



Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in
Bridgend

HM Inspectorate of Probation, June 2022



Contents

Foreword	3
Ratings	5
Executive summary	6
Recommendations	12
Background	13
Contextual facts	15
1. Organisational delivery	17
1.1. Governance and leadership.....	20
1.2. Staff	22
1.3. Partnerships and services	25
1.4. Information and facilities	29
Resettlement.....	30
Diversity	31
2. Court disposals	32
3. Out-of-court disposals	34
3.1. Assessment.....	36
3.2. Planning.....	37
3.3. Implementation and delivery.....	38
3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	39
Annexe 1: Methodology	42
Annexe 2: Inspection data	43

Acknowledgements

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Pauline Burke, supported by a team of inspectors and colleagues from across the Inspectorate. We would like to thank all those who helped plan and took part in the inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

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.

© Crown copyright 2022

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence or email psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available for download at: www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprobation

Published by:

HM Inspectorate of Probation
1st Floor Civil Justice Centre
1 Bridge Street West
Manchester
M3 3FX

Follow us on Twitter
[@hmiprobation](https://twitter.com/hmiprobation)

ISBN: 978-1-914478-60-4

Foreword

This inspection is part of our programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Bridgend Youth Justice Service (YJS) in two broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. We have inspected the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, but because of the low number of cases, we have not rated this area of the YJS's work. Overall, Bridgend YJS was rated as 'Requires improvement'.

Bridgend YJS began operating on 01 April 2019, after the disaggregation of Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service, which we had rated as 'Inadequate'. Although we have rated Bridgend YJS as 'Requires improvement', we do not underestimate the work it has undertaken to deal with some of the most serious failings we found in the previous inspection of Western Bay. This inspection recognises that significant progress has been made, in a short space of time, to move Bridgend YJS from the lowest rating to where it is now, and that is to be commended.

This inspection found a service that wants to improve. For out-of-court disposals, assessing risk of harm to others and planning for a child's desistance were strong areas of practice. However, improvements were required in planning and delivering services relating to a child's safety and wellbeing. We also found that the panel for out-of-court disposals ('the Bureau') is not multi-agency and is not consistently given all the assessment information relevant to children and their families.

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

It was good to see that the YJS has reviewed its progress since the last inspection and has completed a detailed and comprehensive self-assessment. However, in the inspection we found that the management board's membership list is lengthy, attendance can be inconsistent, and there is no representative from child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). There is evidence that the management board challenges agencies about their attendance at the board and has escalated concerns about the lack of representation from health services. Board members recognise that there are limited processes in place to enable them to hear the views of children and families.

Disappointingly, emotional, mental health, and wellbeing provision for care-experienced children and those known to the YJS in Bridgend is poor. There is no specialist CAMHS service for these children, and therefore the service does not understand fully their specific mental health needs. These concerns have been escalated to the relevant health board. The lack of health provision means that children are not receiving the specialist services they need.

Since the last inspection, the leadership team has been proactive in ensuring that staff have the right skills and attitude to take the service forward. However, staffing issues and management capacity have impacted on the quality of management oversight of casework.

Staff do all they can to encourage good engagement from children and their families.

We found that, although the YJS holds ad hoc meetings about individual children, it has no multi-agency framework for dealing with child exploitation and potential county lines, and no specific pathway for practitioners to follow.

The YJS has an excellent and creative intervention called the Building Skills project, which we highlight in this report. It was also good to see that, in probation transition meetings with the YJS, the Probation Service shares the names of young people on probation, to check whether the YJS has had any previous involvement with them. This information helps the Probation Service to engage better with this cohort.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Russell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Bridgend Youth Justice Service

Fieldwork completed February 2022

Score **11/24¹**

Overall rating

Requires improvement



1. Organisational delivery

1.1 Governance and leadership

Requires improvement



1.2 Staff

Good



1.3 Partnerships and services

Requires improvement



1.4 Information and facilities

Good



3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1 Assessment

Good



3.2 Planning

Requires improvement



3.3 Implementation and delivery

Requires improvement



3.4 Out-of-court disposal policy and provision

Requires improvement



¹ We have adjusted our normal rating boundaries to take account of the fact that we have not rated domain two (post-court) work.

Executive summary

Overall, Bridgend Youth Justice Service (YJS) is rated as 'Requires improvement'. This rating has been determined by inspecting the YJS in three areas of its work, referred to as 'domains'. We usually 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.² Published scoring rules generate the overall YJS rating.³ As a result of the low number of relevant cases, the four standards relating to court disposal work have not been rated separately in this YJS and we have adjusted our normal scoring boundaries.⁴ Our findings and ratings are described below.

Organisational delivery

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

The YJS began operating on 01 April 2019, after the disaggregation of Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service, which we had rated as 'Inadequate' at the beginning of 2019. Bridgend began hosting a stand-alone youth justice service and a new management board was created. The YJS's corporate governance structure has been incorporated into the education and family support directorate of the council.

The YJS management board is chaired by the chief executive of Bridgend County Borough Council. The board meets monthly, and over the last six months the membership has significantly changed as people have moved on to other roles. The membership list is lengthy, and attendance can be inconsistent. Both the police and health services have changed their representatives on a number of occasions. There is no representative from child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), and the membership of the board needs to be reviewed. There is evidence that the management board challenges agencies about the consistency of their attendance at the board and has escalated concerns about the lack of representation from health services. Board members recognise that there are limited processes in place to enable them to hear the views of children and families.

The performance framework document is presented at each management board meeting. It includes information on the cohort of YJS children, caseload allocation and a staffing update. The service is focused on improving its work. It has monitored its progress since the last inspection and has completed a detailed and comprehensive self-assessment.

At the time of the inspection, the service had an interim service manager and one of the two lead practitioners had also recently left. This had increased the YJS managers' workloads, resulting in a drop in the quality of management oversight of cases. Although the management structure was fragile at this point, the family support group manager had

² HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards can be found here:

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

³ 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'.

⁴ Scores for overall rating adjusted: 'Inadequate' = 0–4, 'Requires improvement' = 5–12, 'Good' = 13–20, 'Outstanding' = 21–24.

oversight of the service. When the posts are filled, there will be a service manager and two lead practitioners with line management responsibility. They will be supported by the specialist risk management practitioner.

A number of staff have left the service or moved to different roles since the last inspection and the leadership team has been proactive in ensuring that the staff group has the right skills and attitude to make the improvements needed to take the service forward. Since disaggregation, the structure of the YJS has been reviewed, and the corporate management board has approved the recruitment of additional social workers.

The role of the lead practitioners is to support staff in their practice. This includes quality assurance, practice issues, training, and supervision. Case managers had on average six cases each at the time of the inspection. The YJS has a specialist risk management practitioner post, which was created to help the service better manage risks relating to children's safety and wellbeing, and the risk of harm they pose to others. There are currently six newly recruited volunteers, and socially distanced referral order panels have taken place in person. Staff reported feeling very well supported by both Bridgend County Borough Council and the YJS throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Although there is a comprehensive induction process for new local authority staff, induction for partnership staff joining the service has not been as good. We also noted that, for some partnership staff, there was no handover process because of the significant gaps in staffing when they took up their new posts.

All staff have been trained in enhanced case management, trauma-informed practice, and the trauma recovery model. However, we found that the YJS relies on normal supervision processes to support staff who work in this way. This does not take account of the vicarious trauma that these staff may experience, and the YJS needs to ensure that staff working in a trauma-informed manner have access to appropriate support and supervision. This will also better enable them to embed trauma-informed practice effectively.

There is no multi-agency framework in place for dealing with child exploitation and potential county lines. Although ad hoc meetings have been held to discuss concerns about particular children, there is no specific pathway for practitioners to follow. Staff who are working with children at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation can refer them to the Barnardo's Better Futures programme.

Inspectors saw an example of an excellent and creative intervention called the Building Skills project. This not only provides children with workplace skills, but also strengthens their sense of identity and improves their confidence and self-esteem.

The YJS has limited access to a seconded probation officer who, in order to make this provision work, is flexible with their allotted days. One example of good practice in transition meetings was the Probation Service sharing information regarding young adults on probation, to check any previous involvement with the YJS. This information helps them to engage better with this cohort.

The service monitors the number of children accessing appropriate education provision, and the YJS is part of the 'team around the school' model. The service also has a training and employment officer who provides direct support to help children aged over 16 years to access appropriate provision.

The YJS has a seconded health worker who completes a general health assessment for all children subject to a court order. There is a commissioned service to support children with substance misuse.

Emotional, mental health, and wellbeing provision for care-experienced children and those known to the YJS in Bridgend is poor overall. There is no specialist CAMHS service for these children, and so the service does not understand fully their specific mental health needs. There is also a two-year waiting list for neurodevelopmental services. Speech, language, and communication provision is available to the YJS only one day per week, and it is recognised that this does not meet the needs of children known to the service. These concerns have been escalated and are raised regularly with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.

The YJS is based in the civic offices in Bridgend, which are not child friendly and are unsuitable for one-to-one work with children who may be in crisis. It is, however, an appropriate and safe office environment for staff to work in. The YJS, in partnership with the youth service, has recently acquired Evergreen Hall, which will become a youth venue. Children have been consulted on its development, purpose, and décor, and building work is currently ongoing. Staff also have access to a range of community-based facilities.

YJS staff are able to share information through access to the Welsh childcare information system, and relevant partners have their own access to the YJS case management system. Welsh Government guidelines in relation to Covid-19 at the beginning of the pandemic meant that staff were encouraged to work from home where possible, and were allocated mobile phones and laptop computers to facilitate this.

The YJS has a quality assurance framework in place, although there was no evidence of thematic and case audits being completed on a multi-agency basis across the partnership. The YJS was able to demonstrate that it reviews cases when serious incidents occur.

The service has tried various approaches to gathering feedback from children about their experiences with the YJS. It is currently looking at how to gather feedback through its website.

There is a draft YJS custody and resettlement practice policy in place, which includes guidance on constructive resettlement and national standards.

Covid-19 has prevented the service from implementing some of the desired changes to operational practice as planned. A Covid-19 recovery plan was developed at the start of the pandemic and set out how the service would adapt its support for children and families. This included moving to remote and virtual ways of working, doorstep and socially distanced visits, and closer collaboration with partner agencies.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows:

- There is evidence that the management board challenges agencies about the consistency of their attendance.
- The board has escalated concerns about the lack of representation from health services.
- The service has completed a detailed and comprehensive self-assessment.
- The leadership team has been proactive in ensuring that staff have the right skills and attitude to take the service forward.
- The YJS has a specialist risk management practitioner post.
- Staff do all they can to encourage good engagement from children and their families.
- The Probation Service shares information regarding young adults on probation, to get a better understanding of any previous involvement with the YJS. This information helps The Probation Service to engage better with this cohort.
- The Building Skills project is an example of an excellent and creative intervention.

- The YJS has acquired a new youth venue and children have been consulted on its development.
- The service has tried various approaches to getting feedback from children about their experiences with the YJS.
- The YJS has a draft custody and resettlement practice policy, which includes guidance on constructive resettlement and national standards.

But:

- The management board has a long membership list, and attendance can be inconsistent.
- There is no representative from CAMHS on the management board.
- Board members recognise that there are limited processes in place to enable them to hear the views of children and families.
- The quality of management oversight in cases has reduced because of a lack of management capacity due to staffing issues.
- Induction for partnership staff joining the service has not been good because there have been insufficient handover arrangements.
- There is no multi-agency framework for child exploitation and potential county lines, and there is no specific pathway for practitioners to follow.
- There was no evidence of thematic and case audits being completed on a multi-agency basis.
- There is no specialist CAMHS service for YJS children, and so the service does not understand fully their specific mental health needs.
- Emotional, mental health, and wellbeing provision for care-experienced children and those known to the YJS in Bridgend is poor.

Court disposals

We looked in detail at two community sentences managed by the YJS. We also interviewed the two relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment, planning, implementation and delivery of services, and reviewing. We reviewed each of these areas in respect of work done to address desistance, to keep the child safe, and to keep other people safe.

We did not rate court disposal work separately for this YJS because of the low number of cases, and so we have adjusted our normal scoring boundaries.

Our key findings about court disposals are as follows:

- Assessing and reviewing a child's desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others were strong areas of practice.
- Assessments evidenced a sufficient analysis of offending, and work to plan and deliver services was especially effective in relation to the child's desistance. Consideration of the child's strengths and understanding of the child's level of maturity was evident across practice.
- Case managers' classification of risk was reasonable.
- The services delivered took account of the child's diversity, built on their strengths, and were proportionate to the disposal.

- Other agencies were involved in keeping the child safe.
- Case managers considered the victim's wishes and needs where relevant, and the risks for actual and potential victims when necessary.
- Staff encouraged engagement by maintaining a relationship with the child and their parents or carers.
- When reviewing cases, staff focused on the child's diversity factors, considered their motivation and engagement, and involved the child and their parents or carers.

But:

- Case managers did not sufficiently analyse the controls and interventions needed to promote children's safety and wellbeing.
- Contingency planning was weak in relation to emerging concerns about children's safety and wellbeing, and their risk of harm to others.
- Planning for children's safety and wellbeing was insufficient.
- There was a lack of planning to manage children's risk of harm to others and implement a balance of internal and external controls to address the risk.
- The quality of work to deliver interventions was affected by an over-reliance on other desistance factors and a lack of contingency planning in the event of any changes to the child's circumstances.

Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 12 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of one youth conditional caution, two youth cautions, and nine community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in 12 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 policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews.

Our key findings about out-of-court disposals are as follows:

- Assessing a child's risk of harm to others was a strong area of practice.
- Case managers used information from other agencies to help inform their own judgement.
- When carrying out assessments, case managers considered the child's strengths and their level of maturity.
- Planning to support children's desistance was a strong area of practice.
- Staff understood the importance of meeting children's needs regarding education, training, and employment.
- Case managers had included children and their parents or carers in the planning process.

- There was evidence of multi-agency working, especially in regard to children's social care and substance misuse services.
- Case managers took account of victims' needs and wishes.

But:

- The Bureau is not multi-agency, and it is not consistently given all the assessment information relevant to children and their families.
- Planning for children's safety and wellbeing was a poor area of practice.
- Case managers did not identify consistently children at risk of child exploitation or put plans in place to manage this risk.
- There was poor contingency planning to manage children's safety and wellbeing, and their risk of harm to others.
- Children's health needs were not identified consistently, and this had a negative impact on the quality of planning and services relating to their safety and wellbeing.
- Insufficient services were delivered to support children's safety and wellbeing.
- Some interventions could have been delivered more appropriately by other agencies, rather than involving the YJS.

Recommendations

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

The Chair of Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board should:

1. review the emotional, mental health, and wellbeing provision for care-experienced children and those known to the YJS, and ensure that their specific health needs are being met.

The Chair of the YJS Management Board should:

2. consider the membership of the board, to ensure that it is attended by representatives with the right level of seniority and put in place a plan to develop the board so that its members understand their role and responsibilities
3. review the format and purpose of the Bureau, and ensure that it has the relevant information and input from the necessary agencies so that the out-of-court disposal meets the needs of the child.

The YJS Management Board should:

4. make sure that the partnership has a multi-agency framework in place for children who are at risk of, or subject to, child exploitation and ensure that there are clear procedures for practitioners to follow.

The YJS service manager should:

5. improve the quality of planning and services to manage children's safety and wellbeing
6. review the quality assurance processes and improve the effectiveness of management oversight in all cases.

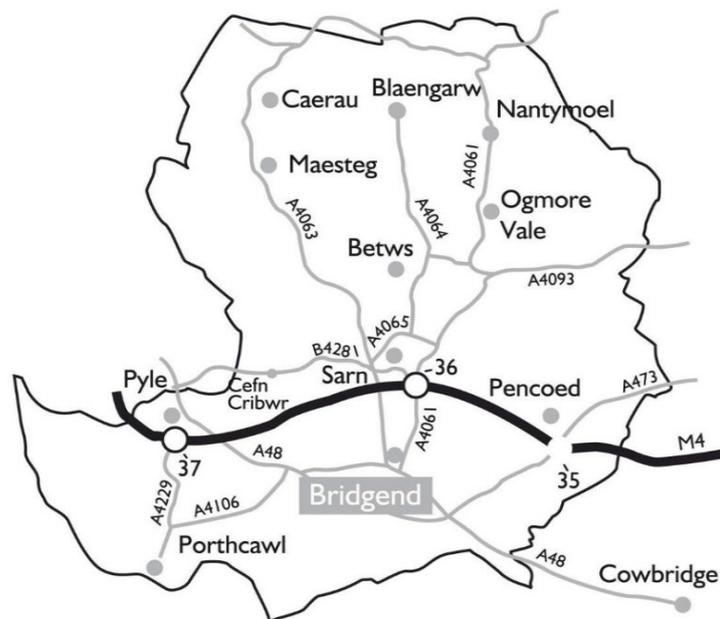
Background

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 Probation Service, and local health services.⁵ 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.

We carried out inspection fieldwork in Bridgend over the period of a week, beginning on 14 February 2022, looking at cases which had commenced between October and September 2021. Bridgend County Borough Council is a local authority in South Wales with a total population of 147,539. The largest town is Bridgend, followed by Maesteg, Pencoed, and the seaside resort of Porthcawl. In Bridgend, 49.6 per cent of the population are male, 50.4 per cent are female, 1.5 per cent are black, Asian and minority ethnic, and 17 per cent are Welsh speakers.



When Bridgend 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, it has been using local reports to establish a trend for the service. These reports highlight that, for 2020/2021, the first-time entrants' data showed a 35 per cent reduction since 2019 and an increase of 4.5 per cent in the annual reoffending rate when comparing 2017/2018 with 2018/2019. No children served a custodial sentence in 2019/2020.

HM Inspectorate of Probation inspected Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service in October 2018. Bridgend was part of this service, alongside Neath Port Talbot and Swansea. The inspection report was published in March 2019, with an overall rating of

⁵ The *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* set out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

'Inadequate' 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, Bridgend began hosting a stand-alone service for youth justice and a new management board was established in June 2019.

Bridgend Youth Justice Service (YJS) was restructured in September 2019 to sit within the 'family support' portfolio in the education and family support directorate, in order to integrate the service more effectively within Bridgend's wider services. This allows the service to be closely aligned with early help teams, edge of care services, education services, and children services. The service is overseen strategically by the family support group manager.

Covid-19 has prevented the service from implementing some of the desired changes to operational practice as planned. A Covid-19 recovery plan was developed at the start of the pandemic and set out how the service would adapt its support for children and families. This included moving to remote and virtual ways of working, doorstep and socially distanced one-to-one home visits with children, and closer collaboration with partner agencies. Welsh Government guidelines in relation to Covid-19 at the beginning of the pandemic meant that staff were encouraged to work from home where possible, and as restrictions ease the YJS envisages that staff will balance their time between working in the office, in community venues, and at home. Staff reported feeling very well supported throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Contextual facts

Population information⁶

115	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in Bridgend ⁷
167	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in England and Wales
N/A	Reoffending rate in Bridgend ⁸
35%	Reoffending rate in England and Wales
147,539	Total population of Bridgend
13,022	Total youth population (10–17 years) of Bridgend

Caseload information⁹

Age	10–14 years	15–17 years
Bridgend YJS	19%	81%
Wales average	23%	77%
England and Wales average	22%	78%

Race/ethnicity	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
Bridgend YJS	100%	0%	0%
Youth population (10–17 years) of Bridgend ¹⁰	94%	6%	0%
Wales average	87%	10%	3%
England and Wales average	69%	28%	3%

Gender	Male	Female
Bridgend YJS	82%	18%
Wales average	83%	17%
England and Wales average	85%	15%

⁶ Office for National Statistics. (2021). *UK population estimates, mid-2020*.

⁷ Youth Justice Board. (2021). *First-time entrants, January to December 2020*.

⁸ Ministry of Justice. (2021). *Proven reoffending statistics, January to December 2019*.

⁹ Youth Justice Board. (2021). *Youth justice annual statistics: 2019 to 2020*.

¹⁰ Data supplied by the YJS.

Additional caseload data¹¹

25	Total current caseload: community sentences
0	Total current caseload in custody
1	Total current caseload on licence
87	Total current caseload: out-of-court-disposals (including youth conditional caution, youth caution and community resolutions)
23	Percentage of current caseload subject to court disposal
77	Percentage of current caseload subject to out-of-court disposal
28%	Percentage of current caseload with child in need plan, child protection plan or care experienced
13.2%	Percentage of current caseload aged 16 and under in pupil referral unit/alternative education/school with reduced timetable
10.2%	Percentage of current caseload aged 17+ not in education, training or employment

¹¹ Data supplied by the YJS, reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

1. Organisational delivery

Bridgend Youth Justice Service (YJS) is part of the education and family support directorate of Bridgend County Borough Council, and the management board is chaired by the council's chief executive. The board meets monthly and, over the last six months, its membership has significantly changed as people have moved on to other roles. The membership of the board needs to be reviewed. The membership list is lengthy, and attendance can be inconsistent. Both the police and health services have changed their representatives on a number of occasions, and there is no representative from child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). There is evidence that the management board challenges agencies about the consistency of their attendance at board meetings and has escalated concerns about lack of representation from health services. Board members recognise that there are limited processes in place to enable them to hear the views of children and families.

The performance framework document is presented at each management board meeting. It includes information on the cohort of YJS children, caseload allocation and a staffing update. The service is focused on improving its work. It has monitored its progress since the last inspection and has completed a detailed and comprehensive self-assessment.

At the time of the inspection, the service had an interim service manager. One of the two lead practitioners had recently left. This had increased the YJS managers' workloads, resulting in a drop in the quality of management oversight of cases. Although the management structure was fragile at this point, the family support group manager had oversight of the service. When the posts are filled, there will be a service manager and two lead practitioners with line management responsibility. They will be supported by the specialist risk management practitioner.

A number of staff have left the service or moved to different roles since the last inspection. The leadership team has been proactive in ensuring that the staff group has the right skills and attitude to make the improvements needed to take the service forward. Since disaggregation, the structure of the YJS has been reviewed, and the corporate management board has approved the recruitment of additional social workers.

The role of the lead practitioners is to support staff in their practice. This includes quality assurance, practice issues, training and supervision. Case managers had approximately six cases each at the time of the inspection. The YJS has a specialist risk management practitioner post, which was created to help the service better manage risk relating to children's safety and wellbeing, and the risk of harm they pose to others. There are currently six newly recruited volunteers, and socially distanced referral order panels have taken place in person. Staff reported feeling very well supported by both Bridgend County Borough Council and the YJS throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Although there is a comprehensive induction process for new local authority staff, induction for partnership staff joining the service has not been as good. For some partnership staff, there was no handover process because of the significant gaps in staffing when they took up their new posts.

All staff have been trained in enhanced case management, trauma-informed practice and the trauma recovery model. However, we found that the YJS relied on normal supervision processes to support staff who worked in this way. This did not take account of the vicarious trauma that these staff may experience. The YJS needs to ensure that staff working in a trauma-informed manner have access to appropriate support and supervision. This will also better enable them to embed trauma-informed practice effectively.

There is no multi-agency framework in place for dealing with child exploitation and county lines. Although ad hoc meetings have been held to discuss concerns about particular children, there is no specific pathway for practitioners to follow. Staff who are working with children at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation can refer them to the Barnardo's Better Futures programme.

Inspectors saw an example of an excellent and creative intervention called the Building Skills project. This not only provides children with workplace skills, but also strengthens their sense of identity, and improves their confidence and self-esteem.

The YJS has limited access to a seconded probation officer who, in order to make this provision work, is flexible with their days. One example of good practice that inspectors saw in probation transition meetings was the Probation Service sharing information regarding young people on probation, to check any previous involvement with the YJS. This information helps them to engage better with this group.

The service monitors the number of children accessing appropriate education provision, and the YJS is part of the 'team around the school' model. The service also has a training and employment officer who provides direct support to help children aged over 16 years to access appropriate provision.

The YJS has a seconded health worker who completes a general health assessment for all children subject to a court order. There is a commissioned service to support children with substance misuse.

Emotional, mental health and wellbeing provision for care-experienced children and those known to the YJS in Bridgend is poor overall. There is no specialist CAMHS service for these children, and so the YJS does not understand fully their specific mental health needs. There is a two-year waiting list for neurodevelopmental services. Speech, language and communication provision is available to the YJS on only one day per week, and it is recognised that this does not meet the needs of children known to the service. These concerns have been escalated and are regularly raised with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.

The YJS is based in the civic offices in Bridgend, which are not child friendly and are unsuitable for one-to-one work with children who may be in crisis. It is, however, an appropriate and safe office environment for staff to work in. The YJS, in partnership with the youth service, has recently acquired Evergreen Hall, which will become a youth venue. Children have been consulted on its development, purpose and décor, and building work is currently ongoing. Staff also have access to a range of community-based facilities.

YJS staff are able to share information through access to the Welsh childcare information system, and relevant partners have their own access to the YJS case management system. Welsh Government guidelines in relation to Covid-19 at the beginning of the pandemic meant that staff were encouraged to work from home where possible, and were allocated mobile phones and laptop computers to facilitate this.

The YJS has a quality assurance framework in place, although there was no evidence of thematic and case audits being completed on a multi-agency basis across the partnership. The YJS was able to demonstrate that it reviews cases when serious incidents occur.

The service has tried various approaches to gathering feedback from children about their experiences with the YJS. It is currently looking at how to gather feedback through its website.

There is a draft YJS custody and resettlement practice policy in place, which includes guidance on constructive resettlement and national standards.

Strengths

- There is evidence that the management board challenges agencies about the consistency of their attendance.
- The board has escalated concerns about the lack of representation from health services on the board.
- The service has completed a detailed and comprehensive self-assessment.
- The leadership team has been proactive in ensuring that staff have the right skills and attitude to take the service forward.
- The YJS has a specialist risk management practitioner post.
- Staff do all they can to encourage good engagement from children and their families.
- The Probation Service shares information regarding young people on probation, to get a better understanding of any previous involvement with the YJS. This information helps the Probation Service to engage better with this cohort.
- There is an example of an excellent and creative intervention called the Building Skills project.
- The YJS has acquired a new, child-friendly venue and children have been consulted on its development.
- The service has tried various approaches to gathering feedback from children about their experiences with the YJS.
- The YJS has a draft custody and resettlement practice policy, which includes guidance on constructive resettlement and national standards.

Areas for improvement

- The management board has a long membership list, and attendance can be inconsistent.
- There is no representative from CAMHS on the management board.
- Board members recognise that there are limited processes in place to enable them to hear the views of children and families.
- The quality of management oversight of cases has fallen because managers lack capacity as a result of staffing issues.
- Induction for partnership staff joining the service has not been good because of a lack of handover arrangements.
- There is no multi-agency framework for child exploitation and potential county lines, and there is no specific pathway for practitioners to follow.
- There was no evidence of thematic and case audits being completed on a multi-agency basis.
- There is no specialist CAMHS service for YJS children, and so the service does not understand fully their specific mental health needs.
- Emotional, mental health and wellbeing provision for care-experienced children and those known to the YJS in Bridgend is poor.

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.

Requires improvement

Key data

Total spend in previous financial year	£941,662
Total projected budget current for financial year	£880,281

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?

Bridgend YJS is part of the education and family support directorate of Bridgend County Borough Council. The management board is chaired by the chief executive, who has had this role since its inception in April 2019. The board includes all statutory partners, as well as some non-statutory partners, including representatives from court and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. There is a youth justice strategic plan in place, which covers 2021/2022.

New board members receive an induction pack, which includes terms of reference and videos that show the experience of children at different stages of the youth justice system from prevention to custody. A statement of the YJS's vision was agreed at one of the service's development days. These days are held regularly and include board members and YJS staff alike. They help to establish working links between staff, and support board members by increasing their knowledge of the service's work.

The board meets monthly. Over the last six months, the membership has significantly changed as people have moved on to other roles. The membership list is lengthy, and attendance can be inconsistent. Both the police and health services have changed their representatives on a number of occasions, and there is no representative from CAMHS. Board members recognise that there are limited processes in place to enable them to hear the views of children and families.

The inspection found that the membership of the board needs to be reviewed, to ensure that it is attended by representatives with the right level of seniority. There can then be a focus on developing the board so that its members understand their role and responsibilities, and increase their knowledge of the YJS's work.

Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?

A performance framework report is provided at each board meeting. This includes information on the cohort of YJS children, caseload allocation and a staffing update. The board has also been presented with reports on safeguarding, accommodation and

disproportionality. In a recent meeting, the service presented its draft literacy, numeracy and digital competency strategy.

The management board continues to challenge agencies about the consistency of their representation and attendance at the board. The board, through its chair, has escalated concerns about the lack of health services provided to the YJS, which has resulted in a review of how health services are represented on the management board.

The service is focused on improving its work. It has monitored its progress since the last inspection using a performance improvement action plan, which is regularly reviewed and presented to the board. In December 2021, the service completed a detailed and comprehensive self-assessment. This built on the format adopted by the education and family support directorate in September 2017 and was tailored to reflect HM Inspectorate of Probation guidance. This self-assessment provided a critical overview of the progress made since the last inspection and has been used to drive forward priority areas for improvement.

Issues impacting on youth offending are prominent on the agendas of other key strategic groups in Bridgend. These include the corporate management board, the early help and safeguarding board, the community safety and partnership board and the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) strategic management board.

Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?

At the time of inspection, the service had an interim service manager in situ and was recruiting to the post. One of the two lead practitioners had also recently left the service and recruitment was being progressed. When the posts are filled there will be a service manager and two lead practitioners with line management responsibility. They will be supported by the specialist risk management practitioner.

The vacancies have reduced the capacity of managers, which has resulted in a drop in the quality of management oversight of cases. For the cases that were inspected, management oversight met the needs of the case in only half of the out-of-court disposals.

The service manager and one of the lead practitioners attend the management board, and other staff members attend to present on specific pieces of work. The performance framework report and minutes of the board meeting are shared with staff so that they know what is being discussed. Feedback from the board is also part of the agenda for management and team meetings.

The inspection staff survey was completed by 24 people. For the following two questions, 21 people responded and 16 out of the 21 staff members understood the vision and mission of the YJS "quite well"; 11 out of 21 were "quite aware" of the activities of the management board and understood its role, while five out of 21 were "not very aware". Most staff who completed the survey felt that they were updated regarding strategic issues.

Covid-19 has prevented the service from implementing some of the desired changes to operational practice as planned. A Covid-19 recovery plan was developed at the start of the pandemic and set out how the service would adapt its support for children and families. This included moving to remote and virtual ways of working, doorstep and socially distanced visits, and closer collaboration with partner agencies. There were a number of challenges during this period relating to engagement from children. Initially, children responded well to remote methods; however, over time, they found it difficult to maintain their motivation and started to disengage. This resulted in the service developing risk assessment processes and using personal protective equipment to visit children at home. The service also supported the delivery of free school meals to eligible children every day. This helped build working relationships between the service, schools and children's social care. The service also supported schools that had children accessing on-site provision during periods of lockdown.

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 (FTE))	20.6
Total headcount, qualified case managers (FTE) ¹³	7.2
Vacancy rate (total unfilled posts as percentage of total staff headcount)	9%
Average caseload, case managers (FTE equivalent) ¹⁴	6
Average annual working days sickness (all staff)	25.6
Staff attrition (percentage of all staff leaving in 12-month period)	1.4%

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?

Since the last inspection a number of staff have left the service or moved to different roles. The leadership team has been proactive in ensuring that staff have the right skills and attitude to make the improvements needed to take the service forward. Inspectors found that, since the disaggregation of the previous Western Bay service, the YJS has focused on investing in its staff and meeting their training and development needs.

The YJS has 29 staff, which includes volunteers for the service. The team structure sits under the family support group manager, with an interim service manager, two lead practitioners and a specialist risk management practitioner. The structure of the YJS was reviewed in 2019 and, recognising the investment that was required for progress to be made, the corporate management board approved the recruitment of additional social workers. This was to ensure that staff had the appropriate skills to meet the complex needs of the children known to the service. Over the last 12 months, there has been a high level of days lost due to staff sickness; however, this is a result of a small number of staff experiencing long-term sickness, and is being managed appropriately.

The role of the lead practitioners is to support staff in their practice. This includes quality assurance, practice issues, training, supervision and, where needed, support with complex cases. They are responsible for allocating work, and in doing so they consider both caseload numbers and the case manager's specific skills and knowledge. They consult staff before

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

¹³ Qualified case managers are those with a relevant social work, youth justice or probation qualification.

¹⁴ Data supplied by YOS, based on staffing and workload at the time of the inspection announcement.

giving them a case, and take into account which staff have previously been involved with the family, so that consistency of case managers is prioritised.

Case managers had approximately six cases each at the time of the inspection, and 17 out of 19 members of staff said that they find their workload or caseload manageable in the staff survey.

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

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

The YJS has a specialist risk management practitioner post, which was created in November 2020 to assist the service in improving its risk management processes. The post holder manages more complex cases and facilitates social work practice forums, and safety and wellbeing meetings. They also assist the lead practitioners in improving general practice across the service.

YJS social workers have case responsibility for all the statutory work in the service. They complete the referral order reports and pre-sentence reports for court, and any custody and resettlement assessments or parole reports. The YJS intervention coordinators have case responsibility for prevention and Bureau cases, and work directly with children. They also assist the service in developing a variety of different programmes and activities, including working with partner agencies.

The service has a court and bail coordinator who supports children and their families at their court appearances. In addition, they offer packages of support and interventions for those children subject to bail requirements. Feedback from Cardiff magistrates' court says that the YJS court officer is always prepared for each case and is comfortable in responding to the court with any questions that arise. The court officer will highlight cases that should be diverted from the court and referred back to the Bureau to be considered for an out-of-court disposal. The pre-sentence reports provided to the court are very detailed and contain appropriate recommendations.

The YJS has a panel and volunteer coordinator who is responsible for running the Bureau and referral order panels. They are also responsible for promoting restorative justice practices. The service currently has six newly recruited volunteers. It advertises for volunteers using social media, the council's website and voluntary organisations. The volunteers are all female at present, although the age range is varied, and the service is actively recruiting more male volunteers and encouraging applicants from different ethnic backgrounds.

Volunteers said that there is a good support network in place, and that the coordinator keeps them up to date by email and through a WhatsApp group. They are asked their views on areas of practice and feel part of the team. Volunteer training is comprehensive. It includes safeguarding training and sessions on the structure of the team, general youth justice issues, county lines and a session on trauma-informed approaches to working with children. The volunteers have also completed a four-day training course on working in a restorative manner. They feel that all of the training so far has met their needs. They can attend referral order panels and the Bureau, and the plan is for them to be mentors to children as well, which will require additional training.

Referral order panels always include two volunteers, and there is a debrief for volunteers before and after the panel. During Covid-19, panels have been in person and socially distanced. Information is sent in good time beforehand and volunteers feel that they have a

useful understanding of the child and their experiences. In the main, victims do not attend panels, but information is contained in the panel report, which represents their views.

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

There are weekly team meetings for all staff, and the YJS social workers also meet at monthly social work forums that are held to support practice development.

Staff receive regular monthly supervision, which covers caseload (if appropriate), workload, any challenges to a person's emotional and mental health, the quality of work and areas of improvement and professional development. Staff stated that if they have an issue, they do not need to wait for supervision as there is always someone to help and support them, whether this is managers or colleagues. Annual appraisals are also completed, and there are procedures in place to address staff competency. Seconded staff are supervised by their home agency, which completes an appraisal, and by their YJS line manager.

Although there is a comprehensive induction process in place for new local authority staff, induction for partnership staff joining the service has not been as good. For some partnership staff, there was no handover process because of the significant gaps in staffing when they took up their new posts.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

There is a YJS training plan in place for 2022 and the service keeps comprehensive training records. Staff reported that they feel encouraged to take up training opportunities.

Bridgend County Borough Council has mandatory e-learning in place for training in safeguarding adults and children, and violence against women. Mandatory training for managers in the council includes supervision, managing absence and having difficult conversations.

The YJS offers a range of learning opportunities to staff, and courses recently completed have included AssetPlus and non-violent resistance training. Some staff are due to complete training in Assessment, Intervention and Moving on (AIM) 3, for working with children who display harmful sexual behaviour. Newly qualified YJS social workers have access to the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment programme (continuing professional education and learning), which is facilitated by the council's learning and development team.

All staff have been trained in enhanced case management, trauma-informed practice and the trauma recovery model. Staff can access weekly workshops to embed their trauma-informed practice approach to working with children. However, we found that the YJS relies on the normal supervision processes to support staff who work in this way. This does not take account of the vicarious trauma that these staff may experience and the YJS needs to ensure that staff working in a trauma-informed manner have access to appropriate support and supervision, such as a structured and clinical approach to supervision support.

Do managers pay sufficient attention to staff engagement?

Staff receive praise and appreciation emails from senior leaders and through supervision with their line managers. Team meetings also encourage staff to share positive news and recognise good practice. Although the management board does not have a recognition or reward process in place, when staff present case studies at board meetings they are praised for their work.

Staff reported feeling very well supported by both Bridgend County Borough Council and the YJS throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. There has been an emphasis on staff wellbeing, and

counselling is available. Staff have also been offered the opportunity to access office space one day a week, with the aim of giving people the opportunity to come together. Lead practitioners continue to offer staff regular check-ins and frequent supervision to ensure that they are supported.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Caseload characteristics

Percentage of current caseload with emotional, wellbeing and mental health issues	38%
Percentage of current caseload with substance misuse issues	58%
Percentage of current caseload with a statement of additional learning needs or individual learning plan	32%

In making a judgement about partnerships and services, we take into account the answers to the following three 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 Bridgend 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, the YJS has used local reports to establish a trend for the service and provides the management board with a data summary report that analyses the service's performance.

The YJS also provides a performance framework report with a breakdown of cases, including children's age, gender, ethnicity, offences committed and levels of risk. It looks at whether they are care experienced, their accommodation status and the type of education, training and employment they are accessing. It also includes a caseload allocation tool, which sets out the cases that specialist practitioners are working on alongside case managers. It outlines the current staffing situation, in terms of vacancies and sickness, and has a general section for practice updates.

The performance reports presented to the management board have led to specific requests for themed reports where more information was required. These have included a report looking specifically at girls known to the service, a reoffending analysis report, a report on the accessibility of venues that YJS staff and children can use and a general disproportionality report, although, disappointingly, this did not include any actions or recommendations.

The performance framework also includes an update on the quality assurance work being undertaken by the service, and this is presented to the board twice a year. This has led to themed audits taking place. These have included the quality of work with victims, and a review of care-experienced children which enabled the YJS to work with residential children's homes to help them to develop their restorative approaches.

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

The YJS specialist risk management practitioner chairs the YJS risk management meetings for all cases where the child's safety and wellbeing or their risk of harm to others are assessed as medium or high risk.

For children at risk of, or subject to, child sexual exploitation, staff can refer them to the Barnardo's Better Futures programme. They will complete assessments, deliver interventions and offer consultancy to case managers. Referrals can also be made to the multi-agency sexual exploitation hub or the Barnardo's advocacy workers in the multi-agency safeguarding hub.

There is, however, no multi-agency framework in place for children at risk of, or subject to, child exploitation and potential involvement in county lines. Approaches utilising contextual safeguarding, which include mapping children in communities, looking at potential areas where exploitation may be happening, considering the type of exploitation and planning for how it can be disrupted, are largely absent. Although ad hoc meetings have been held to discuss concerns about particular children, there is no specific pathway for practitioners to follow.

Care-experienced children are over-represented in the YJS cohort. The service has been monitoring this and has introduced the Adfer project, which is described in more detail below. It has also analysed the figures and looked into the specific offences that these children were involved in, to ensure that they are not being criminalised unnecessarily.

The YJS has a directory of services that staff can access. Interventions are delivered in either a small group setting or on a one-to-one basis. They include the Phoenix project, which is a five-day course run by South Wales Fire and Rescue Service from a working fire station. This gives children the opportunity to experience what it is like to work in an emergency service and includes them wearing the uniform. On completing the project, the children can receive the level one qualification in youth and community firefighting skills. There is also a music group, which incorporates living skills into its programme, and Brave Space, which is a knife crime toolkit that staff can use.

A programme for girls has been designed in consultation with girls known to the YJS. It is due to start in March 2022, and will include sessions on developing living skills, sexual health and substance misuse. It can be delivered on a one-to-one basis or in a group setting.

Inspectors saw an example of an excellent and creative intervention that has been developed over a number of years. The Building Skills project provides children with skills, not only in the workplace, but also in terms of developing their sense of identity and building confidence and self-esteem. Referrals can be made for a child to have alternative education provision, to complete their reparation hours or to build their portfolio by developing their work experience. Children design and build wooden bespoke play areas and equipment for schools and community groups. They gain experience and knowledge in project planning, construction skills, budgeting, health and safety, community regeneration and work experience. The programme is evaluated, and feedback is collated from children and the schools and community groups involved.

The YJS has a victim officer, who has access to the police database. This individual contacts victims and, if the victim wants to stay involved, explores their individual needs, alongside signposting them to other agencies for support, as necessary. The victim officer explains restorative processes to the victim, which include a letter of apology, mediation, a face-to-face meeting or reparation, and is in close contact with the Victim Support service. They will also advise case managers of the victim's wishes regarding licence conditions when

appropriate. Despite using different methods to gain feedback from victims, including questionnaires, emails and now sending a SurveyMonkey link, the response is poor. Verbal feedback is gathered and recorded, but this is more difficult to measure. The most effective way to collate victim feedback is being looked at on both a local and regional basis.

The YJS has a reparation and unpaid work coordinator who sources projects within the community. They take a victim-led approach and ensure that projects are skills based and benefit the community. In the main, they work with children on a one-to-one basis so that the relationship can develop. The coordinator meets the child to discuss their interests and skills, as well as any diversity needs, so that they can match them to an appropriate project. The projects include painting a child's resource centre, working with a school to design a Christmas card, making gift bags and putting information leaflets together to explain what happens after court. During the pandemic, reparation projects stayed more local to where children lived and included outdoor projects and working with schools to create more usable outdoor space in their grounds.

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

There is a joint policy in place between the YJS and children's social care. YJS staff are invited to, and attend, all meetings about children in need, those on a child protection plan and those who are care experienced. Practice development workshops are held regularly for the YJS and edge of care teams, to share knowledge and experience and to enhance people's skills.

The YJS has access to a seconded probation officer for one and a half days per week. To make this limited provision work, the officer is flexible with their days and ensures that they are available for case consultations and meetings about high-risk children. There are monthly transition meetings, where children over 16 years are discussed to see if they will, at the appropriate time, move to the Probation Service. Inspectors saw evidence of good practice, as the meeting also includes the Probation Service sharing information about children aged over 18 who have become known to them, to check any previous involvement with the YJS. This information helps them to engage better with the children on probation.

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. They also track and monitor children for intelligence purposes by identifying information from the police system and matching it with children known to the YJS.

The service monitors the number of children accessing appropriate education provision and attends the 'access to education' panel. A worker in the education engagement team works specifically with children known to the YJS. The service is part of the 'team around the school' model, which gives each comprehensive school in Bridgend the opportunity to bring partners together to discuss children for whom there are concerns about their education. Information is shared and discussions are held to determine which support services are required to assist and prevent issues from escalating.

The YJS has a training and employment officer who provides direct support to help children over 16 years old to access appropriate provision. This individual works closely with Careers Wales, Bridgend College and other partners to identify suitable opportunities for children. The officer is also the lead person for the Building Skills project.

The service has a seconded health worker who completes a general health assessment for all children subject to a court order. Staff can discuss children on an out-of-court disposal if they have any concerns and a full assessment will be completed if needed. The assessment includes checking that the child has a GP and has had their immunisations, checking

whether there are any dental issues and providing any other public health checks as required.

There is a commissioned service to support children who have problems with substance misuse. This includes a worker who receives referrals from case managers and delivers interventions on a one-to-one basis as well as in a group work setting.

All children are screened for speech, language and communication needs by YJS staff as part of their AssetPlus assessment. The service needs to ensure that all staff are trained to identify these needs. If a further assessment or an intervention is required, the children can be referred to the YJS speech and language therapist. However, as the therapist is allocated to the YJS for only one day per week, they are very limited in the services they can provide. They will therefore give advice and guidance to case managers and provide training to staff when time allows.

There is no seconded worker from CAMHS for the YJS to access if they have concerns about a child's mental health. From a CAMHS perspective, there is no specialist worker linked to the YJS who can understand the specific mental health needs of children known to the youth justice system.

Emotional, mental health and wellbeing provision for care-experienced children and those known to the YJS in Bridgend is poor overall. As stated above, there is no specialist CAMHS service for these children and therefore the YJS does not understand fully their specific mental health needs. There is a two-year waiting list for neurodevelopmental services. The speech, language and communication provision to the YJS is available for only one day per week, and it is recognised that this does not meet the needs of children known to the service. These concerns have been escalated by the YJS management board and are raised regularly with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The service has tried various approaches to gain feedback from children about their experiences with the YJS. This initially included sending questionnaires and analysing the self-assessments from AssetPlus. More recently, the YJS has been using participation workers to contact children when they have finished their involvement with the service, and this has given them feedback about the support that children needed during the pandemic. Some children have contributed to a video about the work of the service, and children's views informed the design of Evergreen Hall. Currently, the service is looking at how feedback can be gathered through its website.

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.

Inspectors spoke to two children and one parent. They all felt that their YJS 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:

“At end of day, they [case manager] know what they're doing, they're helping me, they know me, they know how I work, and they encourage me to make a difference”.

When asked if the YJS worker had the right skills, one parent said:

“The case manager doesn't judge. They come on home visits. I can ask questions. They have been my lifeline in recent months. I can ring them, maybe to offload and to share what I am

thinking. It makes me feel lighter as a parent. It's always helpful. It's been a brilliant experience".

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?

There is a full range of policies and guidance in place, which are accessible to staff. People are kept up to date with any changes through emails and discussions at team meetings. 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?

The YJS is based in the civic offices in Bridgend, which are not child friendly and are unsuitable for one-to-one work with children who may be in crisis. It is, however, an appropriate and safe office environment for staff to work in. As Covid-19 restrictions ease, the YJS envisages that staff will balance their time between working in the office, in community venues and at home.

Recently, the YJS, in partnership with the youth service, has acquired Evergreen Hall, which will become a youth venue. Children have been consulted on its development, purpose and décor, and building work is currently ongoing. Children will again be consulted to rename the venue once the building work is complete.

Staff can also access a range of community-based facilities in other areas, including an old courthouse in the north of the borough, fire stations and schools, and will visit children at home.

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

YJS staff are able to share information through access to the Welsh childcare information system, 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.

Due to Welsh Government guidelines in relation to Covid-19, staff were encouraged to work from home where possible, and were allocated mobile phones and laptop computers to facilitate this. Staff were creative when working with children during the pandemic, and used online apps, including social media apps, and MS Teams for meetings.

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

The YJS has a quality assurance framework in place. This includes the lead practitioners and the specialist risk management practitioner reviewing the quality of interventions and gatekeeping all AssetPlus assessments and reports. Individual learning points are discussed with case workers through supervision, and general themes are raised in team meetings.

The YJS performance framework report includes an update on the quality assurance work being undertaken within the service, and this is presented to the board twice a year. This has led to themed audits taking place, which have included the quality of work with victims, as well as a review of care-experienced children that led to work with care homes to develop their restorative approaches.

The YJS reoffending review was a multi-agency approach between children services, the YJS, the police, and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and informed practice for working with Looked After Children. More generally, however, there was limited evidence of thematic and case audits being completed on a multi-agency basis across the partnership. The YJS was able to demonstrate that it reviews cases when serious incidents occur.

Resettlement

Resettlement policy and provision

The YJS has a draft custody and resettlement practice policy. This includes guidance on constructive resettlement and national standards, and sets out assessment, planning and review processes, as well as introducing the need for multi-agency resettlement panels. It does not, however, set out the processes that case managers should follow when recalling children to the secure estate when they are on licence.

The YJS developed the policy by looking at national guidance and YJB national standards, and considering the Welsh Government's blueprint for youth justice and the child-first approach. The draft policy has been sent to the team for feedback; it will then be discussed with partner agencies before going to the management board for sign-off.

Since 2019, the YJS has had three children in custody and one child on remand. Resettlement cases are allocated to YJS social workers. An intervention worker and the training and employment officer will also be allocated to help support the social worker. When children are in custody, staff maintain good relationships with families and will take parents and carers to visits, 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. Staff reported that accessing suitable accommodation can be a challenge when children are released from custody. There has been no specific training in resettlement work, although staff feel that training in trauma-informed practice is especially relevant to resettlement cases.

When there are custody cases in the service, staff described communication with the secure estate as being good. Each child is allocated a key worker and there are regular conversations and exchanges of information between the YJS and the establishment.

HMP Parc is within the Bridgend boundary, and there is a dedicated social work post there. However, this social worker position has been vacant for 12 months because of the complexity of the funding arrangements. The individual in this role plays an important part in reviewing safeguarding issues independently. It should be noted, however, that this gap in provision is not the fault of Bridgend County Borough Council but is the responsibility of HM Prison and Probation Service Wales.

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, 69 per cent of its workforce is female. In the local population, 1.5 per cent are black, Asian and minority ethnic, whereas three per cent of the YJS staff group come from this background. Three per cent of the workforce had a declared disability. Welsh speakers made up 17 per cent of the population and support from Welsh language speaking staff is offered to all children through Bridgend County Borough Council.

At the time of the inspection, 18 per cent of the YJS caseload was female, 32 per cent had a learning disability, 38 per cent presented with emotional, mental health and wellbeing needs, and 58 per cent had substance misuse issues. One per cent of the caseload identified as black, Asian and minority ethnic, and staff reported sometimes feeling unable to identify and address the individual needs of these children. The service will be receiving unconscious bias training in the near future, but leaders need to consider how to increase staff's understanding of how a child's ethnicity can impact on their involvement with youth justice services.

According to information provided by the YJS, 31 out of the 98 children known to the service had a statement of additional learning needs or individual learning plans. The inspection found that these children were being supported through the 'team around the school' model and the 'access to education' panel, where the YJS was represented.

Between April and December 2021, 17 (26 per cent) of the 66 children who started YJS interventions were care experienced, compared with 15 (18 per cent) of the 83 for the same period in the previous year. This indicated that, even though the caseload was smaller during 2021, the number of care-experienced children was higher. In response to this, the service has introduced the Adfer project, which is working with local authority care homes, with a planned extension to private providers and foster carers, to use restorative approaches when working with children. The YJS facilitates the three-day 'train the trainer' sessions with senior staff members in the residential care homes, so that they are able to facilitate restorative conferences themselves, moving forward. The YJS police officer also visits the residential homes to help build up relationships with the staff and children.

The analysis also showed that the gender split for care-experienced children during 2021 was nine boys and eight girls, compared with 11 boys and four girls in 2020, indicating that the ratio of females to males for care-experienced children has increased. When the YJS looked into this, it found that the increase was due to two separate offences taking place that had involved a number of girls and led to them becoming known to the service.

2. Court disposals

We took a detailed look at two community sentences managed by the YJS. We also conducted two 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 reviewed in respect of work done to address desistance, keep the child safe and keep other people safe.

As a result of the low number of relevant cases, we did not rate court disposal work separately in this inspection, and we have adjusted our normal scoring boundaries.

Assessing and reviewing a child's desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others were strong areas of practice. In assessments, there was a good analysis of offending. The case manager focused on the child's strengths and understood their level of maturity. There was, however, insufficient analysis of the controls and interventions needed to promote the child's safety and wellbeing. Inspectors judged the case managers' classification of risk to be reasonable.

Planning and delivering services relating to a child's desistance were also judged to be strong areas of practice. Planning took account of the child's strengths and maturity. However, contingency planning was weak in relation to emerging concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children and their risk of harm to others. Planning was also lacking when considering a child's risk of harm to others and implementing a balance of internal and external controls to help them to address this risk.

The services delivered took account of the child's diversity, built on their strengths and were proportionate to the disposal. Staff encouraged engagement by maintaining a relationship with the child and their parents or carers, and other agencies were involved in keeping the child safe. However, the quality of work to deliver interventions was affected by an over-reliance on other desistance factors and a lack of contingency planning in the event of any changes to the child's circumstances.

Case managers considered victims' wishes and needs where relevant, and considered the risk for actual and potential victims when necessary. When reviewing cases, staff focused on the child's diversity factors, considered their motivation and engagement, and involved the child and their parents or carers.

Strengths

- Assessing and reviewing a child's desistance, safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others were strong areas of practice.
- Assessments evidenced a sufficient analysis of offending, focusing on the child's strengths and understanding their level of maturity.
- Work to plan and deliver services was especially effective in relation to the child's desistance and took account of their strengths and maturity.
- Case managers' classification of risk was reasonable.
- The services delivered took account of the child's diversity, built on their strengths and were proportionate to the disposal.
- Other agencies were involved in keeping the child safe.

- Case managers considered the victim's wishes and needs, and the risk for actual and potential victims where relevant.
- Staff encouraged engagement by maintaining a relationship with the child and their parents or carers.
- When reviewing cases, staff focused on the child's diversity factors, considered their motivation and engagement, and involved the child and their parents or carers.

Areas for improvement

- Case managers did not sufficiently analyse the controls and interventions needed to promote children's safety and wellbeing.
- Contingency planning was weak in relation to emerging concerns about children's safety and wellbeing, and their risk of harm to others.
- Planning for children's safety and wellbeing was insufficient.
- There was a lack of planning to manage children's risk of harm to others and implement a balance of internal and external controls to address the risk.
- The quality of work to deliver interventions was affected by an over-reliance on other desistance factors and a lack of contingency planning in the event of any changes to the child's circumstances.

3. Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 12 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of one youth conditional caution, two youth cautions, and nine community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in all 12 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 policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings and interviews.

The Bureau is the decision-making panel for out-of-court disposals. It consists of a police sergeant, the YJS panel and volunteer coordinator, and a volunteer representative from the community. As part of Bridgend's comprehensive quality assurance self-assessment, the service recognised that the Bureau needed to be more child friendly and to take a trauma-informed approach. When the Bureau was set up originally, the partnership viewed it as part of the criminal justice system, and so it still works in a similar way to referral order panels and courtroom settings. It is not a multi-agency panel, and at this stage children are not part of the criminal justice system and could be diverted away. However, the panel is not currently set up to recognise this, and, to be really effective, needs to include those agencies that focus on the safeguarding and welfare of children as well as those that are part of the criminal justice system.

An AssetPlus assessment is completed for all children, which includes an analysis of the child's needs; however, the Bureau does not have sight of this assessment, but instead receives a summary report. The Bureau is not multi-agency, and it is not consistently given all the assessment information relevant to children and their families. This makes it more difficult to ensure that children are diverted to the most appropriate care and support services and that their diversity needs are recognised.

Overall, assessment was a good area of practice for out-of-court disposals, and the analysis of children's risk of harm was especially strong. Risks to the child's safety and wellbeing were identified and analysed appropriately, and case managers took account of the victim's needs and wishes. The risk of harm to others was clearly identified and analysed, and case managers used available sources of information, including other assessments, to inform their own judgement.

Planning to support a child's desistance was a strong area of practice. There was evidence in the inspected cases that staff focused on and understood the importance of meeting children's needs regarding education, training and employment. One example of this was a child who accessed 'STEER the Enterprise Academy', who went from not attending school to engaging in this provision and telling their case manager that they would attend full time if given the opportunity. Case managers considered the child's strengths and level of maturity, and created plans in collaboration with children and their families.

Planning for a child's safety and wellbeing was a poor area of practice, however, and evidence showed a lack of identification and planning for children who could be at risk of child exploitation. Poor contingency planning for children's safety and wellbeing, and their risk of harm to others, also contributed to this area of practice being judged as insufficient.

Although there was some good evidence of multi-agency work to deliver services, especially in regard to children's social care and substance misuse provision, YJS staff did not consider children's safety and wellbeing sufficiently when delivering services. There were examples where work was not being done in a timely manner and where interventions could have been delivered more appropriately by other agencies, rather than the YJS becoming involved.

The inspection found that children's health needs were not highlighted consistently, and this had a negative impact on the quality of planning and delivery of services relating to a child's safety and wellbeing. The lack of specialist health provision to the YJS meant that children were not receiving the services required to meet their specific health needs.

Strengths

- Assessing a child's risk of harm was a strong area of practice.
- Case managers used information from other agencies to help inform their own judgement.
- When carrying out assessments, case managers considered the child's strengths and their level of maturity.
- Planning to support children's desistance was a strong area of practice.
- Staff understood the importance of meeting children's needs regarding education, training and employment.
- Case managers had included children and their parents or carers in the planning process.
- There was evidence of multi-agency working, especially in regard to children's social care and substance misuse provision.
- Case managers took account of victims' needs and wishes.

Areas for improvement

- The Bureau is not multi-agency, and it is not consistently given all the assessment information relevant to children and their families.
- Case managers did not consistently identify children at risk of child exploitation or put plans in place to manage this risk.
- There was poor contingency planning to manage children's safety and wellbeing, and their risk of harm to others.
- Children's health needs were not identified consistently, and this had a negatively impact on the quality of planning and services relating to their safety and wellbeing.
- Some interventions could have been delivered more appropriately by other agencies, such as children's social care, rather than the YJS becoming involved.

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 rating¹⁵ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	67%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	75%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	83%

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

Assessments sufficiently analysed how to support a child's desistance. In the majority of cases, there was sufficient analysis of offending behaviour and the assessments considered the child's levels of maturity and motivation to change. In all but one case, staff took account of the child's personal circumstances and considered their strengths and protective factors. They had involved the child and their parents or carers in the assessment and taken their views into account.

In most cases, there was an appropriate analysis of the child's diversity needs, and case managers had used information from other agencies to inform their assessment. The victim's needs and wishes had been taken into account in all of the relevant cases.

The factors in out-of-court disposals that relate most to a child's offending are living arrangements, substance misuse, learning and education, training and employment, self-identity and resilience; and in eight of the 12 cases we inspected, the assessment analysed sufficiently how to address these factors and support desistance.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

Assessments were sufficient when analysing how to keep children safe. In most 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 eight out of the 12 cases inspected.

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

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.

One inspector noted:

“The assessment correctly assesses the child’s level of safety and wellbeing as high. The child has experienced significant trauma growing up, and there’s a strong understanding by the case manager as to what is impacting on the child’s behaviour and why. There is ongoing child protection planning and this assists the identification and exploration of the factors impacting on the child’s safety and wellbeing.”

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Assessment of a child’s risk of harm to others was a strong area of practice. Most of the cases clearly identified and analysed the risk of harm to others, including who was at risk and the nature of the risk. 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 10 out of the 12 cases inspected.

3.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

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

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child’s desistance?	83%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	58%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	75%

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

Planning to support a child’s desistance was a strong area of practice. In nearly all cases, staff planned the services most likely to support desistance, paying attention to appropriate timescales and sequencing, and took account of the child’s personal circumstances and social context. Similarly, when planning for a child’s desistance, case managers considered the child’s strengths and protective factors as well as their level of maturity and motivation to change.

In most cases, case managers had considered the child’s diversity issues and taken account of opportunities for the child to integrate into the community and access mainstream services after completing their out-of-court disposal.

In all but one case, staff had involved the child and their parents or carers in the planning process, and in most cases the victim’s needs and wishes had been considered.

Planning was proportionate to the disposal type, which meant that interventions could be completed within the timescales in all but one of the cases.

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.

Overall, planning supported the child’s desistance sufficiently in 10 of the 12 cases inspected.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Planning that focused on keeping children safe was a weaker area of practice. In most cases, planning promoted the child’s safety and wellbeing, but in five of the 11 relevant cases, information from other agencies was not included to inform planning. In more than half of the cases, contingency arrangements for any changes to the level of risk were not evident and, overall, planning focused on keeping the child safe in only seven of the 12 cases inspected.

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

“The child is vulnerable to exploitation but there is no planning to recognise how to keep the child safe in this regard. Planning activity by other agencies is reactive rather than proactive and agencies plans have not been aligned.”

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Planning was sufficient when considering how to keep other people safe. Planning to promote other people’s safety by addressing the factors related to the risk of harm to others was evident in nearly all of the relevant cases, and case managers involved other agencies in most cases. Planning for contingency arrangements to manage those risks identified, however, was evident in only five of the 10 relevant cases.

Planning to address concerns related to actual and potential victims was evident in most of the relevant cases. Overall, planning that focused on keeping people safe was evident in nine of the 12 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 rating¹⁷ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child’s desistance?	75%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	50%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	75%

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

Delivery of services sufficiently supported the child’s desistance. In nearly all cases, interventions to support desistance had been sequenced appropriately and delivered in good time. In most cases, the case manager had considered the child’s diversity needs and their

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.

wider social context, and had included interventions that were proportionate to the disposal and promoted opportunities for community integration and access to mainstream services.

In all cases, staff had developed and maintained an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers, and had encouraged and enabled the child to comply with the interventions.

Overall, support for the child's desistance was evident in nine of the 12 cases inspected.

This was demonstrated in one case, where the inspector noted:

“There is strong evidence of good engagement achieved by the case manager from the outset of the intervention. Understanding the child, making valid considerations as to their age and level of understanding, and using this to shape delivery is welcome to read and hear about. The challenges with the child's access to and view of education is considered, challenged and advocated on by the case manager – to good effect too, given how the child is now fully engaging with their education provision.”

Does service delivery focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Delivering services that focused on keeping children safe was a weaker area of practice. It was not evident that the child's safety and wellbeing had been promoted through service delivery in half of the cases inspected. In five of the 12 cases, staff had not involved other agencies in keeping children safe. Overall, service delivery supported the safety of the child in only six of the 12 cases inspected.

Does service delivery focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

Delivering services was sufficient when considering how to keep other people safe. The services delivered managed and minimised the risk of harm in most of the relevant cases, and in nearly all cases staff had considered the protection of actual and potential victims. Overall, inspectors judged that the safety of other people was supported sufficiently in most of the 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 three 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 Bridgend YJS out-of-court disposal flowchart which outlines operational practice.

The Bureau is the decision-making panel for out-of-court disposals. It consists of a police sergeant, the YJS panel and volunteer coordinator, and a volunteer representative from the community. The policy sets out an escalation process in the event of disagreements about outcomes, and there are case studies which evidence that this process is used when needed.

The Bureau is the decision-making panel for out-of-court disposals. It consists of a police sergeant, the YJS panel and volunteer coordinator, and a volunteer representative from the

community. As part of Bridgend's comprehensive quality assurance self-assessment, the service recognised that the Bureau needed to be more child friendly and to take a trauma-informed approach. When the Bureau was set up originally, the partnership viewed it as part of the criminal justice system, and so it still works in a similar way to referral order panels and courtroom settings. It is not a multi-agency panel, and at this stage children are not part of the criminal justice system and could be diverted away. However, the panel is not currently set up to recognise this, and, to be really effective, needs to include those agencies that focus on the safeguarding and welfare of children as well as those that are part of the criminal justice system.

An AssetPlus assessment is completed for all children, which includes an analysis of the child's needs; however, the Bureau does not have sight of this assessment, but instead receives a summary report. The Bureau is not multi-agency, and it is not consistently given all the assessment information relevant to children and their families. This makes it more difficult to ensure that children are diverted to 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 Bridgend, the police are able to offer community resolutions, either with or without a restorative justice intervention, 'on the street'. The YJS is notified and discusses with the police whether any further referrals or interventions are required.

When a child is referred to the service, the YJS police officer reviews the incident and sends it to YJS administrative staff, so that they can screen the databases of other partners, including children's social care. A YJS lead practitioner will allocate the case and pass the details to the victim officer.

The YJS panel and volunteer coordinator will speak to the child and their family and make sure that they are prepared for attending the Bureau. The child and their family are told that they will be asked about what has happened from their perspective; their thoughts and feelings regarding the incident; and who has been harmed and how.

The case manager will complete an AssetPlus assessment and liaise with the victim officer 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 but does not consistently share all the information relevant to the child and their family. The report is quality assured before it is presented to the Bureau.

There is no fixed number of out-of-court disposals that 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.

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.

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

The policy has been reviewed in partnership with the police and a case review process was introduced to ensure that appropriate exit strategies are in place for children when their out-of-court disposal finishes.

A scrutiny panel is being set up by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Its purpose is to conduct reviews of the decision-making process and the rationale for out-of-court disposals being made.

The YJS recognises that its out-of-court disposal process needs to evolve so that it can work more preventatively in a multi-agency way. The Bureau also needs to recognise the importance of applying a trauma-informed approach when dealing with children and their families. It has been looking at models in other areas, to see if children can be triaged at an earlier stage so that cases only go to the Bureau when it is necessary.

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.¹⁸

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 chief executive 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 14 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 13 meetings, including with managers, partner organisations and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.¹⁹

Domain two: court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. In this YJS, there were only two cases where children had received court disposals five to 10 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.

Domain three: out-of-court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. We inspected 12 out-of-court disposals given to children 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.

¹⁸ HM Inspectorate's standards are available here: <https://www.justiceinspectors.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 two court disposals and 12 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 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 was 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.

As Domain 2 was not rated because of the low number of cases, the total scoring was adapted and ranged from 0 to 24, which was banded to produce the overall rating as follows:

- 0–4 = Inadequate
- 5–12 = Requires improvement
- 13–20 = Good
- 21–24 = Outstanding.

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

Data from inspected cases:²⁰

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?	50%
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?	50%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	100%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	50%
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?	100%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	50%
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%

²⁰ Some questions do not apply in all cases.

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?	100%
b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	50%
c) Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	50%

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?	100%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	50%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	50%
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?	50%
g) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	50%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	
a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	50%
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?	50%
c) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	50%

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?	100%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	50%
c) Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	50%
d) Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	0%
e) Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	0%

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?	50%
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?	50%
g) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	50%
h) Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	50%

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?	50%
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?	50%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	100%
c) Is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	50%

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?	50%
b) Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	100%
c) Does reviewing include analysis of, and respond to, diversity factors?	100%
d) Does reviewing consider the personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	50%
d) Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	100%
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?	50%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing?	50%

b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?	50%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	100%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
a) Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to risk of harm?	50%
b) Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	50%
c) Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan all of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	50%

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?	83%
b) Does assessment sufficiently analyse diversity issues?	75%
c) Does assessment consider personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	92%
d) Does assessment utilise information held by other agencies?	75%
e) Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	92%
f) Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	42%
g) Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	83%
h) Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims, and opportunities for restorative justice?	92%
i) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	92%

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?	75%
---	-----

b) Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	67%
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?	75%

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?	83%
b) Does planning sufficiently address diversity issues?	75%
c) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's personal circumstances, including the wider familial and social context of the child?	83%
d) Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	83%
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?	83%
f) Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?	75%
g) Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victims?	75%
h) Are the child and their parents or carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	92%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	
a) Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	75%

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?	50%
c) Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	45%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
a) Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	75%
b) Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	67%
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?	42%

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?	83%
b) Does service delivery account for the diversity issues of the child?	75%
c) Does service delivery reflect the wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents or carers, or significant others?	75%
d) Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers?	100%
e) Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	100%
f) Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	75%

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?

a) Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	50%
b) Is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	58%

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	
a) Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	58%
b) Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	75%