance and leadership arrangements that are in place for the YJS.

Neath Port Talbot Youth Justice Service is part of the council's children's services directorate. The management board is chaired by the Neath Port Talbot Director of Social Services, Health and Housing, and they have been chairing since its inception in April 2019. The board is attended by representatives with the right level of seniority and the inspection found that board members are fully immersed in the work of the YJS. It includes all statutory partners, as well as some non-statutory partners, such as the cabinet member for children's services and a representative from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. A representative from court is a board member but due to court commitments it is difficult for them to attend board meetings. Therefore, the YJS principal officer and the operational manager meet with court representatives on a regular basis and a service level agreement is in place.

New board members receive an induction into their role from the principal officer along with an induction pack, which includes an outline of the function of the board and an explanation of the data sets used. The YJB National Practice Guidance for England and Wales, which was published in December 2021, notes that the service's management board governance pathway and its induction pack are good practice guides.

There has been a focus on developing the board so that all members understand their role and responsibilities. This has included several board development days, which have helped to establish working links with the staff team and supported board

¹¹ Data supplied by YJS.

members to increase their knowledge of the work of the YJS. As the board has developed, the development days now focus on scrutinising specific areas of practice.

The Youth Justice Strategic Plan runs from 2021 to 2024 and is updated annually. The service had commissioned extremism training; however, it was disappointing to note that its plans for tackling disproportionality and promoting diversity on a wider basis were not included in the strategic plan.

Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?

A management board briefing paper is provided at each board meeting. This includes updates on service and action plans and service area updates, for example staffing, courts, Covid-19 responses and actions arising from the last board. A safeguarding report is produced for the board on a quarterly basis and includes information on a range of safeguarding data, including referrals to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences, Prevent (Channel), and complaints and compliments.

Performance reports are presented at board meetings at different points throughout the year, including six-monthly reports, a yearly profile of the YJS cohort and year-on-year comparisons. The number of looked after children on an out-of-court disposal or a court order is in line with the number of looked after children generally in the Neath Port Talbot area. However, there are a number of residential homes locally and the service does regularly manage children from other local authorities who have been placed in the area. This has an impact on local resources and is continuously monitored. In addition, the looked after children protocol has recently been reviewed and the YJS is promoting it to ensure that the arrangements with children's homes and the police do not result in children being unnecessarily criminalised.

There is evidence of the management board challenging both the probation service and CAMHS regarding their resourcing of the YJS after disaggregation, which resulted in an improved offer of provision. The Chair has also escalated to members of the judiciary the board's concerns about the delays in court procedures for children, highlighting the impact delays can have on the child's emotional and mental health and wellbeing.

There are processes in place for the board to hear the views of children. This is done either through the children attending board meetings or through video recordings that are played at board meetings.

Issues impacting on youth offending are prominent on the agendas of other key strategic groups within Neath Port Talbot. These include the Safeguarding Board, the Safer Neath Port Talbot Partnership group, the Think Families Partnership and the Integrated Offender Management group.

Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?

The YJS principal officer has held various roles within Neath Port Talbot and led the disaggregation of the YJS in April 2019. The operational manager has worked for the YJS since 2008 as a social worker and then as a senior practitioner before becoming the operational manager. The principal officer, the operational manager and the senior practitioners are knowledgeable about youth justice and work well together to support the team.

The principal officer and the operational manager attend the management board, and other staff members attend to present on specific pieces of work. There is a two-way relationship between the board and the YJS staff. Communication from the board is shared at management and team meetings and board members attend team

meetings. The operational manager also writes a newsletter for the board so that members are kept updated on YJS issues.

The inspection staff survey was completed by 14 people, 69 per cent of whom understood the vision and mission of the YJS 'very well'; 54 per cent were 'very aware' of the activities of the management board and understood its role, and 46 per cent were 'quite aware'. Most staff who completed the survey felt they were updated regarding strategic issues.

The Covid-19 pandemic has meant that the YJS is moving towards a blended workforce, between home and office working and, prior to the latest restrictions in December 2021, had returned to limited office working. The new resource centre was opened in 2021, and the space was being used for work with children and for staff team meetings. All staff have been offered the Covid-19 vaccine, and lateral flow testing is a regular occurrence for most staff. Assessments, interventions and visits to children have been completed creatively and all vulnerable children continue to be monitored in collaboration with education and children's services.

1.2. Staff	
Staff within the YOT are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.	Good

Key staffing data¹²

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent)	24
Vacancy rate (total unfilled posts as percentage of total staff)	0%
Average caseload case managers (FTE equivalent) ¹³	12
Average annual working days sickness (all staff)	15

In making a judgement about staffing, we take into account the answers to the following five questions:

Do staffing and workload levels support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

The YJS has a team of 24 staff. The team structure sits under the principal officer, and includes an operational manager, two senior practitioners, an information officer and a business manager. After disaggregation, the structure of the YJS was reviewed, and more social workers, including a consultant social worker, were employed to ensure staff had the appropriate skills to meet the complex needs of the children known to the service.

The YJS operational manager and senior practitioners are responsible for allocating cases and there is a weekly team allocation meeting. Allocations for out-of-court disposals happen outside of this meeting, as these cases have to be allocated within 24 hours. Consideration is given to the number of cases held by case managers and their specific skills and knowledge. Allocation also considers which staff have

¹² Data supplied by YJS and reflecting staffing at the time of the inspection announcement.

¹³ Data supplied by YJS, based on staffing and workload at the time of the inspection announcement

previously been involved with the family so that consistency of case manager is prioritised.

Case managers had approximately 12 cases at the time of the inspection and, of the 14 members of staff who completed the staff survey, 85 per cent said that they find their workload or caseload manageable.

There was evidence in the cases inspected that staff do all they can to encourage good engagement and compliance from the child and both staff and managers are child-centred and know their children well.

Do the skills of YOT staff support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

The YJS social workers have case responsibility and complete assessments, prepare reports and coordinate and deliver the interventions with children who are subject to statutory court orders and voluntary interventions. The YJS prevention and intervention workers support case managers to deliver programmes and have their own specialist areas of intervention, including anti-social behaviour, non-violent resistance, and the intensive supervision and surveillance programme.

The service has a rota system for YJS social workers to attend court, which is shared with Swansea. Feedback received from the court confirmed that YJS staff have been adaptable during Covid-19 in engaging children by using outreach work, virtual meetings and social media. The court is kept informed of the services provided through meetings, open days and the YJS newsletter. The pre-sentence reports provided to court are detailed and outline all sentencing options.

The YJS has a volunteer coordinator. Volunteers can apply for several roles within the service, including acting as a referral order panel member or an appropriate adult for children in police custody, mentoring or reparation. There are currently 15 volunteers registered, although not all are available. Recruitment is ongoing, with five people currently waiting to be trained. The development of mentors to work with children was identified as a gap in provision. All volunteers receive an induction, which includes specific training programmes, meeting staff and shadowing panels. Ongoing training has been restricted due to Covid-19, although volunteers have received a briefing from the speech, language and communication therapist. Volunteers are not invited to team development days or team meetings and there are no specific volunteer meetings. They receive supervision once a year, and although they report that the volunteer coordinator is always available to them, more could be done to support their integration into the team. Further training should be considered so that they remain up to date with youth justice developments and practice.

During Covid-19 the YJS changed the way the referral panels were run and used WhatsApp so that they could operate virtually. They recognised, however, that there were issues with access to, and knowledge of, the technology needed. As soon as restrictions were lifted, they returned to face-to-face panels. The YJS aims to have the same panel members on the initial referral order panel and the review panels in order for them to develop a relationship with the child and their family. YJS staff spend time with volunteers both before and after the panel to discuss any issues that have arisen.

Does the oversight of work support high-quality delivery and professional development?

Staff receive regular monthly supervision, which covers case load (if appropriate), workload, any challenges to a person's emotional and mental health, the quality of work and areas of improvement and professional development. Annual appraisals are

also completed, and objectives are reviewed in supervision meetings. Seconded staff receive supervision from their home agency, who complete an appraisal, and from their YJS line manager.

The YJS consultant social worker provides space for staff to come together and reflect on their practice or on their work more generally. There is a comprehensive induction process in place for new staff, and procedures for addressing staff competency. For the cases that were inspected, management oversight met the needs of the case in all post-court cases and in two out of three out-of-court disposals. Staff reported feeling supported by both their managers and their peers.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

There is a YJS training plan in place for 2021/2022. The service completed the YJB Youth Justice Skills audit for practitioners and keeps comprehensive training records. Staff reported that they feel encouraged to take up training opportunities.

Neath Port Talbot Council has mandatory e-learning in place for training in safeguarding adults and children. A range of learning opportunities are available to staff and all have been trained in the trauma-informed practice approach to working with children. The service commissioned exploitation training from Barnardo's and the senior practitioners have completed SAVRY (Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth) training.

The inspection found that further training is required for staff in Assessment, Intervention and Moving On (AIM3) harmful sexual behaviour and for new staff in screening for speech, language and communication concerns.

The YJS actively encourages staff development through offering management opportunities within the service and supporting staff to complete external qualifications, including social work degrees.

Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?

Staff reported feeling very well supported by both Neath Port Talbot Council and the YJS throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Each member of staff was offered one-to-one catch-up meetings with the principal officer where they were asked what can be done to make the service better, what is being done well, and what needs further development.

Staff surveys are regularly distributed across the directorate and staff members are encouraged to complete them. Staff are consulted at team meetings regarding any new policy or procedure that is to be introduced. Staff receive praise and appreciation emails from senior leaders and through supervision with their line managers. Team meetings encourage the sharing of positive news and recognition of good practice.

Neath Port Talbot Council has a long service award scheme and West Glamorgan Safeguarding Board gives out staff awards. There are also Social Services Awards and a number of YJS staff have been nominated for and won awards in the different categories.

1.3. Partnerships and services



A comprehensive range of high-quality services is in place, enabling personalised and responsive provision for all children.

Good

Caseload characteristics¹⁴

Percentage of current caseload with emotional wellbeing or mental health issues	71%
Percentage of current caseload with substance misuse issues	65%

In making a judgement about partnerships and services, we take into account the answers to the following questions:

Is there a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of children, used by the YOT to deliver well-targeted services?

When Neath Port Talbot was part of the Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service, it did not have its own YJB performance data for first-time entrants, reoffending and custody rates. Since the disaggregation, local reports are being used to establish a trend for the service.

The YJS performance reports combine prevention work, out-of-court disposals and court orders. There is no breakdown of the profile of children while they are subject to these different interventions. Further segmentation would allow for a more detailed analysis of the quality of programmes, the engagement of children, and the reoffending rates associated with these areas of work and would help target service provision.

Does the YOT partnership provide the volume, range and quality of services and interventions required to meet the needs of all children?

The YJS has a strong partnership with children's services and this is reinforced by the YJS principal officer having responsibility for Route 14+ (leaving care and after care services), homelessness and being a child practice reviewer.

A YJS multi-agency risk review meeting is convened if a child is assessed as high risk for safety and wellbeing and/or risk of harm to others. The meeting is chaired by a senior practitioner and all staff involved with the case will attend, including any partner agencies working with the child.

There is also a strategic contextual risk panel and an operational multi-agency mapping and community risk profiling meeting. These focus on mapping children in communities and looking at potential areas where exploitation may be happening, the type of exploitation and how it can be disrupted. In addition, the YJS has set up monthly exploitation clinics with Better Futures (a project run by Barnardo's), which provides individual consultation slots for practitioners with any of their cases involving child exploitation, child sexual exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour and child sexual abuse. The service can also access St Giles Trust for county lines and has its own staff trained to deliver the Non-Violent Resistance programme.

¹⁴ Data supplied by YJS.

The YJS is creative in how it works with children to address their needs. The inspectors saw examples of two excellent and creative interventions. One was the K9 project, which focuses on exploitation, knife crime and county lines. This is run jointly by South Wales police and the YJS and happens over three days. It involves police school liaison workers delivering a session on knife crime, sessions on drug awareness and basic first aid, and input from a victim of a knife crime attack. It ends with a visit to the dog and horses unit at Police Headquarters and a presentation, which can lead to a stage one qualification in communication skills. The programme is subject to ongoing evaluation; however, early indications show a reduction in reoffending by those who have completed the course. Feedback has shown that children are building trust with professionals, and especially the police, and feeling safe in the environment away from peer pressures.

The second inspiring and unique intervention, which was devised and developed by a YJS staff member based on their love of horses, is the Equine Facilitated Learning programme. This is a form of experiential learning that involves horses and a facilitator working together with a child to create positive change. It includes equine activities such as observing, handling, grooming and groundwork, and structured exercises focused on the child's needs and goals. The evaluation is ongoing and includes capturing the outcomes for children using a tool that reviews their confidence and relaxation and the way they relate to others, as well as other areas of their emotional wellbeing. The YJS is currently working in partnership with local pony clubs, farriers and a 'racing for schools' charity to offer children opportunities to find out more about employment and training in the equine industry, which will form part of their exit plan.

The YJS is also involved in the 'Snakes and Ladders' collaboration with Cardiff University, where they are developing a digital emotional wellbeing tool/game that supports children in exploring the impact of lifestyle choices and options.

The service has a youth justice victim liaison officer (VLO), who facilitates restorative meetings and conferences and ensures the impact on victims is considered in the interventions with the child. The VLO will initially text the victim within 24 working hours to arrange an appropriate date and time to visit or phone in order to explain the process and see if they wish to be involved. If the victim does want to stay involved, then their individual needs are explored and, if necessary, they are signposted to other agencies for support. The restorative processes are explained to them, and these include a letter of explanation, mediation, face-to-face meeting or reparation. The VLO will also deliver victim awareness sessions to the children who have offended. The VLO is invited to the child's sentence planning meeting and will share any information from the victim, as well as learning about the plans in place for the child. Unfortunately, feedback from victims is not gathered and so the impact that being involved with the service is having on them cannot be measured. In recent months the VLO has been working on a project to train school staff in restorative practices so that they can more appropriately support and manage children's behaviour in school.

There was a larger choice of reparation projects before Covid-19, but the YJS hopes that eventually all of the programmes will be reinstated. Reparation projects include an accredited first aid course, dog walking at a rescue centre, food banks and charity shops, gardening work and allotments. The service is also involved with Keep Wales Tidy projects. All children receive an induction so that projects can be matched to their interests.

Are arrangements with statutory partners, providers and other agencies established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services?

The gap analysis undertaken after the disaggregation of Western Bay YJS resulted in partners developing a better understanding of local youth justice issues and the specific needs of children known to the service.

CAMHS provide a worker who is shared across Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Youth Justice Services. They offer advice, consultation and training for staff, as well as completing assessments and interventions for children. There are arrangements in place for YJS staff to contact outreach nurses when they have someone who needs sexual health services.

All children are screened for speech, language and communication needs by YJS staff as part of their assessment. The service, however, needs to ensure that all staff are trained to identify these needs so that children can be referred to the speech and language therapist, who will complete a further assessment, provide the relevant interventions and signpost to other agencies if necessary. The therapist also provides advice and support to parents and carers, delivers training for staff in partner agencies and adapts interventions to ensure they are accessible to children.

There is a commissioned service to support children with substance misuse, which includes two workers who receive referrals from case managers and who deliver interventions.

Due to ongoing staff sickness, there has been a gap in the YJS education, training and employment provision. There has been a single point of contact within education to progress any issues or ongoing work with schools. The service also has links with Hillside Secure Children's Home and is developing an education centre so that programmes of education with accreditation can be offered as an alternative to exclusion for specific periods of time. The inspectors found that too many children who are known to the YJS have experienced or are experiencing exclusion from school. The partnership needs to undertake an analysis of this to understand if it is disproportionate in comparison to children who are not known to the YJS. Work should also be initiated with schools to understand the reasons behind the exclusions and what preventative interventions are required to enable YJS children to remain in mainstream provision.

For children over 16, there is a careers adviser from Careers Wales, who attends the BASE15 centre one afternoon a week. Also, the local college provides monthly education clinics where individual cases can be discussed. The inspection found, however, that the pathways to accessing suitable, high-quality post-16 education, training and employment provision were unclear.

The relationship with children's social care is good. YJS staff are invited to and attend all meetings regarding children in need, children on a child protection plan and looked after children.

Staff reported that there is a lack of suitable accommodation for YJS children and this is especially relevant when it is needed on an emergency basis. The YJS principal officer is Chair of the Strategic Homelessness group and a review of all housing provision is taking place. A bid has been made for additional supported accommodation, which it is hoped will improve the situation.

The YJS police officer completes a daily check of the police database to see if any children have been in police custody, either through arrest or voluntary attendance. In addition, they access the 'tracker occurrence', which monitors children for intelligence

purposes by identifying information from the police system and matching it with YJS children.

The YJS has a seconded half-time probation officer who works with children who are aged 16 and over and leads on transitions to the probation service. Only a few children have transitioned to probation as, based on their individual needs, most remain with the YJS.

The YJS attends the West Glamorgan Youth Court Panel to give updates on service delivery as well as provide presentations and training opportunities to youth court magistrates. They also attend the court keep-in-touch meetings, which offers an opportunity to catch up with the magistrates, the Chair of the bench and key court and legal staff.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The local authority participation officer has regular access to the resource centre and works alongside the YJS lead for participation. Children attend or make representation at every management board meeting, and they were involved in a consultation exercise with the engagement and participation officer to rename the resource centre. YJS children are involved in the majority of participation programmes and a participation presentation has been given to the management board.

As part of the inspection process, children are invited to participate in a text survey, and those whose cases are inspected are offered the opportunity to speak to an inspector to give their feedback.

Four children returned the text survey, with three rating the YJS as eight or more out of 10 (with 10 being 'fantastic').

Inspectors spoke to seven children and one parent. They all felt that their workers had the right skills to do the work and had been able to access the right services and support to help them stay out of trouble.

When asked what was one thing that they liked best about the YJS, one child said:

"Their kindness and they try to get you involved in things."

Another child said:

"It's helped having someone to talk to and they have helped me stay out of trouble. I have listened to the advice they have given me."

Resettlement policy and provision

The YJS has a resettlement policy in place, and the resettlement process guidance sets out the initial planning and review processes. Although there is no resettlement panel, all resettlement cases need to be listed at the YJS risk review meeting within four weeks of sentence and must be reviewed regularly. The licence conditions are agreed at these meetings, before the penultimate pre-release meeting. If the child is returning to the supervision of the YJS, then victims will be consulted, and their wishes taken into consideration.

There is practice guidance for case managers on recalling children to the secure estate when they are on licence. This forms part of the YJS compliance policy, and staff reported that, if needed, they would take advice from colleagues in the probation service. At the time of the inspection there had been no specific training in resettlement work.

YJS staff described communication with the secure estate as being very good. Each child is allocated a key worker and there are regular conversations between the YJS and the establishment. Information exchange with the secure establishment is timely, and any adjudication outcomes are usually received within 24 hours.

Staff maintain good relationships with families and will take parents and carers to visits and facilitate video and telephone calls so that families can stay in touch. When appropriate, staff from partnership agencies will see children in secure establishments and will liaise with their counterparts in the institution. In order to ensure continuity of care from custody to the community, they will share information and progress on interventions being completed.

Staff reported that accessing suitable accommodation and post-16 education, training and employment provision can be a challenge when children are released from custody.

The YJS has the Enhanced Constructive Resettlement Practice Guidance in place, which was reviewed in October 2021. This outlines the procedures and processes surrounding resettlement.

1.4. Information and facilities



Timely and relevant information is available and appropriate facilities are in place to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children.

Good

In making a judgement about information and facilities, we take into account the answers to the following four questions:

Do the policies and guidance in place enable staff to deliver a high-quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

A full range of policies and guidance are in place, which are reviewed annually and are accessible to staff. All policies are signed as read and understood by staff members, and each amended policy is discussed in team meetings and staff development days. Information-sharing protocols are in place and understood across the partnership. There is an escalation process for all partners to help in challenging another agency and staff feel supported by managers in raising concerns with other agencies.

Does the YOT's delivery environment(s) meet the needs of all children and enable staff to deliver a high-quality service?

In May 2021 the YJS moved from its premises in Port Talbot to a resource centre in Neath. The resource centre is purposely designed for children and has facilities including an outside gym, an allotment and flower bed, a kitchen, a laundry, a shower room, an IT suite, a wellbeing room, conference facilities, a hairdressing and beauty salon, a training and intervention room, administration facilities, and a train carriage to be renovated for reparation projects.

The resource centre has been renamed by children to BASE15. Work on the centre is ongoing and includes a graffiti art project involving children to ensure that the environment is child friendly. Prior to the December 2021 restrictions, interventions and meetings were taking place within the centre. The aim is that the YJS team will work from there on a rota basis for blended working (combined with home working) going forward.

The inspection noted that the resource centre, while better than the previous facility, is not easily accessible to children and their parents or carers. Due to the geographical make-up of the area, however, YJS staff are used to collecting children and families, and providing transport is viewed as part of the intervention.

Do the information and communications technology (ICT) systems enable staff to deliver a high-quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

YJS staff can share information through access to children's social care systems, and relevant partners have their own access to the YJS case management system. The YJS case management system enables the service to produce data on performance. Partnership staff feel part of the team and reported good communication and information-sharing with case managers, including regular discussions about roles and responsibilities regarding the work that needs to be done with children and families.

Because of Covid-19, all staff, including those who are normally office-based, have been issued with laptops and phones. The service purchased iPads for remote working with children and to support interventions.

Are analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement?

The YJS has a quality assurance framework in place and this includes scheduled and unscheduled reviews of case work and themed areas of practice. Thematic and case audits are completed on a multi-agency basis and have included safeguarding and child sexual exploitation audits across the partnership and whole case audits with children's services. Following case audits, managers give staff both verbal and written feedback.

The participation officer contacts all children at the end of their intervention to gather feedback. However, the YJS does not collect victims' views to help influence the services they receive.

There is evidence that the YJS reviews cases when serious incidents occur and learns from the outcomes of other areas' inspections in order to improve practice.

Diversity

Throughout our standards, we expect a personalised and responsive approach for all children, which includes taking account of their diversity and protected characteristics. Those factors may influence our judgements in specific standards. Here, we present an overall summary of the approach to diversity that we found in this YOT.

According to the information provided by the YJS, 71 per cent of its workforce is female. In the local population, 1.1 per cent are black, Asian or minority ethnic, whereas eight per cent of the YJS staff group are black, Asian or minority ethnic. The number of active interventions open to the YJS at the time of the inspection was 97, of which 18 per cent were linked to girls, three per cent were black, Asian and minority ethnic, 44 per cent had a learning disability, 71 per cent were linked to children with emotional, mental health and wellbeing needs, and 65 per cent had substance misuse issues.

The YJS has presented a disproportionality report to the management board, which analysed the ethnicity of all Neath Port Talbot children who had received an active intervention at some point during 2020-2021. There were 124 children in the time period and the interventions covered prevention cases, out-of-court disposals and court interventions. Of the 124 children, 122 had 'white' in their identified ethnicity; however, within this category one child had identified themselves as 'white and black

African'. One child had recorded 'Gypsy/Roma' and another had recorded 'other mixed background'. This shows that children identifying as black, Asian or minority ethnic are two per cent of the YJS active interventions. When looking specifically at statutory interventions, there were 35 children in the cohort, with one identifying as 'white and black African'. This equates to three per cent of the cohort.

In January 2021 an audit was presented to the board that analysed girls known to the YJS to understand the trends of offending and the needs of girls in contact with the service. It was disappointing to note that there has not been a sustained focus on this area of work and recommendations have not been implemented. There was also a disconnect between managers and staff regarding the impact this report has had on practice. Not all staff could say that they had seen the report and understood the over-representation of girls known to the service.

Although analysis reports had been completed focusing on race and gender it was noted that these had little impact on staff's understanding of how a child's diversity can influence their involvement with youth justice services.

2. Court disposals

We took a detailed look at three community sentences managed by the YJS. There were no custodial sentences within the time period covered by the inspection. We also conducted three interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery of services; and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, keep the child safe and keep other people safe.

HM Inspectorate of Probation's ratings panel applied professional discretion to the rating given for the quality of reviewing. Inspectors examined the case data and judged the quality of reviewing of children's safety and wellbeing to be insufficient. There was evidence, however, that practice was strong when case managers reviewed a child's desistance and their risk of harm to others. After considering all the evidence in the round, and the views of the lead inspector, the panel agreed to move the judgement for this standard from 'Inadequate' to 'Requires improvement'.

All assessments were strong in the areas of desistance, safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others. Case managers considered the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context, and information from other agencies. They took account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and their ability and motivation to change. Analysis of the child's diversity and the controls and interventions to promote their safety and wellbeing and manage and minimise their risk of harm to others, however, needs developing.

All the cases we inspected were satisfactory for planning in relation to desistance and risk of harm to others, and in most cases the manager appropriately planned for the child's safety and wellbeing. Case managers took account of the child's personal circumstances, and considered their strengths and protective factors, as well as their level of maturity and motivation to change. We found that case managers involved children and their parents or carers in the planning. When planning for the child's safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others, case managers addressed their risks, and involved other agencies appropriately. Work to set out contingency arrangements to manage the child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others should be improved.

In all the cases we inspected, implementation and delivery of services was satisfactory in the three areas of desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others. Case managers focused on developing and maintaining an effective relationship with children and their parents or carers and they encouraged and enabled the child's compliance with the court order.

Most reviews were satisfactory in the areas of desistance and risk of harm to others. Case managers identified and responded to changes in the child's circumstances and took account of their strengths and protective factors. They considered the child's motivation and included the parents or carers in the reviewing process. When case managers reviewed safety and wellbeing, they did not consistently respond to any changes in circumstances and adjust the ongoing plan accordingly. Staff must ensure that, when reviewing a child's risk of harm to others and their safety and wellbeing, they include information from other agencies involved with the child and their family.

Strengths

- Assessments were strong in the areas of desistance, safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others. They took account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and their ability and motivation to change.
- When assessing, case managers considered the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context, and information from other agencies.
- When planning for the child's safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others, the child's risks were addressed, and other agencies were involved appropriately.
- Staff focused on developing and maintaining an effective relationship with children and their parents or carers and they encouraged and enabled the child's compliance with the court order.
- When reviewing desistance, case managers identified and responded to changes in the child's circumstances and considered the child's motivation.

Areas for improvement

- Staff did not regularly take account of the child's diversity needs when completing assessments.
- When assessing a child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others, staff need to analyse more clearly the controls and interventions required to manage and minimise the identified risk.
- Staff did not consistently set out the contingency arrangements to manage the child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others in the cases inspected.
- When case managers reviewed safety and wellbeing, they did not consistently respond to changes in circumstances and adjust the ongoing plan accordingly.
- Other agencies were not always involved in the reviewing of the child's safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others.

Work with children sentenced by the courts will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

2.1. Assessment



Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Outstanding

Our rating¹⁵ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

¹⁵ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	100%

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?

In all three inspected cases, the assessment included sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitude towards, and motivation for, their offending. Staff had considered the child's diversity issues in two out of three cases and their personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context, in all cases. The assessment took account of information from other agencies in all cases. Every assessment focused on the child's strengths and their protective factors, and recognised their level of maturity, ability and motivation to change.

The child's views and those of their parents or carers were considered in all cases. The needs and wishes of victims did not have to be taken into account, as there were no relevant victims in the cases inspected.

The factors that are most relevant to a child's offending are substance misuse; learning and education, training and employment; self-identity; and their lifestyle. In all three cases, the assessment analysed sufficiently how to address these factors and support desistance.

One inspector noted:

"The assessment is proportionate to the risks and needs of the case. The child and their parents were clearly involved, and the case manager has gained comprehensive information regarding children's services involvement and the child's educational history."

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

In all cases, staff identified and analysed the risks to a child's safety and wellbeing and assessments drew appropriately on information held by other agencies. In the two cases where it was relevant, however, staff had not given enough attention to analysing the controls and interventions that best promoted the child's safety and wellbeing. Inspectors judged the safety and wellbeing risk classification as reasonable in all three cases. Overall, the assessment analysed sufficiently how to keep the child safe in every case inspected.

This was evidenced by one inspector, who said:

"The assessment was able to document a range of historical concerns with regard to domestic violence, mental illness and drug use. The case manager also identified a risk of child criminal exploitation, as the child had been threatened with violence from older males known to the criminal justice system."

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

In the two relevant cases, assessments identified and analysed any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including who was at risk and the nature of that risk.

In all cases, staff used available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involved other agencies, where appropriate, in the assessments. In the two relevant cases, however, the assessment did not analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child.

Inspectors judged the case manager’s assessment of the level of risk of serious harm as reasonable in all cases. The case manager analysed how to keep other people safe in every case inspected.

2.2. Planning



Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Good

Our rating¹⁶ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child’s desistance?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	67%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	100%

Does planning focus on supporting the child’s desistance?

Overall, planning supported the child’s desistance in all of the cases inspected.

In two out of three cases, staff set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing. Planning took account of the child’s personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context, in all cases. Although planning considered the child’s strengths and protective factors in all cases, it did not address the child’s diversity issues in one of three cases. Staff took account of the child’s level of maturity, and their ability and motivation to change, in all cases.

Planning was not required to consider the needs and wishes of the victim as there were no relevant victims in the cases inspected. In all cases, there was evidence that the child and their parents or carers had been involved in the planning, and their views taken into account.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

In the two relevant cases, the risks to the child’s safety and wellbeing were addressed as part of the planning and case managers involved other agencies and aligned their plans accordingly. Planning did not adequately outline the controls and interventions necessary to promote the child’s safety and wellbeing in one of the two relevant cases. Contingency arrangements to manage identified risks were not sufficiently set out in either of the two relevant cases.

Overall, planning focused on keeping the child safe in two of the three cases inspected.

¹⁶ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

There was sufficient planning to promote the safety of others in the two relevant cases. All cases involved other agencies, where appropriate. Planning to address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims was not required in the cases inspected.

Planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people in the two relevant cases. Effective contingency arrangements to manage the risks that had been identified, however, were not evident in one of the two relevant cases inspected. Overall, planning to keep other people safe was sufficient in all the cases inspected.

One inspector noted:

“The plan covers key areas of work that that need to be undertaken and the child's parent has an important role to play in communicating any concerns. The plan does comment on various control measures that are in place to manage the risk.”

2.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.

Outstanding

Our rating¹⁷ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?	100%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	100%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	100%

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?

Overall, the delivery of services supported the child's desistance in all of the cases inspected. In every case the services delivered reflected the child's wider familial and social context, involved the parents, carers or significant others, built on the child's strengths and protective factors and took account of the child's diversity issues.

In all cases, it was clear that staff focused on developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers.

The following comment from an inspector demonstrates this:

¹⁷ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

“The case manager has clearly formed an effective relationship with the child and advocated successfully to keep the case due to their relationship and the child's moderate learning difficulties. The case manager demonstrated they were able to meet the child's diversity needs and flexibility was given during sessions to take into account the child's anxiety.”

In all but one case, opportunities to access services post-supervision had been promoted. Case managers had encouraged and enabled the child's compliance with the work of the YJS in every case. Enforcement actions were not taken when appropriate in one relevant case, but the interventions delivered were proportionate to the disposal and completed within the required timescales in all cases inspected.

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?

The delivery of services to promote the child's safety and wellbeing was evident in all three cases inspected, and the case manager had coordinated the involvement of other organisations in every case. Overall, the implementation and delivery of services supported the safety of the child effectively in all of the three cases inspected.

One inspector noted:

“The child's safety and wellbeing have been sufficiently managed. There has been regular contact between the case manager and the social worker and work has been done with the child around reducing the risk of further exploitation.”

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?

Services delivered to keep other people safe, by managing and minimising the risk of harm, were evident in the two relevant cases. In the relevant cases, staff had coordinated the involvement of other agencies. The case managers were not required to consider the protection of actual and potential victims, as no relevant victims were identified in the cases inspected. Overall, the service delivery effectively supported the safety of other people, and this was evidenced in every case inspected.

2.4. Reviewing	
Reviewing of progress is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.	Requires Improvement

Our rating¹⁸ for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	67%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	33%

¹⁸ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

Case managers are aware that children's circumstances can change rapidly, and that this can result in an increase, or sometimes decrease, in the likelihood of reoffending, risk of harm to others or risks to their safety and wellbeing.

Reviewing cases resulted in the identification of, and a subsequent response to, changes in the factors linked to desistance in the two relevant cases we inspected. They built on the child's strengths and considered their personal circumstances, including their wider familial and social context, in every relevant case. The review, however, did not include an analysis of, and a response to, the child's diversity factors in one of the two relevant cases. Case managers considered the child's motivation and engagement levels in the one relevant case, and in all cases inspected, the child and their parents or carers had been involved meaningfully in the process, and their views were taken into account.

In the two relevant cases, the review led to changes in the plan of work and, overall, two out of the three cases inspected focused sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance as part of the reviewing process.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

As referred to above, professional discretion was applied to this area of practice. Case managers did not identify and respond to changes in the child's safety and wellbeing in the two relevant cases. When reviewing, case managers had considered information from other agencies and made the necessary changes in the ongoing plan in one of the two relevant cases. Overall, reviewing focused on keeping the child safe in one out of the three cases inspected.

An inspector noted:

"The current review does not capture recent events and concerning incidents which have happened on a regular basis. There were concerns about the child's emotional and mental health and these incidents should have triggered a review."

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

The case manager had not identified, and responded to, changes in risk in the one relevant case. Reviewing was informed by information gathered from other agencies in one out of two relevant cases. In one out of two relevant cases, the child and their parents or carers had been involved meaningfully in reviewing the risk of harm to others, and had their views considered. The reviewing process had not led to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to manage and minimise risks in the one relevant case. Overall, reviewing focused on keeping other people safe in two out of the three cases inspected.

3. Out-of-court disposals

We inspected three cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of one youth caution and two community resolutions. There were no youth conditional cautions in the time period. We interviewed the case managers in three cases.

We examined the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance, work to keep the child safe and work to keep other people safe. The quality of the work undertaken for each factor needs to be above a specified threshold for each aspect of supervision to be rated as satisfactory.

We also inspected the quality of policies and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews.

HM Inspectorate of Probation's ratings panel applied professional discretion to the ratings for the quality of planning and delivering services. Inspectors reviewed the case data and judged that the assessed classification of risk of serious harm to others was not reasonable in one case as it should have been higher and that this had impacted on planning and service delivery. There was evidence, however, that practice was strong when case managers planned and delivered services regarding a child's desistance and their safety and wellbeing. After considering all of the evidence in the round, and the views of the lead inspector, the panel agreed to move the judgement on the planning standard to 'Outstanding' and the implementation and delivery standard to 'Requires improvement'.

In most of the out-of-court cases inspected, assessment was satisfactory in the areas of desistance and the child's safety and wellbeing. Case managers considered the child's strengths and protective factors, and their level of maturity, and ability and motivation to change. Where a victim had been identified, their needs and wishes were taken into account, and the views of parents or carers were considered as part of the assessment. Although assessments of children's risk of harm to others were strong, they should be improved by identifying more clearly who is at risk and the nature of the risk.

Planning was a significant strength in the areas of desistance and safety and wellbeing. Case managers took account of the child's personal circumstances and their level of motivation to change. Planning set out the opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services following completion of the out-of-court disposal work. Case managers considered the needs and wishes of victims and included the child and parents or carers in the planning process. Involving other agencies in planning for a child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others would improve these areas of work.

Implementation and delivery of services were not as strong as assessing and planning in out-of-court disposals. Case managers did not consistently identify the factors that were most likely to support the child's desistance, take account of the child's diversity issues and involve parents, carers or significant others. They did, however, focus on promoting opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services for when the disposal ended.

In Neath Port Talbot, the 'Bureau' is the decision-making panel for out-of-court disposals. It consists of a police sergeant, the YJS operational manager, the YJS police officer and a volunteer representative from the community. The partnership views the

Bureau as part of the criminal justice system, and so it is set up in a similar way to referral order panels and court room settings and is not a multi-agency panel. At this stage, however, children are not part of the criminal justice system and could be diverted away. The panel therefore should include those agencies that are focused on the safeguarding and welfare of children as well as those that are part of the criminal justice system.

An assessment is completed on all children; however, the Bureau does not have sight of this assessment but instead receives a summary report. Therefore, detailed information from the assessment is not consistently presented to the Bureau. This makes it more difficult to ensure that children are diverted into the most appropriate care and support services and that their diversity needs are recognised. There is a Bureau analysis report that looks at comparative data from 2011. It includes profiling of children but does not include ethnicity. There is also no separate performance and analysis of out-of-court disposals. This is a missed opportunity to ensure service provision meets the needs of these children at an early stage.

Strengths

- An assessment is completed on all children before the out-of-court disposal is given.
- When carrying out an assessment, case managers considered the child's strengths and protective factors, and their level of maturity, and ability and motivation to change.
- Assessing and planning were significant strengths in the areas of desistance and safety and wellbeing.
- As part of the planning process case managers set out the opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services following completion of the out-of-court disposal work.
- Where a victim was identified, their needs and wishes were taken into account.
- The views of parents and carers were considered as part of the assessment and planning process.

Areas for improvement

- The Bureau is not multi-agency, and it is not consistently presented with all the assessment information relevant to the child and their family.
- The Bureau analysis report, which involves the profiling of children, does not include ethnicity.
- There is no separate analysis and monitoring of out-of-court disposals to ensure service provision meets the needs of these children at an early stage.
- Other agencies were not sufficiently involved in planning to manage and minimise a child's risk of harm to others.
- When delivering services, case managers did not consistently identify the factors that were most likely to support the child's desistance and take account of the child's diversity issues.

Work with children receiving out-of-court disposals will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

3.1. Assessment



Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Good

Our rating¹⁹ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	67%

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?

There was sufficient analysis of offending behaviour in all three cases. Case managers took account of the child's personal circumstances and used information from other agencies in every case. The case manager considered the child's strengths and protective factors in all cases, although they did not appropriately analyse the child's diversity issues in one of the three cases.

Case managers had involved the child and their parents or carers in the assessment and taken their views into account in all cases. The child's level of maturity and ability and motivation to change were considered in every case. The needs and wishes of victims had been taken into account in all of the cases.

The factors in out-of-court disposals that relate most to a child's offending are self-identity, lifestyle, learning and education, training and employment, and living arrangements; and in all cases the assessment analysed sufficiently how to address these factors and support desistance.

In one case, the inspector noted:

"The case manager has produced a comprehensive assessment and recognises that the child has experienced trauma. It links the child's diversity needs to their early experiences."

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

In all cases, the risk to the child's safety and wellbeing had been identified and analysed appropriately by the case manager. The assessment used sources of information, including other assessments, and involved other agencies where appropriate in every case.

Inspectors judged the case manager's assessment of the level of safety and wellbeing as reasonable in all cases. Overall, the assessment was judged to have analysed sufficiently how to keep the child safe in all three of the inspected cases.

¹⁹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

One inspector noted:

“The child has a complex background and is also experiencing current difficulties. Given this, the case manager has provided a thoughtful and thorough analysis”.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

In two out of three cases, the assessment identified and analysed the risk of harm to others, including who is at risk and the nature of the risk. In all cases, the case manager had used available sources of information, including other assessments, to inform their own judgement. Inspectors judged the case manager’s assessment of the level of risk of serious harm to others as reasonable in all but one case and, overall, the assessment sufficiently analysed how to keep other people safe in two out of three cases inspected.

3.2. Planning



Planning is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents or carers.

Outstanding

Our rating²⁰ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child’s desistance?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	67%

Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child’s desistance?

Overall, planning supported the child’s desistance sufficiently in every case inspected. In all cases, staff planned the services most likely to support desistance, paying attention to appropriate timescales and sequencing. In all three cases, staff took account of the child’s wider familial and social context. However, in one out of three cases, planning did not address the child’s diversity issues well enough or take account of the child’s strengths and protective factors. The child’s level of maturity and motivation to change were considered by the case manager in every case.

Case managers had taken account of opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services for the child after completing their out-of-court disposal in all cases. Planning was proportionate to the disposal type, which meant that interventions could be completed within the timescales in two out of the three cases.

In all cases, staff had involved the child and their parents or carers in the planning process, and in the two relevant cases the needs and wishes of victims had been considered.

²⁰ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

One inspector noted:

“The case manager completed a home visit and explained the plan to the child and their parents. The plan is comprehensive and recognised the child is resilient. It documents a range of work that needs to be completed.”

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

In the one relevant case, planning promoted the safety and wellbeing of the child, but in two relevant cases information from other agencies was not included to inform planning. Contingency arrangements for any changes to the level of risk were evident in the one relevant case and, overall, planning focused on keeping the child safe in all of the cases inspected.

This was demonstrated in the case below, where an inspector noted:

“The plan documents what interventions are needed to keep the child safe. These include work on how to keep them safe in the community, returning to education and positive activities as well as identifying external controls.”

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

As referred to above, professional discretion was applied to this area of practice. Planning to promote the safety of others by addressing the factors related to the risk of harm to others was not evident in one of the relevant cases. Case managers did not involve other agencies in the one relevant case, and planning for contingency arrangements to manage those risks identified was evident in only one of the two relevant cases.

Planning to address concerns related to actual and potential victims was evident in two of the three relevant cases inspected. Overall, planning that focused on keeping people safe was evident in two of the three cases inspected.

3.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.

Requires Improvement

Our rating²¹ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	67%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	67%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	0%

²¹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 2 for a more detailed explanation.

Does implementation and delivery focus sufficiently on supporting the child’s desistance?

Interventions to support desistance had been delivered in good time in two out of three cases. In one case the case manager had not accounted for any diversity issues, but in all three cases, the delivery of the interventions promoted opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services.

In two of the three cases, case managers had considered the child’s social context, developed and maintained an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers and encouraged and enabled the child’s compliance.

Overall, support for the child’s desistance was evident in two of the three cases inspected.

One inspector noted:

“The child was initially reluctant to engage with the YJS. The case manager spent time with the child to encourage and motivate them to work with the service”.

Does implementation and delivery focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

It was not evident that the child’s safety and wellbeing had been promoted through service delivery in the one relevant case. In the one case where other agencies were involved, case managers involved them in keeping children safe. Overall, service delivery supported the safety of the child in two of the three cases inspected.

Does implementation and delivery focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

As referred to above, professional discretion was applied to this area of practice. The services delivered did not manage and minimise the risk of harm in the two relevant cases, and case managers had not considered the protection of actual and potential victims in the one relevant case. Overall, inspectors judged that the safety of other people was not sufficiently supported in all cases inspected.

3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision



There is a high-quality, evidence-based out-of-court disposal service in place that promotes diversion and supports sustainable desistance.

Requires Improvement

In making a judgement about out-of-court disposal policy and provision, we take into account the answers to the following questions:

Is there a policy in place for out-of-court provision that promotes appropriate diversion and supports sustainable desistance?

There is a South Wales Police out-of-court disposal process for 2020-2023 and there is a specific Neath Port Talbot out-of-court disposal policy in place.

The Bureau is the decision-making panel for out-of-court disposals. It consists of a police sergeant, the YJS operational manager, the YJS police officer and a volunteer representative from the community. Although the policy sets out an escalation process should disagreements regarding outcomes arise, this has not been tested.

The partnership views the Bureau as part of the criminal justice system, and so it is set up in a similar way to referral order panels and court room settings and is not a multi-agency panel. At this stage, however, children are not part of the criminal justice system and could be diverted away. The panel is not set up to recognise this and panel members should include those agencies that are focused on the safeguarding and welfare of children as well as those that are part of the criminal justice system. An assessment is completed on all children; however, the Bureau does not have sight of this assessment but instead receives a summary report. Therefore, detailed information from the assessment is not consistently presented to the Bureau. This makes it more difficult to ensure that children are diverted into the most appropriate care and support services and that their diversity needs are recognised. This makes it more difficult to ensure that children are diverted into the most appropriate care and support services and that their diversity needs are recognised.

Does out-of-court disposal provision promote diversion and support sustainable desistance?

In Neath Port Talbot the police are able to offer community resolutions, either with or without a restorative justice intervention, 'on the street'. The YJS is notified and checks whether the child is involved with any other agencies and will offer prevention interventions if appropriate.

When a child is referred to the service, the YJS police officer reviews the incident and sends it to YJS admin, so that they can screen other partners' databases, including children's social care. A YJS manager will allocate the case, depending on whether the child is currently open to the service. The VLO will receive the details of the victim from the YJS police officer.

The case manager will complete an assessment using either the prevention and out-of-court screening tool or the AssetPlus assessment. The screening tool includes a screening for speech, language and communication needs, exploitation, involvement of other agencies, the child's risk of harm to others and their safety and wellbeing. This screening may lead to a full AssetPlus being completed if required. The case manager liaises with the VLO regarding the child's views on any involvement in a restorative process. A report is then prepared for the Bureau, which summarises the assessment that has been completed. The report is quality assured before it is presented to the Bureau. There is no fixed number of out-of-court disposals a child can receive. The decision depends on the type of offence, acceptance of responsibility or agreement to a voluntary intervention, and what the Bureau thinks will meet the child's needs.

Before Covid-19, there was a Bureau clinic where the outcome was delivered to the child and their parents or carers. Due to current restrictions, the Bureau's decision is communicated to the child and their family via a phone call from the YJS police officer for youth restorative disposals. For youth cautions and youth conditional cautions, the decision is communicated face to face. The YJS police officer explains the nature of the disposal, as well as the intervention plan being offered. The case manager will check that the child and parent or carer understands the disposal with a follow-up phone call within 24 hours. All interventions available to children on statutory orders are available to those receiving an out-of-court disposal.

It is expected that an out-of-court disposal will be completed within three months, although a disposal can stay open on a voluntary basis for longer if needed. When a child does not comply with their disposal, efforts are made to support engagement. Where risks are identified, referrals are made to Early Help services and the assessment is shared.

Are the out-of-court disposal policy and provision regularly assessed and updated to ensure effectiveness and maintain alignment with the evidence base?

A scrutiny panel has recently been set up by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and has met once. Its purpose is to conduct reviews of the decision-making process and rationale for an out-of-court disposal being made. The panel includes police, YJS, magistrates, victim support services and a representative from the PCC, although it is recognised that the Crown Prosecution Service needs to be included for the process to be effective. At the time of the inspection there was the intention that the probation service and local authority children's services will also be represented.

There is a Bureau analysis report that looks at comparative data from 2011 and includes profiling of children. It incorporates age, gender, offences and future offending but it does not include ethnicity. However, there is no separate performance and analysis of out-of-court disposals being monitored. If the service does not profile and track this cohort of children, it cannot identify trends in their gender, ethnicity and care status. This a missed opportunity to ensure service provision meets the needs of these children at an early stage.

Annexe 1: Methodology

HM Inspectorate of Probation standards

The standards against which we inspect youth offending services are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. These standards are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.²²

The inspection methodology is summarised below, linked to the three domains in our standards framework. We focused on obtaining evidence against the standards, key questions and prompts in our inspection framework.

Domain one: organisational delivery

The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance and the Neath Port Talbot Director of Social Services, Health and Housing delivered a presentation covering the following areas:

- How do organisational delivery arrangements in this area make sure that the work of your YOS is as effective as it can be, and that the life chances of children who have offended are improved?
- What are your priorities for further improving these arrangements?

During the main fieldwork phase, we conducted six interviews with case managers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. We held various meetings, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and information. In total, we conducted 12 meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.²³

Domain two: court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Fifty per cent of the cases selected were those of children who had received court disposals six to nine months earlier, enabling us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and reviewing. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place.

We examined three court disposals. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of five), and we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

Domain three: out-of-court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Fifty per cent of cases selected were those of children who had received out-of-court disposals three to five months earlier. This enabled us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, and implementation and delivery. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place. We examined three out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set based on the proportion of out-of-court disposal cases in the YJS.

²² HM Inspectorate's standards are available here:

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

Annexe 2: Inspection data

In this inspection, we conducted a detailed examination of a sample of three court disposals and three out-of-court disposals. In each of those cases, we inspect against standards regarding assessment, planning and implementation/delivery. For court disposals, we also look at reviewing. For each standard, inspectors answer a number of key questions about different aspects of quality, including whether there was sufficient analysis of the factors related to offending; the extent to which young offenders were involved in assessment and planning; and whether enough was done to assess the level of risk of harm posed, and to manage that risk.

To score an 'Outstanding' rating for the sections on court disposals or out-of-court disposals, 80 per cent or more of the cases we analyse have to be assessed as sufficient. If between 65 per cent and 79 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then the rating is 'Good' and if between 50 per cent and 64 per cent are judged to be sufficient, then a rating of 'Requires improvement' is applied. Finally, if less than 50 per cent are sufficient, then we rate this as 'Inadequate'. Resettlement cases are not separately rated; the data is for illustrative purposes only.

The rating for each standard is aligned to the banding at the key question level where the lowest proportion of cases were judged to be sufficient, as we believe that each key question is an integral part of the standard. Therefore, if we rate three key questions as 'Good' and one as 'Inadequate', the overall rating for that standard is 'Inadequate'.

Lowest banding (proportion of cases judged to be sufficient key question level)	Rating (standard)
Minority: <50%	Inadequate
Too few: 50-64%	Requires improvement
Reasonable majority: 65-79%	Good
Large majority: 80%+	Outstanding ☆

Additional scoring rules are used to generate the overall YOT rating. Each of the 12 standards are scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; and 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0 to 36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows:

- 0–6 = Inadequate
- 7–18 = Requires improvement
- 19–30 = Good
- 31–36 = Outstanding.

Domain one standards, the qualitative standard in domain three (standard 3.4) and the resettlement standard (standard 4.1) are judged using predominantly qualitative evidence.

The resettlement standard is rated separately and does not influence the overall YOT rating. We apply a limiting judgement, whereby any YOT that receives an 'Inadequate' rating for the resettlement standard is unable to receive an overall 'Outstanding' rating, regardless of how they are rated against the core standards. Where there are no relevant resettlement cases, we do not apply a rating to resettlement work.

Data from inspected cases:²⁴

2.1. Assessment (court disposals)	
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	
a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	100%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	67%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	100%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	100%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	67%
g) Is enough attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and their likelihood of engaging with the court disposal?	100%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	0%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	
a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	100%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	100%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	0%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	
a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	67%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	100%

²⁴ Some questions do not apply in all cases.

c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	0%
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2.2. Planning (court disposals)

Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	67%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	67%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	100%
e) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	100%
f) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims?	0%
g) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	100%

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	67%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	67%
c) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	33%
d) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	0%

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	67%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	67%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	0%

d) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	67%
e) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	33%

2. 3. Implementation and delivery (court disposals)

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?

a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	100%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	100%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	100%
d) Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	100%
e) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	100%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to services post-supervision?	67%
g) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	100%
h) Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	33%

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?

a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	100%
b) Is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?	100%

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?

a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	67%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	0%
c) Is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	67%

2. 4. Reviewing (court disposals)

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors linked to desistance?	67%
b) Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	67%
c) Does reviewing include analysis of, and respond to, diversity factors?	33%
d) Does reviewing consider the personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	33%
e) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	100%
f) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to support desistance?	67%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing?	0%
b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?	33%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	33%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to risk of harm?	0%
b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	33%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan all of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	0%

3.1. Assessment (out-of-court disposals)

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	
a) Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's acknowledgement of responsibility for, attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	100%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	67%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	100%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	100%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	100%
g) Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	100%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	100%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	
a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	100%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	
a) Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	67%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including any other assessments that have been completed, and other evidence of behaviour by the child?	100%

3. 2. Planning (out-of-court disposals)

Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	
a) Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	100%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	67%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	100%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	67%
e) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	100%
f) Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?	100%
g) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims?	67%
h) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	
a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	33%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	0%
c) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	33%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	33%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	0%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	67%
d) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	33%

3.3. Implementation and delivery (out-of-court disposals)

Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	
a) Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	67%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	67%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	67%
d) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	67%
e) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	67%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	100%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	
a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	0%
b) Is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	33%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	
a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	0%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	0%