

Meeting	Governance and Inspection Scrutiny Committee
Date	September 5th, 2024
Title	Report on the inspection of Gwynedd and Ynys Môn Youth Justice
Purpose of report	To share information in relation to the above inspection
Author	Marian Parry Hughes, Head of Service, Children and Family Support.

1. The decision for the committee

- 1.1** It is requested that the Committee receives the report in relation to the conclusions and recommendations from the Youth Justice Service's inspection.

2. Introduction

- 2.1** The Youth Justice Service is hosted by Cyngor Gwynedd and operates across Gwynedd and Ynys Môn. The team is located at Felinheli and it is a multi-agency team working with children and young people who are at risk of offending or who have offended.
- 2.2** During November 2023 an inspection of the service was undertaken by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation/HMIP. The inspection had initially been planned for the end of the previous year, but HMIP did not have any bilingual inspectors available, and both Local Authorities refused to accept a non-Welsh speaking inspection team. HMIP accepted our stance, and the inspection was postponed until such time that HMIP were able to provide at least one inspector who was bilingual. Two of the five inspectors who were part of the team in November were bilingual.
- 2.3** The Gwynedd and Ynys Môn Strategic Management Board for the service are extremely pleased with the final grading of 'Good' because of the inspection. We would like to thank our partners in both Local Authorities, the local Youth Justice network and the Voluntary Sector for their support during the preparation for the inspection and during the inspection itself. The inspection recognised several areas of good practice, including strong partnership arrangements that drive and provide resources to work effectively with children, young people and their families; a well-supported staff group who are well supervised, and evidence that children and parents play an active role in planning and supporting the work of the service.
- 2.4** We have areas of improvement that we need to focus on, but those were not surprising. We are now responsible for working on these areas to ensure that we can provide a high standard of support to children and communities in Gwynedd and Ynys Môn.

2.5 The Management Board and senior officers have already commenced the process of improving areas of work, and a meeting was held on January 31st to review our report and the draft recommendations to respond effectively to those recommendations. An Improvement Plan was presented to HMIP on April 5th detailing the improvement journey. The Plan was accepted by HMIP mid-April and the plan has been shared and received by the Management Board on April 24th and is regularly reviewed at meetings of the Board.

3 Relevant considerations

3.1 We are pleased that the high standard of intervention and support offered by staff of the service to children, young people and their families. We are grateful to the young people and families who gave their time to meet with inspectors to share their thoughts and provide feedback. It is not an easy task as some individual circumstances are difficult and challenging for families..

3.2 Due to the terms of the inspection the service was graded across three main areas – the organisational arrangements of managing the service; standard of work with young people who have been sentenced, and standard of out of court disposal work.

3.3 The Service overall received a grading of ‘Good’, whilst the standard of the resettlement provision and policy was graded as ‘needing improvement’.

3.4 There was a conclusion that the service was child focused and committed to prevent further offending. A person centered approach helped to identify and meet individual children’s needs, and resources were offered in order to help them develop to make positive decisions.

3.5 Staff and volunteers were recognised as a strength, with a recognition that they are kind, thoughtful, working well together as one team, and that they were positive advocates for young people under their supervision. There was evidence that the service listened to children, young people and families’ voices in order to develop and improve services.

3.6 Inspectors were of the view that staff had access to a range of resources to help children and their parents/carers. In particular they made a comment that the service offered by Tim Emrallt (problematic and harmful sexual behaviour) was excellent and innovative, and that it made a true difference to support practitioners to improve the attitude and behaviours of children. Additionally, ‘Be di’r Sgôr’ (substance misuse service) were reported to provide interventions of a high standard.

3.7 A comment was made that the Management Board had some members who were committed and worked well to ensure that the service had sufficient financial support. However, since the pandemic, there has been a disconnection between the Board and front line practitioners, and as a result some staff do not have a full understanding of the work of the Board. It was also noted that there had been noticeable absences from the

Health Board and both Local Authorities' Education Departments at meetings of the Board.

3.8 A comment was made that the service had identified disproportionately negative educational outcomes for their cohort of children and young people, and that there was a dire need for a speech and language resource in the service. The inspectors were of the view that this needed urgent strategic support in order to ensure that the best provision was available to support the service to undertake high standard interventions.

3.9 The quality of relationships between practitioners and staff was identified as a strength, but work related to supporting the safeguarding and welfare of some children and their potential to harm others was variable, and needed to be improved. The inspectors found that not all members of staff understood the processes and systems in a consistent manner in order to keep children safe, and this is addressed in the Improvement Plan.

4 Next Steps

4.1 The Youth Justice Service should be proud of the way that they interact with children with compassion, helping them to live their best lives.

4.2 The next step is to focus on the conclusions of this inspection as a trigger to make further improvements.

4.3 Seven recommendations are included in the final report, and the Improvement Plan and Inspection Report are attached to this report. The Improvement Plan has been agreed between the Management Board members, the Operational Board and staff from within the service so that there is ownership for its' success throughout the service and with our partners.