

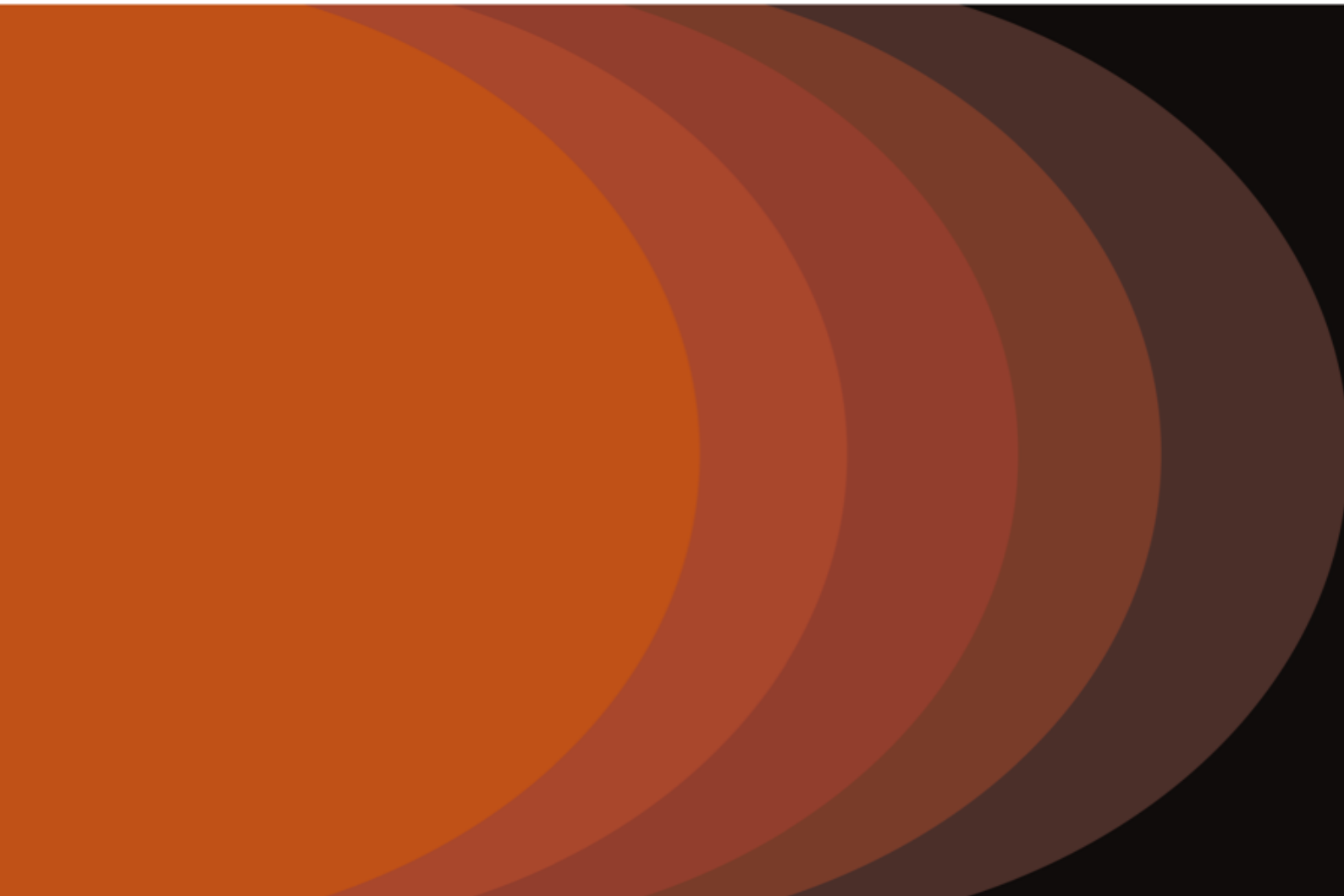


HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth justice services in

Flintshire

HM Inspectorate of Probation, July 2024



Contents

- Foreword 3**
- Ratings..... 4**
- Recommendations 5**
- Background..... 6**
- Domain one: Organisational delivery 6**
 - 1.1. Governance and leadership.....7
 - 1.2. Staff.....9
 - 1.3. Partnerships and services 11
 - 1.4. Information and facilities 13
- Domain two: Court disposals..... 18**
 - 2.1. Assessment 18
 - 2.2. Planning 19
 - 2.3. Implementation and delivery 20
 - 2.4. Reviewing.....21
- Domain three: Out-of-court disposals..... 22**
 - 3.1. Assessment 22
 - 3.2. Planning 23
 - 3.3. Implementation and delivery 24
 - 3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision 25
- 4.1. Resettlement 27**
 - 4.1. Resettlement policy and provision 27
- Further information 27**

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

HM Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth justice and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth justice 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.

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.

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: 978-1-916621-38-1

© **Crown copyright 2024**

Foreword

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

Overall, Flintshire YJS was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Good'.

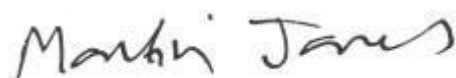
Flintshire YJS is a developing service, as in recent years it has moved from being subsumed within integrated youth services to become a distinct service within the education and youth portfolio. The senior manager is an influential leader, and this has helped to raise the profile of the YJS, both within the local authority and with partner agencies. Governance of the YJS is provided by the executive management board, which is chaired by the council's chief executive. The board is supported by comprehensive performance reports and has appropriate links to other strategic forums.

We found motivated, positive and passionate staff who are committed to achieving the best for the children they work with. It was pleasing to see plans being co-produced with children, and staff who did all they could to encourage children's engagement. However, partnership arrangements need to improve. Healthcare provision is limited, especially for children's emotional health and wellbeing and their speech, language and communication needs. There has been no seconded probation officer to the YJS for a number of years and while there are education support officers to coordinate education, training and employment services, they do not work directly with children. We found that case managers are often having to bridge the gaps in the partnership provision and go above and beyond to make sure that children's needs are being met.

For both post-court work and out-of-court disposals, we found consistently high-quality work in assessing children. However, the quality of planning for out-of-court disposals and for managing children's risk of harm to others needs to improve.















The panel for out-of-court disposals (the Bureau) is not multi-agency, and case managers complete assessments for the panel but do not attend it. Therefore, no one who has met the child and their family is at the panel to help inform decision-making and we recommend that these arrangements are reviewed.

The YJS is committed to becoming a trauma-informed service. It works with academic establishments to make sure the services being delivered are research-led and evidence-based and we found evidence of this in the work we inspected. The YJS delivers exceptional work with victims, ensuring they feel safe and supported. We found high levels of motivation, passion, and advocacy on behalf of victims. Flintshire YJS should be rightly proud of what it has achieved since becoming a distinct service. In this report we make six recommendations, and we trust that they will assist the service as it continues its development journey.



Martin Jones CBE
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Flintshire Youth Justice Service Fieldwork started March 2024		Score	20/36
Overall rating		Good	
1. Organisational delivery			
1.1	Governance and leadership	Good	
1.2	Staff	Good	
1.3	Partnerships and services	Requires improvement	
1.4	Information and facilities	Good	
2. Court disposals			
2.1	Assessment	Good	
2.2	Planning	Requires improvement	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Good	
2.4	Reviewing	Good	
3. Out-of-court disposals			
3.1	Assessment	Outstanding	
3.2	Planning	Requires improvement	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement	
3.4	Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	Requires improvement	
4. Resettlement¹			
4.1	Resettlement policy and provision	Good	

¹ The rating for resettlement does not influence the overall YJS rating.

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 Flintshire. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth justice services, and better protect the public.

Flintshire healthcare partners should:

1. make sure that healthcare provision for YJS children meets their emotional health and wellbeing needs
2. ensure that children supervised by the YJS are assessed for and have specific access to services that meet their speech, language and communication needs.

The executive management board should:

3. continue to challenge the Probation Service to ensure that it meets its statutory duties and provides the appropriate secondment provision to the YJS
4. review the format and purpose of the Bureau and ensure that it has the relevant input from staff who have met the child and the necessary agencies a in attendance, so that out-of-court disposals meet children's needs.

The YJS senior manager should:

5. improve the quality of planning in both post-court casework and out-of-court disposals to ensure consistently high-quality planning activity, tailored to each child
6. strengthen the quality and consistency of management oversight to ensure it drives improvements in the quality of practice.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Flintshire YJS over a period of a week, beginning on 11 March 2024. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began, out-of-court disposals were delivered, and resettlement cases were sentenced or released between 13 March 2023 and 05 January 2024. We also conducted 14 interviews with case managers.

Flintshire is a unitary local authority in the north-east corner of Wales, bordering Cheshire, Wrexham and Denbighshire. Coastal communities in Flintshire experience high levels of deprivation, particularly in relation to employment, income, education, and community safety. In 2021, the Welsh language was spoken by 23.9 per cent of the population in Flintshire compared with 29.5 per cent across Wales. This is a significant increase since 2011. Currently, 6.23 per cent of children in Flintshire are educated using the Welsh language. The population of Flintshire is largely white, and, over the years, this has been reflected in the population of children committing offences.

North Wales Police operates across Flintshire, and the YJS works collaboratively with other youth justice services in the region. This includes shared representation at regional and national forums, a shared review of out-of-court disposal work, implementation of the Turnaround programme and the commissioning of training and engagement with partners to address resourcing issues. Regional practitioner groups share best practice across the region.

In recent years, Flintshire YJS has become a distinct service within Flintshire County Council, separated from the integrated youth service. It now sits within the education and youth portfolio, and this has given it a higher profile across the partnership. It is therefore an emerging service, led by a senior manager, who reports to the chief officer for the education and youth portfolio. Governance of the YJS is provided by the YJS executive partnership board. This is chaired by the chief executive director of Flintshire County Council, who has been chair for two years. The senior manager is supported by a team manager and two senior practitioners. All have thematic leads and areas of responsibility. At the time of the inspection one of the senior practitioners was on maternity leave, and so her areas of responsibility and line management had been temporarily reallocated. There are 24 YJS staff and three volunteers. In February 2024, 20 post-court interventions and 24 out-of-court disposals were open to the YJS.

The service produces comprehensive data on the YJS cohort of children. Each year, it undertakes a comparative cohort analysis of cases to support planning and set the service's priorities. Analysis of YJS performance data shows that the number of first-time entrants to the formal youth justice system was above the average for Wales, and for England and Wales. The proportion of children who reoffend and the frequency with which they do so are also higher than the average for England and Wales. However, there is a prevent and deter panel that looks at referrals made for early intervention and the number of children being referred for diversion support has increased. This is a positive trend, and shows that services are intervening with children at an earlier stage, with the intention of preventing offending and reducing the number of first-time entrants.

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 12 meetings, including with staff, volunteers, managers, board members, and partnership staff and their managers.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows.

1.1. Governance and leadership



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

Good

Strengths:

- Governance of the YJS is provided by the executive management board. The board is chaired by the council's chief executive, with the chief officer for education and youth acting as deputy chair. They work alongside the senior manager in providing a clear vision for the board.
- Board membership includes all statutory partners, who understand the vision and risks for the YJS. The board is supported by a multi-agency delivery group that helps to make progress towards the YJS and partnership's priorities.
- The board receives high-quality information on the service's performance and progress on its action plans. It also receives learning from audits and inspection reports, and from deep-dive thematic reports and reports on national performance.
- Board members contribute actively to the meeting. This will be developed further when partner agencies start reporting on YJS key performance indicators linked to their area of practice.
- The YJS senior manager is an experienced, knowledgeable, and influential leader who uses research to help develop the services provided. This has had a positive impact on raising the YJS's profile within the local authority and with partner agencies.
- The service is well represented across strategic and operational partnership forums. There are strong youth justice links across the North Wales region and the YJS is represented on various local and national forums.
- The board commissioned a peer review from the Youth Justice Sector Improvement Partnership, which looked at leadership and governance. Following this, it had development sessions to create an action plan and monitored progress in board meetings.
- The board is supported by a delivery group, which has reprioritised and refocused its agenda following the peer review.
- The senior manager shares the key findings from the board with the service to ensure that staff are aware of local trends and priorities.
- A YJS practitioner is an active member of the board and board members have met YJS staff.

- The youth justice plan has been developed through consultation with board members and staff.
- Board members learn about children's experiences through listening to case studies at board meetings.
- At the time of inspection, a senior practitioner was on maternity leave, and so her areas of responsibility and line management had been temporarily reallocated. However, everyone was clear about their key areas of practice and there were clear lines of accountability.
- The management team meets regularly to discuss practice-related issues such as recruitment and training, and to review performance, look at caseloads, and understand the profile of the children.
- There is a good working relationship between the managers, who all understand and promote the YJS's vision and objectives.

Areas for improvement:

- The YJS probation post has been vacant for over two years and there is no dedicated speech, language and communication provision. However, board members gave us examples of how they had challenged agencies and escalated their concerns about the lack of resource.
- The YJS has a disproportionality action plan and there is a strategic group that reviews over-represented groups. However, this needs to have an impact at an operational level to help improve practice in assessing children and delivering interventions that reflect their protected characteristics.
- Although induction to the board is supported by meetings with the senior manager, this process needs to be standardised so that all new members are made aware of the board's expectations.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Strengths:

- Staff are happy, positive and motivated in their work. They reported feeling supported by their managers and their peers.
- The management team works well together. Staff feel confident to approach managers for advice and guidance.
- Managers have provided the executive management board with reports outlining issues on vacancies and staff capacity. This led to increased funding for posts and enabled the service to recruit more permanent staff and make the service more sustainable.
- There is a good level of diversity within the team, with specific needs being reflected in the staff group.
- When allocating cases, the service uses the same case manager where possible. This helps children to form consistent and trusting relationships with workers. Staff feel that the allocation of work is fair and collaborative.
- Staff receive regular and purposeful monthly supervision. Seconded staff receive supervision and support from both their home agency and their YJS line manager.
- Staff who manage complex cases, for example cases involving harmful sexual behaviour, have access to clinical support and supervision. This includes support provided through the enhanced case management model.
- Staff across the partnership work collaboratively and prioritise joint working to meet the needs of children and families.
- Staff receive individual feedback from audits. Themes are discussed at team meetings so that staff know what is being done well and what needs to be done differently to improve practice.
- There is a thorough induction process for new staff, and there are procedures for addressing staff competency.
- The YJS has a succession and development plan, and staff feel encouraged to look for training opportunities. The service proactively encourages staff development and offers management opportunities within the service. It also supports staff to complete external qualifications.
- Volunteers are supported in their role through individual supervision, where their professional and personal development is considered.
- Trauma-informed practice is being developed across the service. There is a lead practitioner and staff have received training.
- Restorative justice and victim work was a significant strength. We found high levels of motivation, passion, and advocacy on behalf of victims. Staff informed victims of their rights, encouraged them to engage, and helped them to feel safe. The restorative justice and victim officer worked alongside practitioners to ensure that they incorporated victims' views into their practice.

- Staff do all they can to encourage good engagement with the child. Staff and managers are child-centred and know their children well. Staff advocate for children and challenge other agencies when appropriate to ensure that children are receiving the services they need. Staff go above and beyond to make sure that children's needs are being met. This often involves them bridging the gaps in partnership provision.
- The senior manager carries out annual staff assessments to review the general welfare of the team. This provides an opportunity to discuss the wider strategic and operational elements within the service.
- Managers recognise good practice through emails. Staff receive praise through supervision. Staff feel valued by managers and by their peers and the service promotes a supportive culture.

Area for improvement:

- Case managers have to cover limited partnership resources, for example in education and health. This can increase their workload and lead to inconsistencies in the quality of the services delivered.
- Management oversight met the needs of the case in only just over half of the cases inspected. It was not consistently driving a high quality of practice.
- Opportunities for volunteers could be expanded to include other roles within the service, such as mentoring. The service could also consider how to include volunteers in team away-days and meetings.

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

Strengths:

- The YJS has access to a comprehensive suite of data, which it uses to improve its work, for example with children who are looked after.
- Each year, the YJS carries out a comparative cohort analysis of cases to support planning and set priorities. This includes monitoring the adverse childhood experiences of the cohort to understand the needs and experiences of children and families.
- Children assessed as high risk are discussed at the YJS multi-agency risk strategy meetings, and in other forums, including the missing, exploited and trafficked panel.
- The service is committed to becoming a trauma-informed service. In partnership with ACE Hub Wales (Public Health Wales) and Wrexham University, it has used the TrACE toolkit to develop an action plan and regularly monitors progress against this.
- The YJS has access to a number of additional services, including enhanced case management. This is provided across Wales by the Forensic Adolescent Consultation and Treatment Service for children with the most complex behavioural concerns. There is also Empire Fighting Chance, which is a programme to empower children and combines non-contact boxing training with psychology-informed mentoring.
- The restorative justice and victim officer has put a structured framework in place to ensure that the victim is included and supported, and that their views are heard. He also works with corporate victims to build relationships with local communities. Staff make sure that victims feel supported and that children who have committed offences are integrated into their communities.
- Reparation sessions are tailored to the child's needs, although more could be done to develop specific activities for girls. They are offered to all children open to the YJS, to encourage them to get involved in positive activities.
- The YJS has education support officers, two of which are seconded from the Inclusion Service. They are responsible for coordinating education, training and employment support services for YJS children, but do not provide individual interventions. The officers provide a link between education and careers services and monitor children through the YJS education, training and employment panel. They also liaise with Careers Wales to support children aged over 16.
- There is a comprehensive range of partnership forums. These work collectively to tackle exclusions, challenge and support schools, and ease access for YJS children to further education. Education providers are responsive to the needs of YJS children. Partnership working is helping to improve schools' capacity to manage them and keep them in learning.
- There is a good connection with social services for children and evidence of joint working. Staff understand how to refer a child to social services if they are concerned about their safety and wellbeing.

- The YJS has a pathway in place for working with harmful sexual behaviour and a link with Action for Children, who also provide specialist assessments and interventions.
- There is a child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) practitioner, who provides specialist consultation, assessment and intervention for children. The YJS case manager screens all children for mental health needs and will consult with the CAMHS practitioner if needed.
- As a result of the YJS health review, the YJS and CAMHS have developed a new post that will support children's physical health, emotional health and wellbeing.
- 'Flintshire Sorted' is the children's substance misuse team, which is also managed by the YJS senior manager. They provide services to minimise the risk of drug- and alcohol-related harm and deliver prevention work in schools and the community. They provide targeted work for children at higher risk of misusing substances and a therapeutic service for those whose substance use is having a negative impact on daily functioning and mental health. Flintshire Sorted and the YJS work in a cohesive manner, and there is effective communication between the services.
- YJS has an experienced seconded police officer who ensures that police officers understand the YJS's work and the child-first approach. Intelligence is shared daily; the police officer attends the YJS risk strategy meetings and will do joint visits with case managers if required. She works directly with children and families and completes restorative justice sessions for children who have offended against police officers or staff.
- Feedback from court indicates that YJS staff are knowledgeable about the children who appear in court. Reports are comprehensive and easy to understand, with clear recommendations that follow from the information provided. There are regular meetings between the service and court. A feedback form is completed at the end of court sessions.

Areas for improvement:

- Healthcare provision is limited, especially for children's emotional health and wellbeing and their speech, language and communication needs.
- The partnership recognises that there is no dedicated speech, language and communication provision for YJS children. It understands the barriers to obtaining effective provision. Strategic focus on this gap needs to continue to ensure that appropriate speech, language and communication provision is available and accessible for YJS children and meets their needs.
- There has been no seconded probation officer to the YJS for a number of years. The partnership understands that this is because of recruitment issues that are specific to the North Wales region. The YJS has put various measures in place, including obtaining funding for a post that deals with transitions to the probation service. However, at the time of the inspection, this statutory post was vacant and the YJS lacked the skills and experience of a seconded probation officer.
- While there are education support officers to coordinate education, training and employment services, they do not do direct work with children. This affects the capacity of YJS case managers, who are pulled into education meetings to advocate for individual educational provision for children.

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

Strengths:

- Diversity is addressed in policies that are updated annually and well understood by staff. Any reviews are communicated by email and in discussions at team meetings.
- The YJS is developing trauma-informed practice through its partnership with Public Health Wales and by implementing the TrACE toolkit. It is also developing trauma-informed practice in its policies and procedures. This includes reviewing the use of language in reports.
- Information-sharing protocols are in place and understood across the partnership.
- There is an escalation process for all partners, to help them challenge each other. Staff feel supported by managers to raise concerns.
- Staff are flexible in how they see children. As the service covers a large geographical area, staff try to use buildings that are accessible, safe and suitable for children and families. Staff also see children at venues around the area, including youth hubs, schools and through home visits.
- Performance data is produced for the management team. This allows the team to identify and address any issues in relation to data and recording.
- YJS staff have access to social services' children's systems. Some partners have their own access to the YJS case management system.
- HM Inspectorate of Probation reports are discussed and reviewed against practice in Flintshire. This supports the YJS in developing learning and considering different options for service delivery.
- Critical learning reviews are completed so that the YJS and the wider partnership can share key learning and implement actions.
- The YJS is committed to delivering services that are research-led and evidence-based and works closely with different university establishments.
- The YJS has actioned the learning from the peer review commissioned by the board and monitors progress regularly.

Areas for improvement:

- The YJS has a quality assurance framework in place. However, although we saw some excellent practice in some cases, the framework did not consistently drive the quality of practice in all the inspected cases.
- Although the current YJS office is in disrepair and is not child-friendly, there are imminent plans to move the service to a more appropriate building.
- While the YJS has attempted to gather more feedback from children through various methods, it has not always done this consistently. Some feedback methods and

processes are yet to be fully embedded, and the YJS needs to ensure that participation and feedback influence service delivery.

- Staff have a range of interventions to use with children but greater access to technology would help to keep children engaged.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The YJS has a participation strategy that sets out the various methods it uses to get feedback from children, parents/carers and victims to shape service provision and delivery. As part of the assessment and planning process, YJS staff ask children about their aspirations and seek their views on areas of their life and how positive these areas are for them. At the end of intervention, staff revisit these to see if progress has been made.

As part of the service's commitment to develop a trauma-informed approach, the YJS senior manager held interviews with children and parents to hear about their experiences with the service. The management board has also focused on the voice of children by using case study information as part of each meeting. While the YJS has attempted to get more feedback from children, it has not always done this consistently.

The YJS contacted, on our behalf, children who had open cases at the time of the inspection, to gain their consent for a text survey. We delivered the survey independently to the four children who consented, and one child replied.

When asked how they rated the service they had received from the YJS, one child responded, giving a score of 10 out of 10.

Inspectors also spoke to three children. All felt that their YJS workers had the right skills to do the work. They also felt that they had been able to access the right services and support to help them stay out of trouble.

One child, talking about their case manager, said:

"Since I've seen the worker, I haven't been in trouble at school or in the community. They are very understanding and a good listener."

Another child commented:

"My worker will speak to me about school and getting into trouble and how my mates can influence me."

One child said:

"They are just nice people, easy to talk to. They know I don't like sitting around so they would come and be with me when I had to go to court."

Diversity

- The YJS has a disproportionality action plan in place to monitor the representation of different groups within the cohort and respond to this. This had led to the service analysing how it works with different groups of children and increasing training for staff and managers.
- According to the 2021 Annual Population Survey, the Welsh language is spoken by 23.9 per cent of the population in Flintshire compared with 29.5 per cent across Wales. This is a significant increase on the data from the 2011 national census, which reported that 13.2 per cent of the county's population have some Welsh language skills.
- The county has five Welsh medium primary schools and one Welsh medium secondary school. There are no dual stream or bilingual schools in Flintshire. Currently 6.23 per cent of children in Flintshire are educated in Welsh. There are ambitious targets in the council's Welsh in Education strategic plan to increase this number over the next 10 years.
- Demographically, the population of Flintshire is largely white, and the offending population has, over the years, reflected this. In December 2023 one child of Black ethnicity was involved with the YJS, which accounted for approximately four per cent of the offending population. This was in line with the proportion of 10- to 17-year-old children of Black ethnicity in Flintshire.
- The YJS looks at disproportionality in terms of ethnicity. It also monitors wider groups, such as girls, children who are looked after, children from Eastern European backgrounds and children from Roma, Gypsy and Traveller families.
- YJS data shows that, typically, the YJS cohort is usually approximately 20 per cent female to 80 per cent male. However, from the middle to end of 2023 there was a shift to 27 per cent female. This is a higher proportion when compared to previous trends. The service has started to examine the data to look for any patterns in the cohort. The service manager is consulting with researchers at Liverpool John Moores University to get their views and academic insights.
- The YJS monitors the proportion of children who are looked after, who represent approximately 13 per cent of the total cohort. Deeper analysis of this data showed that violence is a concern within this cohort, and all the children became criminalised while they were in care. In the past, the YJS has attempted a restorative justice pilot programme to promote diversion. However, it was difficult to make progress with this, because of a lack of resources. The YJS is formulating its response to the national protocol on reducing the criminalisation of looked after children.
- Of the 44 children with open interventions at the time of inspection, 63 per cent had substance misuse issues, 79 per cent had emotional, mental health and wellbeing concerns, and 67 per cent had a learning disability or learning difficulty, or received additional learning needs support. Nine per cent of the children were looked after and living within the YJS area.
- The inspection saw an excellent example of a case manager working with a child on their racist language and behaviour. They focused on well-known racist incidents in the news, how language affects behaviour and the positive effect that people from different cultures have on society and local communities. The work was delivered sensitively, considered and well worked through, and had a positive impact on the child's views, behaviour and sense of self.

- The YJS has a disproportionality action plan and there is a strategic group that reviews over-represented groups. However, it needs to connect this to its work at an operational level to help drive practice in assessing and delivering interventions that reflect children's protected characteristics. This would be especially relevant to developing reparation activities for girls.
- In the staff survey, nearly all staff who had diversity needs said that these had been met either 'very well' or 'quite well'.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at five community sentences and one custodial sentence managed by the YJS.

2.1. Assessment



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

Good

Our rating² for assessment is based on the following key questions:

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

The inspection found that assessment activity was consistently strong across children's desistance and their safety and wellbeing. However, although case managers had access to information from other agencies, they did not always use it when analysing children's risk of harm to others. In assessing desistance, case managers showed an awareness of the trauma that children had experienced and its impact on their behaviour and engagement. Case managers completed appropriate analysis of children's attitudes towards, or reasons for, their offending. They focused on children's strengths and motivation to change and involved children and their parents or carers in the assessment. They analysed children's diversity needs and, in all cases, the restorative justice and victim officer proactively ensured that case managers included the victim's needs and wishes in their assessments.

Case managers identified potential risks to children's safety and wellbeing appropriately. They used information from other agencies consistently to support children's safety. They liaised well with social services for children and with the education specialist workers. There was a clear written record of children's wellbeing and how to keep them safe.

In assessing children's risk of harm to others, case managers did not always access information from other agencies, including information on past behaviours and convictions, and use it consistently to analyse the level of the risk of harm presented by the child. However, in most cases, case managers consistently considered who was at risk, and the nature of that risk.

² 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 on our website.](#)

2.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

Our rating³ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	67%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	67%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	50%

The service prioritised allocating cases to case managers who had already worked with the child and their family. There was evidence that plans had been co-produced with children. Planning for the child's interventions showed that the case manager knew the child well, considered their personal circumstances, and understood their motivations and strengths. However, inspectors noted that children's emotional and wellbeing concerns, and their speech, language and communication needs, were not consistently included in planning.

In too many cases practitioners did not include children's diversity needs when planning services and interventions. Case managers did not always take the views of parents and carers into consideration as part of the planning process. Education, training and employment workers shared information about children's ability to take part in provision. However, case managers were responsible for helping children to access the services and, if necessary, advocating for them to ensure their needs were being met. Flintshire Sorted had processes for working with children with needs related to substance use, and engaged children well. Victims' wishes were considered consistently, which provided opportunities for restorative justice.

Planning to keep children safe involved other agencies. Multi-agency meetings were held regularly to make sure information was shared and all agencies were up to date with the child's circumstances. Regular information-sharing and updates from the police enabled practitioners to consider wider safeguarding issues outside of the home.

Planning promoted the safety of other people and involved other agencies in only half of the cases. Contingency planning to address escalating concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing and the safety of other people was not sufficiently detailed or relevant to the child's specific circumstances in enough cases.

³ 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 on our website](#)

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating⁴ 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?	67%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	67%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	67%

Case managers had built strong relationships with the children and their families, and this was evident in the children's engagement. All cases demonstrated the high priority that case managers gave to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents or carers. There was evidence of staff using trauma-informed interventions that showed they understood the child's needs. Interventions were innovative and tailored to help motivate children. Case managers were involved in multi-agency discussions to ensure that provision was in place for the child when their involvement with the YJS ended. Sessional workers were involved in delivering reparation sessions. There were good examples of them using the opportunity to mentor the children they were working with. There was evidence of reparation activities being used to help the child to build relationships and facilitate community integration.

In all cases, the case manager identified interventions to manage the child's safety and wellbeing. Although the involvement of other agencies in helping to keep children safe was not evident in every case, there were some examples of joint work with specialist staff, including the CAMHS worker, and with partner agencies, including substance use services, and social care for children. Although case managers felt confident in assessing children's emotional and wellbeing concerns, and their speech, language and communication needs, they were aware that provision to meet children's needs was limited. The YJS has worked with health partners to close these gaps. However, the lack of specific identified provision for YJS children meant that their needs were not being fully met. Case managers used escalation procedures when they felt that the child was not receiving the provision they needed, to meet their needs. However, inspectors noted that, had these services been available to children, they would have improved the quality of the interventions delivered.

The delivery of services and interventions that considered a child's risk of harm to others needed strengthening. The involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm was not sufficiently well coordinated in all cases, in particular the higher risk cases. However, the case manager considered the protection of actual and potential victims in nearly all cases, and included focused work with victim's families ensuring that their needs were being met. There was a multi-agency approach across agencies to monitor risks, and the communication and information-sharing between the YJS police staff and case managers was timely.

⁴ 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 on our website](#)

2.4. Reviewing



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

Good

Our rating⁵ for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	67%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	83%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	67%

Reviews were completed at key points in the order, and in nearly all cases there was an ongoing review of desistance factors as the order progressed. Not all cases evidenced that case managers continued to build on children's strengths, but they did consider changes in children's personal circumstances. Reviewing considered the child's motivation appropriately as the order progressed, and the child and their parents or carers continued to be involved in the reviewing process. Although the focus of interventions changed if needed, the child's plan was not adjusted, for example to include children's views, in all cases.

Reviewing of children's safety and wellbeing mostly detailed the changes in children's circumstances. Case managers and partner agencies were involved in multi-agency discussions and meetings to ensure that provision was in place for children when their involvement with the YJS ended. Case managers were responsive to changes in the child's circumstances. They used the multi-agency risk strategy meetings and children's social care statutory meetings to help them manage any concerns or escalations in the risk to children's safety and wellbeing.

When reviewing the safety of other people, there were some delays in case managers identifying new risks that were emerging. Reviewing the potential impact of these on the level of risk posed by the child was not always timely. Case managers changed the focus of interventions if needed to manage risk, and in one case a MAPPa review had been appropriately led by the Probation service due to the child's age. However, the child's ongoing plan was not consistently adjusted in line with the reviewing process.

⁵ 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 on our website](#)

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected eight cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of two youth conditional cautions, two youth cautions and four community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in seven cases.

3.1. Assessment



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁶ 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?	88%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	88%

To help identify children's desistance factors, case managers accessed a range of sources from partner agencies, including from education, health and the police. They offered an appropriate analysis of children's attitudes towards, or reasons for, their offending and focused on children's strengths and their motivation to change. Case managers involved children and their parents or carers in assessment activity. In nearly all cases, they considered the needs and wishes of victims. Assessment activity took account of the child's diversity and identified any barriers preventing children from accessing services to meet their needs. Inspectors noted that case managers were tenacious in capturing children's views in their assessments.

In nearly all the cases inspected, the potential risks to children's safety and wellbeing were sufficiently analysed. They used information from other agencies to inform their assessments, including from social services for children, and took into account their contextual safeguarding needs. There was evidence in the out-of-court disposal cases that case managers had considered the child's experience of trauma and its impact on their engagement. There was a clear written record of children's wellbeing and how to keep them safe.

In nearly all cases, there was a clear written record of the assessment to keep other people safe. Case managers identified and analysed the risks to others, and used information from other agencies to inform the assessment. Practitioners recognised wider risks to other people and analysed children's potential future harmful behaviour appropriately.

⁶ 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 on our website](#)

3.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁷ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	63%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	63%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	63%

The Bureau in Flintshire is not a multi-agency panel. This means that other agencies do not help to formulate the plans at the panel for children subject to out-of-court disposals, and this may have contributed to planning being an area of practice requiring development. This is compounded by the case manager not attending the panel and so not having the opportunity to directly contribute to the panel's plans for the child.

Planning addressed the child's desistance factors, although case managers took account of children's diversity needs in only half of the cases. They co-produced plans with children, included their parents or carers, and made planning proportionate to the type of disposal. Most planning reflected the victim's wishes and needs. As some of the interventions were delivered within a short period, case managers and partner agency staff focused effectively on children's access to mainstream services and opportunities for community integration after the disposal had ended.

Planning for children's safety and wellbeing saw case managers working alongside other agencies, including social services for children and substance use workers. Partnership working was evident in the multi-agency missing, exploited and trafficked meetings, as well as discussions about children's risks in other forums across the partnership. However, planning interventions for speech, language and communication and general health was limited.

Case managers considered how to keep other people safe in most cases. However, they did not consistently involve specialist workers and other agencies or address the safety of specific victims and potential victims to help inform the planning process. Contingency planning to address escalating concerns about the safety of other people could have been improved by ensuring that plans were not generic but a response to individual children's situations.

⁷ 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 on our website.](#)

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Our rating⁸ 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?	75%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	63%

Case managers could access all the services and interventions available for children on court orders for those subject to an out-of-court disposal. The interventions delivered showed that the case manager had built a strong relationship with the child, although they had not considered the children's diversity needs in all cases.

Case managers worked hard to establish effective working relationships with children and their parents or carers. There were examples of case managers being creative with the interventions and using visual and kinaesthetic resources to engage children and meet their needs. In most cases, practitioners had considered how children could be linked to mainstream services once their interventions had ended.

Case managers were aware of the gaps in partnership services for children and were tenacious in advocating for them to ensure that partner agencies provided appropriate provision, especially for children's health and education needs. Case managers liaised well with social services for children. They used multi-agency meetings to share information so that agencies were up to date with children's circumstances. In nearly all of the cases inspected, service delivery and interventions supported children's safety effectively.

In most cases, interventions with children to support the safety of other people were managing and minimising the risk of harm. There was an excellent example of a practitioner working with a child on a hate crime incident and incorporating the child's own lived experiences and heritage. However, case managers needed to give greater consideration as to how best to protect potential and actual victims when delivering interventions. Overall, the interventions delivered supported the safety of other people in most of the cases inspected.

⁸ 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 on our website.](#)

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
---	----------------------

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 were as follows:

Strengths:

- The YJS has a prevention offer, which includes the Turnaround programme. Multi-agency panels focus on early help for children and families.
- The number of children being referred for prevention and diversion support had increased. This shows that services are intervening with children at an earlier stage, to prevent offending and reduce the number of first-time entrants.
- The Bureau is the decision-making panel for out-of-court disposals. There is a Bureau policy, which was recently reviewed to include updated guidance.
- On receiving the out-of-court referral, the case is allocated to a case manager, to complete an assessment. Victim and specialist workers are also informed of the allocations, so that they can check their information to add to the assessment.
- Staff understood the process for out-of-court disposals and felt that their assessments influenced the outcome for the child.
- There was evidence of joint decision-making between the YJS and police at the panel, and the rationales for the disposal outcomes were clearly recorded. If there were any disagreements at the panel, there was a clear escalation process in place.
- Case managers complete a spreadsheet on a fortnightly basis so that the Bureau can check the child's progress.
- The YJS monitors the reoffending of children subject to out-of-court disposals and reports it to the management board.
- Although there is a North Wales scrutiny panel, the service felt it focused too much on adults. Therefore, they have developed a local scrutiny panel, which is chaired by a magistrate and attended by the YJS senior manager and a representative from North Wales Police. This panel focuses entirely on Flintshire children and reports to the management board.

Areas for improvement:

- The Bureau members are the YJS seconded police officer, the YJS senior practitioner and the restorative justice worker, who represents the victim's views. The Bureau is not multi-agency and does not include anyone from social services for children, education, health or any professional relevant to the child. Although the case manager who completed the assessment makes an outcome recommendation they do not attend, and so no one who has met the child and their family is at the panel to help inform decision-making.
- The lack of a multi-agency out-of-court disposal panel means the case manager has to gather a lot of information from different agencies which impacts on the amount of pre-panel work required. This is compounded by the case manager not attending the

panel and so not having the opportunity to contribute and respond to the panel's discussion at that time. Whilst the panel can be rescheduled for the case manager to respond to the panel's initial decision if it deviates from the recommendation, this can lead to a time delay in delivering the outcome for the child.

- Although the quality of Bureau assessments was strong, the amount of time taken to complete them increased case managers' workload.
- The police have recently implemented Outcome 22; however, this does not include children who give 'no comment' interviews. This approach needs to ensure that children are not being unnecessarily criminalised because the options for diversionary outcomes are limited.

4.1. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Good

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 two cases managed by the YJS that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

Strengths:

- The YJS has a resettlement policy, which will be reviewed to include the revised Youth Justice Board case management guidance.
- The YJS and social services for children have an agreement that there is a multi-agency review when a child is remanded to custody.
- Data on custody and resettlement was presented at the management board. The board identified that monitoring safeguarding incidents and promoting advocacy for children in custody needed to improve. This led to the board escalating safeguarding concerns about children currently in custody.
- Multi-agency resettlement meetings were held and were evident in the cases inspected. They determined the sequencing of work that would take place to address the child's needs and the agencies' roles and responsibilities.
- YJS case managers attended review meetings and regularly visited children in custody in person, to maintain and develop their working relationship.
- Staff described communication with the secure estate as effective. Each child was allocated a resettlement worker. There were weekly conversations between the YJS and the establishment.
- Finding suitable accommodation was a challenge. However, problems with accommodation were escalated quickly to ensure that any issues affecting children in custody were dealt with as soon as possible.
- Case managers considered release on temporary licence to help children explore education, employment and training opportunities. There were good examples of this being used to help children reintegrate into their community.
- Staff are supportive of families whose children are in custody and use creative ways to maintain communication with them. For example, they set up a WhatsApp group for parents who did not speak to each other so that both parents were updated about their child's progress.
- There are procedures in place to ensure that specialist practitioners maintained regular contact with education and health services in custody. Case managers were the conduits for ensuring that all information was shared between agencies in the community and their counterparts in the custodial establishment. YJS case managers worked closely with the child's social worker, including joint visits to the secure establishments, and attending review meetings.

Areas for improvement:

- A policy decision regarding the use of intensive supervision and surveillance (ISS) had a negative impact on the quality of one of the resettlement cases. This led to the child being subject to licence with ISS, which was not appropriate to their level of risk and did not address their many vulnerabilities. The YJS has since changed the policy and is reviewing the use of ISS as part of licence conditions.
- The resettlement policy is not ensuring that resettlement casework is consistent.
- The wording in pre-sentence reports did not consistently offer a child-first, trauma-informed approach, especially when considering the impact of custody on children. However, it is positive that reviewing the language in reports had already been identified as an action in the YJS TrACE development plan.
- Although there had been training in resettlement work for both YJS staff and partner agencies in the past, none had been completed recently.
- Some, but not all, management board members know the profile of the children in custody, what their needs are, and what services will be required from partner agencies on their release.

Further information

The following can be found on our website:

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