

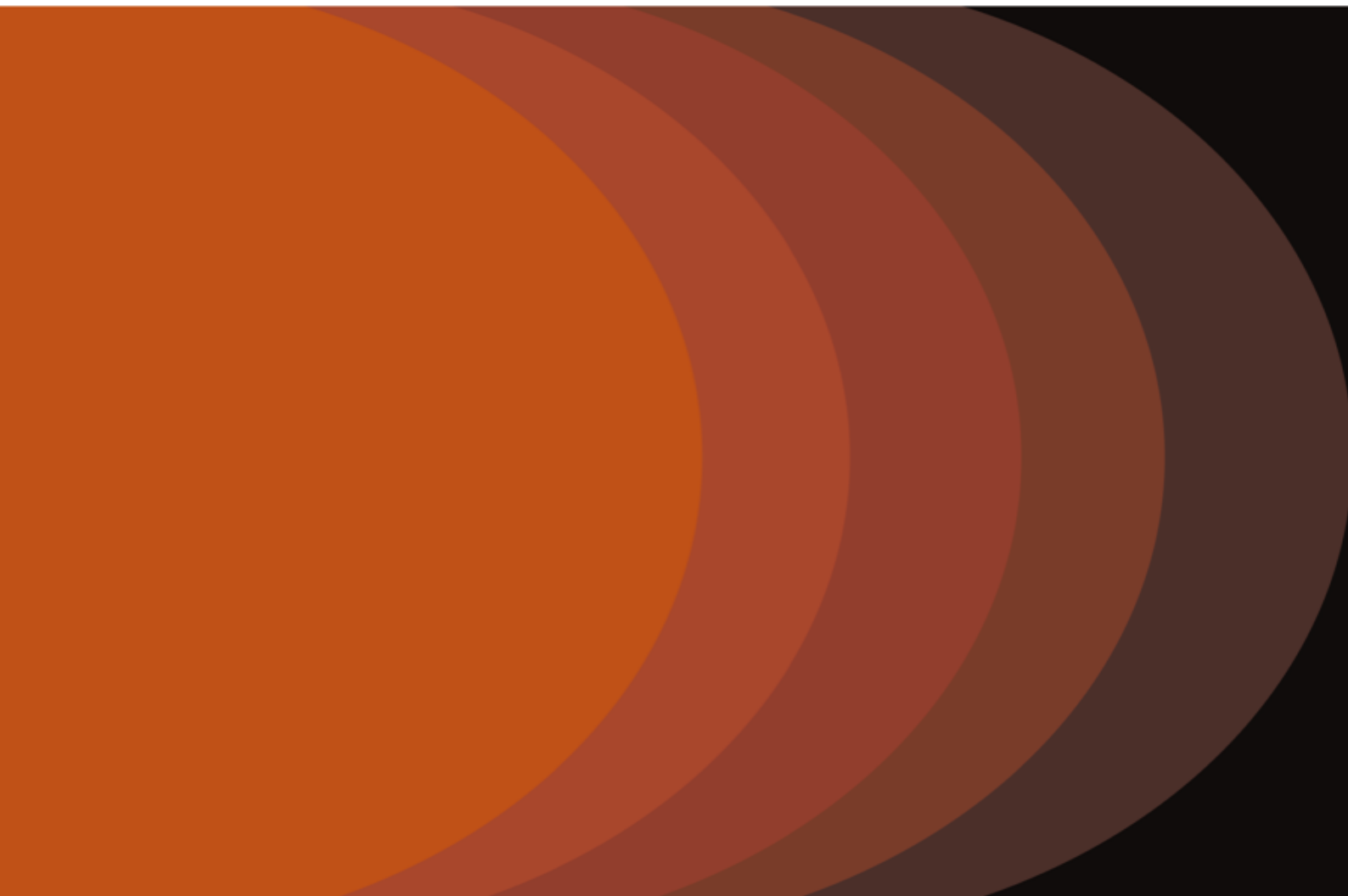


HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth justice services in

Newport

HM Inspectorate of Probation, July 2024



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

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Foreword

This inspection is part of our programme of youth justice service (YJS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Newport 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, Newport YJS was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Good'.

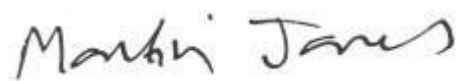
In recent years Newport YJS has experienced significant challenges, with changes to leadership arrangements, loss of a dedicated premises, absence of specialist workers, and high workloads. During the past 12 months, under the guidance of the YJS leadership team, there has been a period of transition in which the team has rebuilt its identity and sense of purpose. It is a credit to the team that, despite the adversity, it has prioritised the delivery of effective services to children.

The YJS leadership team promotes a culture of learning and transparency and has insight into the areas that need improvement. Up until recently, it had been steering the service, and there has been a lack of effective leadership and governance from the YJS strategic partnership board. Chairing arrangements of the board were inconsistent and contributions from statutory and key partners varied. The recent appointment of a new chair, and renewed membership of the right partners, with sufficient seniority, should result in significant improvements to the YJS governance arrangements. The board and partnership need to urgently develop their understanding of the profile of YJS children, with particular focus on overrepresented groups, and they must provide a strategic and operational steer to progress the YJS disproportionality strategy. The renewed governance arrangements need to be visible and provide assurances that the YJS is supporting processes to obtain appropriate premises.

Newport YJS has a strong preventative offer to divert children away from the formal justice system. Children have equitable access to the range of services, and we found an impressive suite of interventions. The partnership arrangements have strengths but are missing vital statutory representation from a probation officer and education worker. These gaps must be addressed. The partnership also needs to be assured that the services it is delivering are evaluated and having a positive impact on children's lives.

Newport YJS has aspirational outcomes for its children. We found embedded strengths-based approaches and a proactive attitude to supporting desistance. Quality assurance processes have recently been improved and the YJS acknowledges that attention needs to be paid to the sufficiency of reviewing in post-court cases, particularly in relation to keeping children and other people safe. We found strengths in out-of-court disposal practice, and it was pleasing to see a commitment to embedding and evaluating the recently revised out-of-court disposal policy and provision.















In this report, we make several recommendations that will enable Newport YJS to build on its existing strengths and make important improvements in its delivery of services to children.



Martin Jones

HM Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Newport Youth Justice Service		Score	19/36
Fieldwork started February 2024			
Overall rating		Good	
1. Organisational delivery			
1.1	Governance and leadership	Requires improvement	
1.2	Staff	Good	
1.3	Partnerships and services	Requires improvement	
1.4	Information and facilities	Requires improvement	
2. Court disposals			
2.1	Assessment	Good	
2.2	Planning	Good	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement	
2.4	Reviewing	Inadequate	
3. Out-of-court disposals			
3.1	Assessment	Good	
3.2	Planning	Outstanding	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Outstanding	
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 ten recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of youth justice services in Newport. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth justice services, and better protect the public.

The Newport Youth Justice Strategic Partnership Board should:

1. develop consistent and cohesive chairing arrangements, which ensure the attendance and participation of all board members
2. improve data analysis processes to promote a consistent understanding of the profile of YJS children, with a particular focus on developing effective mechanisms to capture, analyse, and mitigate against disproportionality and overrepresentation in the service
3. ensure the YJS is resourced and located to deliver high-quality work with children, including securing a probation officer, an education worker, and leading processes to obtain appropriate spaces for the YJS to undertake its work
4. improve the relationship between the board and YJS practitioners to ensure a shared understanding of the influence of strategic priorities on operational delivery
5. evaluate the impact of YJS services and interventions, ensuring that they are effective in keeping children and others safe.

The Newport Youth Justice leadership team should:

6. complete a strategic review of the leadership team's areas of responsibility, to ensure workloads, lines of accountability, and management expectations are reasonable, and the leadership team have sufficient capacity to complete their roles to a consistently high standard
7. ensure that there is effective oversight of volunteers which includes training, support and monitoring of all volunteers.

The Newport Youth Justice Service should:

8. ensure that practitioners understand the range of children's protected characteristics, consider how these impact upon children's identity and lived experience and feel confident in having conversations with children about their diversity needs
9. embed quality assurance and risk and safety management oversight processes, particularly for the reviewing of post-court cases, to ensure effective work to keep children and other people safe
10. consistently capture the voices of children and their parents or carers to inform the reviewing of policies, process, and provision.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Newport Youth Justice Service (YJS) over a period of a week, beginning 26 February 2024. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began, out-of-court disposals were delivered, and resettlement cases were sentenced or released between 27 February 2023 and 22 December 2023. We also conducted 15 interviews with case managers or their line managers.

Situated in south-east Wales, the county of Newport has a population of 159,658, with children aged 10 to 17 accounting for 10 per cent of the total population. In the last 10 years, Newport's population has grown by 9.5 per cent, which is the largest increase of a local authority in Wales. The 2021 Census identifies that 7.5 per cent of residents in Newport are Welsh speakers.

Newport YJS is a multi-agency partnership that sits within the children's services department of Newport City Council (NCC). The YJS is led by the head of service who reports to the head of children and young people's services and the director of social services. The YJS head of service has responsibility for the YJS, three children looked after teams, and a team supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The YJS team manager oversees prevention and Turnaround, alongside the out-of-court disposal and statutory teams. Both teams have designated deputy team managers, and a senior practitioner provides quality assurance oversight. Governance of the YJS is provided by the YJS strategic partnership board.

The YJS has experienced extensive changes over the past five years. It is a credit to the current YJS team that it has undertaken significant development work, resulting in a renewed sense of direction. During the past 12 months, the YJS has recruited a victim worker, a substance misuse practitioner, created a resettlement and reintegration role, and increased the capacity of the speech and language therapist. A probation officer and education worker are urgently required to meet the statutory obligation of the partnership.

Gwent Police covers the local authority areas of Newport, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, and Torfaen. The YJS's positive collaboration with other local authorities and with Gwent Police, has resulted in a recent comprehensive review of out-of-court policy and provision.

In Newport, 14 per cent of the population identify as Black, Asian, and minority ethnic. The YJS has seen a disproportionately high number of children from these groups cautioned or sentenced by the court, accounting for 21 per cent of the total caseload. Children looked after (CLA) are also overrepresented, accounting for 16 per cent of the YJS workload. The YJS has worked with the wider partnership to develop Restorative Approaches to Children Looked After (RACLA).

Newport YJS enshrines the key principles of the Wales Youth Justice Blueprint by promoting early intervention and diversion from the justice system. This is reflected in the YJS's caseload with 58 per cent of children supported via preventative programmes, 29 per cent on out-of-court disposals and 13 per cent statutory involvement. At the point when the inspection was announced, Newport YJS's first-time entrants and reoffending figures were lower than the average for England and Wales.

Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 13 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 YOT supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.

Requires improvement

Strengths:

- The board is realistic and transparent, acknowledging that considerable work is needed to develop the governance arrangements of the YJS. The objectives identified in the YJS action and improvement plan generally align with the inspection findings, providing reassurance that the board and leadership team have insight into current challenges.
- The YJS's vision, strategy, and key priorities are mostly understood by the board and wider partnership.
- The board has streamlined its membership to ensure that statutory and key partners, of the appropriate seniority, are represented.
- The head of service's development of the board has improved connectivity with the YJS leadership team. It has ensured that the team manager is a standing member, and that operational staff and managers are regularly invited to make presentations at board meetings.
- The YJS leadership team has been instrumental in shaping the work of the service and the board. It has ensured the continued delivery of effective services to children throughout periods of significant change, and this is reflected in the inspection case data findings.
- The revised induction and board development days ensure that members understand their roles and responsibilities in supporting and advocating for the YJS. The renewed commitments need to be translated into clear actions and operationalised to ensure that the YJS can deliver a quality service.
- Board representatives are well connected to other partnership boards and have effective links to provision to support YJS service delivery.
- Prevention and early intervention are priorities. The YJS and its partnership have developed a coordinated offer to prevent children becoming involved in the justice system.
- There is commitment to ensuring the voice of the child is heard at every board meeting. Various methods have been used to assist members in understanding children's lived experience, including in-person attendance, video feedback, and letters from children. The YJS is committed to creating a shadow board consisting of children and young people.

Areas for improvement:

- The YJS and its staff experienced significant changes over the past five years. These included the loss of dedicated premises, disbanding of specialist workers, and a loss of the service's sense of direction. There has been a period of transition in which the team has rebuilt its identity, and staff now feel optimistic with the renewed sense of direction. The board has had oversight of these critical changes, which have negatively impacted the YJS, and they have not intervened. The board needs to become proactive and tenacious in protecting and supporting the YJS and its delivery of key services to children.
- The board acknowledges the difficulties it has experienced with inconsistent chairing arrangements. The new chair of the partnership board is a strategic director, appointed because of their portfolio within the local authority and wider partnership. To ensure effective leadership of the board, it requires a chair who is consistent in their attendance, engagement, and leadership.
- The board needs to ensure that the YJS has appropriate staff resource across all statutory partners, for example a dedicated probation officer and education worker. Plans are in place to address these absences, but these need urgent progression as a priority.
- The YJS has a disproportionality strategy and action plan, although it is acknowledged that this is in its infancy and requires strategic steer and development by the partnership board. The profile of children should be analysed to understand overrepresentation and disproportionality within the YJS population.
- The board needs to have more strategic oversight and operational involvement in key areas of YJS delivery. It has identified opportunities to become involved in YJS quality assurance processes, and several members are keen to observe YJS activities.
- Although a YJS practitioner is invited to attend each strategic partnership board meeting, connectivity between the YJS and board members outside of this forum requires development. The YJS needs to see that the board is visible and responsive to key areas of concern, such as supporting the progression of dedicated premises to support children or an appropriate office space to undertake its work.
- The board needs to undertake a comprehensive review of its current risk register to ensure that it recognises, monitors, and mitigates against potential risks.
- There are significant concerns about safety and risk management processes for volunteers and the children they are working with. Leadership responsibilities for volunteers need to be reviewed to ensure appropriate oversight and support. Volunteers need opportunities to meet with the partnership board and to contribute towards the YJS vision and strategy.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Strengths:

- Staff are motivated, enthusiastic, and promote aspirational outcomes for all children.
- The YJS leadership team is reflective and demonstrates awareness and insight into the current position of the service. The head of service has a proactive attitude to learning and development, and has linked in with the sector to enhance their understanding of effective practice to improve service delivery.
- Staff receive regular case management supervision and are resolute to deliver high-quality services. Inspectors found that oversight provided from risk management forums, chaired by the YJS leadership team, enhanced the quality of work with children.
- In the case sample inspected, inspectors found that seven of the eight out-of-court cases and four of the six post-court cases had sufficient management oversight.
- The workloads of most staff are manageable following a review of the preventative offer and the recruitment of staff.
- There is a considered approach to allocations which takes account of the child's needs, staff skill sets, and capacity.
- Practitioners access a range of learning and training opportunities. The YJS values a culture of continuous improvement with opportunities for secondments and access to the social work degree.
- The physical safety of staff is enhanced by the lone working arrangements. The emotional safety of staff has been tested by significant changes within their service. It is commendable that morale remains high, and the resilience of staff and managers is impressive.

Areas for improvement:

- The YJS leadership team needs to complete a strategic review of their areas of responsibility, to ensure workloads, lines of accountability, and management expectations are reasonable, and the leadership team have sufficient capacity to complete their roles to a consistently high standard.
- The YJS has embedded trauma-informed approaches. Clinical supervision is not available to most staff but would be beneficial to support practitioners in their work with children.
- The YJS needs to integrate volunteers into the service, providing opportunities for attendance at team meetings, training, and supervision.
- The YJS needs to ensure that all staff receive appraisals and that all volunteers have opportunities to participate in annual reviews.
- Induction arrangements have been reviewed and strengthened but require embedding to ensure that all new practitioners fully understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Recruitment to vacancies needs to be a priority to ensure that workloads remain manageable.
- The workforce does not currently reflect the local population or the YJS caseload; future recruitment should encourage applicants from Black, Asian and minority ethnic heritage.

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 Newport Turnaround service was created in December 2022 focusing on early intervention and prevention. The service has evolved, resulting in an YJS-led multi-agency allocations panel. The aim is to offer a child the right support at the right time to avoid escalation to formal YJS intervention.
- There are strong strategic and operational relationships between the YJS and children's social care. The head of service oversees both the YJS and children looked after pathways, allowing enhanced oversight of children accessing support from these services.
- The current Gwent National Referral Mechanism (NRM)² pilot has enabled the partnership to make quick decisions on children being exploited. Positive NRM outcomes are appropriately considered when making decisions regarding out-of-court disposals and court proceedings.
- Arrangements for addressing exploitation appear to be robust and are understood by the partnership. There are dedicated teams and services which can offer support for children who are being exploited. Inspectors found evidence of impressive practice to safeguard children from extra-familial harm in both pre-court and post-court cases.
- Partnerships with police are impressive with effective information-sharing arrangements to ensure the safety of the child and safety of others. The seconded police officer is proactive in working directly with children and victims, and facilitating training across the partnership.
- Children have swift access to in-house speech and language, mental health, and substance misuse provision. Health pathways are clearly understood and utilised to access support for children with high levels of need. Children accessing YJS support on a preventative, out-of-court or statutory basis have equitable access to these services.
- Staff are trained to undertake harmful sexualised behaviour assessments and there is a clear pathway to access specialist support.
- Relationships with the courts are positive with a dedicated cohort of YJS practitioners promoting consistency and confidence in advising on sentencing options. The courts understand the YJS's preventative offer for children subject to court bail and those released under investigation.
- There is a proactive approach to engaging victims which includes offering contact through various methods, such as phone call, text, email, letter, and home visits. There is an appropriate level of tenacity to encourage engagement. Victims can opt

² The framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support.

in and out at any time. Involvement is victim led, and the level and length of contact is determined by victim need.

- The YJS partnership has worked together to develop an impressive range of services that children can access quickly and easily. The Believe suite of interventions includes group work sessions for a range of needs such as knife crime, exploitation, attitudes to police, substance misuse, and antisocial behaviour. Specific strengths-based projects promote children spending time in the outdoors, engaging in constructive activities, and developing confidence and self-identity. The use of such activities for reparation ensures that children are developing skills whilst engaging in meaningful work in their communities. Interventions are accredited and children can gain Youth Achievement Awards (YAA).

Areas for improvement:

- The partnership has some understanding of the profile of YJS children. However, its understanding of diversity, disproportionality, and protected characteristics is underdeveloped and must be strengthened.
- Whilst pockets of evaluation are undertaken, generally linked to grant funding, there is not an inherent culture of formally reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of services delivered to children. The YJS partnership delivers a wide range of interventions, and it needs to have confidence that the content and methods of delivery are having a positive impact on children's lives.
- The strategic and wider partnership relationships between the YJS and education are enhanced by the secondment of an education safeguarding role. Whilst this arrangement provides more strategic steer and support for YJS children discussed at education panels, it leaves an operational void which is filled by the YJS practitioners. The YJS is committed to recruiting a dedicated YJS education worker.
- Although interim youth-to-adult transition arrangements are in place and are understood by the partnership, there is still the need for a dedicated probation officer to lead on crucial transition work with children.
- There is recognition of the barriers to securing appropriate accommodation and educational placements for children. The YJS leadership team is part of a working groups seeking to overcome these challenges.

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.

Requires improvement

Strengths:

- The YJS has a comprehensive list of policies, and they are frequently reviewed and accessible to all staff.
- Information-sharing and governance arrangements are robust. There are information-sharing protocols, confidentiality agreements, and terms of reference to support the effective flow of information.
- The ICT dashboard utilised by children's services and the YJS has enabled quick and seamless referrals to and from each service. This provides daily information on new referrals, and the outcomes of these can be recorded and accessed by both services.
- The YJS undertakes some benchmark and dip-sampling activity which does result in changes to processes and practices. This has included the creation of a multi-agency allocations panel, and additional forums to ensure the safety of the child and the safety of others.
- The YJS has developed quality assurance processes to promote consistency.

Areas for improvement:

- The YJS does not have dedicated premises for staff to undertake work with children, which creates challenges for specialist and confidential meetings. Though there is currently a base, it is acknowledged that this is not appropriate. There are interim and long-term plans to secure new premises, which need to provide staff and children with a safe and positive environment as a matter of priority.
- There are gaps with data capture and analysis which mean that the YJS may not have an accurate understanding of the current cohort of children. This issue has been identified and measures are under way to address it and provide a more robust analysis process.
- Reviewing of policy should embed disproportionality specific to the diverse communities of Newport. YJS policies should address overrepresentation and the impact of protected characteristics on a child's lived experience.
- The YJS delivers a range of services to children. Evaluation mechanisms are in their infancy and need to be developed as a means of understanding the effectiveness of the work undertaken. Routine deep-dive analyses are needed to comprehensively understand need and determine future service delivery.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The YJS values the voices and opinions of children and their parents or carers, and their views are shared at every strategic partnership board meeting. We found examples of children completing written, audio, and video feedback detailing their experiences of the justice system and support provided by the YJS. Children also contribute to the assessment, planning, delivery, and review of their interventions. The YJS is keen to develop mechanisms to consistently capture the voices of children and to ensure that the feedback informs the evaluation and development of future services.

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 13 children who consented, and six children replied. We also interviewed three children and a parent. Feedback from children and parents was positive and reflected the relationship-based approaches that we saw within the cases we inspected. Children felt respected by their YJS workers. All four children and parent interviewed said that YJS practitioners had the right skills, and some detailed that they had been positively supported in dealing with difficult life events.

Parents commented that the YJS had enabled them and their child to access specialist health and education provision in a supportive and timely manner. Multi-agency working was seen as collaborative, with children and their parents aware of the role of the YJS and other professionals.

Children told us that:

“They have helped me a lot and they are really good at understanding young people’s behaviours.”

“They prevent me from mixing with the wrong crowds.”

We saw good evidence of engagement with parents and carers during our inspection and this was captured in responses to our questions, with one parent reflecting on interactions with her child’s caseworker:

“(REDACTED) has guided our son through a bit of a rough patch in his life. She has shown empathy for the bigger situation surrounding his referral to YJS, helped him to understand better solutions to situations, and importantly listened to both his and our concerns, and I feel gone above what she is probably expected to in terms of working with other professional organisations to secure a workable future for (REDACTED) in his current situation.”

Other parents said of staff that:

“He’s helped reduce the criminal activity with my son massively.”

“It takes a special person to do what the YJS worker does.”

While the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, it is of note that sessions with children are undertaken in a wide range of venues, reflecting the YJS’s own analysis of the need for a dedicated space to see children and their parents or carers.

Diversity

- The strategic approach to addressing diversity and how the service intends to meet the protected characteristics of children are underdeveloped. The board needs to support the YJS in identifying and understanding disproportionality and steer a clear strategic and operational response. The YJS has developed a disproportionality strategy and action plan and acknowledged that implementation is in its infancy.
- Policies and procedures do cover disproportionality, but there is a need to review these with a specific focus on the diverse communities of Newport. YJS and partnership data must be interrogated against the entire range of protected characteristics to enhance the understanding of the YJS cohort.
- Analysis of YJS data indicate that two groups are overrepresented within the YJS cohort; these are cared for children (representing 16 per cent of interventions in 2022-2023) and children from a Black, Asian, and minority ethnic background (representing 21 per cent of all interventions between 01 October 2022 to 30 September 2023). The YJS acknowledges the overrepresentation of children looked after and is implementing Restorative Approaches for Children Looked After (RACLA).
- The YJS's identification and understanding of all diversity considerations need to develop. Inspectors found some examples of good practice within the case sample, but this was inconsistent. The YJS should be assured that practitioners understand the range of protected characteristics, feel confident in having conversations with children about their diversity needs, and consider how these impact on children's identity and lived experience.
- The Newport City Council five-year Welsh strategy has resulted in development of the YJS 2024 *Mwy Na Geiriau* Welsh-language action plan. The YJS has created Welsh language and diversity champions to support the team. YJS documents reflect the Welsh context, with the revised partnership board induction detailing the impact of devolved and non-devolved services on multi-agency YJSs. The YJS enshrines the Blueprint for Wales and has a firm grounding in prevention and diverting children away from the justice system.
- Inspectors found that trauma-informed practices were routinely used to engage and support children. The impact of trauma is widely understood amongst YJS practitioners and managers.
- The YJS facilitates direct interventions, including the Soul Trail project, an outdoor programme supporting children from diverse communities to enjoy nature-based activities, with a safe place to talk, improve confidence, and build relationships.
- Newport YJS led on the Levelling the Playing Field (LtPF) pilot project in Gwent,³ using sport and physical activity to engage and improve health and life outcomes for ethnically diverse children who are more likely to enter, or already be involved with, the criminal justice system.

³ [About LtPF \(levellingtheplayingfield.org\)](https://levellingtheplayingfield.org)

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at six community sentences 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 rating⁴ 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?	67%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	83%

Assessment of desistance was done well in all cases, providing an accurate understanding of the factors contributing towards children's offending. Practitioners used a range of information from other agencies to analyse the child's motivations and attitudes underpinning their behaviours. The YJS has embedded strengths-based approaches to its work with children and we found that all assessments engaged the child and focused on building their protective factors. Practice would be improved by consistently analysing the diversity needs of all children and ensuring that there are conversations to understand the impact of a child's lived experience.

Inspectors identified a high degree of complex need within the case sample. Children had experienced extensive trauma and significant life events. Assessment activity did not identify all risks to the child's safety and wellbeing, and information from other agencies was not consistently used to develop comprehensive assessments to keep the child safe. When information was collated, it was used well to understand the child's needs and we found positive examples of health practitioners directly supporting assessments.

Assessments to keep others safe from harm mostly identified and analysed the range of harmful behaviours and the nature of these risks. Risk of serious harm thresholds had been applied accurately in all cases and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) were appropriately used. The voices of victims within assessments and focus on victim safety needs to be stronger, and it is anticipated that the new YJS victim worker will assist in developing practice.

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 in the data annexe.](#)

2.2. Planning



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

Good

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

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

Planning to support the desistance needs of children, to build on their strengths and to promote protective factors was evident in the majority of instances. We saw positive examples of child-friendly plans, adapted to meet individual learning and speech, language, and communication needs. However, this practice was not embedded throughout post-court cases. We identified a varied approach to recognising and responding to the child's diversity needs, with only half of the case sample sufficiently incorporating this crucial area of work into planning activity.

Over half of the children in the post-court case sample had been looked after by the local authority during the duration of their court orders. Planning to keep the child safe therefore requires a cohesive multi-agency response. We found that planning generally identified and analysed the risks presented to both the safety and wellbeing of the child. YJS practitioners routinely attended meetings held by other agencies; however, the discussions and planning from those meetings were not integrated into the YJS's planning activities. In half of the cases inspected, the YJS's plans did not align with other plans to keep the child safe, and this impacted on the sufficiency of contingency planning. We found similar themes with planning to keep others safe, with a need to consistently involve other agencies, and to use the information exchanged to enhance the quality of planning activities.

Given the high levels of safety and wellbeing and risk of harm concerns identified, some of the issues included in contingency planning could have been reasonably anticipated. Planning would be improved by routinely integrating the plans of other agencies, and by ensuring that contingency planning is individualised and specific to keeping the child and others safe from harm.

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 in the data annexe.](#)

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁶ 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?	50%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	67%

In all the cases inspected, practitioners prioritised developing and maintaining effective working relationships with children and their parents or carers. We saw sensitive approaches to engaging children who, due to extensive trauma, had struggled to develop secure and positive relationships with adults. Trauma-informed approaches were evident and practitioners enabled children to engage with the requirements of the order, and were responsive to their changing circumstances. Opportunities for future community integration featured in half the cases and could be developed due to the extensive universal and preventative offer available to the service.

Delivery to keep the child safe was sufficient in half of our case sample. We saw examples of effective escalation within the partnership to keep children safe. However, this was inconsistent, resulting in missed opportunities to involve children's social care in the delivery of vital services to children.

Collaboration between the YJS and health practitioners resulted in specialist assessments that informed adaptations to interventions to meet a child's speech, language, communication, and cognitive needs. We found some examples of tailored interventions delivered with children, including those covering healthy relationships, online safety, peer relationships, problem-solving, and decision-making.

Service delivery to support the safety of others was evident in a reasonable majority of cases. Collaborative multi-agency working was enhanced by the oversight from the YJS risk management panels, although the focus on victims required development. Generic victim awareness work was undertaken, but only half of the cases inspected provided sufficient attention to the ongoing safety of victims.

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 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.

Inadequate

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

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

Newport YJS's action and improvement plan identifies reviewing activity as an area for improvement. This is reflected in our findings with too few cases sufficiently reviewing the safety of the child and the safety of others.

Reviewing did mostly respond to changes in factors linked to desistance and on building the children's strengths and protective factors. However, a recurring theme of post-court work was the underdeveloped approach to identifying and analysing a child's diversity needs. Inspectors found that reviewing analysed and responded to a child's diversity needs in only two of the six cases. We found pockets of good practice, but minimal embedded understanding of the impact of all protected characteristics on a child's identity and lived experiences.

Inspectors found that formal written reviews of desistance and reviews to keep the child safe were undertaken in all cases, and reviewing to keep others safe was completed in five out of the six cases. However, whilst the process of reviewing was happening, it was not meaningful and did not adequately capture or analyse the changing circumstances and the impact on the child, victims, family members, and public.

Reviewing to keep the child and others safe did not consistently utilise the information held by other agencies, meaning that adjustments to the ongoing plans were insufficient for ensuring the safety of all. Inspectors found that new behaviours or allegations were not fully explored, assessed, and incorporated into general reviewing activity. We found examples of both the risk of harm, and safety and well-being classifications being reduced prematurely, without sufficient evidence to demonstrate a sustained period of positive impact on the child's life.

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 in the data annexe.](#)

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 one youth conditional caution, one youth caution and six community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in eight cases.

3.1. Assessment



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

Good

Our rating⁸ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	88%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	88%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	63%

Inspectors looked at a sample of cases predating the new policies and procedures implemented on 01 January 2024. A variety of screening and assessment tools were utilised to inform discussions at the decision-making panel, and all eight cases involved joint decision-making by the YJS and police. Whilst delays in the justice system were acknowledged by the partnership, we found decision-making and the issuing of disposals to be timely in all cases. Analysis of desistance factors was strong in all but one of the cases inspected, which did not sufficiently focus on exploring the impact of the child's diversity considerations on behaviours. Inspectors found impressive work in engaging the child and parent or carer with the assessment process, building on a child's strengths and analysing key structural barriers. In contrast to the findings of the post-court case sample, we found that all relevant victims' wishes and feelings informed the out-of-court assessment process.

Assessments to keep the child safe were enhanced by the YJS's and wider partnership's approach to tackling exploitation. We found positive information-sharing ensuring that extra-familial harm was sufficiently identified and analysed.

Assessments identifying all factors linked to keeping other people safe were weaker. In some cases, concerning behaviours were accurately identified, but required more in-depth analysis to specifically capture the nature of the harm. When done well, practitioners had used a range of information sources to identify who was at risk, the nature of that risk, and the context in which the risk was greatest.

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 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 rating⁹ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	88%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	88%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	88%

Out-of-court planning activity was an area of strength for the YJS. In all cases, we found that planning considered the child's personal circumstances and broader familial and social context. Practitioners were mindful of the child's maturity and their ability to engage with a proposed plan of interventions. Planning was individualised with examples of objectives that were meaningful to the child and promoted their interests and goals. Inspectors found that sporting activities were routinely included in a child's plan to encourage constructive use of time and the development of social and thinking skills. Supporting the child's strengths was balanced with the needs and wishes of victims in all cases. Inspectors found examples of effective restorative approaches with positive outcomes for the child and those harmed by their actions.

The importance of securing and maintaining appropriate education provision was incorporated into plans, and it was pleasing to see consultations with the speech and language therapist informing planning of interventions. Inspectors found several examples of child-friendly plans, and embedding this into practice would further strengthen out-of-court planning activity.

We found similar themes in planning to keep the child safe and to keep others safe. Planning to promote the safety of the child and safety of others was consistent in all cases. We found that planning was involving other agencies in a majority of instances, and when this did occur, it was done well with examples of effective co-working arrangements with children's social care. Inspectors found general alignment with the plans of other agencies and some instances of strong multi-agency work; however, this was not reflected in the YJS's approach to contingency planning. The YJS supports children with a multitude of complex needs, and it is essential that contingency planning is individualised and specific to manage the high levels of needs and risks.

⁹ 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 rating¹⁰ 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?	88%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	88%

In every case inspected, service delivery was sufficiently focused to support the child's desistance. All services available to children on statutory court orders were available for out-of-court disposals, and interventions were strengths-based, and helped children to understand their behaviour.

In all cases, priority was given to developing and maintaining relationships with all children and their parents or carers, enabling the child's engagement with the out-of-court disposal. Inspectors found innovative and tenacious efforts to engage children, and appropriate levels of persistence in promoting their participation. The trauma recovery model (TRM) was implemented well, and the oversight from a clinical psychologist ensured that interventions were adapted to the child's cognitive, social, and emotional functioning. Art therapy and puzzles were used to develop relationships and key social skills.

Practitioners demonstrated sensitivity towards the child's diversity needs. We found examples of children being supported to engage in conversations regarding their heritage and gender identity, resulting in positive ongoing conversations and signposting to relevant groups. Consistently developing this practice, across the range of disposals and services, would strengthen the YJS's approach to diversity.

Inspectors found that YJS practitioners appropriately supported and escalated concerns regarding education provision. Careers Wales had supported a child to attend college, resulting in positive changes to his routine, peer groups, and substance misuse. It was pleasing to see that a substance misuse practitioner had recently joined the team to deliver bespoke interventions.

Multi-agency work was enhanced by the YJS-led risk and safety management forums. Sufficient attention was given to the protection of actual and potential victims in all relevant cases.

¹⁰ 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.](#)

3.4. 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
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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 had implemented a revised out-of-court policy and process on 01 January 2024. The policy reflects a child-centred approach through each stage of the decision-making process. Social care and early intervention representatives are positive additions to the decision-making panel. The inclusion of children at their panel is discretionary, depending on the child’s wishes, individual needs, and circumstances.
- The YJS and police are committed to a child-centred approach which considers the individual needs of the child and circumstances of the offence. The gravity matrix is utilised appropriately, and mitigating circumstances are considered in determining the most appropriate outcomes.
- Risk and safety management processes are sufficient, with use of multi-agency forums to ensure the safety of the child and the safety of others, and this was evidenced in case work we inspected.
- All victims are contacted and offered support and opportunities to complete a victim statement to inform the out-of-court decision-making panel. There is a comprehensive offer for victims which includes indirect and direct reparation, restorative justice conferences, signposting to other support services, case updates, and input in risk and safety management processes.
- There is a proactive and positive approach to children looked after by the local authority to avoid their contact with the criminal justice system. The YJS delivers restorative training to care providers and the police to ensure that children are not unnecessarily escalated through the justice system.
- Children who have been involved in motoring offences are eligible for out-of-court disposals. Cases are considered on an individual basis and, where appropriate, will be diverted to a tailored intervention package.
- All interventions and services available to children on statutory orders are also available to those receiving an out-of-court disposal. Inspectors found that the YJS staff undertook impressive strengths-based work with children subject to out-of-court disposals.

Areas for improvement:

- The revised out-of-court policy and provision are in their infancy and require development to ensure an embedded and shared understanding across the YJS and partnership.

- Out-of-court screening and assessment processes, and the use of diversionary outcomes, are not consistently understood by all YJS practitioners.
- The YJS and partners acknowledge that there have been improvements in the out-of-court process, but there is still further work needed, particularly in relation to local scrutiny and evaluation.
- Performance reports provide a breakdown of the gender, ethnicity, and child looked after status of out-of-court disposal outcomes. Work should be undertaken to evaluate the impact on children with different protected characteristics to ascertain whether the YJS is meeting its diversity needs and minimising disadvantage.
- The voices and experience of children and parents or carers should be routinely collated and analysed to shape service delivery.
- The regional scrutiny panels in place would be complemented by the introduction of local scrutiny arrangements to provide a deep-dive analysis of the decision-making and delivery of out-of-court disposals in Newport.
- The YJS has identified delays from offence to disposal, and this has been explored with the police and board. Further scrutiny at board level should provide reassurance that children are receiving prompt outcomes.

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

Strengths:

- Decisions to review resettlement policy and processes had resulted in positive changes to service delivery. The policy, practice guide, resettlement plan, and promise to the child enshrined a child-centred and individualised approach to resettlement and reintegration.
- The resettlement and reintegration policy and practice guide clearly identifies the need for simultaneous safeguarding, risk management, and MAPPA procedures. The YJS has a detailed joint working agreement with children's services outlining roles and responsibilities when children are in custody.
- The importance of constructive resettlement, developing a prosocial identity, and providing individualised services is an integral part of resettlement and reintegration arrangements.
- Inspectors found examples of tenacious work by the YJS to provide bail packages that would avoid unnecessary and lengthy remands to custody.
- There is a multi-agency commitment to supporting the resettlement framework. This is formalised by attendance and engagement in resettlement and reintegration panels.
- Escalation processes are documented. In our inspection of the delivery of resettlement services we saw effective escalations to challenge the accessibility of education and training provision.
- There is a strong in-reach offer for children in custody for health, education, and substance misuse. Partner services will attend the secure estate to build relationships with children, link in with secure estate providers, and support planning for post-release.
- The partnership supports children placed in England to access services in Welsh via the use of mentors and translators. It is acknowledged that children placed outside of Wales may require additional support with Welsh-specific provision.
- The importance of maintaining contact with children in custody and their parents or carers was understood. Contact from the YJS was frequent and meaningful, which enabled ongoing support from the service.
- There is a dedicated lead resettlement and reintegration practitioner within the team. They have delivered training to the team focused on constructive resettlement and

the importance of the identity shift. Every child sentenced or remanded to custody is co-allocated to a YJS officer and the resettlement lead.

- The YJS delivers a range of strengths-based interventions to support children with their reintegration into the community.
- In our inspection of the delivery of resettlement work we saw effective processes to ensure the safety of the child, victims, and wider public.

Areas for improvement:

- Future policy and guidance need to clearly identify how the service intends to meet the protected characteristics and diversity needs of children.
- The board has an awareness of children sentenced to custody, and development work will require the board to address barriers to achieving effective constructive resettlement.
- Challenges in providing suitable accommodation mean that provision is not often the most appropriate. The partnership recognises these issues and is working to address deficits in the accommodation placements available.
- Further audit work is needed to scrutinise the quality of practice, and draw together some more quantitative analysis and evaluation of YJS work with children, both remanded and sentenced to custody.
- The YJS policy and practice guidance could strengthen victim safety processes.
- The review of the YJS's policy and provision has not been informed by children and their parents or carers. This is a missed opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of policy and provision by those receiving services.

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.](#)