



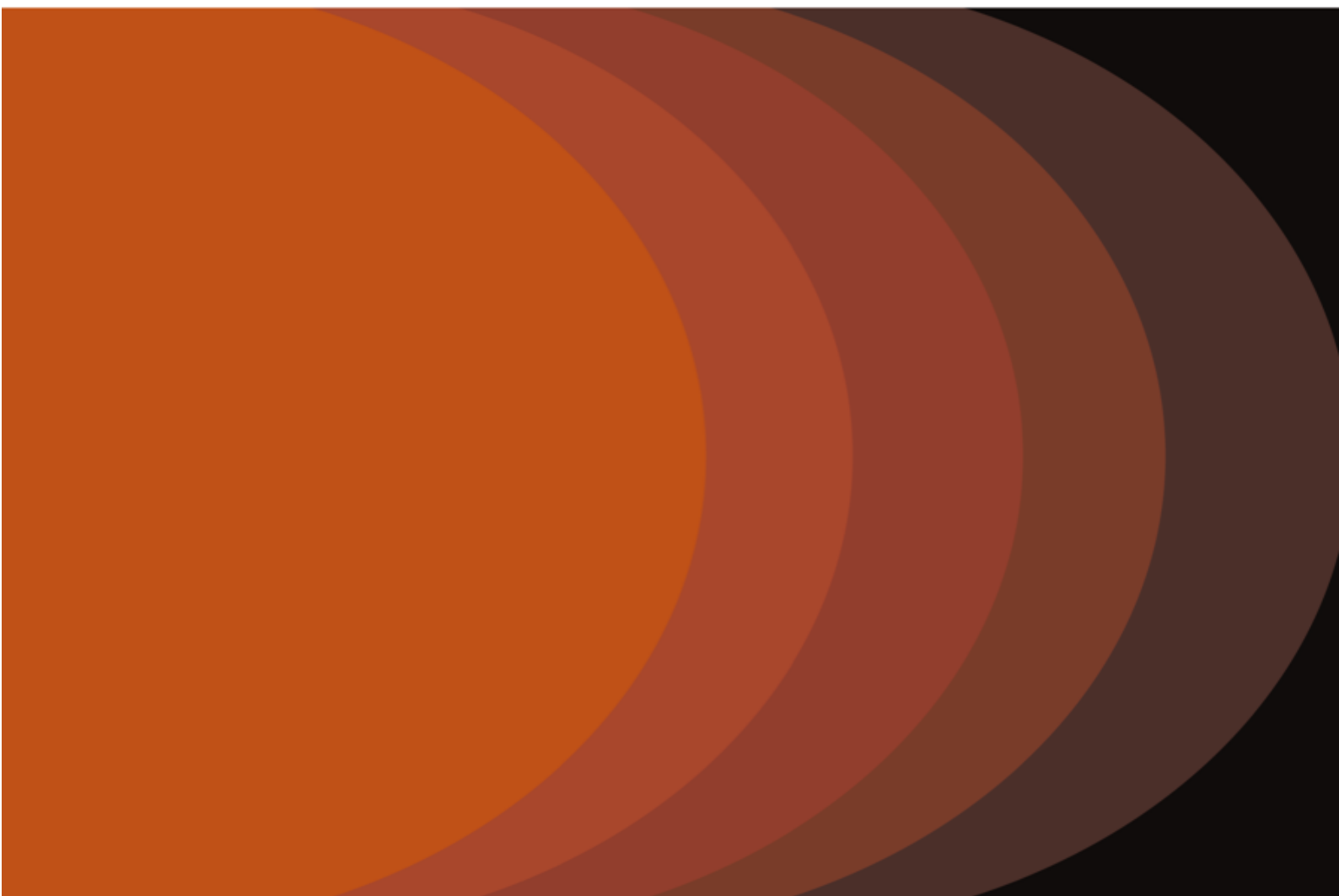
HM Inspectorate  
of Probation

An inspection of youth justice services in

# Carmarthenshire

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HM Inspectorate of Probation, March 2024



# Contents

- Foreword ..... 3**
- Ratings..... 4**
- Recommendations ..... 5**
- Background..... 6**
- Domain one: Organisational delivery ..... 7**
  - 1.1. Governance and leadership.....7
  - 1.2. Staff.....9
  - 1.3. Partnerships and services ..... 10
  - 1.4. Information and facilities ..... 11
- Domain two: Court disposals..... 14**
  - 2.1. Assessment ..... 14
  - 2.2. Planning ..... 15
  - 2.3. Implementation and delivery ..... 16
  - 2.4. Reviewing..... 17
- Domain three: Out-of-court disposals..... 18**
  - 3.1. Assessment ..... 18
  - 3.2. Planning ..... 19
  - 3.3. Implementation and delivery ..... 20
  - 3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision ..... 21
- 4.1. Resettlement ..... 23**
  - 4.1. Resettlement policy and provision ..... 23
- Further information ..... 25**

### Acknowledgements

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Rebecca Howard, 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.

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### 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: 978-1-916621-09-1

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## Foreword

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This inspection is part of our programme of youth justice team (YJT) inspections. We have inspected and rated Carmarthenshire YJT across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work.

Overall, Carmarthenshire YJT was rated as 'Outstanding'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Outstanding'.

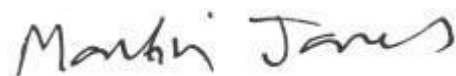
Staff know and understand their children and families well, and we found high-quality work being delivered. There is a high level of care and dedication to the staff, children, and victims accessing the service, which extends from senior leaders to operational staff. The YJT has invested in its staff, offering a comprehensive training package and regular opportunities for development and progression. Staff are motivated, passionate, and their hard work is routinely acknowledged and rewarded. The management board is invested in the YJT; it has continually advocated for the service and proactively supported it in achieving the best outcomes for children, families, and victims. We noted that the management board chair should ensure they attend every meeting and support the board's future development.

The YJT is highly respected within the partnership. Strong, vibrant and consistent leadership has enabled the service to operationalise its vision and strategy effectively. There is a commitment to meeting the protected characteristics of those children the service works with. Whilst some elements of this are still in the early stages, they are showing promise. Provision for Welsh speakers is well established. There are mature and cohesive partnership arrangements which enable children and families to access a range of services. These includes speech, language, and communication therapy, wraparound education support, and specialist intervention for children involved in sexually harmful behaviour. Partnership provision has also secured seconded staff from police and probation based within the YJT.

Reparation provision is impressive; the service has worked with the community to identify and deliver meaningful and impactful projects. Children have been able to develop skills as well as engaging in restorative justice. This provision could be enhanced further through offering children the opportunity to achieve formal qualifications.

The service proactively seeks opportunities to learn and improve the services it provides from the wider sector. This includes work with police partners in adopting and localising an approach for care-experienced children to avoid unnecessary criminalisation and contact with the justice system.













There is a robust quality assurance framework which has driven high-quality practice and casework. Management oversight is effective and evidenced in strong results from the post-court, out-of-court and resettlement inspection case samples.



**Martin Jones CBE**

HM Chief Inspector of Probation

# Ratings

<b>Carmarthenshire Youth Justice Team</b>		<b>Score</b>	<b>34/36</b>
<b>Overall rating</b>		<b>Outstanding</b>	
<b>1. Organisational delivery</b>			
1.1	Governance and leadership	<b>Good</b>	
1.2	Staff	<b>Outstanding</b>	
1.3	Partnerships and services	<b>Outstanding</b>	
1.4	Information and facilities	<b>Outstanding</b>	
<b>2. Court disposals</b>			
2.1	Assessment	<b>Outstanding</b>	
2.2	Planning	<b>Outstanding</b>	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	<b>Outstanding</b>	
2.4	Reviewing	<b>Outstanding</b>	
<b>3. Out-of-court disposals</b>			
3.1	Assessment	<b>Good</b>	
3.2	Planning	<b>Outstanding</b>	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	<b>Outstanding</b>	
3.4	Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	<b>Outstanding</b>	
<b>4. Resettlement<sup>1</sup></b>			
4.1	Resettlement policy and provision	<b>Outstanding</b>	

<sup>1</sup> The rating for resettlement does not influence the overall YJT rating.

## Recommendations

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

### **The Carmarthenshire Youth Justice Team should:**

1. continue to work with police partners to reduce the delay between the offence and referral through to the YJT
2. continue to work with police partners to embed Outcome 22,<sup>2</sup> and consider introducing greater flexibility in the use of out-of-court disposals which ensures their application best meets children's needs.

### **The Youth Justice Team management board should:**

3. review the current chairing arrangements to ensure that the chair is able to consistently attend board meetings, and lead on overseeing board activity, member attendance, and future development of the board
4. ensure it achieves greater connectivity with the YJT through more direct contact and engagement with the wider service.

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<sup>2</sup> Where police defer prosecution and diversionary or educational activity has been undertaken with the child.

## Background

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We conducted fieldwork in Carmarthenshire Youth Justice Team (YJT) over a period of a week, beginning 06 November 2023. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence, out-of-court disposal or resettlement provision was delivered between 07 November 2022 and 01 September 2023.

Carmarthenshire is a county in the south west of Wales. It is bordered by five neighbouring authorities: Ceredigion, Powys, Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, and Pembrokeshire. Carmarthenshire is a large and diverse geographical area; the three main towns are Carmarthen, Llanelli, and Ammanford. In December 2022, the Office for National Statistics recorded the population of Carmarthenshire as 188,191; nine per cent of this figure, 17,454, were children aged 10–17 years. The county has the second highest number of Welsh speakers of all local authorities in Wales, and remains the fourth highest in the percentage of the population that can speak Welsh – recorded as 40 per cent in the 2021 Census. The Census recorded that 94 per cent of the Carmarthenshire population were white Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish or British heritage. At the time of inspection, children from black, Asian, and minority ethnic heritage made up five per cent of the case sample.

The YJT is located within the county council's youth support service (YSS) and is overseen by the principal manager. Carmarthenshire YSS was established in 2016, bringing together youth work and youth justice statutory provision under a single management structure. The service is part of the strategy and learner support division of the council's department for education and children. The YJT sits alongside three other teams: universal support, targeted youth support (16-25 years), and targeted youth support (10-18 years). The YJT senior management structure comprises a principal manager and youth justice team manager, and two senior practitioner posts. The wider team includes practitioners, prevention workers, business support, an education worker, victim officer, and an information officer. Through service and partnership arrangements, the YJT has a seconded police and probation officer, specialist substance misuse practitioners, and a speech and language therapist.

The YJT predominantly works with children aged 15-17 years. At the time of this inspection, there were 22 children subject to post-court orders, including one child on licence. There were 101 children subject to an out-of-court disposal, which included five children who were working with the YJT while on a youth conditional caution. Analysis completed by the YJT in 2023 identified that drug and violent offences were the highest offences within their cohort. This was mirrored in our case sample, with violent offences making up 71 per cent of out-of-court disposal cases and 57 per cent of post-court cases. Within the YJT cohort only four per cent of children are cared for by the local authority. Children subject to care and support plans made up 11 per cent of the cohort, and those under child protection procedures were four per cent.

The Dyfed-Powys Police service covers the Carmarthenshire area. The service has good links and relationships with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPPC), who fund the regional restorative justice project. The OPPC has twice nominated the regional YJT for the annual force awards.

## Domain one: Organisational delivery

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To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJT and conducted 14 meetings, including with staff, volunteers, managers, board members, and partnership staff and their managers.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows.

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### 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.

Good

#### Strengths:

- The principal manager is held in high regard by the board, partnership, and YJT. Their proactive and innovative approach has operationalised the vision and strategy for the service effectively. High-quality leadership from the principal manager is supported by a team of exceptional managers.
- The management team is cohesive and supportive. Communication is effective and lines of accountability are understood. There is a high level of care for the staff and those accessing the YJT.
- The vision and strategy have been developed collaboratively with partners and the YJT. Priorities and aspirations for the service are understood, both strategically and operationally.
- The board and YJT have strategic links with other boards and the youth justice sector, which helps to ensure their work is relevant, consistent, and of high quality.
- Board members are invested in and advocate for the YJT. The board includes partners of appropriate seniority who understand the needs of the service and their roles and responsibilities as members.
- New board members receive a thorough induction to prepare them for the role.
- There is a strong strategic partnership who actively support and contribute to the YJT delivery. The collaborative approach enables children and families to access wraparound support.
- Commissioning arrangements enable in-house provision for substance misuse work, and speech and language therapy. The service benefits from secondments from the police and probation service.
- The wider service understands the role of the board and have confidence in its ability to govern and support the service. The board activity and service updates are disseminated to staff.
- The board is sighted on and understands risks to the service. Proactive plans are in place to mitigate against these.

**Areas for improvement:**

- There is strong representation from most board members, but there has been some inconsistent attendance from several key partners. This is being addressed but more reliability and consistency is needed.
- There needs to be improved attendance at the board from the chair. An increased presence will ensure that the chair's roles and responsibilities in overseeing board activity and development are consistently undertaken.
- Comprehensive data and analysis are produced by the YJT and shared with board members. However, board meetings would benefit from the routine presentation of data held by partner services for discussion.
- There is strong connectivity from the YJT to the board. However, there could be greater reciprocation from the board to the YJT. More direct contact from board members to the service would enhance the connectivity further.



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## 1.2. Staff



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

Outstanding

### Strengths:

- Staff are passionate and committed to achieving the best outcomes for children, families, and victims. They know and understand their children and families well. High levels of motivation, care, and dedication extend from senior managers to operational staff.
- The workforce is stable and adequately staffed to meet service need. Workloads are demanding, but manageable. Managers proactively monitor capacity. There are effective contingency arrangements allowing the service to respond to changes and ensure it delivers consistent high-quality practice.
- There is a measured approach to the allocation of cases which considers the practitioners' knowledge and experience. Children are matched to practitioners with appropriate skills to meet their needs.
- There is a comprehensive and supportive induction process for staff and volunteers which prepares them adequately to undertake their roles.
- Supervision for managers and staff is frequent, supportive, and driving high-quality practice. Staff report that their physical safety and emotional wellbeing are priorities and are responded to effectively.
- The service has provided several promotion and development opportunities for staff. These include secondments to other services and progression of staff into management and senior posts.
- The service promotes a culture of learning and development; staff have opportunities to maintain and achieve qualifications such as the youth justice foundation degree.
- There is a comprehensive training strategy which has responded to identified trends and changes in service need. This has supported staff in enhancing their knowledge and skills.
- Staff and volunteers feel valued by the service and wider partnership. Their hard work and achievements are rewarded and acknowledged by managers and formal award processes.
- Maintaining and improving staff engagement is a priority. Staff feel closely aligned to the service, and their views have been used to shape and improve service delivery.

### Areas for improvement:

- Some volunteers would like increased access to training and more opportunities to link in with the service directly.

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## 1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Outstanding

### Strengths:

- Analysis is routinely completed, providing the YJT with valuable information on desistance needs and the profile and demographics of children and families accessing the service. This includes scrutiny of protected characteristics to explore potential disproportionality.
- There is a holistic partnership approach to meeting the education, training, and employment (ETE) needs of children. Pathways for access and escalation routes if ETE provision is not sufficient are understood and used effectively.
- Children have access to a wide range of innovative reparation projects, providing opportunities to develop their skills. The YJT has strong links with the local area, which has enabled it to deliver meaningful and restorative projects benefiting the community.
- Providing access to emotional wellbeing and mental health support is a priority. Existing provision is strong, and the partnership is working collaboratively to enhance services further.
- Children have prompt access to substance misuse assessment and support. Arrangements allow specialist intervention to be delivered in-house.
- The YJT has recently secured in-house speech, language, and communication provision. Children are now able to receive assessments and intervention.
- Processes for promoting safety of the child and other people are thorough and robust. There is multi-agency commitment, with risk and safety management seen as partnership responsibility.
- Children involved in harmful sexual behaviour have access to wraparound specialist provision and intervention.
- There is a strong transition process which supports children moving into the probation service.
- Within the case sample, we saw high-quality partnership coordination and arrangements which met children's desistance needs and promoted safety.
- The YJT has effective relationships with the courts, providing regular updates and training to magistrates. Magistrates are invited to and have attended the bureau to observe how out-of-court disposal decisions are made.

### Areas for improvement:

- Reparation projects could be developed further by offering children the opportunity to gain formal qualifications.
- There is a strong offer for victims who access the service, but further work is needed to understand victim uptake rates and how these can be improved.

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## 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.

Outstanding

### Strengths:

- YJT policies are regularly reviewed and cover all key areas of practice. Most policies are comprehensive and provide adequate guidance on protocols and practice.
- Policies and guidance are located centrally and have been communicated effectively to staff. Staff understand and are confident in how to access the right services from partners. This has assisted in consistent delivery of high-quality work.
- Policies provide detail on how the YJT intends to meet the protected characteristics of those it works with. Practical guidance on how to recognise and respond to diversity needs is available to assist staff.
- Premises where staff work with children are accessible and safe. Carmarthenshire is a large geographical area and community facilities, as well as home visits, are used to avoid children having to travel lengthy distances.
- There are effective working arrangements for staff to work flexibly from office and other locations, alongside regularly meeting in person.
- The service has access to effective ICT packages which enable it to undertake its roles. ICT systems support agile working so staff can work remotely from other offices or community venues.
- Information-sharing arrangements and protocols with partners allow prompt exchange of appropriate information.
- There is an impressive and robust quality assurance framework. Audit activity is frequent, looking at thematic areas as well as practice. Learning has been used effectively to improve quality of provision.
- The YJT is committed to learning and improving practice. It has drawn on learning from the sector, research, and outcomes from inspections to inform service delivery.
- The YJT undertakes regular evaluation of its service to explore its impact; this includes proactive review of areas of work where best outcomes have not been achieved.

## Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The YJT and wider partnership embody a child-first ethos, where the needs of the child and family are central to their practice and delivery. Hearing from children and families about their work with the service and understanding their lived experience is a priority. Feedback is routinely shared with the board, but the YJT is continuing to enhance this process, through exploring the methods it uses to engage with children. There are mechanisms which allow children and families to provide regular feedback on their experiences of the service, its impact, and if provision needs improving. The service recognises the importance of collaboration and involvement of children and families. For instance, it has been involved in the development of intervention and services, including the Dyma-Fi ('this is me') programme for children.

The YJT contacted, on our behalf, children who had worked with the service to gain their consent for an interview or a text survey. We spoke with eight children, two parents, and one carer. We also had 12 responses to our text survey.

The responses we received about the service were overwhelmingly positive. One participant commented:

*"She [practitioner] always puts the needs and wants of the child first whilst remaining professional. She has supported me endlessly and done more than what her job role requires of her ... I have found the support from [the practitioner] very beneficial and my son opens up to her; she is the only professional involved with my son who he engages well with."*

In the text survey, participants were asked to rate the YJT on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being poor and 10 being 'fantastic'. All scored the service a 7 and above, with 9 and 10 being the most frequent answer.

All of the participants we spoke to felt that the practitioner had the right skills for their role. One parent stated:

*"[The] offence was severe and of a sensitive nature, and case manager was incredibly understanding of this, was kind throughout, took the time, and helped support his placement. Also gave time whenever required, was always available."*

The participants we spoke to were asked, 'how good are the services you received from the YJT?'. All rated these as either 'very' or 'quite' good. One parent commented:

*"They [practitioner and child] have bonded really well, my son has just restarted education ... and their case manager was instrumental in this. She has been really helpful and supportive. My son's communication skills have really improved as a result."*

Children had appreciated the way their practitioners had engaged and worked with them. When asked what they had liked best about the YJT, two children provided the following comments:

*"Comfort and openness of worker, felt at ease at all times, couldn't ask for better."*

*"She [practitioner] was patient, really open, had a willingness to support me. I was excited for my appointments. We had coffee meetings, she had a positive attitude and made me feel comfortable."*

## Diversity

- There is a clear strategy outlining how the service intends to meet the protected characteristics of those they work with. Elements of this are in an early stage but are showing promise; other areas, such as equitable access for Welsh speakers, are well established. The strategy is understood by the wider partnership and the YJT recognises that continued work is needed to ensure a systemic impact.
- The YJT has recognised the need to address and prevent over-representation within the cohort. Proactive steps are taken to support care-experienced children and avoid their contact with the criminal justice system.
- In terms of ethnicity, the workforce and volunteers are reflective of local population and the current cohort of children.
- The service has committed to future proactive recruitment to ensure its team are relatable to those who access the service. However, an increase in male practitioners would allow children more opportunities to work with staff of the same gender. Volunteers felt that the recruitment of younger volunteers should also be considered.
- Analysis is routinely completed providing the YJT with valuable information, including scrutiny of protected characteristics to explore potential disproportionality. Analysis of trends and patterns has enabled the YJT to improve service delivery and offer tailored intervention. This includes developing a programme for girls with input from children into the development of this.
- Speech, language, and communication provision is available in both Welsh and English. Children will now be able to access assessments and intervention in both languages.
- Policies outline the YJT's commitment to meeting the protected characteristics of those it works with. There is practical guidance to support staff and the service in how to recognise and respond to diversity needs.
- In the resettlement case we reviewed, the individual diversity needs of the child had been considered. Appropriate actions and adjustments were made to promote equitable access to provision and meet the child's needs. For instance, the YJT ensured the same interpreter was used throughout.
- In our post-court case sample, meeting the diversity needs of children was impressive and sufficient in all cases for assessment, planning, delivery, and all required cases for reviewing. In the out-of-court disposal case sample, meeting the diversity needs of children was a strength and sufficient in the majority of cases for assessment, planning, and delivery.

## Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at seven community sentences managed by the YJT.

### 2.1. Assessment



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

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>3</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	<b>86%</b>
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	<b>86%</b>

Assessment of desistance was impressive and of consistent high quality. Practitioners had proactively sought and used appropriately information held by other services to enhance their analysis and assessments. Other tools, such as self-assessment questionnaires and speech and language screening, were used to provide further information. There was a collaborative approach to assessment, where the views of children, families, and carers were central. This had supported practitioners in exploring and understanding the child's maturity, identity, and diversity needs. Assessments were balanced, exploring triggers to behaviours and considered the impact of early experiences. Analysis was thorough and comprehensive, considering both areas of concern and strengths.

Practitioners were skilled at identifying potential adverse outcomes and risks the child posed to others. Analysis of risks was detailed and explored imminency, the nature, and context of where these could occur. Practitioners had scrutinised controls and intervention effectively to mitigate against risks. There was a strong understanding of trauma and how emotional harm can impact and affect the child. In analysis of potential harm to others, practitioners had considered other previous behaviour and offences appropriately for a holistic assessment. In assessments of potential harm to and from the child, inspectors found that risk classifications were reasonable in all cases. Practitioners had provided detailed evidence and rationales for their judgements.

In all cases, there was effective management oversight and assessments were quality assured by managers. Where required, appropriate guidance to strengthen assessments was provided.

<sup>3</sup> 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. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

## 2.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>4</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>86%</b>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	<b>86%</b>

Planning was completed using an accessible, child-friendly format which considered and captured the child's strengths and aspirations. There was a collaborative approach with children, families, and carers meaningfully involved in planning activity. Practitioners had considered the individual needs of the child and how best to work and engage with them. This included how to undertake sessions so that they were in line with the child's learning and communication needs. Planning was proportionate, with clearly identified and achievable targets and goals. Planning recognised the need to strengthen protective and desistance factors, as well as focusing on areas of concern. For instance, where reparation was to be completed, planning had explored the child's interests and existing skills, and they were matched to appropriate projects.

Where other services were involved with the child and family, there was a strong multi-agency approach to planning. The professional network understood their roles and responsibilities, and were committed to working with the YJT in promoting the safety of the child and others. Plans with other services were aligned and communicated effectively to avoid duplication of work.

Planning had identified appropriate interventions and referrals to reduce risks and concerns. For example, where children were experiencing drugs and/or alcohol difficulties, substance misuse care plans had been developed for the child to receive specialist intervention. Necessary controls to mitigate risks posed to others were considered effectively and detailed in planning. For instance, where there were concerns relating to antisocial behaviour, additional mechanisms were put in place for monitoring but also to support the child. In most cases, plans to protect actual and potential victims were in place and adequately detailed.

Contingency arrangements were comprehensive and thorough, clearly articulating appropriate actions should risks to and from the child change. Inspectors found contingency planning to be bespoke to the child's needs and tailored to the identified risks, which ensured that responses were meaningful and relevant.

<sup>4</sup> 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. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

## 2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>5</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

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

Delivery embodied a trauma-informed approach to working with children and families. Inspectors found that practitioners had taken time to build trust and develop positive and effective working relationships. This had encouraged and supported engagement, and, in many cases, children felt comfortable in making further disclosures. Practitioners were skilled at responding appropriately, ensuring that safety was managed alongside ensuring their relationship with the child was not compromised.

Practitioners had translated their high-quality plans into practice, delivering a range of interventions which addressed concerns and built on strengths. For instance, inspectors found strong advocacy to support children securing and maintaining appropriate education and training packages. The delivery of interventions had been personalised for each child and implemented in accordance with their preferred learning style, for example using interactive methods. The child's diversity needs had been considered in all cases and, where required, appropriate adjustments had been made.

Delivery to promote the safety of the child and others was impressive. Inspectors found that interventions had targeted critical areas, such as substance misuse and emotional wellbeing. Sessions had also provided children with practical skills for independent living, which focused on developing their confidence and self-esteem.

Inspectors found considerable work was undertaken looking at victim experiences and the impact the child's behaviour may have had. Appropriate attention was paid to actual and potential victims, with effective actions, such as additional monitoring and external controls, put in place to promote safety. In one case, the practitioner had developed strong links with neighbourhood policing, the antisocial behaviour coordinator, and youth worker, allowing regular feedback and monitoring of concerns. This approach was replicated in other cases, with frequent and effective communication between members of the professional network.

<sup>5</sup> 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. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)



## 2.4. Reviewing



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

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>6</sup> for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	<b>100%</b>
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>100%</b>
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	<b>100%</b>

Formal written reviews had been completed, capturing changes to desistance and risks to and from the child in all cases. Inspectors found that reviewing activity was an ongoing process with practitioners frequently monitoring progress and adjusting their approach when required. This included adding new areas of work, such as substance misuse intervention. Reviewing activity ensured that intervention remained proportionate and appropriately sequenced, targeting critical areas and building on strengths, such as access to constructive activities. Exit strategies were considered at an early stage with other services involved promptly to support effective transition.

Obtaining the views of children and families was a priority and had assisted practitioners in understanding progress and the impact of intervention. Child-friendly review plans were completed and updated collaboratively with children and families. This ensured that targets and goals were still relevant and achievable.

Practitioners had responded appropriately to changes in risks to and from the child, which was supported by having effective contingency plans already in place. For instance, in one case where concerns relating to potential exploitation were identified, the case manager had made a referral to children's social care, attended strategy meetings, and contributed to the new safety plan.

Practitioners were proactive in seeking information and views from the professional network, and these had been incorporated into reviewing activity. There was commitment from the professional network in attending internal YJT risk review meetings. Practitioners were consistently invited to and attended meetings held by other services, such as care and support plan meetings. This allowed the partnership to have a continued coordinated approach to supporting children and families.

<sup>6</sup> 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. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

## Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected seven cases managed by the YJT that had received an out-of-court disposal. We interviewed the case managers in six cases.

### 3.1. Assessment



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

Good

Our rating<sup>7</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	<b>71%</b>
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	<b>71%</b>
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	86%

The YJT was part of the Youth Justice Board (YJB) assessment tool pilot and the cases within our sample had been assessed using this tool. Inspectors found comprehensive analysis of desistance which had explored protective factors and areas of concern. This provided a holistic analysis and understanding of the child's behaviour, triggers for offending, and areas of strength to be built on. Assessments were bolstered by information sought from other services working with the child and family, including education and children's social care. Children and families were meaningfully involved in the process and their views had been fully incorporated into assessments. Multiple sources of information and professional judgement had been used, enabling a detailed and balanced assessment of the child and their needs.

In the majority of cases, inspectors found comprehensive analysis of diversity needs, including exploration of self-identity. However, in the two cases deemed to be insufficient, there needed to be more consideration of the child's heritage, culture, and neurodiversity.

Inspectors found thorough investigation of risks, including how early experiences may have impacted on the child's behaviour. Classifications for both safety of the child and risks to others were well evidenced and provided detailed rationales to support the judgements made. It was clear that practitioners understood how to analyse the nature and context of potential harm and use this to explore imminency of risks.

Management oversight was sufficient in almost every case, and the level of support matched the complexity of need appropriately. Assessments had been quality assured and, where necessary, feedback provided to enhance the assessment.

<sup>7</sup> 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. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annex.](#)

## 3.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>8</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

	<b>% 'Yes'</b>
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	<b>86%</b>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	<b>86%</b>
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	100%

Plans to address desistance were co-produced with children and families, fully incorporating their voices and aspirations. There was a strong focus on enhancing protective factors and building on desistance, for example developing employment skills. Plans were accessible and written in a child-friendly format, which ensured that children and families understood expectations. Inspectors found tailored and personalised plans with proportionate and achievable targets for the out-of-court disposal timeframe. Where children would potentially need support beyond YJT closure, exit plans were considered and started early.

There was a strong focus on exploring the child's identity, heritage, and culture within plans, and in most cases diversity needs had been considered. However, in some plans, the child's neurodiversity needs required more thought and detail.

Planning to promote the safety of others was of consistent high quality. Plans had targeted key areas for intervention aiming to reduce risks to and from the child. This included emotional wellbeing support, substance misuse needs, peer relationships, and emotional regulation. In relevant cases, personal safety plans had been completed with the child, looking at actions they could undertake to keep safe, such as always carrying necessary medication and keeping their phone charged and on them. This collaborative approach gave children a sense of ownership.

Consideration of victims and their safety was a strength and sufficient in all relevant cases. Where potential and actual victims had been identified, appropriate victim safety planning had been completed. These plans had considered the views and wishes of victims as well as external controls to mitigate concerns. Plans had also identified intervention to assist children in understanding the impact their behaviour may have had for the victim/s.

Contingency planning to keep the child and others safe was detailed adequately, identifying appropriate responses and timeframes for actions should risks change. Contingency arrangements were holistic and had included the roles of other services, the child, and family in promoting safety.

<sup>8</sup> 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. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

### 3.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.	Outstanding
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Our rating<sup>9</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	100%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	<b>86%</b>
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	100%

Practitioners are skilled at developing and maintaining positive working relationships with children and families. Children were seen in environments where they were most comfortable, for example home visits or community venues. Inspectors found that practitioners had used a range of innovative delivery styles catered to the child's needs, including visual aids and interactive sessions. In all cases, delivery had met the diversity needs of the child; in one case, we saw a strong example of sessions exploring culture and heritage and how this had shaped the child's experience and identity. The practitioner's approach facilitated strong and effective engagement with the disposal.

There was a strong focus on community integration and building on the child's personal strengths to raise their self-esteem and confidence. Interventions were sequenced well, targeting key areas such as conflict resolution, substance misuse, and thinking skills. Where children needed emotional wellbeing and mental health support, referrals had been completed and appropriate supported offered.

Where other services were involved with the child and family, inspectors found a cohesive and coordinated approach from the professional network. This approach, along with effective communication between services, greatly assisted in managing and addressing risks to and from the child. The alignment of the services in one case was impressive, as they were collectively and individually reinforcing the same message. This consistency was incredibly beneficial to the child and family, who understood the roles of each service and what they would be undertaking with them.

The strong focus on victim protection in planning had translated into practice. In all relevant cases, the needs of victims and necessary measures to promote safety were in place. These included utilising appropriate external controls, and also delivering intervention to develop the child's internal controls, such as emotional regulation work.

<sup>9</sup> 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. [A more detailed explanation is available in the data annexe.](#)

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### 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.

Outstanding

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for out-of-court disposals, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews. Our key findings were as follows:

#### Strengths:

- There is detailed guidance which clearly articulates out-of-court disposal processes and minimum expectations for delivery. Protocols are fully understood by the service and wider partnership.
- Guidance provides distinct details on how the service intends to meet the protected characteristics of children and families accessing the bureau. This guidance promotes equitable access to provision and how to recognise and support diversity needs.
- The bureau process is thorough and robust. There is consistent attendance from the police, YJT, and children's social care. Other professionals involved in the case are invited, along with the child and family. Decision-making is informed by comprehensive assessments which are read prior to the bureau.
- The YJT, police, and partnership are committed to a child-centred approach. The individual needs of the child and circumstances of the offence are considered alongside the gravity matrix in determining the most appropriate outcomes.
- Children and families are meaningfully involved in the bureau process. They are supported and prepared to attend the bureau. Their views are highly valued and there is a collaborative approach to assessing, planning, and identifying the most appropriate outcome.
- Although it is not often needed, there is an established escalation process should a decision not be reached, which allows cases to be reviewed at a senior level. Panel members are confident in using this process.
- Intervention is offered for all out-of-court disposals. Children can access the same services and provision as post-court cases, with the voluntary element understood well. There is a robust exit strategy where, if required, children will be supported beyond YJT closure.
- There are effective risk management processes in place. These are understood by the partnership and promote the safety of children and other people.
- The service was part of the out-of-court disposal YJB assessment tool pilot and has provided feedback, contributing to its development and evaluation. The service has now adopted this tool.
- The YJT and partners are committed to improving the bureau process and offer for children. They have undertaken evaluation and used learning from the sector to adapt their provision, including piloting Outcome 22 and embedding a cannabis diversion scheme.
- Analysis of out-of-court disposal delivery is routinely undertaken. This is informed by the views of children and families who have accessed this provision. This has assisted the service's understanding of effectiveness and helped shape delivery.

**Areas for improvement:**

- There is a strong diversion offer, but the YJT needs to continue its work with the police to enhance this, including further developing and embedding Outcome 22. It would also benefit from reviewing processes to ensure appropriate flexibility in the application of out-of-court disposals, so ensure they meet the needs of children in all cases.
- In some cases, there were lengthy delays between the offence and referral to the bureau. This is an issue the police and YJT are addressing, but has not yet been fully resolved.
- The communication of findings from analysis and evaluation needs to be strengthened so that the impact of provision is understood at an operational level.

## 4.1. Resettlement

### 4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



There is a high-quality, evidence-based resettlement service for children leaving custody.

Outstanding

We inspected the quality of policy and provision in place for resettlement work, using evidence from documents, meetings, and interviews. To illustrate that work, we inspected one case managed by the YJT that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

#### Strengths:

- Guidance is comprehensive; it clearly outlines the necessary processes to achieve constructive resettlement. There is partnership commitment within the policy and pathways, and expectations of each service are appropriately detailed.
- The policy advocates for a personalised, strengths-based approach where the individual and diversity needs of children are central. Practical guidance on how to recognise and support children is detailed within the policy.
- In the resettlement case we reviewed, the individual diversity needs of the child had been considered. Appropriate actions and adjustments were made to promote equitable access to provision and meet the child's needs.
- The partnership recognises that it is responsible and accountable for resettlement provision. Arrangements allow both operational and strategic oversight.
- Most practitioners who oversee resettlement and remand cases have received specific training. Co-working arrangements are used in complex cases.
- Risk and safety management processes, including support for and protection of victims, is clearly detailed within guidance. In the resettlement case we reviewed, appropriate actions were undertaken to promote the safety of the child and other people.
- In the case we reviewed, there was frequent and meaningful contact with the child, which assisted in developing a positive working relationship and contributed to effective resettlement planning.
- The YJT has effective working relationships with local secure estates and the professional networks involved in resettlement. In the case we reviewed, communication between services was timely, supported resettlement planning, and promoted risk and safety management.
- There are effective resettlement pathways, coordinated by the YJT, which enable partners to provide in-reach services to children for constructive resettlement. In the case reviewed, the accommodation, health, and education need of the child were met.
- Resettlement policy and provision are regularly reviewed and are informed by internal analysis and learning from the wider sector.
- Evaluation of resettlement provision has been undertaken with partners. Findings have been effectively used to shape and improve service delivery. This includes reviewing the enhancing of accommodation protocols and options for children at risk of remand and due for release.

**Areas for improvement:**

- To further enhance evaluation, reviews of individual cases with operational staff will support learning, enable further understanding of the child's lived experience, and explore the impact of potential disproportionality.
- Communication of findings from analysis and evaluation to operational staff and partners needs to be improved. This will ensure that learning, including areas of strength, are understood.



## Further information

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The following can be found on our website:

- [inspection data, including methodology and contextual facts about the YJT](#)
- [a glossary of terms used in this report.](#)