

Youth Justice and Early Support Service



Gwasanaeth Cyfiawnder Ieuencid
a Chymorth Cynnar
Youth Justice
and Early Support Service
Bro Morgannwg • Vale of Glamorgan

Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025



Lance Carver
(Director of Social Services)

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(Service Manager YJESS)



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Introduction, Vision, and Strategy



I am pleased to be able to share with you the Youth Justice & Early Support Service Plan for 2024/25. Public sector services remain under significant pressure and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis is being felt in our communities. It is in this difficult societal context that this plan is set. It is important therefore that it is realistic, whilst also aiming to become one of the best of such services in Wales. As a partnership we strive to deliver the most effective services whilst recognising the constraints placed on us separately due to financial pressures.

As a board we have endeavored to utilise the real experiences of the children and young people that we support to enhance our learning and approaches. Through linking the operational delivery of the team, the experience of those we support and the strategic oversight of the board we believe we can make a real difference. This plan is intended to not only consolidate our progress but also to push us to build further on our young people's strengths and help them fulfil their potential.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. Jones'.

Director of Social Services.
Vale of Glamorgan Council.

The **Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice & Early Support Service (YJESS)** formerly Youth Offending Service, is a statutory multi-agency partnership with a legal duty to co-operate in order to secure appropriate local Youth Justice Services. The purpose of the YJESS is to ensure that Youth Justice Services are available to the extent required across the local authority area. The YJESS should be the main vehicle through which youth justice services are coordinated and delivered. Statutory duties to prevent offending are outlined in Criminal Justice and Civil Legislation.

The principal aim of Youth Justice Services in England and Wales is to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Section 39(1) of the act places a duty on each Local Authority, acting with its statutory partners (Police, Probation and Health) to establish Youth Offending Teams in their local area to deliver Youth Justice Services. Section 38(3) of the Act placed a duty on the Local Authority and its statutory partners to make payment towards the expenditure incurred in providing youth justice services. Membership of the Youth Offending Service is prescribed by the legislation. It must include a Probation Officer, Social Worker, Police Officer, Health representative and Education representative.

Local Authorities in Wales also have a statutory duty to provide preventative services, contained in Section 15 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. Local authorities must provide services to:

- encourage children not to commit offences.
- avoid the need for children to be placed in secure accommodation.
- enable children to live their lives as independently as possible.

The YJESS Strategic Management Board is made up of senior representatives from each of the statutory partners and other agencies and authorities. It oversees the operation of the service including the functions it undertakes and the funding arrangements. The function and representation on the board is subsequently detailed in this plan.

The YJESS Management Board is chaired by the Director of Social Services, Lance Carver and the service is led by the YJESS Service Manager Kirsty Davies who was appointed in January 2022. Section 40 of the 1998 Act places a duty on the Local Authority to produce an annual Youth Justice Plan in consultation with its statutory partners. The Youth Justice Plan confirms how Youth Justice Services are to be provided and funded during the period of the plan.

The YJESS staff have adapted well during the past year and although welcoming the return to the more usual way of working pre-pandemic, all value the benefits of working in a more flexible way as we move forward with hybrid working

In April 2022 the YJESS was part of an inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation and received positive feedback and overall rating of '**Good**'. The inspectorate commended the "**stability, passion and experience**" of the service and highlighted areas of strength to ensure the "**right ingredients for success**", citing "**that children have access to what they need to succeed and move away from further offending**". Inspectors praised the knowledge of staff at the YJESS, and their overall delivery of good

quality work, emphasising that the service has “**struck the right balance between helping children and protecting the public.**” In line with the honest appraisal provided by the service, the inspection made recommendations for areas for improvement. These were set out in six recommendations which were welcomed by the YJESS, to assist in driving forward improvements which have all been implemented. The information within this plan will set out the clear direction of the service, including how the YJESS has achieved and built upon recommendations set out by HMIP in their inspection report.

The vision and ambition of the YJESS has been determined by a collaborative working group led by the Chair of the YJESS Management Board, YJESS Service Manager, members of the staff team along with consultations with children and their parents/carers. The service also actively promotes the Vale of Glamorgan’s core values of being:



To ensure the needs of children in the Vale of Glamorgan are met, the YJESS functions as a fully integrated multi-agency service, utilising support from both internal and external partners to address the needs of children and families in a timely manner. Collaboration with local third-sector organisations is also vital to prevent offending and anti-social behaviour (ASB). The service also works closely with the Vale Community Safety Partnership. This is essential to support children whose vulnerability manifests in incidents of anti-social behaviour in the community and by sharing information we can identify areas where emerging problems may occur.

Vision

Supporting young people to build on their strengths and fulfil their potential.

**Ambition:
Person-centred approach**



We will work with children and young people to build on their strengths, enhance their opportunities and encourage better decisions through a person-centred approach.

**Ambition:
Fairness, Inclusion and Equality**



We value the importance of children and young people and are driven by fairness, inclusion, and equality.

**Ambition:
Restorative Approaches**



We are committed to working together to improve the lives of children and young people, their families, victims, and the community through a restorative approach.

Local Context



The Vale of Glamorgan, often referred to as ‘the Vale’, is a county borough on the south-east coast of Wales with a population of 133,492 people. Its eastern neighbour is the Welsh capital, Cardiff, however it covers a more rural area of 335 square kilometers made up of small towns, villages, hamlets, farms, coastal walks, holiday parks and beaches.

The county headquarters are based in Barry, the Vale’s largest town of 53,353, with the famous beach, family amusements and pleasure park of Barry Island. The diverse area of the Vale

comprises of very different communities with different levels of affluence and social deprivation, social structures, aspirations, needs and concerns. In more deprived areas it is estimated that 32% of people are living in income deprivation and 53% of children are living in poverty. 11% of the population are Welsh speakers.

The Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice & Early Support Service is an integral part of the Children and Young People’s Service and works closely with partner statutory agencies, third sector and voluntary organisations. It focuses on prevention and diversion, taking a holistic approach to divert children and young people from offending and re-offending. Alongside the alignment with local authority services, including education and housing, there is a strong, active set of working relationships with South Wales Police, the probation service, Cardiff and Wales University Health Board and the voluntary and community sector.

The Vale of Glamorgan YJESS works with children and young people from the age of 8 to 18 in the following areas:

- Preventative support as part of its Prevention Service or Turnaround project
- Early diversionary support with children who have committed lower-level offences where it is assessed as appropriate and in the public interest not to charge to court.
- Children subject to Court orders, both in custody and the community.
- Voluntary Support interventions and exit planning.

The Vale YJESS also works to support the parents and carers of those children, and with the victims of offences or anti-social behaviour within the Victim Code of Practice 2021 There has been a powerful and positive shift in the focus of YJESS work towards prevention and diversionary support, which is evidenced in the reduction in statutory Court

Orders. It is significant to note that prevention, diversion, and other voluntary interventions now make up approximately 90% of the current YJESS caseload.

This direction of travel is greatly welcomed and has been influenced in Wales with the Welsh Government Youth Justice Blueprint 2019. The Blueprint sets out key aspirations and guiding principles for young people in, or at risk of entering, the criminal justice system in relation to: Prevention; Pre-Court Diversion; Community; Resettlement and Transition; and Custody fundamentally through a trauma-informed lens.

Children supported by the YJESS have a complex set of needs as highlighted within the Vale of Glamorgan profile of children for 2024 in fig 1. It is recognised that children are greatly impacted by their experiences and, sadly, for many children this can mean difficult experiences, poor relationships, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma. A profile of the ACEs experienced by children supported by the Vale YJESS is included below (fig 2) and provides a picture of 91% of the children having experienced at least one Adverse Childhood Experience, with 46% having experienced five or more.

In order to safeguard and promote the best outcomes for children and to prevent and divert them from criminality and anti-social behaviour, it is critical that the service continues to operate a meaningful child first and strengths-based approach. This recognises the impact of their individual experiences and needs. All children have the potential to achieve their aspirations and the YJESS works collaboratively with families, partners, and communities to support all children to access these opportunities and to be empowered and supported to achieve their full potential.

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fig. 1

A profile of the ACEs experienced by children supported by the Vale YJESS is included (fig 2)

ACES impact a child's development, their relationships with others and increase the risk of engaging in health harming behaviours, and experiencing poorer mental and physical health outcomes in adulthood.

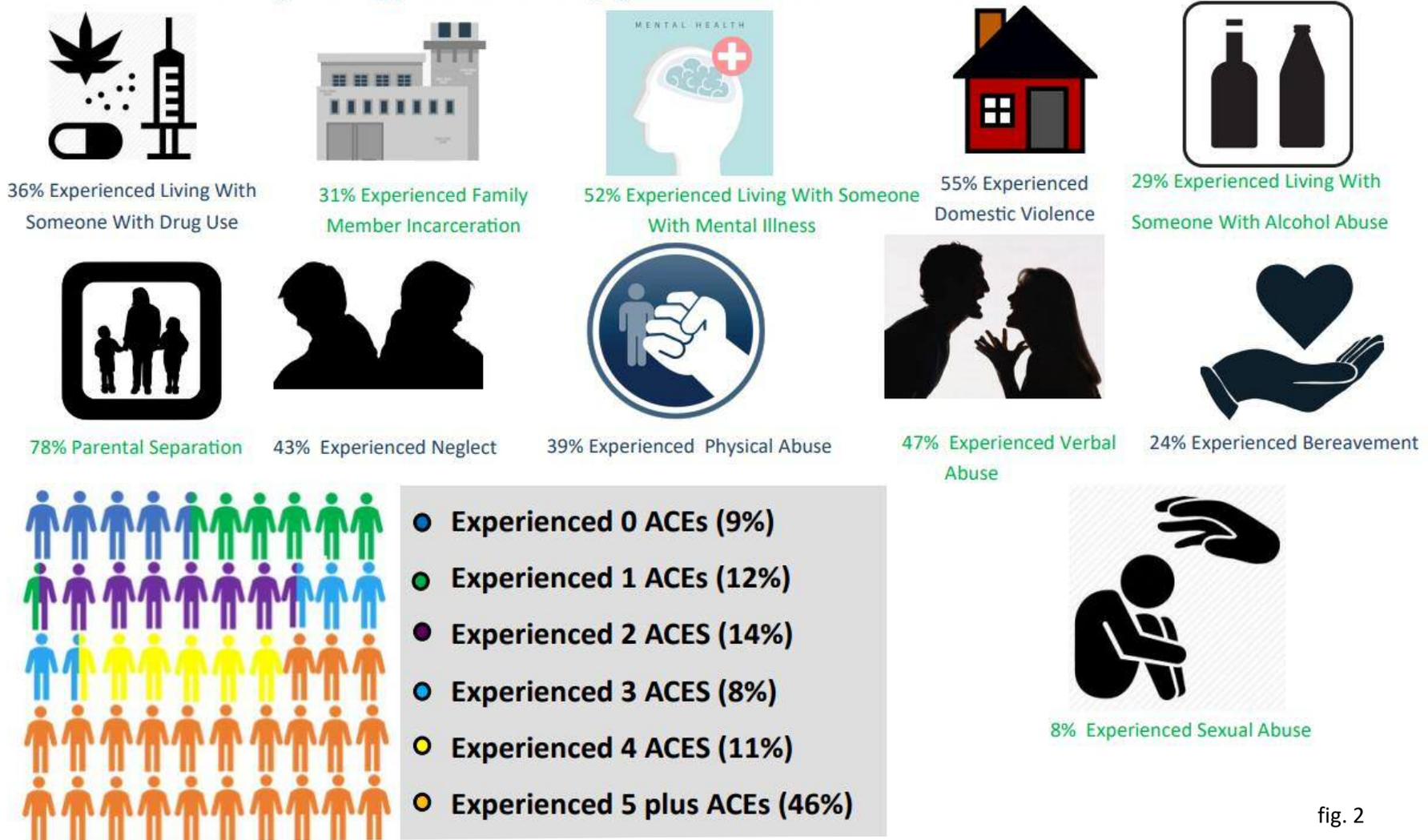
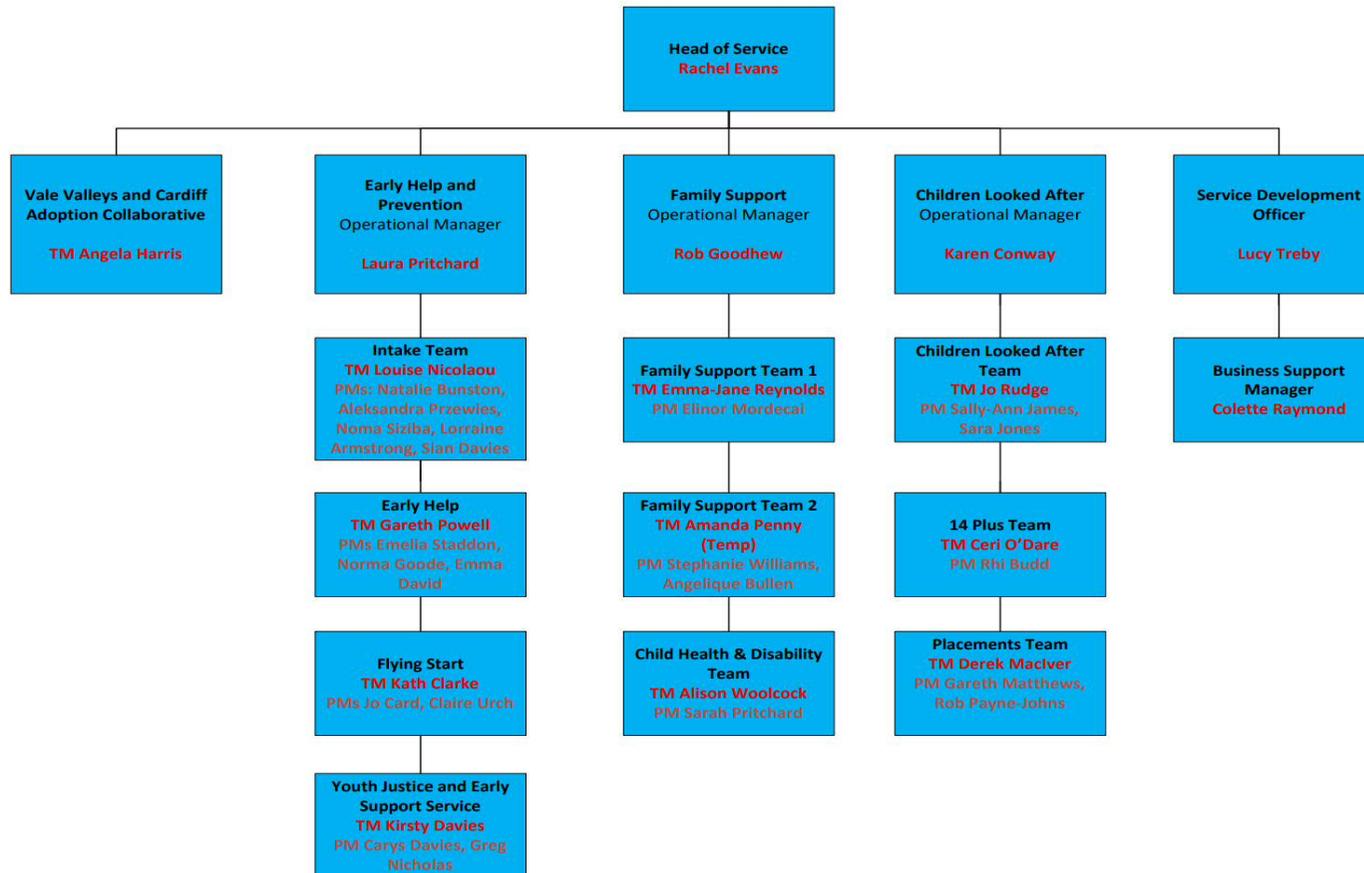


fig. 2

Governance, Leadership and Partnership Arrangements



The YJESS is located within Children and Young Peoples' Services, one of three divisions within the Social Services Directorate. The Director of Social Services is a longstanding Chair of the YJESS Management Board. The Director sits on the Senior Leadership team of the Local Authority, and the YJESS Service Manager sits on local and regional boards and panels, including the Regional Safeguarding Board and MAPPA Operational Group, ensuring that the YJESS is well-connected to local and regional strategic partnerships through which services are commissioned and developed, and giving a voice to the YJESS and the children and families with whom we work.

The YJESS sits within Children and Young People Services, recognising its primary role in working in the best interests of children; focused on the achievement of positive outcomes. Following investment into Children and Young People Services and a need to respond to increased levels of demand and complexity, a proportionate level of restructuring has taken place, to create a dedicated Intake Team, two Family Support Teams and a 14-Plus Team. Additional posts have been added across all of the core teams to add capacity and resilience. Investment has also enabled the addition of a third Operational Manager and the positive realignment of teams according to their primary area of focus.

The Youth Justice & Early Support Service is part of services for Early Help and Prevention, including the Intake Team, Early Help service and Flying Start. This alignment recognises the role and substantial commitment the Youth Justice & Early Support Service has in the prevention of offending/re-offending. The alignment also recognises the key partnerships between statutory and non-statutory services and the value placed on working together in the best interests of children.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council's Children and Young People Services seeks to put children and families at the heart of their own care, no matter why they need social care support. The aim is to offer the right help at the right time to help [children] be happy, safe and have the best opportunities in life. 'Building on strengths (BOS)' describes this approach establishing relationships is key to enable children and families to have choice to know what their rights are and how they will be supported to plan their future.

The Vale of Glamorgan's Corporate Strategy for Children and Young People who need Care and Support 2024-2028 sets out how the Council is going to work collaboratively with its partners to improve the general well-being of children and young people and their families who, for whatever reason, need care and support. It aligns to numerous local and national plans including the Council's Corporate Plan and the Homelessness Prevention Strategy. The Strategy describes the central importance of working in partnership with families as early as possible to co-produce effective plans and to support families to remain together where possible and ensure where a child does become looked after they are actively involved in developing their care and support plans.

The YJESS Management Board is made up of the statutory partnership agencies in addition to locally agreed agency representatives as illustrated in the organisational chart below. Representatives have the appropriate seniority and authority to make strategic decisions related to financial and staffing resources and for the purpose of escalation and development of gaps in service provision. Board attendance is now provided within the quarterly returns

The Board reviews the performance of the service, including levels of first-time entrants, rates of re-offending, the use of custody, access to education, training and employment, substance misuse, emotional wellbeing issues and accommodation, along with the new YJB Key Performance Indicators. These metrics allow the board to evaluate the effectiveness of the youth justice service, identifying areas that require improvement. By integrating these measures into its governance framework, the YJESS can ensure a strategic focus on service quality and accountability.

There has also been substantial development of local performance measures to widen the information presented to the Board. This seeks to encompass broader information relating to the health of the organisation including areas relating to staffing, sickness, financial consideration along with the nature of current interventions, offences, timeliness of assessments and findings of quality assurance audits

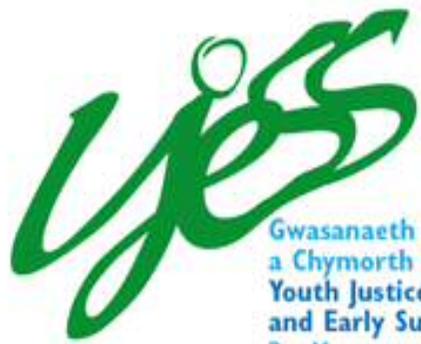
The nature of information provided to the Board will remain an area for continuing progression. The use of data from partnership organisations, such as information from the police representative on the Board is currently utilised to enhance the depth and accuracy of information to underpin planning and provide scrutiny. In addition to performance reports, there will continue to be updates from YJESS practitioners to appraise the Board on their roles and responsibilities and the outcomes generated from their support. This ensures that Board members have a full and rich understanding of the YJESS and how each role contributes to the reduction and prevention of offending behaviour.

By integrating key performance measures, enhancing performance reporting and themed audits, operational staff inclusion and development and collaboration with external partners, the YJESS aims to create a governance framework that supports the service to empower children and promote a childhood removed from the justice system.

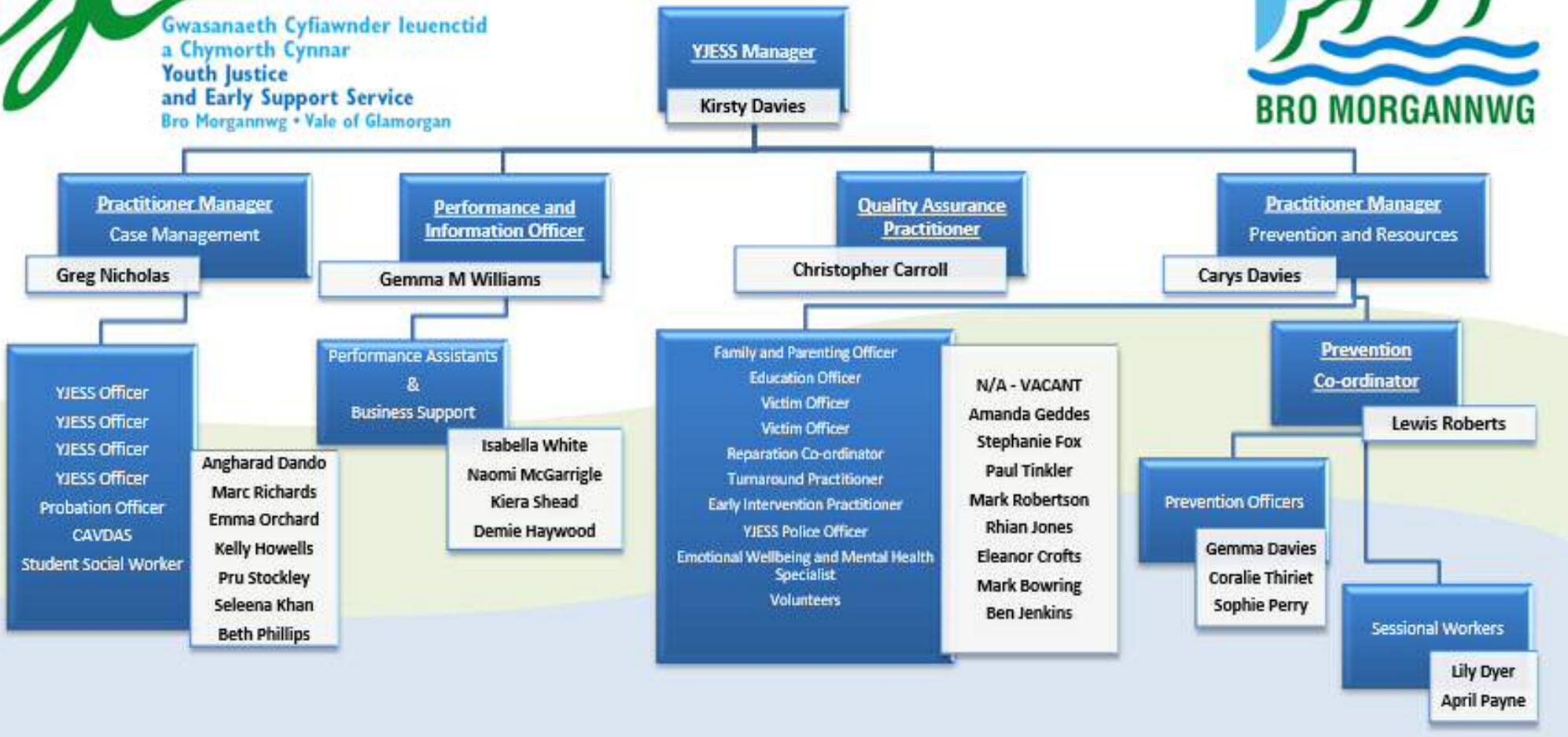
Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) Management Board

Name	Position	Agency
Lance Carver	Director of Social Services	VoG
CLlr Eddie Williams	Cabinet Member	Social Care & Health
Rachel Evans	Head of Children & Young People Services	VoG
Kirsty Davies	Service Manager- YJESS	VoG
Debbie Gibbs	Community Safety & Partnership Team Manager	C&V
Eirian Evans	Head of Probation	Police
DCI Andrew Bartholomew	Public Protection and Safeguarding Department	Cardiff and Vale Police
Lisa Morgan	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusions Policy Officer	South Wales Police & Crime Commissioner
Morwen Hudson	Head of Standards & Provision in Education - Learning & Skills	VoG
Martin Dacey	Lead Officer for Social Inclusion & Wellbeing in Education	VoG
Becci Ingram	General Manager for Children, Young People and Family Health Services	C&V
Mark Davies	Prevention and Partnership Manager	VoG
Mike Ingram	Head of Housing & Building Services	VoG
Laura Pritchard	Operational Manager - Early Help & Prevention	VoG
Emily McCauley	Justice Oversight Manager - Wales	YJB
Carys Davies	Practitioner Manager - Prevention and Resources	YJESS
Greg Nicholas	Practitioner Manager - Case Management	YJESS
Gemma Williams	Performance & information Officer	YJESS
Chris Carroll	Quality Assurance Officer	YJESS

The staffing structure of the YJESS, including the specialist provision, is illustrated in the chart below:



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Update on Previous Year

Progress on Priorities in Previous Plan

Key Achievements:

- Renamed the Service, following participation and engagement with children, family's staff and board members to the Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS). This is a noteworthy development, as it more accurately reflects the predominance of preventative and diversionary interventions in the cohort of children that we support and the vision of the service.
- Completed and subsequently undertaken further development of areas into the operations of the YJESS, actions identified in the Post Inspection Improvement Action Plan (PIAP) submitted to HMIP in August 2022
- Focused on further developing the reach of prevention and diversion support to promote children and young people's safe, happy and healthy life chances. This has included preventative community outreach sessions with children at key times for example at Halloween, to engage children and tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Liaised with schools, colleagues across Children and Young People (CYP) Services and service providers within the Vale of Glamorgan through networking opportunities and events to promote preventative service offer to ensure that referrals are maximised.
- Continued to embed the Trauma Informed approach into practice, so allowing increased support for those experiencing trauma and who have Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) to lead safer, offence free and positive lives. This includes ensuring that all staff completed the updated 2-day Enhanced Case Management (ECM) Training which is a trauma-informed intervention with support from a Child-Psychologist.
- Continued to incorporate the use of digital communication methods to promote increased availability by developing a Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) website.
- Strong performance noted on the 'Turnaround' project utilising funding by central government to increase the diversionary support for young people identified by the Police.
- Increasing the use of the YJESS building across services as a safe space for children to help develop life skills, promote positive relationships and as a medium for intervention work and close collaborative and joined up approaches to support children.
- Continued to work with victims of offences through the YJESS Victim officers in a strong victim led offer, including supporting participation in the restorative process

- Worked effectively with colleagues in CYP Services, to develop practice in safeguarding children at risk of/experiencing exploitation.
- Continued the delivery of high-quality reparation work within the community for example in 'beach clean' reparation sessions and graffiti removal. Working in partnership with Visible Services and the Community Safety Team, this has included removal graffiti which is discriminatory in context and impacts upon community cohesion.
- Effectively trained and developed a new cohort of volunteers to support and actively enhance capacity and workforce delivery
- Restorative offer made to residential units with the Vale of Glamorgan to actively support the diversion of care experienced Children from the criminal Justice System

Key Successes:

- YJESS providing support to children and young people in the Vale of Glamorgan in undertaking 259 interventions.
- Further increasing the number of children and young people benefitting from preventive and diversionary work, including through Turnaround. Between 80- 90 % of all support has been through preventative/diversion work. This helps to promote the best possible outcomes for children to lead happy, healthy, positive lives.
- Ensuring that children and young people are being identified and supported through the preventative offer at the earliest point, which has seen a reduction in the average age of children being referred into the service.
- Preventative outreach service undertaken at key times scales over the Halloween period and recorded 70 interactions with children and young people.
- Continued to significantly reduce the numbers of children entering the formal Youth Justice System, with a reduction in First Time Entrants (children receiving a Youth Caution or higher outcome for the first time).
- Consistently maintaining the lowest First Time Entrance rates in Wales.
- Maintaining high quality reparation offer by the skilled and creative engagement of children. This has enabled us to provide a positive opportunity for direct reparation for children committing offences and anti-social behaviour.
- Proactive focus on quality work offered to victims of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour has been recognised. We were asked to meet with HMIP Inspectors to provide feedback on the effective assessment of quality victim engagement, and towards best practice guidance, which has now been published by the Ministry of Justice as part of the Victim Code campaign.
- Maintaining effective service delivery in the face of challenges in capacity across the service, particularly with significant capacity challenges within the Management Team

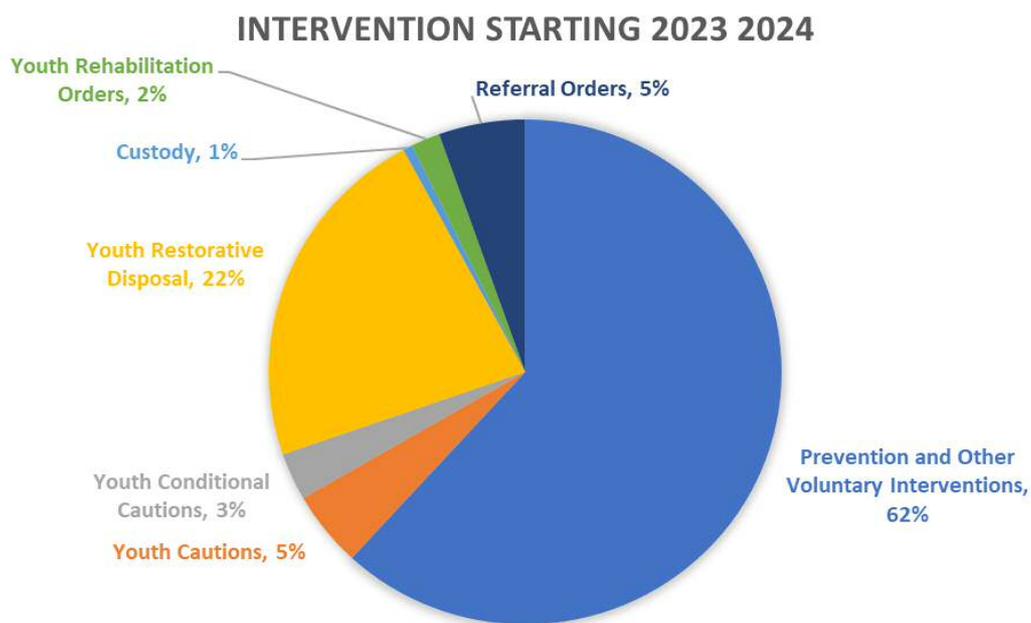
for an extended period (since December 2023). Whilst capacity has understandably impacted upon a number of key areas such as timeliness of asset plus sign off and our ability to progress areas of development at the pace anticipated, it is testament to the resilience and commitment of the wider service and management team that we have continued display strong performance in supporting children and communities in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Performance over the Previous Year

The Vale YJESS supported 137 children in relation to 188 interventions which commenced between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024. This includes the full range of interventions from preventative support through to statutory court orders. This is an increase of 12% from the previous year when the YJESS supported 122 children commencing 156 interventions and 34% from 2 years prior when 102 children who commenced 124 interventions.

Of the 188 interventions which commenced in 2023/24, 63 (33.5%) were for Prevention and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) support. 18 (9.5%) children commenced support with the new Turnaround programme, 21 (11%) commenced an alternative voluntary support intervention. 61 (32.4%) children received an Out of Court Disposal and related intervention support in the period. 25 (13%) children were supported through a statutory court order, including by the completion of Pre-Sentence reports and subject to remand outcomes.

13% of interventions in 2023/24 were for a Youth Caution or higher tariff intervention, which are classed as Substantive Outcomes.

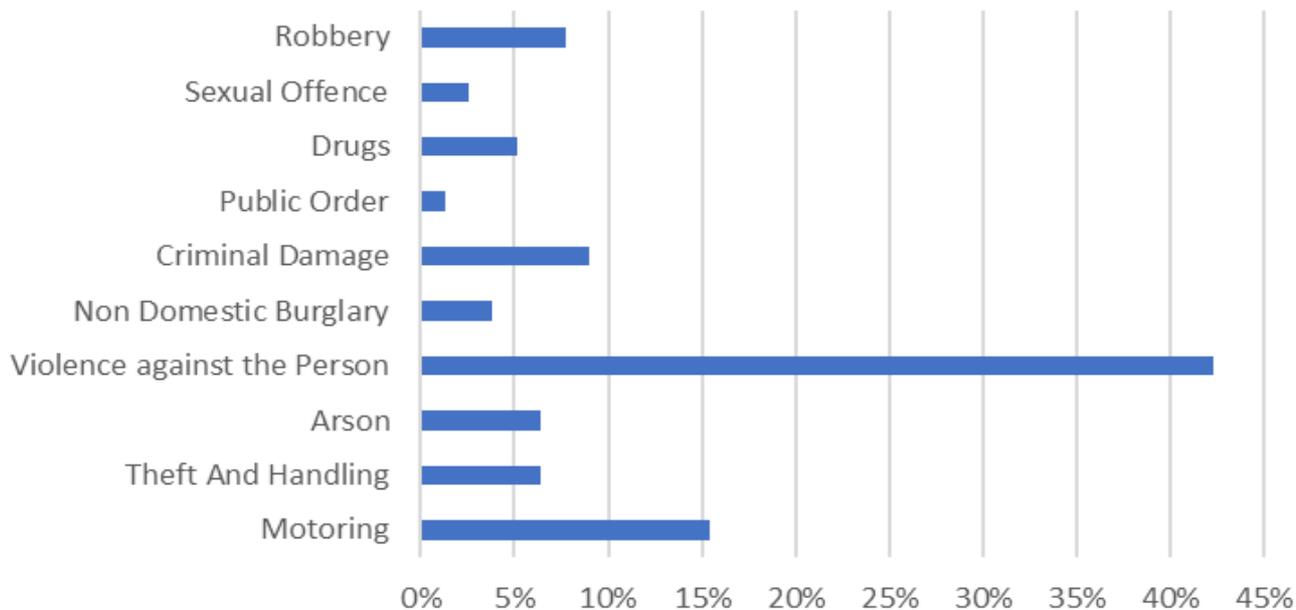


78 of the 188 (41.8%) of interventions commencing in 2023/24 involved offences being linked to the interventions. The total number of offences linked was 136 and these were committed by 63 children in total.

42% (33) of all main offences related to violence against the person. 17 of these were for Assault by Beating or Common Assault including against an emergency worker.

Motoring Offences accounted for 15% and Criminal Damage 9%.

Main Offence Type



Analysis on offence types is provided to the YJESS Strategic Management Board. Intervention audits and case studies are undertaken and presented to provide in depth analysis where additional context is required, to allow for further scrutiny, identification of trends, to facilitate specific multi agency action planning and for highlighting the need for additional resources where required.

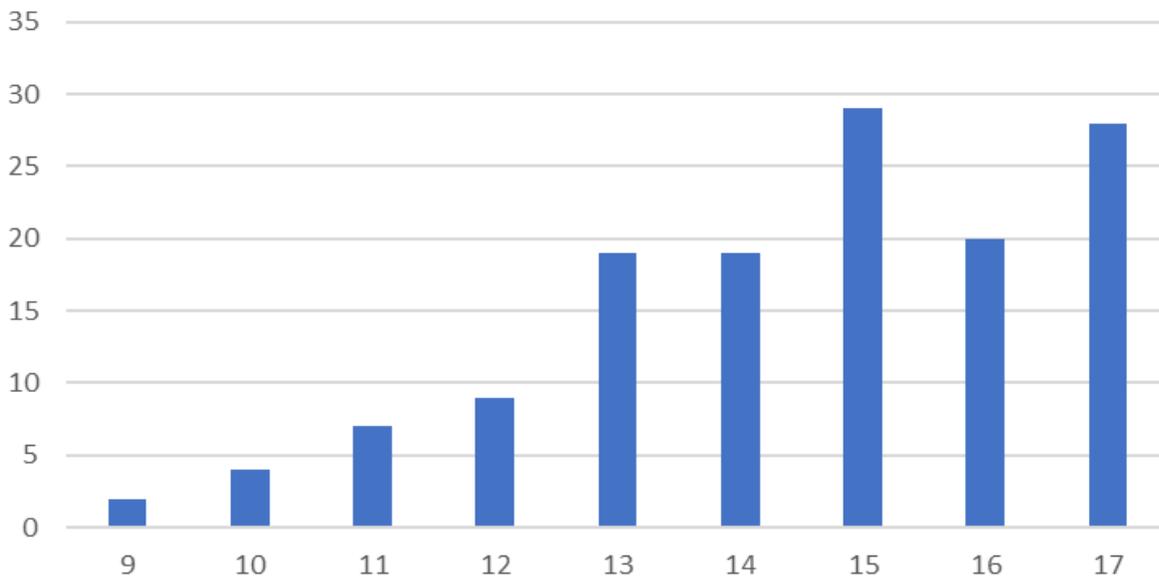
In relation to children supported by the YJESS out of the 137, 108 (79%) identified as Male and 29 (21%) identified as Female. This is the same as the previous year.

137 Children Supported



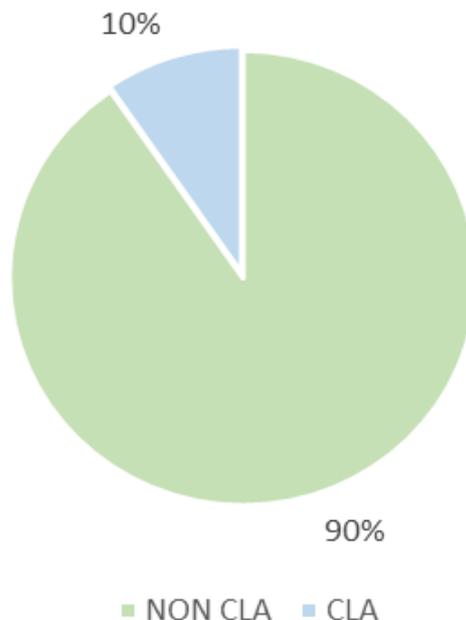
56% of the children were aged between 15 years and 17 years

Age of Children Starting an Intervention 2023/24



10% of the children supported by the YJESS in 2023/24 were Children Looked after.

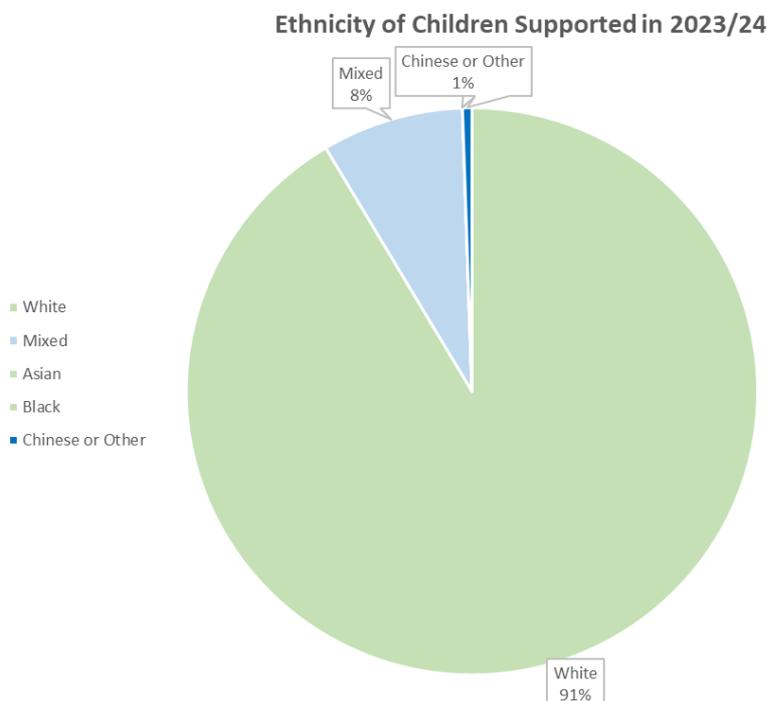
Child Looked After



91% of the children supported by the YJESS identified as white (9% identifying as non-white) which is representative of the Vale population for children aged 10-17 years.

This is not representative of the population of children in the Vale being supported as a result of committing offences in 2023/24 however, with 11% (2 of 17) of children who committed offences in the Vale aged 10 -17 identifying as black or other ethnic minority. This is above

the Vale general representation although a decrease from the previous year's 29% figure. This over representation will be analysed as part of the disproportionality policy and ongoing work and is addressed within the Over-Represented Groups section of this plan.

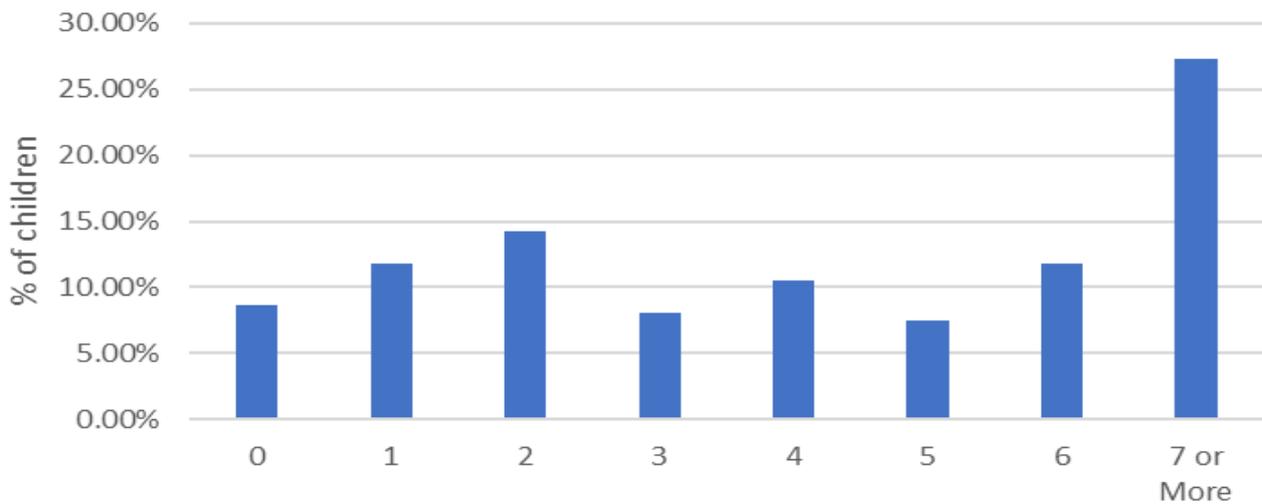


Using data from the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, we are able to further analyse the complexity in needs of our cohort of children in the Vale. The data is used to target resources effectively and to consider whether delivery is directed in relation to an identified area or at community level.

40 (29%) children supported by the Vale Youth Justice & Early Support Service reside in the bottom 20% most deprived areas in Wales. In contrast 37 (27%) of children supported reside in the top 20% least deprived areas of the Vale identifying some of the potential diverse needs of children living in the Vale.

From assessment data provided by practitioners, analysis identifies that 57% of children supported by the YJESS in 2023/24 experienced four or more ACEs, and 27% experienced seven or more. Below is a breakdown of the percentage of children and the number of ACEs identified, at the time of assessment.

Number fo ACEs Identified

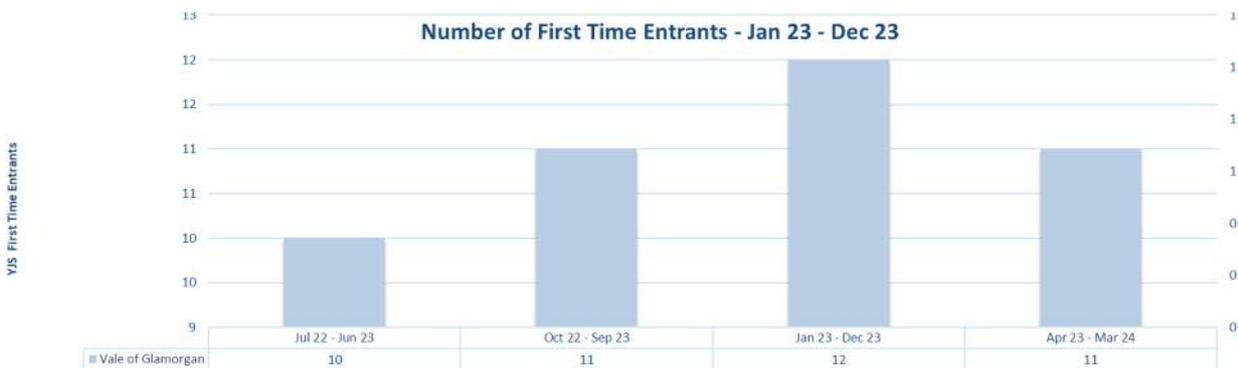


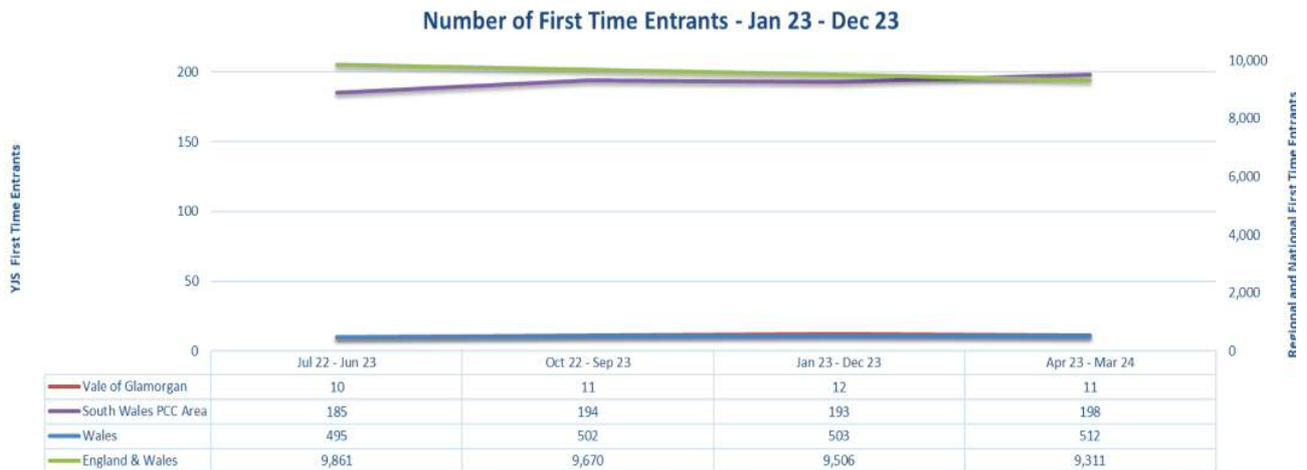
First Time Entrants

First-time entrants (FTEs) are defined as children (aged 10-17 years) who receive their first substantive outcome (a youth caution, youth conditional caution or court conviction) for the first time.

Each YJESS has an overarching target to reduce the number of FTEs on a quarterly basis within its locality. The rate of first-time entrants to the criminal justice system aged 10 -17 years is per 100,000.

The graph below indicates that the rate of First Time Entrants continues to be maintained at around the same low level, however, slight variances over the 4-year period are shown.





Reduction of First Time Entrants

The YJESS Management Team continually scrutinise the FTE figures and provide performance data to the YJESS Management Board to enable effective oversight and scrutiny to ensure that children are being supported effectually in the context of the agreed processes within South Wales. The FTE numbers in the Vale have been consistently low and positively have been the lowest across Wales and much of England. Nevertheless, to maintain this downward trajectory the Board requested an additional audit in early 2023 in relation to the children who became FTEs in the previous period. The focus of the audit was to consider partnership working and to ascertain if there were opportunities where earlier support may have been beneficial and to concentrate on any developmental needs identified for addressing deficit and improving the support provided by agencies working with children.

The outcomes were clear in identifying such opportunities, and in highlighting the trauma experienced by many of the children who enter the youth justice system. The outcomes were subsequently presented to Board, and more widely with the local authority Senior Leadership Team, to raise awareness of early identification of need and to promote referrals for preventative support. The YJESS briefed Heads of Schools on the findings, and pathways for prevention. Routine auditing and learning for First Time Entrants will continue to be undertaken and shared with the Board and more widely to identify and promote the earliest possible support opportunities for children. This is key, along with the quality of the preventative offer in the Vale to enable us to continue to evidence strong performance for children removed from the justice system.

Ongoing work to enable us to continue to evidence strong performance for children removed from the justice system includes maintaining effective interventions for diversionary interventions outside of the Court arena. Within this it is key that there is a robust multi-agency decision making process and escalation points for considering appropriate alternative support; specifically considering over-represented children, Training for children’s homes and foster carers in Restorative Approaches with their children also continues to be offered.

Reoffending Rate

An area of strength is the robust, strengths based preventative offer. Effective and collaborative links with the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has resulted in earlier

targeted support to children with vulnerabilities displaying anti-social behaviour. The introduction of the ‘Turnaround’ Scheme provided additional funding over a three-year period has enabled us to enhance capacity within the preventative arena to provide more intensive early intervention programmes. The data for this indicator comes from the Police National Computer and is published by the Ministry of Justice.

The cohort consists of all young people who received a pre-court or court disposal, or were released from custody, within a 12-month period. The YJESS has an overarching target to reduce the number of children re-entering the criminal justice system year on year.

Due to the timescales for tracking of the cohort, the measure is always approximately 18 months behind ‘real time’. The most recent data below for Jul 21 -June 22, shows that there were 14 children in the cohort, 7 reoffended, committing a total of 19 reoffences. 2.71 reoffences per offender with a 50% reoffending rate.

This is compared to the previous year of 22 children in the cohort, with 6 reoffending, committing a total of 17 offences, giving a figure of 2.83 re-offences per reoffender with a 27.3% reoffending rate.

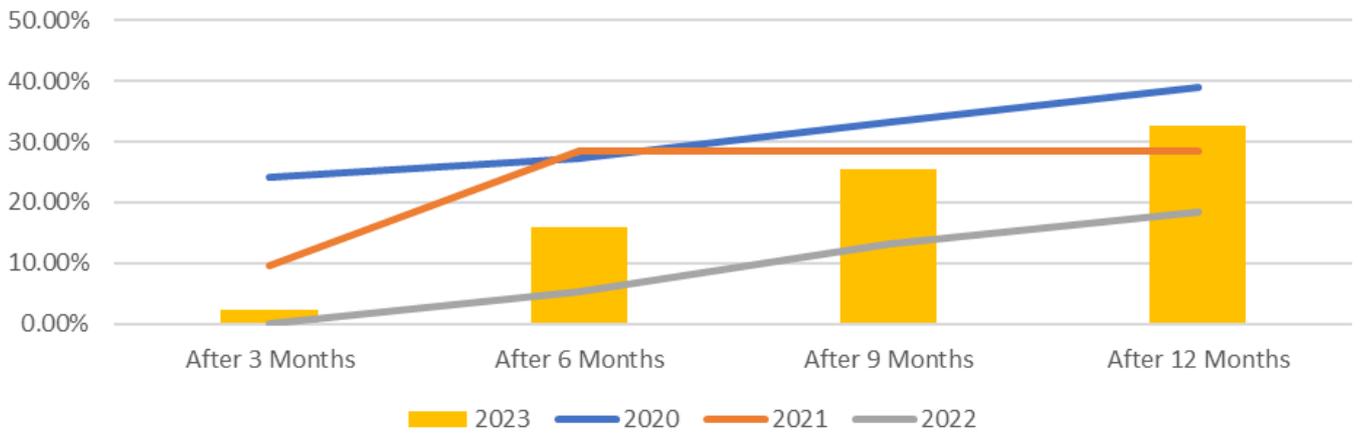


Local Offending/Reoffending

The Vale YJESS provides the Management Board with additional current and contextualised data. The most recent data available is 1st Jan 2023 – 31st March 2023, 43 children were analysed as a part of the live reoffending tracker and data presented to the board quarterly. These were children who had started a prevention intervention or received an out of court disposal, pre court or community disposal. As part of the YJESS Re-offending Action Plan, it was agreed that the YJESS will complete file audits on children who are being supported by the YJESS who have offended (while receiving prevention support) or reoffended, to ensure that the support being provided does assist with reducing the likelihood of reoffending.

Of the 43 children in the cohort, fourteen children offended or reoffended, committing 24 offences, with offences per child who committed an offence and an 18.4% offending/reoffending rate.

Reoffending Binary Rate Local Data

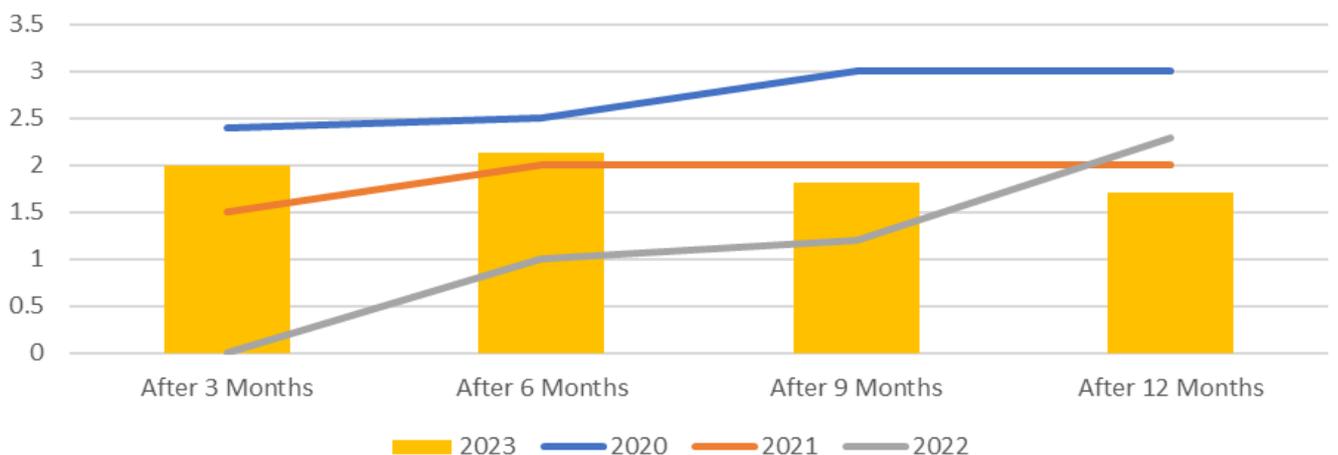


A primary focus of the support and targeted interventions provided to the children who have committed offences is to prevent reoffending. In addition to the individual support, re-offending audits have now started to take place when re-offending is identified, as identified above. The audits include practitioners undertaking group reviews of the interventions and the circumstances of the offences, and feedback provided from these to individual practitioners and the team.

Areas for development identified have included a greater emphasis on establishing and maintaining oversight of early consistent communication with the child and their family. Areas of strength and good practice have included the very positive multi-agency relationships, and the positive and adaptive methods of working with children.

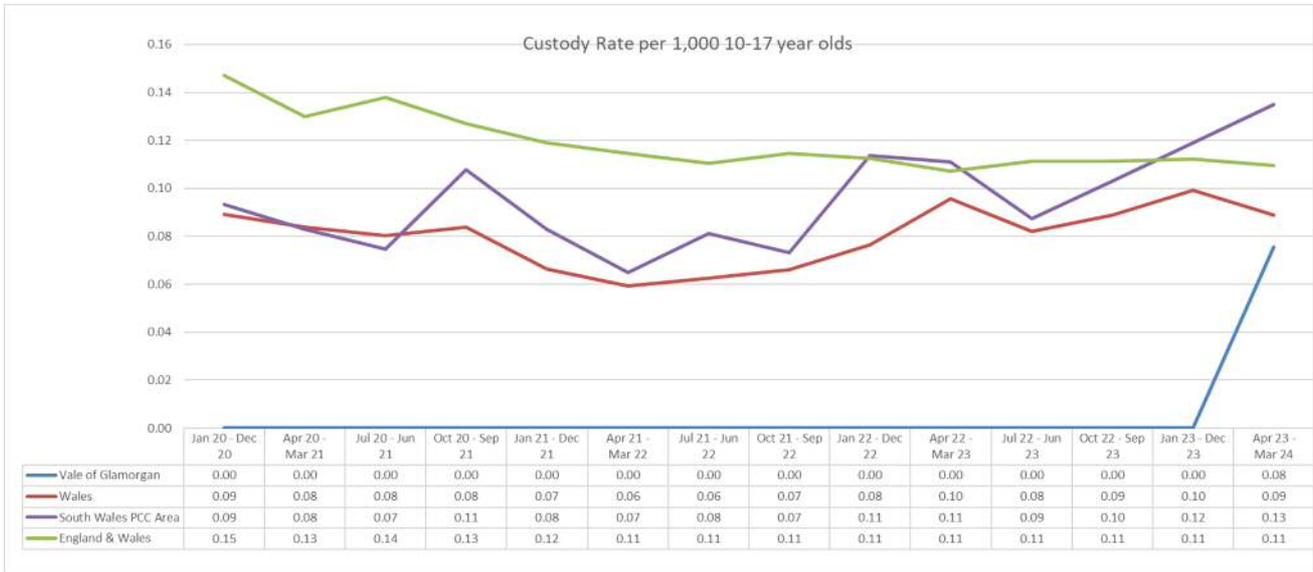
Reducing Re-offending

Reoffending Reoffences by Reoffender Local Data



Custody

Use of custody rate per 1,000 of 10-17 population for the period April 23 – March 24



Unfortunately, whilst the Vale has not had a child sentenced to custody for approximately four years, we have experienced an upward trajectory due to one child receiving a custodial and one child who was previously unknown to us being remanded into Hillside Secure accommodation for a serious offence. In response a multi-agency learning event has been facilitated which is detailed subsequently in this plan.

During this period there were eight Pre-Sentence Reports (PSRs) requested by the court requiring consideration of 'all options' which includes consideration of custody with a 100% concordance rate.

Risks and Issues

The Vale YJESS faces a range of risks and challenges that could impact our ability to achieve the most positive outcomes for children. Risks represent potential factors that may hinder success, while issues refer to existing challenges affecting outcomes. Below is an overview of the risks and challenges encountered, along with proposed measures to address them and strategies to mitigate future risks.

Current risks

- Finance cuts – budget reductions from local authorities or central government pose a significant risk to the service. Decreased funding may necessitate staff reduction particularly in relation to temporary staff, a decrease in available interventions, and an overall decline in capacity to support children in this vulnerable group. This could impact upon the quality and accessibility of youth justice support available to children. In response the YJESS will seek alternative funding sources where possible, continue

to search for and apply for grants, and develop partnerships to maintain financial stability. The objective is to prevent service disruptions and ensure stability in youth justice service delivery

- Gaps in quality assurance (QA) performance – inconsistencies in the quality assurance process can lead to uneven service delivery, undermining the effectiveness of interventions and impacting upon stakeholder trust, including that of children and their families. Maintaining robust quality assurance is important for ensuring the best possible outcomes for children. To mitigate inconsistencies in service delivery, the YJESS will strengthen quality assurance processes by ensuring robust audits, oversight of performance, and staff training. This approach helps maintain high standards and consistent outcomes.
- Delays in police forensic and charging decisions – inefficiencies and delays in police proceedings in these two areas can significantly impact a child's journey through the justice system, prolonging their time in the system and adding stress. This can impede rehabilitation efforts and delay the implementation of support plans, adversely affecting outcomes. The YJESS will engage with police partners to highlight where there are delays and when children are delayed for extended periods. This collaboration aims to improve the efficiency of the justice system and ensure that children can proceed through the process without unnecessary stress or setbacks.
- Out of Court Disposal Panels – Potential delays in decision making and escalation points, in addition to restrictions on utilising all available panel disposals including the potential use of Outcome 21 and Outcome 22 has the potential to impact upon the number of children who become first time entrants . This is a key area focus the YJESS and work is ongoing with police partners to review existing policies and protocols to ensure that these risks are mitigated and that escalation processes are timely and effective. This will also take place in the context of a collective approach across YOT Managers Cymru and with the support of the YJB.
- Victim service provision – inconsistencies in addressing the needs of victims may weaken restorative justice practices, leading to dissatisfaction among victims and a decline in community trust. This risk could compromise the overall effectiveness of youth justice and restorative processes. The YJESS will ensure that effective quality assurance and oversight function is in place to monitor victim outcomes and to ensure that victims needs are met in conjunction with child first approaches.
- Responding to exploitation – the YJESS may face challenges in working with multi agency partners and colleagues across Children and Young People's services in ensuring consistency in relation to the identification and efficacy of safety plans to address children at risk of exploitation. Addressing this risk necessitates specialised training and robust partnerships to ensure children's safety and well-being. Inadequate responses to exploitation can have enduring consequences for vulnerable children.
- Increase in violent offending – an escalation in violent offences among children poses potential risks to public safety and requires a potential shift in intervention focus. Addressing this trend requires targeted interventions, additional resources, and a partnership approach to tackling the root causes of violence and promoting safer behaviour. The YJESS will explore creative solutions, reinforcing shared approaches with partner agencies, and highlighting the importance of cultural sensitivity and

diversity in service delivery. Through these measures, the YJESS aims to create a safer and more supportive environment for children and families involved in the youth justice system.

- Potential challenges in the health offer and pathways along with emotional wellbeing services – some children experience emotional well-being issues that do not meet the threshold for specialist intervention from CAMHS. However, these issues could impact their future mental health and daily functioning. The YJESS and health partners will explore alternative options to overcome barriers and work is ongoing in relation to reviewing the Service Level Agreement with Health partners.
- Partnership working risks – collaborative partnerships also pose risks, including co-ordination challenges, differing priorities among partners, and resource limitations. These risks can be addressed through effective communication, shared goals, and robust governance structures to ensure successful partnership working.

Current issues

- Challenges in capacity - Significant challenges in management capacity since December 2023 due to and within the Service in long term vacant posts. The capacity challenges in the management team will shortly be addressed by the return to work following maternity leave and return to substantive post of the Quality Assurance and Development Officer. Recruitment is to be undertaken ensure the permanency of the Quality Assurance post, the parenting officer post and repurposing of an existing vacant post to enhance the preventative and diversionary offer. However, reduction in funding presents a significant and ongoing threat to the effective delivery of services. For example, the ending of the 'Turnaround' funding in 2025.
- Meeting the needs of children with Speech Language and Communication Needs is an area of significant deficit in the service offered by the YJESS. This will continue to be an area requiring prioritisation with strategic partners to seek to ensure that this deficit is addressed and the potential for creative solutions and collaborative partnership working is explored to seek solutions to this key are of deficit.

By acknowledging and actively seeking to address these risks and challenges the YJESS demonstrates its assurance to overcoming barriers and delivering positive outcomes for children within the youth justice system.

Plan for the Forthcoming Year

Child First

The Vale YJESS ensures takes a Child First approach towards children and young people receiving trauma support and embeds the Welsh Government's Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales 2019.

The Child First principles are:

- Seeing children as children developing pro-social Identity for positive child outcomes
- Collaborating with children
- Promoting Diversion

The Vale YJESS has embedded these principles into practice. We take a trauma informed approach to encapsulate the impact of children's experiences, with a focus on building trusting relationships through stable and consistent support as a foundation for the intervention. A series of development sessions and whole team training has taken place to support trauma informed assessment, planning and intervention as an in-house model of practice, with team members trained in implementing time-lining and formulation discussion.

This also includes a strengths-based focus to identify, encourage and support the interest of children and young people in positive activities, and to reach their potential and positively contribute to the community. By utilising local sports centres, boxing activities (such as Empire Fighting Chance), the kitchen and gardening facilities at the YJESS engagement is facilitated.

Research identifies that "learning takes place in the context of relationships and is critically affected by the quality of those relationships". The YJESS is centered around relationship-based practices and strengths based bespoke interventions addressing individual need. The importance of this is shown from young people showing trust in the practitioners sharing their concerns, needs and goals with the belief that the service will offer every support to assist them to succeed.

"He has been more responsible, and he thinks before making decisions. I feel the input that you have given him... ..has helped the most. I want to thank you for investing your time for the benefit of my son."

"The workers are flexible and can see me when needed."

"The YJESS staff have helped by being consistent and staying with us."

The principle of advocating for prevention and diversion is a strong focus at the YJESS, as illustrated throughout this plan, to minimise children's involvement with the Criminal Justice System, reduce the number of children becoming involved more formally with the Youth Justice Service as First Time Entrants, and support children to remain free from harm and exploitation.

Through including young people in discussions over time and analysing the demographic of young people we support we continue to build a comprehensive resource library; utilising practitioner skill sets and offering targeted training and development opportunities in order to have wide ranging response to the needs identified. The multi-agency nature of Youth Justice within Wales provides further prospects of specific support from partners such as CAVDAS (substance use), Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service, Local education authorities, Youth Services as well as NSPCC, Sexual Health Outreach Teams and Careers Wales. This enables us to apply flexibility when creating unique support plans and interventions with the children who are referred into the service, or required to receive support, as a result of behaviours displayed.

Child Centred Practice within the Preventative Interventions

This model focuses on a child centred and strength-based way of working with children and families. Along with their support networks, the children/young people and their families complete a report with a Prevention Officer as part of an assessment and planning process, and agree a plan together based on their views of their needs.

It is the Prevention Officer's role, as part of the collaborative assessment and planning process, to ensure the child is aware of factors such as concerns shared by practitioners, positive reinforcements, and praise, and of the YJESS Practitioner's own assessment findings. The assessment and proposed plan agreed with the child and family is discussed within a Prevention Meeting, which includes the YJESS and partner agencies, to explore how the child and their family can best be supported to achieve their goals.

Service Development

Children are involved in service development at the Vale YJESS through participating in the interview and selection process of practitioners through a children's panel. It is recognised that more has needed to be done to increase the participation of children in service provision, as recognised by the Inspectorate, and there is a workstream in place led by a member of the Board to develop this process and the voice of the child within the YJESS.

The YJESS are reviewing how young people are able to share their views and how these can be reflected within the service, and in the development of the service, and a Participation Strategy has been finalized. Feedback and views have begun to be obtained through the use of Microsoft Word based feedback forms, verbal feedback through intervention sessions and self-assessment tools. The service has developed feedback utilising the ever-changing technology available and now uses QR codes, tablets and web-based feedback forms.

Resources and Services

As of 20th Of July 2024 the Youth Justice Board practice Grant for 2024/2025 has not been confirmed, therefore the funding settlement for 2023/2024 has been used as a projection for the current year's budget, as advised by the Youth Justice Board. This is set out in the table below. The tables below illustrate how the core grant contributes to providing YJESS practitioners and support for the work of the YJESS, as well as how partner agencies provide equivalent contributions to staffing.

B5: YOT Budget: Costs and Contributions

Please enter amounts below in pounds, to the nearest whole number

Agency	Staffing Costs	Payments in Kind	Other Delegated Funds	Total
Youth Justice Board	182535			182535
Local Authority	552230		206443	758673
Police	3445	59722	6925	70092
Police and Crime Commissioner	17478		5722	23200
Probation		24699		24699
Health		91317		91317
Welsh Government *	192274			192274
Other	37348		12128	49476
Total	985310	175738	231218	1392266

* Welsh YOT's only

Intervention Programmes

The youth justice core grant allocated to the YJESS will be strategically utilised to address the complex needs of children and to prevent their offending or reoffending. Our approach involves investing in targeted interventions, support services, community engagement initiatives, and staff training and development.

We will allocate a portion of the grant to implementing evidence-based intervention programmes designed to address the underlying causes of offending behaviour.

Support Services

Another portion of the grant will be directed towards providing comprehensive support services to children and their families.

Community Engagement

We recognise the importance of engaging with the local community to foster positive relationships and support networks for children. Therefore, a portion of the grant will be allocated to community engagement initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the consequences of offending behaviour and promoting positive alternatives.

Training and Development

To ensure the effective delivery of services, a portion of the grant will be invested in the training and development of our staff. This includes ongoing professional development opportunities to enhance their skills and expertise in working with children at risk of offending, reoffending, or harm related behaviours. The core grant and additional contributions also contribute to the trauma informed training, specialist training such as AIM3 for assessing and working with sexually harmful behaviour, the training of practitioners and volunteers to facilitate Restorative Justice meetings, and in the support of facilitating positive activities.

In addition to the youth justice core grant, Vale YJESS benefits from partnership resources that contribute to the aims and expected outcomes of our plan. These partnerships encompass collaborations with local government agencies, educational institutions, healthcare providers, and community organisations. Funding resulting in an additional Turnaround post and resources also allows the YJESS to work with an increased number of children who are identified as at risk of becoming involved in offending and anti-social behaviour.

Partnership Resources

The evolving health contribution provides an increased focus on emotional and mental health support for children supported by the YJESS. This involves the part time provision of a CAMHS Specialist, and access to Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service (CAVDAS) Tier 3 support. The emotional health support includes consultation with practitioners and direct work with the children, supporting both the Child First and trauma informed approach through advising practitioners, external agencies and parents/carers of the best approaches for supporting the child, and supporting the child to develop an understanding of their own emotional needs and techniques to support these.

Effective and Efficient Use of Resources

We are committed to ensuring the effective and efficient use of resources, with a strong emphasis on achieving measurable outcomes and improving performance. By leveraging our grant, partner contributions, and available resources, we believe we can deliver services that produce real benefits and outcomes for young offenders and the community. Our performance will be continuously monitored and evaluated against the performance and outcome measures set out in the plan. We are confident that our strategic approach to resource management will result in improved outcomes for young people involved in the youth justice system, with plans for further enhancements in the coming year.

The partnership contributors to provision of services for children supported by the YJESS are shown below based on full time equivalents

Type of Contract	Strategic Manager (FT)	Operational Manager (PT)	Operational Manager (FT)	Practitioners (PT)	Practitioners (FT)	Administration (PT)	Administration (FT)	Sessional	Total
	Permanent	1		3	0.8	6	1.1	2	4
Fixed-term		0.8			4				0
Temporary									0
Vacant					2				0
Seconded Children's Services									0
Seconded Probation				0.4					0.4
Seconded Police					1				1
Seconded Health (Substance misuse)									0
Seconded Health (Mental health)				0.5					0.5
Seconded Health (Physical health)									0
Seconded Tier 2 Substance Misuse (currently recruiting)				1					
Seconded Education				0.5					0.5
Total	1	0.8	3	3.2	13	1.1	2	4	28.3
Disabled (self-classified)	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	4

Staffing of the Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice & Early Support Service by gender, ethnicity, and Welsh language:

Ethnicity	Managers Strategic		Managers Operational		Practitioners		Administrative		Sessional		Volunteer		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Asian												1	0	1
Black													0	0

Mixed						1							0	1
White		1	3	1	6	8		4		4	3	8	11	26
Any other ethnic group													0	0
Not known													0	0
Total	0	1	3	1	6	9	0	4	0	4	3	9	11	28
Welsh Speakers	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2

With this diverse array of professional's, the YJESS is well-appointed to adopt a holistic approach in its work with children. The Services collective expertise enables us to effectively address the complex needs of the children This comprehensive approach increases the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes for the children involved, supporting their rehabilitation, and reducing the risk of reoffending.

Board Development

The YJESS in the Vale is dedicated to maintaining a sound and effective local management board that ensures robust governance, strategic leadership, and high-quality service delivery for all children involved in the youth justice system.

The Board have undertaken a development session guided by the Youth Justice Board Management Board Guidance facilitated by YJB Cymru, including updating knowledge on the role and responsibilities of the board. Following the Inspection in 2022, there has been continued development and partnership working between the board and YJESS practitioners, initially as part of the work-streams to support delivery of the Vale YJESS Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP). This enabled Board members and the staff team to develop positive relationships and understand each other's roles and how they both influence service improvements.

This positive area of development has continued and can be evidenced at the YJESS Planning and Development Workshop which took place on the 26th of February 2024. The session was led by the Board Chair and YJESS Service Manager and was attended by Board members, partners and the full YJESS staff group.

The aims of the session were to provide:

- Opportunity to reflect and plan
- Youth Justice Plan 2024 – 2025
- Engage board members and wider strategic partners
- Engage and consult with staff members
- Collective ownership

This workshop was positively received by all attendees and was highly successful in providing board members with an opportunity to engage with operational teams, gather feedback, and discuss strategies for service improvement. Development sessions support a culture of openness, allowing staff to provide solutions and insights that can drive positive change within the Youth Justice and Early Support Service. This approach encourages collaboration across different levels of the organisation, promoting a more cohesive and effective team.

Workforce Development

Over the past year, the service has continued to invest in diverse array of training and development opportunities aimed at enhancing the skills, knowledge, and expertise of the workforce.

Participation in the TRM Academy training has provided staff with a profound understanding of the intricate relationship between trauma and child offending behaviours. By delving into the nuanced dynamics of trauma and its effects on child development, staff are better equipped to recognise signs of trauma, understand underlying causes, and implement trauma-informed approaches to support rehabilitation and reintegration effectively.

Furthermore, the TRM Academy training has underscored the importance of creating a safe and supportive environment within the youth justice system, emphasising the need to acknowledge and address the trauma experiences of children. By fostering a trauma-informed approach within their practice, staff can build trusting relationships, promote healing and resilience, and contribute to positive outcomes for children.

Staff at all levels have also been involved in implementing and embedding 'Building on Strengths', which describes the Vale of Glamorgan Children and Young People Services bespoke approach to practice. This focuses on doing the basics well, embedding collaboration, respect, voice and control in the support offered. Children's lived experience and family context are put at the centre, by working purposefully towards meaningful outcomes that are understood and agreed with the child, young person, their family, and partners. This approach also recognises that a stable, skilled workforce is key in supporting children, young people and their families/carers to achieve what matters to them. Strengths-based approaches have a significant impact on people's experiences and the services offered.

This approach explicitly demonstrates and describes the values that underpins practice in the Vale, lining up with trauma informed work, including the use of the trauma recovery model, enabling workers to utilise youth justice approaches, but still provides consistency with the rest of CYPS. The bespoke nature of BoS and the shared language across the division encourages personal wellbeing and professional development leading to better outcomes for children.

Implementation has been ongoing for the last year, and will continue as follows:

Embedding Building on Strengths for Supervisors - all supervisors across the division attend quarterly workshops based on Building on Strengths approach, framework, and tools. These

always include a reflective element and consider supervision of workers. We think approach and these workshops are unique to the Vale in the diversity of staff that attend allows a range of voices and perspectives to reflect and improve on the work we do to support children and young people.

Embedding Building on Strengths for teams – all workers in YJESS have and will continue to participate in quarterly sessions that help them reflect and develop their practice promoting strength-based relationships in their work. These workshops reflect the content of the supervisors' workshops, again promoting shared language and understanding of the standard of practice that VoG CYPS wants to achieve.

Themes for these workshops in 23/24 have been:

- Introduction to Building on Strengths – putting relationships central
- Using Building on Strengths to record – how we write
- Developing Services Together – working with families
- Using Building on Strengths in everyday practice
- Safe uncertainty and risk

Themes for 24/25 will be developed according to service need but have included

- Service day which brought the division together to reflect and consider practice
- Dare to lead – Courage and Vulnerability in supervision and practice
- Professional identity

Quarterly sessions are mandatory to ensure reach across the workforce, and optional sessions offered in between. Themes of which have been:

- Working with people we find or find us challenging
- Recovering from difficult professional situations

Training sessions on the AIM 3 Assessment Model and Technology Assisted Harmful Sexual Behaviour delivered by AIM/NSPCC have significantly enhanced staff's ability to respond consistently and effectively to children who display problematic or harmful sexual behaviour and who may be harmful to themselves and others.

Integration of restorative approaches training into the service's framework has promoted a culture of accountability, reconciliation, and healing, significantly contributing to fostering safer and more supportive communities, benefitting both children who have committed offences and victims alike.

Essential mandatory local authority programmes covering various areas, such as the ICT data protection, corporate induction, and fire safety awareness etc have ensured that staff are proficient in essential policies and procedures, facilitating effective service delivery.

Third sector partnership sessions in team meetings have provided staff with enhanced knowledge of services available to children in the authority.

In addition to organised training events, staff are proactive in accessing web-based learning opportunities such as webinars to enhance their knowledge and practice in working with children, families, and victims.

The cumulative effect of these training initiatives has been a significant enhancement in the skills, knowledge, and overall capacity of the service's workforce, resulting in demonstrable

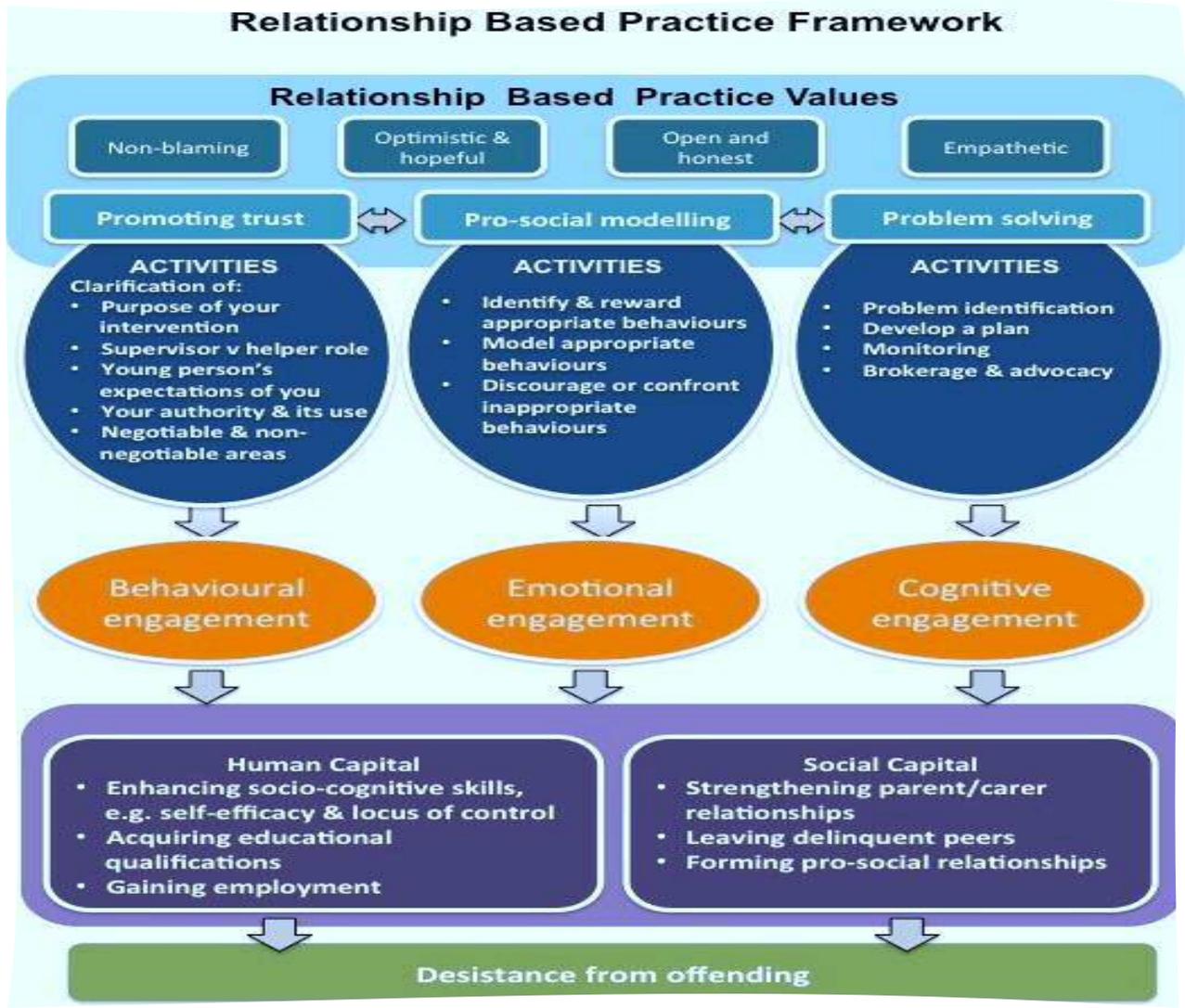
improvements in service delivery outcomes and support for individuals and communities served by the service.

Looking ahead, Vale YJESS remains committed to workforce development by addressing identified training gaps and further enhancing staff skills and knowledge. This commitment includes tailored training sessions on cultural diversity and disproportionality, non-violent resistance (NVR) and further child exploitation and serious youth violence training, among others. Additionally, ongoing support for staff resilience and well-being will be provided through peer-to-peer and management support, team building and well-being initiatives.

Through these efforts, the service aims to continue enhancing staff skills, knowledge, and resilience, leading to improved service delivery outcomes and better support for individuals and communities served.

Evidence-based practice & Innovation and Evaluation

Relationship Based Practice



The YJESS Prevention Service has a process of support for the young people called the **Prevention Planning Meeting**. This process encourages the child/young person's participation within the intervention plan and highlights praise and concerns through self-reflection and the evidence-based assessment model, Asset+. Increased inclusion of the child/young person within the planning process of the intervention would likely lead to a higher understanding of why the intervention is in place.

This scheme uses the *Relationship Based Practice Framework's*¹ 4 base values of being **Non-Blaming, Optimistic & Hopeful, Open & Honest and Empathetic** and works towards further promoting trust, displaying pro-social modelling, and assisting in problem solving which will further build human and social capital from within the young person. This in turn would increase the likelihood of a young person desisting from offending.

This approach has developed a tiered approach to the prevention of youth offending which we have adopted in The Vale of Glamorgan.



Tier 1: Early Intervention and Preventative Service (Universal services)

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 set a statutory responsibility on all agencies to prevent offending, this includes the prevention of youth offending. Having identified the characteristics of children and young people who are at risk of offending or who have offended, it is evident that this is not a single agency responsibility.

The overarching aim for universal services, early intervention and preventative services in the Vale of Glamorgan is to ensure services better meet the needs of children and young people who are at risk of entering or already in the **Youth Justice System**.

The relevant outcomes from '*Children and Young People First*' which this strategy is aiming to achieve are:

¹

Stephenson, M., & Dix, H. (2017). Relationship Based Practice. In M. Stephenson, & R. Allen, *Exploring Youth Justice* (pp. 32-51). Norwich: Unitas.

- Children and young people are engaged in mainstream services through access to *high quality prevention, treatment, and support*.
- All services work in a *holistic, multi-agency partnership* and are *accountable for meeting the needs* of children and young people.
- Children and young people are *not unnecessarily brought into the Youth Justice System* and are *diverted* into services which are accountable for and able to meet their needs.
- The *values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills* of practitioners enable young people to stop offending and lead to crime-free lives.
- Children and young people make a *seamless transition* between Youth Justice services and an independent, crime free life.

Statutory services such as **Education, Health, Social Services, Police, Youth Service and Probation** have a duty under the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* to ensure the needs of Children are met. Those children whose needs are not met are more likely to offend in the future. This is reinforced within Wales by legislation within devolved areas such as *Mental Health (Wales) Measure 2010* which places duties on Health Boards and Local Authorities to deliver primary and secondary mental health services and subsequent guidance from the Welsh Government and YJB; ensuring that children and young people at risk of entering and within the **Criminal Justice System** have access to mental health services. The new *Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014* places additional duties on all service areas working with children and young people to ensure that their **wellbeing, care and support needs** are met, and the *Education Act* places duties on Local Authorities and education providers to promote the wellbeing of children and young people.

The Vale of Glamorgan has adopted an 'invest to save' model for working with children and their families, which promotes the ethos that investment in early intervention will prevent the need for acute, intensive intervention in the future, a position that has produced positive outcomes within the Youth Justice arena. In order to prevent children and young people from entering the Criminal Justice System, those working with children and young people need to **understand the risks associated with offending behaviour and understand their responsibilities in identifying the risks** and intervening appropriately.

Tier 2 & Tier 3: Targeted Youth Justice and Early Support Service Prevention & Diversion

The YJESS support system is based on the needs identified from the referral (for Preventative and diversionary interventions) as well as the dynamic assessment process for all interventions opened within the service.

The team has helped develop and maintain a positive rapport with fellow early intervention services in the Vale of Glamorgan, such as **FACT, Families First Advice Line and Youth Wellbeing services**. It is important to ensure that interventions include referring children and young people to the correct agency for additional support based on their identified needs. The YJESS will ensure information and advice, in a variety of formats, is available to practitioners within the Vale of Glamorgan to enable them to meet their responsibilities as a preventative service but are also aware of the additional statutory support provided by the YJESS.

In line with the tiered approach, planning and assessment structures should also be appropriate to the needs, strengths and identified risks presented. This is the reason behind a new assessment tool being implemented in 2024 called the Prevention and Diversion (PAD) assessment tool. This will allow comprehensive assessments to take place that are proportionate to the child/young person's circumstances. It also allows each intervention plan in YJESS to be developed using an evidenced-based assessment models which leads to the YJESS being able to provide appropriate interventions, both 1:1 and in a group setting.

All practitioners within YJESS have received training around Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and received further training on the **Trauma Recovery Model**². For young people who have experienced significant ACEs, display more complex needs and engage in concerning behaviours towards themselves and others, we have adopted the **Enhanced Case management** system. This encompasses the expertise of clinical psychologists to help create a timeline of the child/young person's life to help identify patterns and create a theory as to why that young person behave in the manner in which they do. With this information and input from clinical practitioners, the interventions put in place can be more attuned to the intricate needs behind the behaviours.

Children whose parents are known prolific offenders or who are serving a custodial sentence will be a priority area for the YJESS Prevention Service. Therefore, the **YJESS** and **Integrated Offender Management Unit** will ensure processes are in place for automatic referral pathways to the YJESS for these children and young people utilising the seconded Probation Officer within the YJESS.

Priorities for the coming year

The priorities for the 2024-2025 year are as follows.

- To ensure that the health offer from the role of a specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) for children known to the YJESS is effective and most importantly meets the complexity of needs of the children within cohort. This will be achieved by reviewing and updating the Service Level Agreement to ensure that there are clear expectations and lines of accountability. CAMHS strategic and operational monthly meetings will be ongoing to monitor the emerging needs from the service and how we best utilise services such as single point of access, CAMHS consultation and emotional wellbeing support services to ensure the needs of the child are met.
- Meeting the needs of children with Speech Language and Communication Needs is an area of significant deficit in the service offered by the YJESS. This will continue to be an area requiring prioritisation with strategic partners to seek to ensure that this deficit is addressed.

2

Skuse, T., Matthew, J., & Kennedy, D. (2024, June 01). *The Trauma Recovery Model*. Retrieved from TRM Academy: <https://www.trmacademy.com/#theModel>

- Continue to embed Trauma Informed Approaches and use of Enhance Case Management. We will utilise support from the Youth Justice Co-ordinator (Social Worker) in the Forensic Adolescent Consultation Service in the development of services, which will include further training resources and opportunities.
- We will continue to report Board member attendance and contributions against the new key performance indicator (KPI) and ensure representation is at the right level and is achieving the priorities set.
- Focus on robust quality assurance framework and the Quality Assurance Officer will audit plans and reviews to ensure all steps are taken to protect the child, their victim and the community and the plan meets the need of the child and ensures they are listened to.
- Training will be provided for all staff in relation to understanding ethnicity and diversity and how it impacts on a child's needs.
- Seek to ensure that volunteers from all different backgrounds continue to apply for voluntary roles within the service and to continue to provide high quality support for volunteers and in to explore further links with Children and Young People's Service so volunteers gain a wider scope of opportunity available to them.
- To consider and seek alternative funding options as part of an exit strategy from Turnaround funding.
- Vale YJESS will continue to prioritise building awareness and knowledge to ensure children are targeted at the earliest point to prevent children entering the youth justice system, to safeguard them and to promote positive outcomes.
- To refine systems for feedback in line with YJESS performance indicators and to shape the questionnaire and other methods to gain the views from children.
- Complete a further quality audit in 2024-2025 in relation to girls in the service, the voice of the child and Exclusion from educational provision
- We will continue to undertake planning and delivery sessions and training activities between the Board members and the staff within the Vale YJESS to optimise relationships between board members and operational staff. There is an open evening event scheduled for 17th September 2024 which will celebrate the new name of the service and showcase the range of work and support provided to children and young people. Invites for this event includes elected members, board members, partner agencies and third sector organisations.
- We will continue to ensure that child first principles remain at the heart of all of our work, and we will seek every opportunity to effectively engage children in a range preventative and diversionary activities. This will include programmes within school holidays and in partnership with the Community Safety team during times of increased risk of anti-social behaviour such as Halloween
- We will arrange regular updates from team members to appraise the board on their roles and responsibilities and ensure members are up to date with any changes in Vale YJESS provision.

- Vale YJESS Service manager and Practitioner managers will continue to regularly attend Children and Young Peoples Services Divisional Managers' meetings and development days with staff across early help to build and share knowledge of Vale YJESS services, share experiences of working with families and to continue to build maintain professional relationships. We will also ensure that we work collaboratively in relation to the Vale of Glamorgan's corporate Strategy for children who need care and support 2024-2028
- We will review the Memorandum of Understanding with the Learning and Skills Directorate to ensure that we are working collaboratively and effectively in relation to the challenges in the increase in numbers of school exclusions and to ensure that children with Additional Learning Needs are receiving the support that they need.
- We will review the Out of Court Disposals policy with police colleagues to ensure that it is consistent with child first principles and ensure that escalation processes are effective and timely.

Our focus is on elevating standards for children within the justice system. We will ensure the completion of regular robust self-assessments and where have areas for improvement are identified, will ensure that proactive steps are taken to address gaps identified in internal audits.

We are dedicated to sustaining Health and Probation strategic and operational meetings while diligently monitoring Board member attendance against newly established KPIs. Reviewing multi-agency memberships ensures timely addressing of relevant cases to meet the evolving needs of children. Quality assurance remains paramount, with rigorous audits of plans and reviews to safeguard the well-being of children, victims, and the community.

Equally important, is providing staff with comprehensive training on ethnicity and diversity, alongside encouraging participation from volunteers representing diverse backgrounds. Our overarching goal is to increase awareness and knowledge to deter youth justice system entry, ensuring the protection and promotion of positive outcomes for children.

Over the past year, we have:

- adopted a trauma-informed approach across the service;
- benefited from a stronger focus on implementing agreed priorities;
- introduced more policies and procedures that reflect good quality youth justice work; and
- strengthened our partnership approach to working with stakeholders and delivery partners.

Standards for children

National Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System are a framework for supporting the work with children involved with youth justice services. Their purpose is to ensure the quality of support for children, and to encourage innovation and good practice. The overall aim of the National Standards is to:

- improve outcomes for children who commit offences.
- ensure that every child lives a safe and crime-free life.
- support the children to make a positive contribution to society.

These standards align with the Youth Justice Board’s ‘Child First’ principle. Introduced in 2019, the current National Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System required an initial baseline self-assessment by the YJESS followed by a comparison self-assessment undertaken in 2020. The Vale Youth Justice & Early Support Service followed these with a further self-assessment in 2022 and self-assessments in 2024.

Areas of good practice and areas for development have been identified within the self-assessment audits. A range of good practice has been identified including a wide range of interventions being carried out by Practitioners, a wide variety of reparation opportunities for young people, good quality of assessments and reports.

With regards to areas for continued development to increase the percentage of assessments completed and signed off within timescales and increase the percentage of Out of court disposals issued within timescales.

The Vale Youth Justice & Early Support Service also undertook a full Self-Assessment against National Standards in 2023/24. As requested by the Youth Justice Board, this had a focus on National Standard 2: “At Court”, to tie in with the YJB Business Plan of working towards operationalising Child First practice in court. This highlighted some strong practice within the service and areas for improvement. In the 22 areas to be assessed, an overall assessment of ‘Good’. Of the 22, 2 were identified as Outstanding, 11 of these were assessed as good, and 9 were to require improvement. None were assessed as being inadequate as evidenced by the table below.

Question	2023 self-assessment score
SECTION A- STRATEGY	
1.Does your youth justice service take all possible steps* to divert children from court?	Good
2.Does your service have an effective strategy to minimise unnecessary* use of remands?	Good
3.Do your court processes take all possible steps to promote fair treatment of particular groups of children*?	Good
4. Does your management board have an action plan to tackle disproportionality, with regular analysis and reviews of progress	Requires Improvement
5. Does your service have sufficient resource to manage demand for court services, and complete written reports to court within specified timescales?	Outstanding
6. Does your youth justice service minimise any delays from specialist assessments?	Good

7. Do you have a means to get regular feedback from magistrates and judges about your reports and court services, and engage with strategic partners* to ensure court confidence in your work and interventions?	Requires Improvement
8. Do you have a means to ensure children can participate effectively in court proceedings, and to secure consistent feedback from children about their experience in court?	Requires Improvement
9. Do you have consistent access to custodial warrants for children remanded and sentenced to youth detention accommodation?	n/a

SECTION B REPORTS	
10. Does your youth justice service consistently provide reports which are high quality* to all courts dealing with children within the civil and criminal codes, and for any subsequent referral order panel meetings?	Outstanding
11. Are reports child focussed, support desistance and contain the child's views?	Good
12. Are all reports based on an up-to-date and relevant YJB approved assessment?	Good
13. Do all reports evidence engagement with parents and carers?	Requires Improvement
14. Do reports take account of impact on victims?	Requires Improvement
15. Does your service have an effective Quality Assurance process for reports?	Requires Improvement

SECTION C- PROCESS	
16. Does your service take sufficient steps to ensure children understand and can participate in court processes?	Requires Improvement
17. Do you ensure parents and carers understand court processes and receive support as needed?	Requires Improvement
18. Do staff inform the parents/carers of the court outcome?	Good

19. Does your service take sufficient steps to ensure children really understand the outcome of court?	Requires improvement
20. Are court outcomes consistently recorded accurately?	Good
21. Does your service consistently provide all relevant information to the Youth Custody Service in a sufficiently timely way?	Good
22. Do you ensure parents and carers are informed about details of youth detention accommodation, including (where relevant) the Assisted Prison Visit scheme?	Good

The areas that were deemed to be required improvement have been further evaluated with progress made and the next steps have been formed to ensure progress continues to be made. These findings are also being presented to the Management Board alongside the accompanying action plan.

Action Plan of Areas Requiring Improvement – Progress 2024

<p>4. Does your management board have an action plan to tackle disproportionality, with regular analysis and reviews of progress</p> <p>2024 Progress- the disproportionately policy was shared at management board and is being embedded. Data is regularly shared with board re disproportionality and in-depth pieces of work such as the 'Girls report' to be shared with board.</p> <p>Next steps- continue to embed the policy and create new action plans as part of it.</p> <p>Likely rating now Good.</p>	<p>Requires Improvement</p> <p>2024- good</p>
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<p>7. Do you have a means to get regular feedback from magistrates and judges about your reports and court services, and engage with strategic partners* to ensure court confidence in your work and interventions?</p> <p>2024- Progress- verbal feedback is reported back however court forms have not been returned by the Court.</p> <p>Next steps- Work is ongoing to re-establish the local Court User Group in partnership with the Courts and Cardiff and Bridgend Youth justice Service to promote feedback and promote confidence in the work of the YJESS.</p> <p>Likely rating remains requires improvement</p>	<p>Requires Improvement</p> <p>2024- remains Requires improvement</p>
<p>8. Do you have a means to ensure children can participate effectively in court proceedings, and to secure consistent feedback from children about their experience in court?</p> <p>2024- There are recent example of Practitioners ensuring children share their feedback from their experience in court and this does happen.</p> <p>Next steps- new court monitoring form which will make this section and explicit and utilise any speech and language input to devise more creative ways of ensuring feedback is collected.</p>	<p>Requires Improvement</p> <p>2024- good</p>
<p>13. Do all reports evidence engagement with parents and carers?</p> <p>2024 update- Parents or carers views are referenced in reports and this is part of the QA process however work remains to be done on informing the court of what additional support can be provided to parents and carers. The vacant parenting officer post will improve this area further as their views and recommendations for support can be included in all reports where applicable.</p> <p>Next steps- with the parenting officer due to go out for advert this post to support this to be embedded to engage parents and carers. To use QA process to ensure quality of recording by practitioners in assessments and reports.</p>	<p>Requires Improvement</p> <p>2024- requires improvement</p>

<p>14. Do reports take account of impact on victims?</p> <p>2024- all reports do either include information from victims or explain why there are not available, this is also being embedded into the new QA report template which specifically references victims. All PSRs since April have specifically referenced the impact on victim.</p> <p>Next steps- continue this progress with new QA tool.</p>	<p>Requires Improvement</p> <p>2024- good</p>
<p>15. Does your service have an effective Quality Assurance process for reports?</p> <p>2024 progress- Quality assurance continues to take place on every report and assessment. There was a backlog of assessments which has now been cleared due to significant challenges with management capacity for an extended period. QA form for assessments was updated in May 2023 to embed this process and a permanent post for a Quality Assurance officer is set to go out to advert imminently.</p> <p>Next steps- review QA templates and update QA form for reports.</p>	<p>Requires Improvement</p> <p>2024- requires improvement</p>
<p>16. Does your service take sufficient steps to ensure children understand and can participate in court processes?</p> <p>2024- This is done in the majority of cases and recorded on childview and a dip sample of recent court cases confirms this. However a new court monitoring form is being developed which requires explicit reference to this being completed which will move the rating upwards in a positive direction.</p>	<p>Requires Improvement</p> <p>2024 good</p>
<p>17. Do you ensure parents and carers understand court processes and receive support as needed?</p> <p>2024 progress- this will also be included to be referenced explicitly in the court monitoring form to ensure consistency however there is recent evidence of this happening to a good standard, including liaison with other key professionals such as social workers involved.</p> <p>Next steps- Ensure the new Parenting Officer is aware of any young people in Court and offers bespoke support to any parents.</p>	<p>Requires Improvement</p> <p>Remains requires improvement</p>

<p>19. Does your service take sufficient steps to ensure children really understand the outcome of court?</p> <p>2024- There is evidence practitioner do inform children of court outcomes in a child friendly way on an individual basis. This is strengthened by where possible the Court Officer who has the best relationship with the young person will be present at Court to explain the process and outcome to them. However, further support in speech and language would help solidify this improvement where we can be sure information is shared in a way children can truly understand. There are also plans to devise child friendly information sheets which speech and language would support with.</p> <p>Next steps- continue to monitor and QA quality of recording following court appearances.</p>	<p>Requires improvement</p> <p>2024- good</p>
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There are four areas which remain required improvement
Action Plan - National Standard 2.

- Continue to embed the disproportionality policy and create new specific action plan to embed it.
- Work is ongoing to re-establish the local Court User Group in partnership with the Courts and Cardiff and Bridgend Youth justice Service to promote feedback and promote confidence in the work of the YJESS.
- Develop and embed new court monitoring form which will make this section and explicit and utilise any speech and language input to devise more creative ways of ensuring feedback is collected.
- Ensure the new Parenting Officer is aware of any young people in Court and offers bespoke support to any parents.
- Quality Assurance- continue this progress with new QA tool.
- Continue to monitor and QA quality of recording following court appearances to ensure all relevant information is captured.

Internal Audits

The YJESS also undertakes internal audits of interventions and themes. These areas have analysed themes such as girls, education, and children in custody. The findings were shared and presented to the YJESS Management board with actions flowing from them, such as the scheduling of a multi-agency learning event in respect of a specific young person facilitated and led by the Head of Service for Children and Young Peoples Services in the Vale.

In December 2023 a 17-year-old open to the Vale YJESS was remanded into custody. This was the first young person to be remanded into custody in the Vale for approximately 4 years. He was then subject to a YRO with ISS and placed himself in breach of this order and was returned to Court, then receiving a 12-month Detention and Training Order (DTO)

Consequently, a presentation was given to the Management Board of the traumatic background of the young person and their involvement with the Youth Justice and Early Support Service and known involvement with other agencies from Youth Justice records, as the young person had significant involvement with the Youth Justice Service from the age of 10. He was also subject to a full care order. The young person turned 18 shortly after he was sentenced to and is now undergoing a transition to the Probation Service. The presentation was well received at Management Board and the Head of Service for Children and Young People Services then put together a wider 'learning event' inviting multi agency partners from health, education, police, probation, children and young people services and youth justice. All multi agency partners were invited to provide any information they had in respect of the young person.

The aim of the day was to discuss and undertake reflections on learning in relation to:

- The early stages of our involvement
- Prevention
- Working in partnership / transitions
- Assessment of need
- The child / young person's voice
- Managing risk
- Decision making
- Placement finding and stability
- Our role as corporate parents

Looking forward- So all agencies could attempt to support the young person moving forward

- His wishes and feelings
- Meeting his needs
- Managing risk
- Being ambitious

Our shared commitments

In addition, each attendee was asked at the end of the event for two things each person will now do as a result of the learning event. The feedback included areas such as to cascade any learning to others, of reflections to improve their own practice or of things people could personally do to support this young person further during his transition to adult services. Feedback from the event was that it was insightful and it was well received, and a general consensus was similar exercises could be completed for other young people so that good practice is shared and any gaps in provision can be addressed in an appropriate forum.

Service Development

The Vale of Glamorgan YJESS regularly reviews progress against HMI Probation thematic inspection, serious incident reviews and learning exercises. The service is proactive in ensuring that it develops services in accordance with the Youth Justice Boards Strategic Plan 2024 - 2027

Addressing racial disparities within the youth justice system is crucial. The YJESS will use data analysis to identify and address these disparities, ensuring equitable outcomes and access to services for all children.

The introduction of the Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool and Turnaround funding will enable the YJESS to continue developing prevention and diversion strategies over the next 12 months.

Practitioner Managers have undertaken the train the trainer training from the YJB in readiness for the introduction of the Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool. A priority for service development will be to roll out training to all practitioners who will be undertaking the assessments as well as sharing with partners and partner agencies to ensure the assessment is informed and developed from a multi-agency perspective. In addition, Turnaround funding enables YJESS to continue developing prevention and diversion strategies, such as expanding interventions in schools and community settings.

A further priority is in relation to Enhanced Case Management approaches and developing as a Trauma informed service with the support from the YJB trauma informed leads.

The Vale YJESS has also used lessons from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation's March 2024 Inspection of Youth Justice Services in Carmarthenshire to inform future service development and priorities for the forthcoming year

Areas that were identified as good practice include the use of additional diversionary tools such as Outcome 22 which we are in discussions with South Wales Police about how this can be further embedded in the out of court process.

The service has had minimal serious incident reporting to the Youth Justice Board. There has only been the requirement to report on one case in the last year and this child has been found to be unfit to plead by the Court. Whilst the YJESS had no previous knowledge about the child prior to the offence, we will undertake a multi-agency learning event in respect of this young person.

The Vale YJESS aims to enhance service quality, address disparities, and provide ongoing comprehensive support to children in the justice system, promoting their well-being and reducing reoffending.

National Priority Areas

Children from Groups who are Over-represented

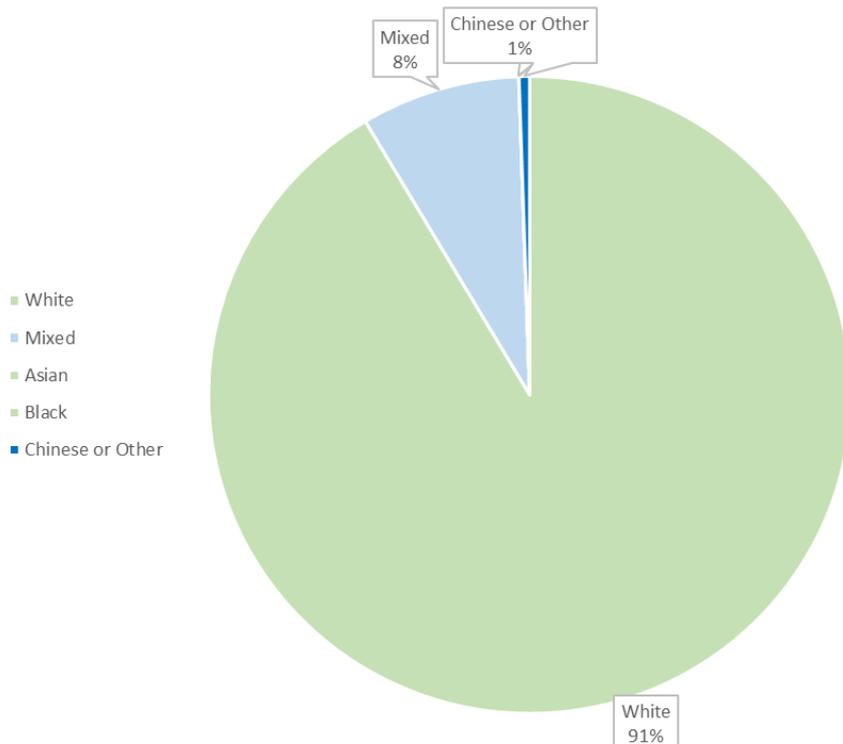
The Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 sets out the context and ambitions for delivering services that support the diverse communities that make up our society. This plan sets out equality objectives for both operational and strategic requirements. The Vale YJESS devised a new Disproportionality Policy which was ratified at Management Board in October 2023. The Disproportionality Policy allows the Youth Justice and Early Support Service to contribute to the success of this plan and provide a better, fairer more inclusive service for our users.

The Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) is committed to addressing disproportionality and exploring who is affected by disproportionality within the Youth Justice System. This is essential to analyse how we can address inequality experienced by young people within a system which should be fair and equal.

This includes working to ensure that we accurately collect, collate and analyse relevant data in relation to protected characteristics. Analysis will enable continual understanding and assessment of disproportionality in order that it can be identified and tackled. Analysis will be conducted where disproportionality concerns are highlighted by the community, YJESS professionals or as proactive comparisons within data analysis, to ensure a full understanding of the current picture. The aim will be for multi-agency disproportionately data to be continually monitored so that appropriate actions can be taken where necessary. We will define clear, measurable, outcomes to this area of business and will work in conjunction with our communities and partners to understand community impact in relation to disproportionality and its effects.

This data has shown that 91% of children supported by the YJESS are identified as white (9% identifying as non-white) which is representative of the Vale population for children aged 10-17 years. This is not representative of the population of children in the Vale being supported as a result of committing offences in 2023/24 however, with 13% (2 of 13) of children who committed offences in the Vale aged 10 -17 identifying as Black or another ethnic minority. This is above the Vale general representation although a decrease from the previous year's 29% figure. This over representation will continue to be analysed as part of the disproportionality policy and this data is shared with the Management Board. An example of how disproportionality is challenged and discussed is explicitly referencing diversity in the OOOD panels and where relevant highlighting the concept 'adultification' to challenge decisions.

Ethnicity of Children Supported in 2023/24



Using data from the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation enables us to provide analysis of the complexity of need of our cohort. The data is used to target resources to where it is best delivered in a small area or at community level.

40 (29%) children supported by the Vale Youth Justice & Early Support Service reside in the bottom 20% most deprived areas in Wales. In contrast 37 (27%) of children supported reside in the top 20% least deprived areas of the Vale identifying some of the potential diverse needs of children living in the Vale.

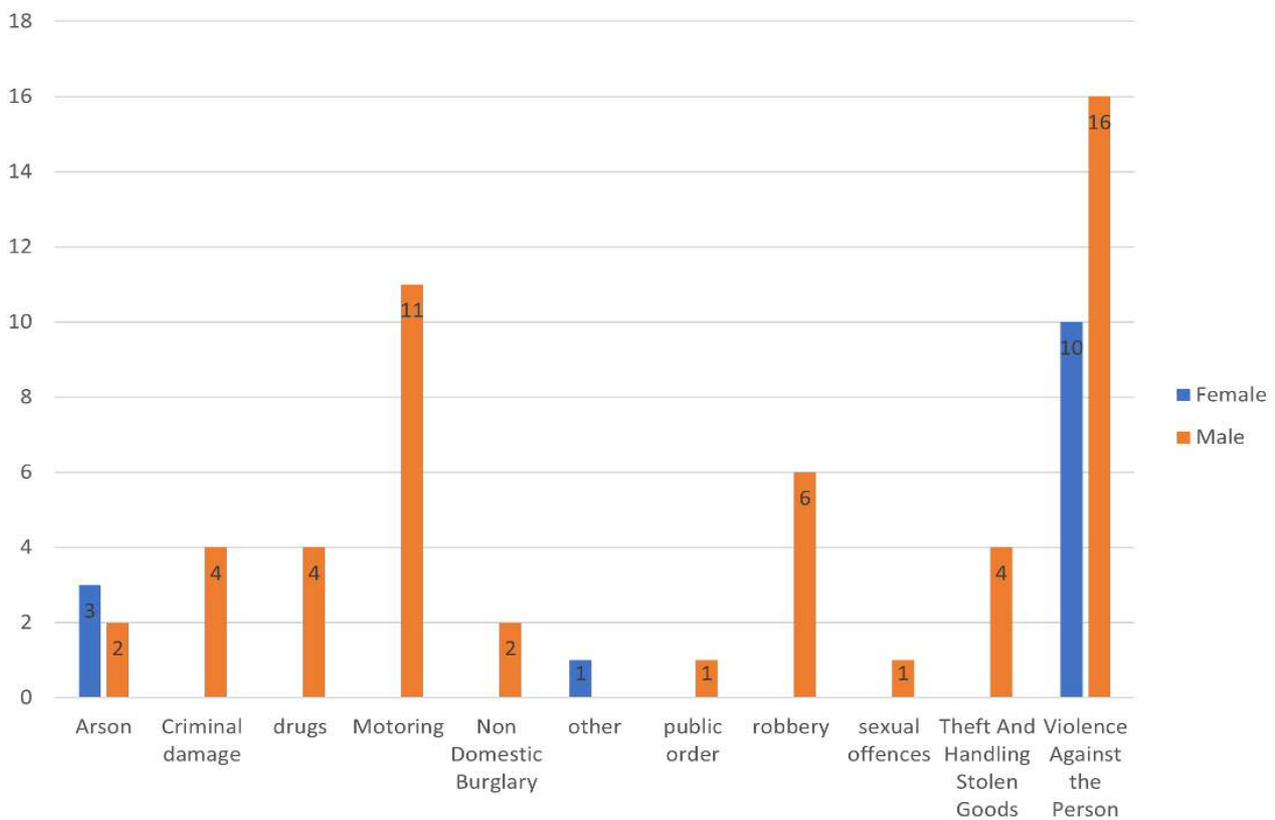
With regards to care experienced children the All-Wales Protocol for Reducing the criminalisation of care experienced children and young adults (2022) reflects the protocol already in place in the Vale of Glamorgan since February 2019, aiming to set out 'best practice' to prevent children who are care experienced from entering the youth justice system. As part of our commitment, we continue to offer support and training to the residential children's homes and foster carers within the Vale of Glamorgan, which includes Restorative Approaches and support in facilitating restorative conversations and conferences. However, the YJESS infographic shows the vulnerabilities of children in the YJESS cohort and highlights that 22% of children had been looked after.

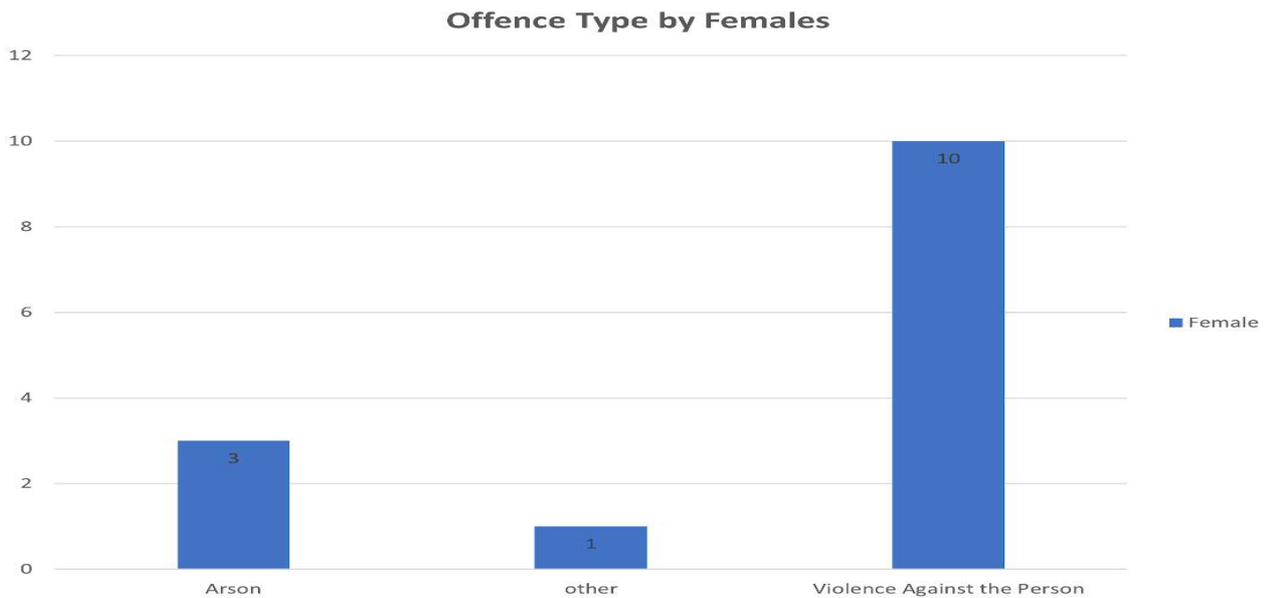
The Vale YJESS continues to closely monitor the growing trend of girls within the cohort. Comparing the Data of 1st October 2022 – 31st March 2023 with 1st October 2023 – 31st March 2024 identified that there had been an increase in the percentage of girls in the cohort. In the 6 months period for 2023/24 the interventions were made up of 23% (45/153) of girls compared to 21% (35/133) of girls for the same period in 2022/23. There is an increase from

17% to 23% when comparing six months data from the 1st of October 2020 to 31st of March 2020 when 17% of all interventions related to female. (23/116).

In addition, a deeper analysis of these girls has been completed as part of the monitoring and when looking at the data (Appendix 2), 22% of Interventions open in the period Oct 23–March 24 with a linked offence, related to girls, and 71% of all their main offences were made up of violence against the person. (10 out of 14 Girls had a main offence of Violence against the person) This is compared to the males whose main offence of Violence against the person accounted for 31%. Notably, there were 3 offences of Arson, which have received Out of Court disposals and suitable intervention to address the offending behaviour.

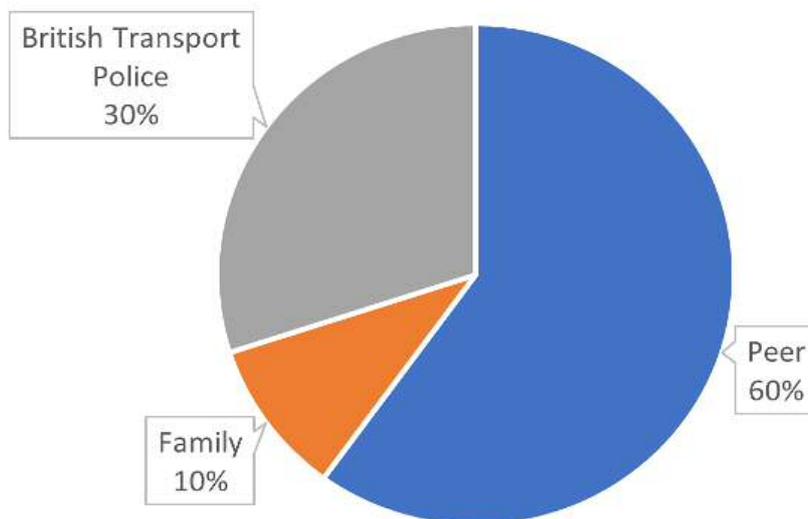
Offence Type by Gender





In addition, analysis of the offences committed by girls has revealed that peers are also most likely to be the victims of these offences.

Violence Against the Person - Victim Type



Perhaps notably, 89% currently or have been previously known to Children and Young People Services, 58% of girls have been or are currently supported by CAMHS, and 52% of the girl cohort have disclosed self-harming. Based on the data outlined in the report, there are potential indicators that increase the risk of offending behaviour within the young female cohort that could be considered by agencies for the targeting of referrals in respect of preventative interventions and support.

The next steps are for the report and findings to be presented to the Management Board and YJESS and partners to consider this data in reviewing and how we target services. We will also be linking into Hwb Doeth has committed to supporting a thematic data collection exercise across Wales, which will improve understanding and assist in the development of appropriate strategies and interventions for girls who offend.

Policing

The Vale YJESS have one full time seconded Police Officer who is overseen by a Sergeant who covers the Cardiff and Vale Police area. This joint arrangement allows for flexibility between Cardiff and the Vale YJS Services to share and pool resources to cover leave and sickness. In the Vale YJESS if the daily flag shows any young person in custody, then the designated police officer liaises with the Duty AA and police custody to ensure young people are dealt with as swiftly as possible. The Vale YJESS Police Officer also does daily checks at the end of each day if any young people are in custody and may require an AA or any support later that day or the following day. While young people can at times spend too long in police custody due to the positive partnerships in place with the local police force, these challenges can be made where necessary.

The relationships with the seconded YJESS police officer and Sergeant remain critical to the success of our partnership with the police. Strong police involvement is in place at both a strategic and operational level with a police representative sitting on the YJESS management board.

Across the South Wales region, child-centred policing continues to develop and, along with the Child First approach advocated within youth justice, is informing how police employees treat, listen, and respond to children at every stage of the criminal justice process. The emphasis on working in partnership is vital to ensure children receive the most appropriate outcome that avoids stigmatisation and criminality wherever possible. As a response to enhancing the Child First approach, the police are developing an electronic communication application to help them gather more information on children they encounter in the community, allowing them to deliver the most appropriate interventions to support the child and to try and use arrest as a last resort when dealing with incidents. The police also plan to improve data collection to enable the submission of information and statistics to Management Boards across South Wales in relation to child arrests and length of time held in custody so there is further opportunity to scrutinise and challenge to enable constructive change in reducing the time children are held in police custody.

Child First Approach in Custody in South Wales

There was effective strategic representation and challenge by the YJESS Service Manager at a recent roundtable event held at South Wales Police Headquarters on 10th June 2024.

In 2021 SWP and partners participated in the first part of a Nuffield funded study that examined the impact of PACE on the detention and questioning of child suspects. At that time, Dr Vicky Kemp and her colleagues engaged with children while detained about their legal rights so that the research could critically examine the police custody process through the eyes of the child. This approach has been extremely powerful in producing a strong evidence base from which to help inform change. The study also developed a set of recommendations to achieve a Child First police custody process. These recommendations have received widespread support, including from relevant leads within the National Police Chiefs' Council and the Youth Justice Board.

A further follow up study is also being funded by Nuffield and Dr Vicky Kemp (University of Nottingham), together with Dr Miranda Bevan (Goldsmiths University), are working in partnership with several forces and other agencies to pilot a Child First approach in police custody. SWP and partners will also participate in this second study. This will include examining how SWP can work more effectively with external partners to better engage options for diversion and support for the child, in the community and, if required due to the seriousness of the offence, for children brought into police custody.

It was acknowledged in the first study that Wales has more of a rights-based approach when dealing with children drawn into the criminal justice system than is found in England. The proportion of children receiving an out-of-court disposal in Wales, for example, is twice that found in English forces. In the second phase, the researchers want to tailor changes to meet local challenges and strengths to create a distinct 'Welsh' approach. This will include working collaboratively with agencies, including Youth Justice Services, safeguarding teams, Children's Services, and agencies working with the Wales Violence Prevention Unit, to better engage options for diversion and support for the child, both in the community and, if necessary, in custody.

The outcomes of the study are intended to assist Welsh agencies in adopting a whole-systems approach, as set out in the Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales – focusing on prevention, pre-court diversion, community (particularly for children in the system who have complex needs, including emotional trauma and Aces) and, to help improve system oversight of this early stage of the youth justice system.

The purpose of the event was to discuss the findings and recommendations of the first study and explore opportunities and challenges in achieving Child First approaches to children coming into contact with the police. The Vale YJESS are fully committed to actively participating in the follow up study and welcome any opportunity to improve outcomes for children based on a meaningful and effective Child First approach

The YJESS police officer contribute to support in a wide range of areas which includes;

- Producing a daily flag each morning of any young people arrested in the Vale, any occurrences that have taken place involving young people open to the service or any disposals that have been issued. This is shared with all staff.
- intelligence and information sharing with relevant professionals by sharing, where possible, any intelligence re the young person.
- out-of-court work (including prevention and diversion). The YJESS Police Officer is a mandatory panel member of the OOC panel, and the sergeant can assist with escalation for problem solving in cases. Disposals are also issued to the young person following the OOC Panel by the YJESS Police Officer.
- Attending strategy meetings for young people open to the YJESS and also acting as the primary police contact for other professionals and the young person/family for any issues around exploitation while the young person is open to the YJESS.

In addition, the YJESS police officer assists with the sharing of victim information from NICHE to the YJESS Victim Liaison Officers.

OUTCOME 22- There have been challenges in respect of the use of Outcome 21/22 and further meetings are set to take place to try and provide consistency in terms of their use and to gain feedback in terms of how they fit into the wider out of court disposal framework. This issue has also been raised at Management Board Level. There is a plan to create further

guidance for YJS's and to complete an audit through the local scrutiny panels on the use of these outcomes.

The purpose of the Prevention Strategy at the Vale YJESS is to prevent children and young people from entering the Criminal Justice System by identifying those at risk of offending or committing anti-social behaviour.

Prevention

"I take in what you say, I learned a lot."

"Talking to you [about behaviours and consequences] is helpful."

The Prevention Service provides evidence-based interventions designed to reduce the likelihood of offending and involvement in ASB. In line with this, the service aims to inform and educate children and young people; increasing their resilience and empowering them to make better decisions. Referrals can be made through partner agencies, or by the family.

The YJESS Prevention Service has already adopted a tiered support system based on the needs identified from the referral and the risk level indicated through a verification process. This includes educational work around Anti-Social and Criminal Behaviour for children assessed as at a lower level of likelihood of becoming involved in offending or ASB, to a full Prevention assessment and unique intervention for those assessed as at higher need. (appendix 2)

ASB Programmes are offered as part of the close working partnership with the Community Safety Team, identifying children involved in ASB at earlier stages in order to provide support. This includes undertaking restorative-focused work facilitated by community volunteers.

The Prevention Service has helped develop and maintain a positive rapport with fellow early intervention services in the Vale of Glamorgan, such as **FACT, Families First Advice Line** and **Youth Wellbeing services**. It is important to ensure that services are referring children and young people to the correct agency for additional support based on their identified needs. The YJESS will ensure information and advice in a variety of formats is available to practitioners within the Vale of Glamorgan to ensure that they meet their responsibilities as a Tier 1 preventative service but are also aware of the additional support service provided by the YJESS.

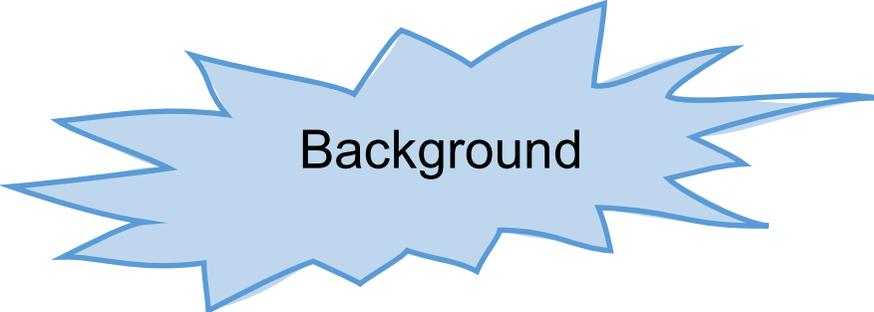
Each intervention plan in the Vale YJESS is developed by using the ASSET Plus model which is unique to the child and their family. Using the Child First and trauma informed approaches, the Prevention Model (detailed earlier in this report within the Voice of the Child section) and

the YJESS practitioner the child and their parents/carers identify their needs and strengths and a plan to support these.

This enables the child to receive the appropriate support, either 1:1 or in group settings, with the same specialist resources available within prevention support as children involved in other YJESS support.

Evaluations take place through feedback from the child and family at the end of intervention support, and the prevention service is part of the First Time Entrant and Offending/Reoffending audits now taking place if the child commits an offence.

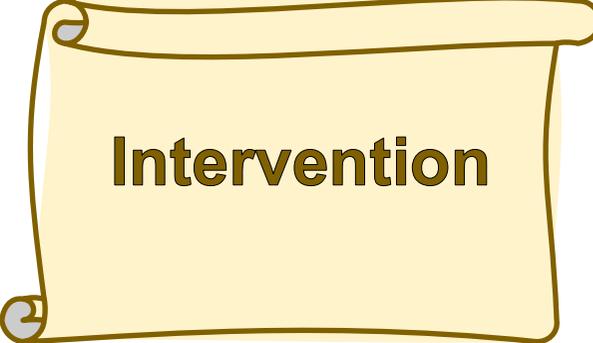
Prevention practice examples are detailed including initial concerns, support undertaken, and outcomes.



Background

- Support to transfer to another mainstream school.
- We completed a referral to CAVDAS for support around YP's cannabis use.
- Provided support and intervention around the impacts of engaging in anti-social and offending behaviour.
- FACT supported mum with parenting support.
- Support and intervention around the impacts of social media use and online bullying.
- YP completed sessions around the impacts of cannabis use and harm reduction.
- Referral was completed to CAVDAS and YP completed two sessions.
- Support and intervention around the impacts of engaging with negative peer influences.
- YP was referred to Empire Fighting Chance
- YP was referred to CAMHS clinical nurse specialist for support around poor mental health.

- Permanently excluded from school.
- Concerns around sexual exploitation.
- A lot of conflict in the home with mum.
- Not adhering to boundaries or consequences.
- Engaging in anti-social and offending behaviour.
- Engaging in fights in the local community.
- Cannabis use.
- Concerns around online bullying.



Intervention

- YP returned to mainstream school and attends full time.
- YP no longer engages in anti-social or offending behaviour.
- YP has reduced cannabis use.
- YP regularly attends Empire Fighting Chance and due to how well they are engaging Empire Fighting Chance have continued to support them with boxing sessions.
- YP states mental health and sleep routine has improved.

Diversion

Many partnerships are delivering diversion work with children (together with their families/carers) who have committed an offence, to support them to avoid a criminal record and escalation into the justice system. The VoG YJESS continues to operate a bespoke Out of Court Disposal (OOC) model as part of its diversion activity. The outcomes from the OOC process include the child receiving Outcome 22, Youth Restorative Disposal (YRD), a Youth Caution (YC), a Youth Conditional Caution (YCC), referral back to the custody sergeant to consider No Further Action, or for a referral to Court.

The OOC model received positive feedback from the HMIP Inspectorate in 2022, who stated that the “out-of-court disposal policy and practice are well documented, with clarity about the contributions of the relevant partners”. Children are referred for consideration of an OOC by the custody sergeant at the police station following interview, or via the court, based on qualifying seriousness of the offence. All children referred are allocated a YJESS practitioner who undertakes a comprehensive assessment with the child and their family/carers, including the support they may wish to receive, to inform discussion at a multi-agency decision-making panel within 15 working days of the referral. The multi-agency panel routinely includes YJESS, South Wales Police, Victim Officer and education, as well as health and CYPS as appropriate and a decision is made based on eligibility, suitability and on all the information shared at the meeting. If a decision for a YRD, YC or YCC is reached, the panel recommends a provisional plan after consideration of the practitioner’s assessment and provisional planning with the child and their family/carers. The YJESS Practitioner will confirm an agreed plan with the child and their family, and the child will receive their disposal from the YJESS seconded police officer, as part of a restorative meeting facilitated by restoratively trained community volunteers. This is to be scheduled within five working days of the decision-making meeting. The views of the victim are also shared at each panel.

If an agreed decision is not able to be reached by the practitioners at the panel, the information is escalated to the YJESS Sergeant to progress to the supervising Inspector and YJESS Service Manager for a review and further decision making to take place. All children receiving an OOC are offered an opportunity to engage in an intervention plan supported by their YJESS practitioner. The HMIP inspectorate cited a number of strengths of the VoG OOC process:

- An appropriate assessment tool (Asset Plus) is used with each child before a decision-making panel takes place.
- The multi-agency panel makes decisions jointly.
- There is an escalation process if the panel does not reach a consensus.

- The YJESS's out-of-court policy has driven a diversionary approach, and the first-time entrants to the system remain at a very low level.

For the purpose of effective analysis of the OOC Process, the YJESS has partnered with Cardiff Youth Justice Service to scrutinise OOCs to examine decision making, identify areas of good practice and areas for development. Since 2021 a Scrutiny Panel occurs every three months including Cardiff YJS, Vale YJESS, Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, Police representatives of the YJESS Boards, Youth Magistrates, Victim Focus and Crown Prosecution Service Representation. Three children's interventions from each service are randomly selected by PCC colleagues as part of the scrutiny, and additional performance data is also provided on a quarterly basis.

Diversity within OOC Decision-Making - an area of ongoing scrutiny and development is ensuring that diversity considerations being incorporated and evidenced at the earliest point into the decision-making process for Out of Court Disposals. This is critical to identify if there are other support mechanisms which would be more appropriate for children in over-represented groups.

As a part of the ongoing development of the OOC offer, and in line with developments across the South Wales Policing area, the Vale YJESS has successfully been delivering a bespoke driving offence package to children referred by the police for OOC relating to driving offences, as an alternative to these children being charged to court. This programme of work involves direct work with the young person undertaken by a YJESS police officer and the fire service.

Turnaround - in December 2022, the Ministry of Justice offered all YJESS' additional funding to deliver the Turnaround Project, with the aim of reducing the number of children entering the youth justice system. The primary aims of the Turnaround programme are:

- to achieve positive outcomes for children, aiming to prevent them from engaging in criminal behaviour.
- to enhance existing efforts by ensuring that all children at risk of entering the youth justice system receive consistent needs assessments and access to support services.
- to improve the socio-emotional, mental health, and overall well-being of children in vulnerable situations; and
- to promote better integration and collaboration between YJS and other statutory services, facilitating comprehensive support for children in need.

The VOG YJESS applied for and received this funding, completing an intervention audit and purchasing relevant additional resources to support the project, and appointing a new

Turnaround Support Practitioner. This has been successful in further promoting diversion work allowing for referrals to be received to support young people released under investigation or on pre-charge bail. These children are identified via the daily flag sent to all YJESS staff of any young people who have been arrested and also in regular discussions with CYPS.

Education

The YJESS works closely with the Learning and Skills Directorate within the Local Authority to ensure each child is in receives their entitlement of 25 hours of education per week in an appropriate education setting. There is a dedicated Lead Inclusion Officer from the Inclusion service (Education Welfare Service) who is available to offer support and advice to help identify attendance concerns and liaise within the learners educational setting, thus ensuring positive outcomes for children. All staff within the inclusion teamwork with children open to YJESS thereby ensuring a wide range of skills, knowledge and capacity is available. Staff meet regularly in multi-agency meetings to share information and contribute to Individual Support Plan's for children. Meetings include monthly team meetings, Out of Court Disposals Meetings, Prevention Case Meetings SEMHP (Social Emotional and Mental Health panel), exclusion monitoring, YJESS/Inclusion interface meetings and YJESS Strategic Board meetings.

Educational information is regularly shared to enable accurate data collection and performance monitoring and to ensure that YJESS staff are empowered to challenge partners to ensure that children's legal entitlement is being met. This is also vital to ensure that children's needs are met and that risks are collectively managed. YJESS staff attend Pastoral Support Plan review meetings, post exclusion meetings, integration meetings and provide support if needed in Pupil Disciplinary Committee meetings.

Educational partners also offer a wide range of training such as Exclusions, Elective Home Education, and Pastoral Support Plan training to upskill members of the service by enhancing their awareness of legislation and guidelines. Additional training is being developed by partners to provide specialised advice on the Additional Learning Needs legislation.

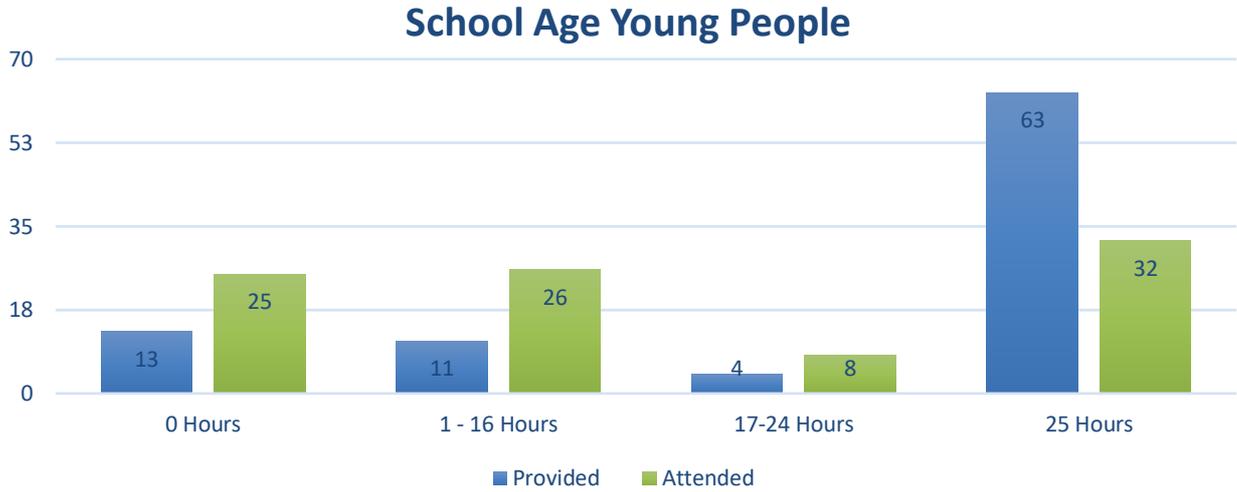
The YJESS infographic 2024 reveals that 63% of the YJESS cohort has additional learning needs. The introduction of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Act places responsibilities on the Education Directorate and providers of education for all children up to the age of 25, who require additional support to remain in education or training from September 2021.

Vale YJESS also report on any children who are electively home educated. As of July 2024 none of the children open to the YJESS fall into this category, although there is provision to discuss in the YJESS/Education Interface Meetings. Recently educational partners gave a presentation at a full management board meeting to outline the responsibilities of the local authority and partner agencies in such situations in line with Welsh Government guidance.

As of July 2024, 91 (93%) of the children on the YJESS caseload were of statutory school age and 8 (7%) were post-16 School Age.

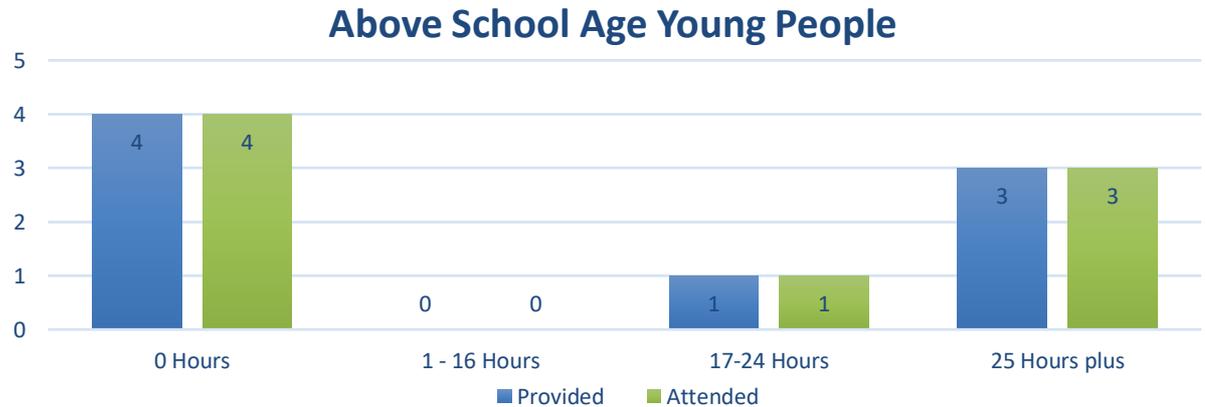
The graphs outline the number of ETE hours of provision children currently attend. The YJB target for statutory school age children is 25 hours. 64% of statutory school age children were provided with 25 hours of education.

11 children have been assessed currently by practitioners as having unsuitable provision. This have been discussed at an operational and strategic management level within the YJESS and Education, and actions have been agreed on how to improve the provision in relation to each of the children identified.

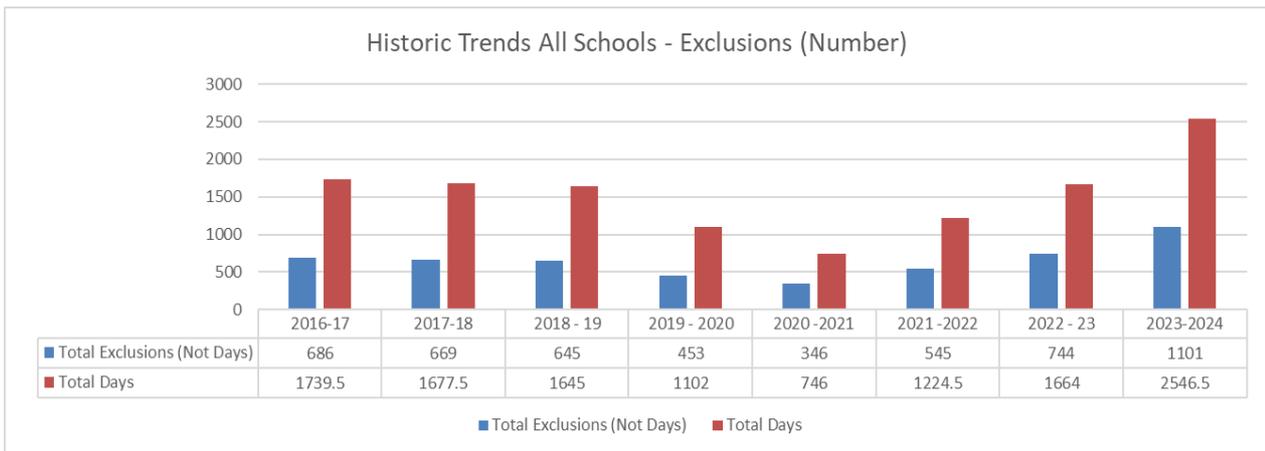


The YJB target for above statutory school age children is 16 hours. 50% of above statutory school age children were provided with 16 hours of education. In addition, 3 children have been assessed by Practitioners as having unsuitable provisions, as they were unemployed. All four have been referred to an appropriate further education support provider.

It has also been noted and discussed during the YJESS/Education interface meetings that in 2023/24 there has been a general trend of an increasing number of exclusions in the Vale of Glamorgan. This data is monitored and shared with YJESS as detailed by the



graph below.



In addition, there were 13 children permanently excluded in 2023/24 in the Vale of Glamorgan and 9 of these 13 children are known to the YJESS. However, some of these children only became known to the YJESS following being permanently excluded and in some situations the referral to YJESS was as a direct result of an incident that had led to the permanent exclusion.

In response to the growing trend of exclusions it is planned for this data to be presented to a YJESS Strategic Management Board meeting with an in-depth analysis of the data in relation to vulnerable groups such as the needs of children with Additional Learning Needs and Child Looked After status.

Vale of Glamorgan Youth Support Services

The Vale of Glamorgan YJESS also has a close working relationship with the Youth Support Service. In February 2024 the Vale Youth Service had an inspection from Estyn which was very positive and found *“the quality of Youth work was consistently high”*. This list of services and projects is available within the Vale of Glamorgan to support young people (11-25yrs), many are based on referral pathways and through positive partnership working and collaboration young people and their families can benefit from the wide range of support on offer and support transition into adulthood.

- Support from EWC registered and qualified youth workers within schools through the Strive Project, this identifies learners at risk of becoming NEET Pre-16 or Youth Homeless and receive youth mentoring and coaching.
- Youth Engagement & progression Framework monitoring to support NEET figures across the LA and support through projects with the destination survey and promote learners moving into a positive destination post16 through Education, employment, or training, this is completed via a Post16 worker and referral on to Employability work programmes.
- Open access Youth clubs across the Vale to offer diversionary events and activities aimed at supporting informal, non-formal and formal learning opportunities within the community during afterschool, evening, or weekends, this may be through

projects and will include Agored Cymru Units. Projects may include leisure centre takeovers, summer projects and holiday schemes.

- Street based Youth offer across the Vale, this team delivers a range of detached, outreach and mobile provision in areas across the Vale to increase health and wellbeing in the outdoors, this includes summer projects and events.
- Targeted projects for identified and underrepresented groups – LGBTQ+ youth club, Inclusive Youth Club, C-Card scheme through Cardiff YMCA, and projects with partners such as EYST.
- Youth Wellbeing mentors and coaches for those aged 11-25 who are referred through the families first advice line and in need of wellbeing support, confidence building, self-esteem building etc.
- Youth Participation projects – this includes the Youth Council, Youth Cabinet rep, Youth Action Groups, Her Voice Wales, and Rights Ambassadors project.
- Accredited Learning offer through our Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, including residentials, bronze and silver expedition walks and learning.

Restorative Approaches and Victims

It is extremely important to recognise the impact of offending upon victims and to ensure that there are appropriate services and support to meet their needs. Victims supported

"It was very emotional; I didn't think I would cry but clearly there was a lot of emotion left which I didn't expect. I really appreciate what you have done for me and how you have supported me"

"The process has helped prevent the young person falling into the Criminal Justice System.."

"Thank you so much for everything, it really means a lot."

by the YJESS are provided with an opportunity to express this impact and for this to be represented to the children who have committed the offences

Victim feedback is critical and some of the feedback received from victims following the support provided by the YJESS victim officers shows the importance of the work being undertaken with them.

Following the introduction of the Victim Code of Practice 2020, Vale of Glamorgan YJESS conducted a baseline audit of the offer provided to victims of crime and anti-social behaviour and this was presented to Board in October 2022

These recommendations included a regular audit of the offer provided to victims, and regular case studies to the YJESS Management Board to display good practice and areas for improvement, with a focus on identifying actions to improve the volume of feedback received from victims to help improve the victim's journey.

Following the audit, the VOG YJESS began working with the Police and Crime Commissioner's office, to discuss how they could support our endeavour to improve victim's journey, and as a result the VOG YJESS are working with the OCC to undertake regular joint victim audits. The PCC's office will compile a report of the findings which will be presented to the South Wales Criminal Justice and IOM Board as well as the Victims and Witness Taskforce as part of a work-stream for Criminal Justice in Wales. This will also be presented to the YJESS Management Board. The aim of these audits locally will be to highlight areas of good practice but also areas of development, and result in action planning so that a victim's journey is the best it can possibly be in difficult circumstances.

In addition to the victim service provided by the YJESS, if the VOG YJESS identify concerns about a victim's journey prior to referral for YJESS support, the PCC's office will aim to support with a request for a review if appropriate.

Use of Restorative Approaches

These will be developed to include the additional requirements in the updated Victims' Code 2021. This has structured victim entitlements into 12 over-arching rights with further detail, including timescales and other specifics, under each one. The victim's perspective should be at the forefront of all the work and interventions we do with young people, and this year The Vale YJESS will build upon its already established values which are woven in policy and practice to offer greater opportunities to bring victims and young people together. This approach promotes accountability, empathy, and learning, resulting in reduced reoffending rates and improved community relationships. Offering victims an enhanced service, allowing them to become active participants in the process if they so wish, can be very empowering.

The YJESS aims to offer restorative approaches facilitated by community volunteers during our support with young people. This includes within the formulation of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) with the children and their parents/carers, during the

administering of Out of Court Disposals (OOCs), and during Referral Order panels. Direct restorative work including face-to-face meetings between the children and victims is also something which is available and offered in all areas of support where a victim is identified.

The Vale YJESS is committed to providing all members of the service, including performance team members, training to understand and be able to use restorative language via restorative conversations and/or more formal restorative meetings. This training is part of the ongoing training offer to the staff team and wider partners across the Vale, including the Community Safety Partnership who support children participating in anti-social behaviour and the victims of this behaviour.

Reparation

The Vale of Glamorgan YJESS has a full time Reparation Officer who facilitates a variety of innovative and skills-based projects for young people to undertake reparation in the community. They also work very closely with the Victim Liaison Officers to support with any direct or indirect reparation.

Case Studies

Case study 1- Reparation Officer working with a child who had experienced rejection from his father, which is something he struggles with, and whose mother passed away approximately two years ago. The child had experienced significant trauma and his name had been placed on the Child Protection Register on two separate occasions under the categories of Neglect and Emotional Harm. A supportive, trusting and consistent relationship was developed during sessions during which the child was able to explore traumatic life experiences and feelings of grief and loss. A routine was developed following each reparation appointment the Reparation Officer buys flowers and takes the child to lay them on his mother's grave. Establishing a positive and empathic relationship has been key in engaging the child to not only build skills in undertaking a variety of projects but most importantly to have a safe space to explore feelings and emotions surrounding his experiences of trauma. This has greatly assisted as a platform for facilitating engagement with other professionals from a range of agencies to ensure that his voice is heard, and his needs are met.

Case Study 2 – Worker supporting a young person who has a history of traumatic family experiences involving him being moved around different family carers where he experienced repeated abuse. He did not attend school until he was eight years of age. For the last two years he has lived with the daughter of an aunt’s partner and her partner. He has had very limited contact with his mother, who is currently in prison, and has no contact with his father. behaviour and has been receiving support from the YJESS as a result of this and shoplifting offences. The Reparation



Officer has been working with this young person in undertaking reparation for a shoplifting offence at a local shop. After the YJESS Victim Officer offered support to the manager of the shop, and discussion on the restorative options available to them, the manager



requested some form of direct reparation. The Reparation Officer liaised with the manager and agreed with them for the young person to clear an area used for parking behind the local shops where was a lot of litter and other refuse. The young person was supported in undertaking this reparation, and the young person worked extremely hard to clear this to a high standard. The manager of the store wished to speak with the young person afterwards, however the young person did not wish to do so, very likely as a result of feeling embarrassed and ashamed, however this is something that the YJESS do aim to work towards if the victim wishes to do so.

Boots for Bluebirds appeal

The Vale of Glamorgan YJESS is delighted to be part of a team up with Cardiff City Foundation and their 'Boots for Bluebirds' appeal. Cardiff City Foundation receive and collect donations for football boots, trainers and shinpads of all sizes which have been used. These boots and trainers have been provided to the Vale of Glamorgan YJESS and as a reparation opportunity young people can assist in polishing and restoring the boots which can then be redistributed back into the community.



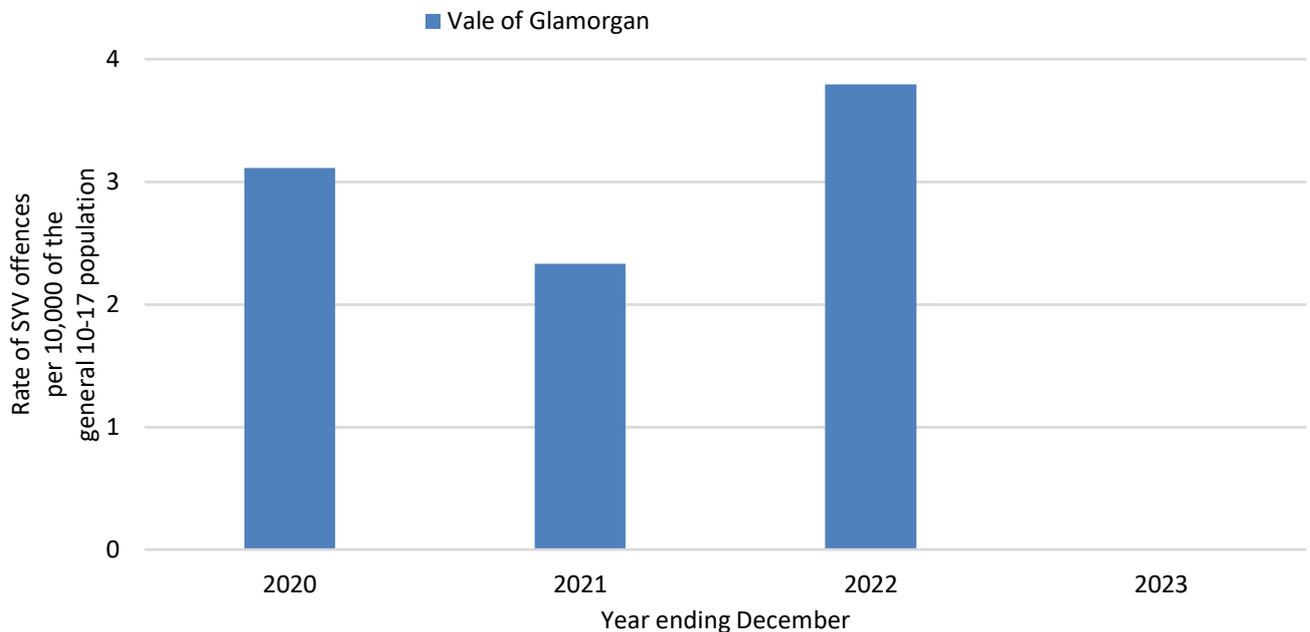
The CCFC Foundation appeal states:

“With the cost-of-living crisis forcing more families into poverty, even more people will be unable to experience the health and social benefits associated with football. At Cardiff City we’re passionate about inclusion and making football more accessible, so we’re calling on supporters to donate football boots, trainers and shin pads to support those who need it most.”

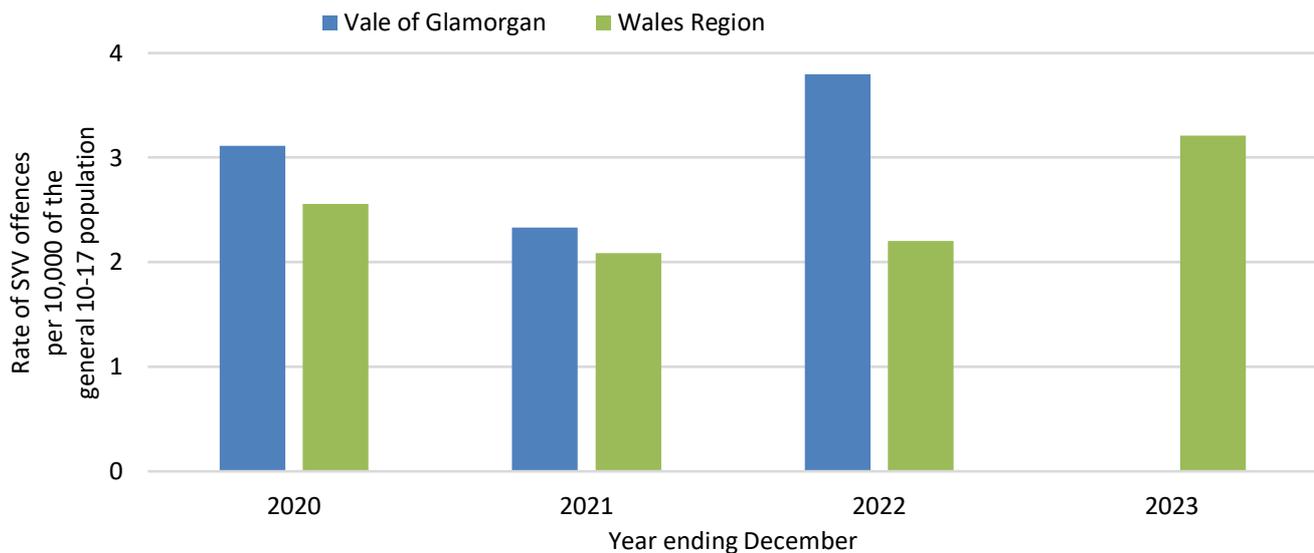
Serious violence, exploitation, and contextual safeguarding

The Vale YJESS has seen a decrease in the number of offences defined as serious violence between 2022 and 2023, from seven in 2021 to zero offences in 2023. These seven offences were committed by six children. As the charts below show, the 2023 decrease is a significant decrease from the trend over the last few years. However, it is acknowledged that there are currently some children awaiting sentencing for offences that would fall into this category for offences that took place during this period.

Despite the low figures this is still monitored and Specific reference to offences of serious violence are now identified within the audits/reviews for First Time Entrants, and in reoffending reviews to help identify areas for development and strengthen good practice internally and with partners.



The Vale YJESS has engaged with the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Community Safety Partnership in the development of a strategy to combat serious violence. A Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan strategic needs assessment is currently underway (as defined by the Home Office Serious Violence Duty for England and Wales 2022) to highlight the areas of development. This is due to be completed imminently (end of June 2023) and will result in the commencement of work for a Delivery Plan to deliver against the identified areas of development. YJESS data and concerns have been included in the strategic needs assessment and the YJESS remains involved in this process.



All children subject to Police Bail and Released Under Investigation are monitored and highlighted by the YJESS seconded police officer. The daily flag is also shared with Children and Young People Services to identify any concerns of exploitation or risks. In addition, Vale YJESS receives a Daily Flag report on all children from the Vale who have been arrested. The Daily flag also includes a report on any incident coming to police attention for children who are already receiving YJESS support. This has resulted in discussion for YJESS voluntary support, including through the new Turnaround provision. This also allows YJESS to ensure other agencies such as Children and Young People Services have relevant information and a multi-agency safeguarding response such as a strategy discussion can then be convened. YJESS receive standard invitations for strategy meetings from the Vales Intake and Assessment Team and communicate on a regular basis. YJESS staff also have full 'read only' access to the Children and Young People services database WCCIS which is used to ensure they are aware of any information or YJESS have full knowledge of the relevant chronology of that child's history.

Child Exploitation

The Vale YJESS strongly advocates for Child Criminal and Sexual Exploitation multi-agency forums including strategy meetings relating to specific incidents of concern. We are currently liaising with the Vale Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) who are undertaking further development of the Local Authority exploitation responses. Since April 2024 high risk meetings for young people open to the YJESS are combined with exploitation meetings held by Children and Young People Services. This is helping to ensure all information is shared in the correct forum and any plans to safeguard the child can be drawn up and shared. These meetings are attended by police officers who specialise in exploitation and co-chaired by a Practitioner Manager from Vale YJESS with an Independent Reviewing Officer. However, further work is planned to embed this strategy which includes revisiting the Regional Safeguarding Board exploitation strategy and developing a delivery plan that sits behind this.

In 2024 The Vale YJESS and CYPS have rolled out an identification toolkit for practitioners to 'screen' for signs of exploitation and this screening tool is then used to request an

exploitation meeting and to submit a MARF. On a strategic level the local authority and Service Manager is engaging regionally with a police task force group with regard to Serious and Organised Crime and practitioner support forums. The YJESS staff are proactive in recognising exploitation, and this is embedded in the oversight processes at the YJESS.

Practitioners continue to be fully aware of, and utilise, the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) process for children who are identified as being exploited, alongside the referrals to CYPS and advocating for strategy meetings, in line with the All-Wales Procedures. All identified children, and those identified as at risk, are also referred internally to the (high risk/safety & wellbeing) Case Planning Forum ensuring multi-agency sharing of information and planning to manage and reduce concern. YJESS have strong local links with St. Giles Trust for specialist individual support for children being exploited, or at risk of being exploited, and refer to Barnardo's alongside the NRM referrals for advocacy and consultation support. Vale YJESS have made a significant number of NRM referrals, often in conjunction with Vale C&YPs workers and the police, which have resulted in positive reasonable grounds and conclusive grounds decisions. This in turn has been of influence in discussions with decision makers and magistrates when considering outcomes for these children who have become involved with the criminal courts as a result of being exploited with children being able to raise 'Section 45' defences. However, a significant challenge continues to be the length of time that it takes to reach conclusive grounds decisions which exceeds the guidelines in most cases, and this is a risk that has led to delayed decision and sentencing outcomes. The delays have also resulted in some extended periods on police bail/return under investigation

In addition, in May 2024 Vale YJESS discussed learnings from a Child Practice Review relevant to exploitation undertaken by the Cardiff and Vale Safeguarding Board following the death of a child from a neighbouring local authority that took place in the Vale- at a service meeting. The Vale YJESS also coordinated a learning event recently in respect of a child sentenced to custody which has previously been detailed in this plan.

While not a significant risk factor for children in the Vale historically or currently, the YJESS is represented at managerial level on the local Channel Panel where referrals can be made if there are concerns of potential radicalisation and extremism. This can open up access to specialist intervention providers with expertise and detailed knowledge.

Detention in Police Custody and Remands

As detailed under the Serious Violence section of the Plan, the YJESS seconded police officer provides a Daily Flag for children arrested from the Vale which is shared each morning to all staff. The Vale YJESS provides an Appropriate Adult duty service involving practitioners and volunteers during office hours, evenings and weekends up to 10pm. All practitioners and volunteers are trained including the need for compliance with PACE. During office hours and weekends/bank holidays, the YJESS duty or on-call practitioner maintains contact with the local custody suites in order to anticipate the need for appropriate adult provision or accommodation arrangements, and also provides court duty functions. While YJESS does not have access to accommodation provision, where there are concerns about accommodation arrangements, or risks of remand, the YJESS duty

practitioner will liaise with the Children and Young People's Service to help support accommodation provision. CYPS also hold a 'weekly Placement Panel' chaired by the Head of Service and Operational Managers which YJESS attend weekly to share and gather relevant information with multi agency partners and also to advocate CYPS managers are aware of their responsibilities relating to children receiving remand and their status as Child Looked After. YJESS Practitioner Manager

During evenings and weekends the police also liaise with the Emergency Duty Team and the Vale's Children and Young People's Service provide an on-call senior Manager (OM) who can be contacted around decisions relating to police detention and/or secure remand. These arrangements are also aimed at decreasing the risk of a child being detained in police custody overnight. If a child is at risk of being remanded from court, the Vale YJESS court officers offer de-escalation proposals to court such as the use of bail support packages and alternative provision of accommodation through liaison with CYPS and the family support networks. All court officers are trained in, and aware of, their responsibilities in notification of YJB placements, ASSET+ and preparing post court reports where required, and liaise with CYPS to ensure that CLA processes take place if a child does receive remand. It is recognised that becoming subject to any form of remand is a stressful and traumatic event. Children in such circumstances may also have experienced previous trauma and ACEs and staff involved in the management of remand events are all trained in identifying trauma and trauma informed practice. Children and families will be kept informed, updated, and offered support throughout

Two children between December 2023 and February 2024 from the Vale of Glamorgan were remanded to youth detention accommodation. One was charged for attempted murder who was previously not known to the service, and one was remanded for an offence of robbery and was already subject to a Youth Rehabilitation Order. On both occasions all information was passed to the secure estate and the young people continued to receive support from the Vale YJESS while on remand. Both children were already subject to Full Care Orders with the Vale of Glamorgan LA. Child C who was charged with attempted murder, having no previous convictions has been a particularly complex situation. He has been supported through two fitness to plea assessments which have both concluded he is not fit to plea for his offences and at the time of writing the situation remains ongoing. No children from the Vale of Glamorgan local authority or youth detention accommodation for a considerable period of time.

Use of Custody and Constructive Resettlement

There has been 1 young person from the Vale of Glamorgan sentenced to custody which took place in March 2024, receiving a 12-month DTO. This was the first young person to be sentenced to custody in the Vale of Glamorgan for approximately 3 years. This young person was initially on remand, then was sentenced to a community sentence of YRO with ISS. This disposal was in line with the recommendation outlined in the PSR. However, the young person breached the YRO with ISS in approximately 3 weeks and was subsequently sentenced to the DTO. This young person has now turned 18 and is currently undertaking a transition to the Probation Service and is currently being joint worked by both agencies.

As detailed in this plan, in the past year there have been eight all option Pre-Sentence Reports where custody has been considered by the court. All eight have resulted in the recommended community sentencing options being agreed. All Pre-Sentence reports are prepared by experienced practitioners qualified in social work or probation who consistently prepare comprehensive assessments, Pre-Sentence Reports and intervention plans as alternatives to custody with robust yet realistic plans specific to each child, including consideration of Intensive Supervision and Surveillance and Intensive Referral Orders. When a Referral Order is an option and an 'all options PSR' has been requested the YJESS facilitates a pre-sentencing community panel to devise, with community volunteers what a proposed contract would consist of if a Referral Order was ordered by the Court. Trained court practitioners have a good working relationship with magistrates and the youth court clerk, and feedback about reports has been excellent, demonstrating the court's confidence in the Vale YJESS.

Staff working closely with this most vulnerable cohort of young people are acutely aware of the impact of their life experiences and apply the principles of trauma recovery within plans presented to court. The risk and impact of exploitation is also addressed, and NRM referrals are undertaken when appropriate to ensure that magistrates have all the information needed to make informed decisions when they are considering custody for a child. In the event of a young person receiving a custodial sentence, the nature of the known impact of custody on children results in the child being referred for discussion at the YJESS multi-agency high risk Case Planning Forum and exploitation meetings, including invites to relevant staff in the custodial setting. This allows for additional oversight and multi-agency planning and supports a cohesive resettlement process from the start of the sentence.

Working with Families

Safeguarding children remains at the forefront of our work so if we assess that any child is at risk of significant harm, then safeguarding procedures are followed, and referrals are submitted promptly. We also ensure that we work in partnership with Children and Young Peoples Services (CYPS) when any child is open to them. This includes regularly attending social services meetings such as child protection (CP) conferences, care, and support plan (CASP) reviews, core groups and strategy discussions. Similarly allocated CYPS workers also attend the YJESS risk management meetings to ensure a joined-up approach when managing young people that are at high risk of causing serious harm to others or themselves. Through these processes, Multi agency action planning takes place with the young person to assist in the collective management of risk which includes making necessary referrals to family support services and external agencies when appropriate.

The **Early Help Team** sits within the Early Intervention and Prevention Team for Children and Young Peoples Services and consists of:

- The Families First Advice Line
- Team Around the Family (FACT)
- Vale Parenting Service (VPS)
- Early Help PCSO- South Wales Police
- Wellbeing and mental Health Services (NHS)

The **Families First Advice Line** is the first point of contact for parents, carers and professionals who have, or are working with children aged 0-18 years residing in the Vale of Glamorgan. The Families First Advisors offer a personal service with an aim of listening to and assessing the strengths and needs of each family. They offer information and advice to support families in resolving their difficulties independently and assist them in accessing other services to support them further if required.

The **Team around the Family** offers a coordinated intervention for families who have a range of needs that require support from multiple agencies. The service supports the whole family to explore their strengths as well as their needs, ensuring that all relevant services are in place. The TAF worker will hold multi-agency meetings on a regular basis to review a family focused action plan.

The team assist children, young people (aged 0-18) and their families, who may benefit from additional support to overcome difficulties and make positive changes. They offer direct work with parents, children and young people as well as working closely with other services to get the best support to meet the identified needs.

The **Vale Parenting Service** supports families with children between the ages of 0-18 years across the Vale in order to build on strengths and make positive changes, enabling parents to feel more confident in managing, behaviour, routines and boundaries. The Service also focuses on promoting emotional wellbeing and supporting positive family relationships. The team deliver parenting programmes in a group setting or one to one bespoke intervention. Parenting programmes include Go Brain, Welcome to the world, Nurturing programme, Handling Children's behaviour, Handling Teenage Behaviour and Talking Teens.

Carer Assessments are undertaken by the team. This includes Parent Carer Assessments for parents who are caring for a child or young person with additional learning needs or disabilities and Young Carer Assessments for children and young people who have caring responsibility for another individual within their household.

Early Help Mental Health Practitioner the Primary Mental Health Consultant works within the Early Help Team taking referrals from the Families First Advice Line (FFAL) Vale Parenting Service, FACT, and the Youth Wellbeing Service (YWS) in the form of a 'Thinking Together Conversation' request. Consultations involve in depth conversations with the aim of up-skilling practitioners with the knowledge of mental health difficulties so they can further support the families they are working with. A one off session can also be offered to young people where required.

South Wales Police and the Early Help PSCO aim to reduce the number of Public Protection Notices (PPN's) that are submitted to Childrens Services and result in no further action. Where police attend a family home and early intervention support would be beneficial, a referral is submitted to the Families First Advice Line for assessment.

Adolescent Resource Centre (ARC) / Edge of Care Service provides intensive therapeutic and strength-based support to young people and their families at risk of being looked after who present such a challenge that they would be likely to otherwise be placed in external agency placements. This service offers integrated support in partnership with key organisations such as health, education, youth service and housing. The ARC also provides access to planned overnight short breaks respite provision.

Vale of Glamorgan Youth Support Services have a wide range of service and projects available to young people (11-25 years old). In February 2024 the Vale Youth Service had an inspection from Estyn which was very positive and found *“the quality of Youth work was consistently high”*

The support offered through this support service include:

- Support from EWC registered and qualified youth workers within schools through the Strive Project, this identifies learners at risk of becoming NEET Pre-16 or Youth Homeless and receive youth mentoring and coaching.
- Youth Engagement & progression Framework monitoring to support NEET figures across the LA and support through projects with the destination survey and promote learners moving into a positive destination post16 through Education, employment, or training, this is completed via a Post16 worker and referral on to Employability work programmes.
- Open access Youth clubs across the Vale to offer diversionary events and activities aimed at supporting informal, non-formal and formal learning opportunities within the community during afterschool, evening, or weekends, this may be through projects and will include Agored Cymru Units. Projects may include leisure centre takeovers, summer projects and holiday schemes.
- Street based Youth offer across the Vale, this team delivers a range of detached, outreach and mobile provision in areas across the Vale to increase health and wellbeing in the outdoors, this includes summer projects and events.
- Targeted projects for identified and underrepresented groups – LGBTQ+ youth club, Inclusive Youth Club, C-Card scheme through Cardiff YMCA, and projects with partners such as EYST.
- Youth Wellbeing mentors and coaches for those aged 11-25 who are referred through the families first advice line and in need of wellbeing support, confidence building, self-esteem building etc.
- Youth Participation projects – this includes the Youth Council, Youth Cabinet rep, Youth Action Groups, Her Voice Wales, and Rights Ambassadors project.
- Accredited Learning offer through our Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, including residentials, bronze and silver expedition walks and learning.

Sign off

Chair of YJESS Management Board -
name

Mr Lance Carver

Signature



Date

1 August 2024

Appendix 1- Girls Report and Analysis presented to YJESS Management Board on 30th July 2024



Girls Report 2024.pdf

Appendix 2 – Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice and Early Support Service Prevention Strategy 2024



VoG YJESS
Prevention strategy 2024