

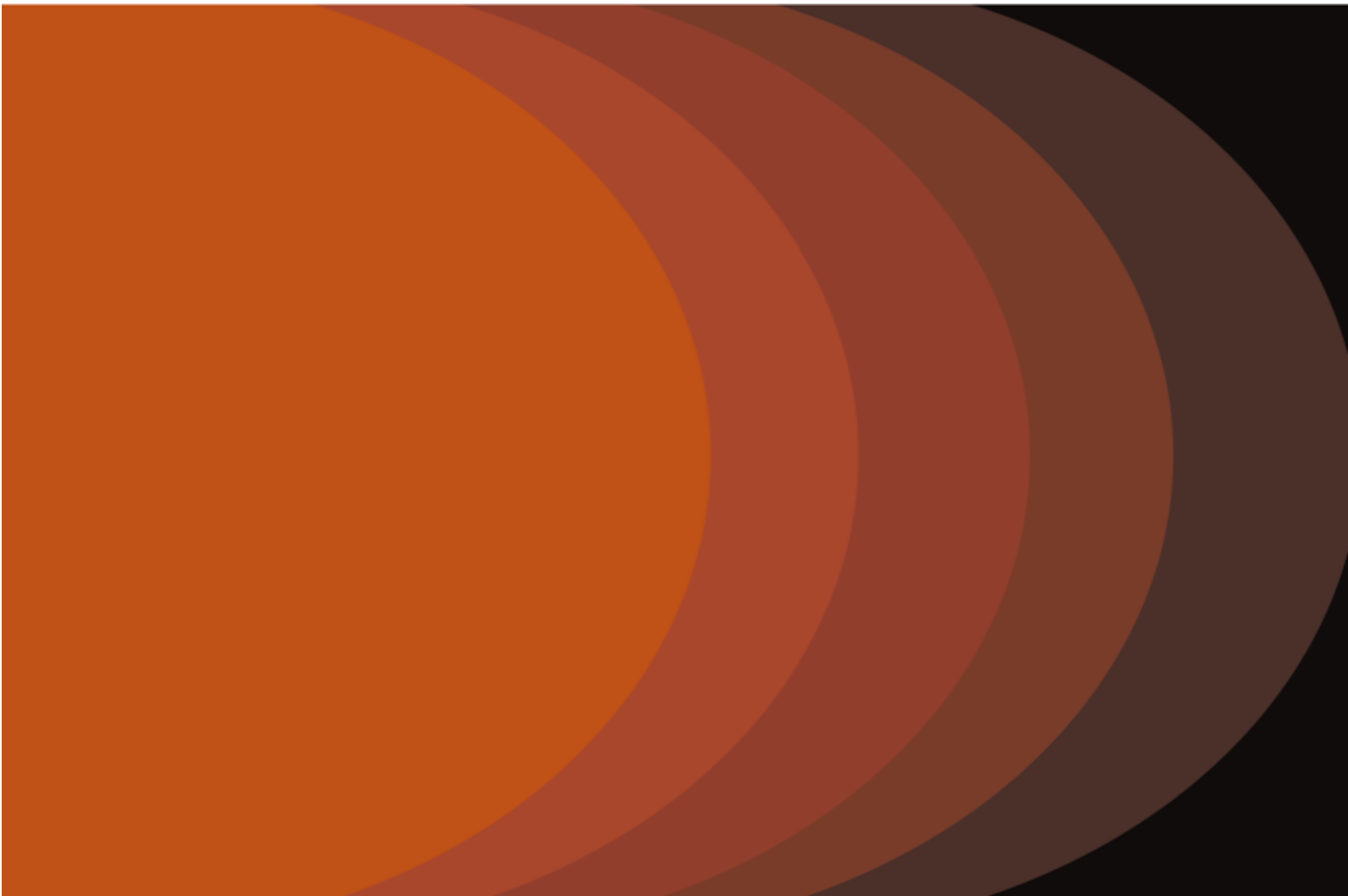


HM Inspectorate
of Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in

Gwynedd & Ynys Môn

HM Inspectorate of Probation, March 2024



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The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

HM Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending service work with adults and children.

We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice and use our data and information to encourage high-quality services. We are independent of government and speak independently.

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

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Foreword

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

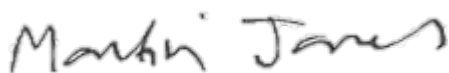
Overall, Gwynedd & Ynys Môn YJS was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Requires improvement'.

The service is child focused, committed to helping children to desist from further offending. An individualised approach helps to ensure that children's diversity needs are recognised, and support put in place to help them thrive and achieve positive decision-making. Staff and volunteers are a strength. They are kind, thoughtful, work well together as one team, and are positive advocates for the children they supervise. The service collects the voices of children and their parents or carers effectively. This informs the development of services and service improvements. Staff have access to a range of interventions to help children and their parents or carers. In particular, the Tim Emrallt (problematic and harmful sexual behaviour) offer is excellent and making a real difference in supporting practitioners to improving children's attitudes and behaviours. The Be di'r Sgôr (substance misuse service) provides high-quality interventions.

The strategic management board has some committed members who work well to mobilise financial resources for the YJS. Since the pandemic, however, there has been a disconnect with frontline practitioners. This has left some staff not fully understanding the work of the board. Furthermore, there has been a notable absence from health and education partners at board meetings. The YJS has identified disproportionately in poorer education outcomes for its cohort of children, and the need for a speech and language resource. These findings need a more urgent focus at a strategic level. There also needs to be a greater drive and focus at a strategic level to ensure that YJS children are receiving the best possible service and the YJS is supported to deliver high quality interventions.

Engagement and the quality of the relationships that practitioners have with children are a strength, but work associated with supporting children's safety and wellbeing and their potential to cause harm to others is variable. This needs to improve. Our inspection found that, across court and out-of-court work, not all staff understood and applied the systems and processes consistently to keep children safe and prevent them from causing harm to others.

The YJS can be rightly proud of the way it reaches out to children with compassion to help them live out their best lives. It must now focus on using the findings from this inspection as a springboard to bring about further change. In this report, we make seven recommendations to improve further the work of the Gwynedd & Ynys Môn YJS. We trust that they will assist the service as it continues its improvement journey.



Martin Jones

Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Gwynedd & Ynys Môn Youth Justice Service
Fieldwork started November 2023

Score 19/36

Overall rating

Good



1. Organisational delivery

1.1	Governance and leadership	Requires improvement	
1.2	Staff	Good	
1.3	Partnerships and services	Good	
1.4	Information and facilities	Good	

2. Court disposals

2.1	Assessment	Requires improvement	
2.2	Planning	Outstanding	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Good	
2.4	Reviewing	Requires improvement	

3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1	Assessment	Requires improvement	
3.2	Planning	Requires improvement	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Good	
3.4	Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	Requires improvement	

4. Resettlement¹

4.1	Resettlement policy and provision	Requires improvement	
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¹ The rating for Resettlement does not influence the overall YOS rating.

Recommendations

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

The Gwynedd & Ynys Môn Youth Justice Service should:

1. improve the quality of assessment and planning work to keep children safe and manage the risk of harm they present to others
2. ensure that management oversight is consistently effective in reviewing Asset Plus activity and contingency planning, so that practitioners are clear about what they need to improve
3. provide practitioners with comprehensive guidance that supports the completion of effective out-of-court assessment and planning work
4. improve the knowledge and understanding of practitioners to identify when children are being exploited so that timely action is taken to keep children safe.

The Gwynedd & Ynys Môn Youth Justice Strategic Management Board should:

5. ensure consistent attendance at the management board from senior education and health leaders, to achieve positive education and health outcomes for all children
6. address the disconnect between the strategic management board and frontline practitioners
7. address the gap in speech, language, and communication provision for children and ensure that services are provided which assess and respond to children's communication needs.

Background

We conducted fieldwork in Gwynedd & Ynys Môn YJS over a period of a week, beginning 20 November 2023. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began between Monday 21 November 2022 and Friday 15 September 2023; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between Monday 21 November 2022 and Friday 15 September 2023; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between Monday 21 November 2022 and Friday 15 September 2023. We also conducted 20 interviews with case managers.

The Gwynedd & Ynys Môn YJS is commissioned jointly by the Isle of Anglesey County Council and Gwynedd County Council (GCC). GCC is the host authority, covering a large geographical area. The YJS is governed by the senior management board (SMB) and supported by the operational management group. The service also hosts the young person's substance misuse service (Be di'r Sgôr) and Gwynedd's harmful sexual behaviour team (Tim Emrall). The service is integrated into local partnerships through a range of forums, covering children's and criminal justice service delivery. These include the community safety partnership, local safeguarding delivery group, regional criminal justice board, regional out-of-court disposals scrutiny panel, organised criminal gangs/serious organised crime groups, child exploitation panels, and integrated offender management.

The Gwynedd & Ynys Môn YJS office is based in Y Felinheli. This location is not linked to particularly good community networks or easy access for children and their parents and carers.

Gwynedd & Ynys Môn has an estimated population of 186,016 and a youth population (10-17) of 16,450 (8.8 per cent). The Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups in the total population for Gwynedd & Ynys Môn constitute less than four per cent (ONS, 2022). Black, Asian and minority ethnic figures for service referrals 2020-2023 was less than three per cent (YDS 113,114 & 115)².

In the 2021 census, 59.3 per cent of the population of Gwynedd & Ynys Môn identified themselves as white Welsh rather than white British or white Welsh/British. Gwynedd & Ynys Môn has the highest percentage of Welsh language speakers per head of population in Wales: Gwynedd 65 per cent and Ynys Môn 57 per cent. Of the 32 staff (across the three services), 29 (91 per cent) are first-language Welsh speakers.

The number of first-time entrants to the YJS remains high when compared to the average in Wales. Between 2020 and 2022, although actual numbers were lower as a result of the pandemic, it rose by almost 40 per cent. Between the 01 October 2022 and 30 September 2023, the YJS provided out-of-court services to 183 children. This represented 73 per cent of its caseload.

Scheduled youth courts take place fortnightly and at Crown Court when required. There is one police custody suite in the service area, based in Caernarfon. The YJS as its vision, seeks to 'support children to reach their full potential by living crime-free lives'. Children supervised by the YJS have produced the strapline, 'supporting us to do the best we can by staying away from crime' to explain what they see as the role of the YJS.

² Information supplied by Gwynedd & Ynys Môn YJS

Domain one: Organisational delivery

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

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows.

1.1. Governance and leadership



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

Requires improvement

Strengths:

- The strategic management board (SMB) has set a clear vision and strategy through its effective engagement with partners and stakeholders.
- Board members feel that the chair drives a clear commitment to service improvement and putting children first.
- Non-statutory partners bring added value to the SMB.
- Most YJS partnership arrangements support the delivery of effective work with YJS children.
- The YJS leadership team promotes openness and constructive challenge, creating a safe space for all to contribute to.
- Information-sharing protocols enable effective communication exchanges.
- Business risks to the YJS are understood well by leaders and there are appropriate controls in place to mitigate risk.
- There is an objective within the YJS plan which incorporates listening to the voices of children and their parents or carers. Audit mechanisms and tools to measure how well views are gathered, and used to develop practice, are a notable strength.

Areas for improvement:

- The frequency of attendance and representation at the SMB needs to be regular across all statutory partners. Currently, there is a notable absence or inconsistent engagement from education and health partners.
- The SMB needs to be more proactive and urgent in its response to identified need – for example, providing a speech and language resource.
- Volunteers and YJS staff should be given more opportunities to contribute to the youth justice plan.
- Not all staff are aware of the activities of the SMB. This has led to a disconnect between the SMB and frontline practitioners in the partnership.

- The YJS business plan (2023–2025) is not explicit in identifying or addressing disproportionality and the needs of children with different protected characteristics. There is very limited evidence of robust conversations about protected characteristics and diversity at SMB meetings.
- The induction experience of board members is variable.

1.2. Staff



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

Good

Strengths:

- Gwynedd & Ynys Môn YJS provides good pastoral care and support for its staff.
- The workforce is diverse and able to work with children in the Welsh or English language.
- Staffing resources are planned, used effectively, and appropriately reviewed to respond to the changing needs and profile of children supervised by the YJS.
- The workloads of staff and managers, including volunteers, are realistic.
- There are comprehensive arrangements in place to ensure that the quality of work during planned and unplanned absences is maintained.
- Cases are correctly allocated to practitioners with suitable skills and qualifications. Joint working of cases provides additional accountability, learning, and development.
- Staff are supported well in their professional development.
- Staff receive regular case management supervision and staff are resolute to deliver high-quality services.
- Practitioners have access to a range of learning and training opportunities.
- The partnership champions and values a culture of learning and continuous improvement.
- Employment opportunities are advertised openly.

Areas for improvement:

- Learning, development, and training are not yet leading to effective and consistent work to address safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others.
- Clinical supervision is not available to most staff.
- Management oversight addressing safety and well-being, and risk of harm work is not consistent.
- Reward and recognition arrangements are minimal and could be strengthened or enhanced.
- Not all managers have received the appropriate level of training, for their role or responsibilities, in the last 12 months.
- Not all staff have had a formal appraisal.
- Not all volunteers receive formal supervision.

1.3. Partnerships and services



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

Good

Strengths:

- There is a comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the desistance needs of YJS children. The analysis considers safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm factors as well as diversity needs. This is informed by management information extracted from Asset Plus, audits, thematic reports and quality assurance processes.
- Children and their parents or carers are actively invited to provide feedback to support service development – this is a notable strength.
- Access to mainstream and specialist services which help children to desist from offending, and keep them and others safe, is strong. These services include emotional wellbeing, substance misuse (Be di'r Sgôr), and 'Tim Emrallt', a service providing advice, guidance, assessment, and practitioner support to children involved in problematic harmful sexual behaviour.
- The co-location of some partner agencies allows good collaboration.
- There are established links and relationships with various statutory partners, providers, and agencies providing desistance, safeguarding (multi-agency safeguarding hub, early help hub, and exploitation team), and public protection interventions (risk management panels). Oversight is provided through various memorandums of understanding, service level agreements, and terms of reference for different service providers.
- The YJS has good links with local sentencers, which helps ensure that courts are aware of the services available to support sentencing.
- The focus on building resilience (as informed by research from Bangor University) is evident in interactions with children.

Areas for improvement:

- The YJS could do more to identify interventions specifically for girls.
- The YJS could consider how reparation projects could be accredited to provide a qualification.
- Education, training, and employment, and speech, language, and communication outcomes for children are not high enough.
- The statutory requirement of a probation officer in the YJS is absent.
- Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) training is not delivered to all staff, to provide a more robust understanding of the breadth and depth of the work needed for effective risk management.
- Caernarfon Crown & Youth Court is the only court supported by the service in the area, this creates problems for families who live at distance from the court.

1.4. Information and facilities



Timely and relevant information is available and appropriate facilities are in place to support a high-quality, personalised, and responsive approach for all children.

Good

Strengths:

- The YJS has relevant policies, procedures, and guidance in place that enable staff to undertake their responsibilities. All staff in the HM Inspectorate of Probation staff survey reported that they understood 'quite well, or 'very well' the policies and procedures that applied to their roles.
- Services for children are delivered in accessible and safe environments and locations.
- Children and their parents or carers are provided with travel vouchers, when required, to help them to meet the extra costs of travelling to the Menai Office (Swyddfa Menai) in Gwynedd.
- There is good information and communications technology access, enabling staff to carry out assessments, planning, service delivery, and reviewing.
- Staff can complete their work effectively from office and remote locations.
- There is a range of quality assurance and auditing processes, helping the YJS to have a better understanding of performance.
- There are effective processes in place to ensure that the service learns from things that go wrong. These include reviews and audits across the partnership. Learning is disseminated well.
- Information sharing, memorandums of understanding, and governance arrangements are robust.
- At an operational level, the YJS gathers and hears the voice of children innovatively.

Areas for improvement:

- Quality assurance of casework is not consistent.
- Additional deep-dive analyses are needed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the needs of children and determine activity.
- Benchmarking of performance against HM Inspectorate of Probation thematic reports and other research findings is needed.
- Not all policies and procedures are dated or include review dates.
- There is a need to be more explicit about diversity needs in policies.
- Not all staff know how to access services from partners and providers.
- More activity is needed to embrace fully the range of protected characteristics that children possess.
- The office space used for meetings with children and their parents or carers is in need of refurbishment.

Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The YJS contacted, on our behalf, children who had open cases at the time of the inspection, to gain their consent for a text survey. We delivered the survey independently to the 13 children who consented, and two children replied. We also spoke to six children who had accessed the service and four parents or carers.

The service values, collects, and considers proactively the views of children and their parents or carers. It captures their feedback in different ways, including regular consultation events, surveys, audits, 'your voice' questionnaires, and end-of-intervention feedback. Children are invited to attend the YJS staff conference, which is held annually, and their voices are heard creatively. For example, in July 2023, a practitioner used a 'carpool'-style video recording showing what a child thought about the service.

Many children reported that practitioners had communicated with them in ways that were meaningful – for example, adapting materials and using pictorial images, including drawings, to build understanding and resilience. Additionally, a number of children and their parents or carers spoke about referral orders being returned to panel for early revocation for good progress. This reinforced positive change and acted as an encouragement from which children were able to take the next step in establishing themselves in the community.

In our telephone and face-to-face interviews, all 10 children and their parents or carers reported that they understood what the YJS is trying to achieve. When asked if they thought the staff had the right skills, they all responded 'yes'. Comments from children included:

"They (YJS practitioners) listen to me and make sure I keep on track. It's my responsibility to make sure I don't get into trouble again. I'll be going to probation soon and they've helped me understand what will be different."

"They (YJS practitioners) don't talk down to me and they listen to my side. Working with them has helped me calm down and be more mature."

"Staff are polite, courteous, kind, and professional".

"My worker is 'very cool', and I get on with him well, he's not 'old or anything' and understands what it's like to be young".

"Youth Justice has helped me and I think I want to do a health and social care course in the future, to help other young people."

"I want to grow up and be like my case manager".

Parents or carers stated:

"I am very happy with the staff – one sees my son every week without fail at school and will come to the house 'every so often' to talk to me and update me on how things are going. They're easy to talk to but also professional in the way they work."

"My lad was referred to the health panel – this was a useful service which helped him get help with issues unrelated to offending but important to him".

"They (YJS practitioners) see my son as a whole person and not just about his offending".

Diversity

The information below highlights some of the YJS's data on the diversity of its staff and children.

- 27 per cent of children on the current caseload are girls.
- 69 per cent of staff working in the YJS are female.
- Black, Asian, or minority ethnic children make up less than four per cent of children in the area covered by the YJS, and 2.7 per cent of children on the current caseload.
- 18 per cent of children on the current caseload have a learning disability, a learning difficulty, or an education, health, and care plan.
- 40 per cent of children who make up the current caseload aged 16 and under are in a pupil referral unit or alternative education or school with a reduced timetable.
- 26 per cent of the current caseload aged 17 and over are not in education, training, or employment.

There is a clear ambition from the SMB to address diversity and disproportionate outcomes for children. There is access to some disproportionality data, but it is not always clear how this is being used at a strategic level. Additionally, conversations about broader protected characteristics are required. The YJS 2023–2025 plan needs to be more explicit about diversity and embed all protected characteristics, as identified in the *Equality Act 2010*.

Services delivered to children are individualised and evidenced well in the casework that inspectors reviewed. We found some excellent examples where the learning needs (attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder or autism spectrum disorder) of children were managed sensitively and effectively. In addition, the 'racism work pack' was helping practitioners to work with children who were showing discriminatory attitudes. The level of staff understanding, awareness, and confidence in dealing with diversity issues is impressive. Our case findings showed that diversity issues in out-of-court disposal cases had been analysed well in 10 out of the 12 inspected cases, and services had been delivered with a central focus on diversity in 11 out of 12 cases.

The diversity of operational and strategic staff is reflective of the local population. Gwynedd & Ynys Môn has the highest percentage of Welsh language speakers per head of population in Wales: Gwynedd 65 per cent and Ynys Môn 57 per cent. Currently, of the 32 staff (across the three services), 29 (91 per cent) are first-language Welsh speakers, two are Welsh learners (intermediate), and one has limited Welsh language ability (basic). All children are offered services in their preferred language of Welsh or English.

There is a comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the desistance needs of YJS children. The analysis considers safety and wellbeing, risk of harm factors, and diversity needs. This is informed by management information extracted from Asset Plus, audits, thematic reports, and quality assurance processes. However, within the resettlement and out-of-court disposal policies, the focus on diversity is limited and linked primarily to tailoring interventions. There is no signposting to the consideration of broader protected characteristics. Reference to understanding the lived experience of the child and trauma is much better.

Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at eight community sentences managed by the YJS.

2.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

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

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	100%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	63%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	63%

Assessment work to support children in desisting from further offending was a strength. Practitioners took an analytical approach to understanding the reasons for a child's offending and made good use of historical and current information. They understood diversity needs and personal circumstances well. We found that practitioners had made good use of information held by other agencies in their assessment enquiries. Additionally, they had reviewed the child's strengths and protective factors robustly. Engagement with the child's parents or carers was impressive. However, victims' needs were not addressed sufficiently consistently.

Assessment activity did not always identify all the risks to the child's safety and wellbeing. Additionally, practitioners did not consistently gather relevant information from other agencies and analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child. When information was collected (education and social services), it was used well to get a better understanding of the child's safety and wellbeing needs.

Assessments to identify all relevant factors linked to keeping other people safe were weaker. In some cases, it was unclear to whom the child presented a risk, and the nature of this risk. Where necessary, practitioners collected information from other agencies, but this was not always integrated into their assessments. This included intelligence from the police and social services about the child's new reported offending. We found evidence of under-recording in several cases, especially in the assessment of safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm. However, during interviews with inspectors, most case managers were able to articulate a broader understanding of these aspects of casework.

³ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

2.2. Planning



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

Outstanding

Our rating⁴ for planning is based on the following key questions:

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

Planning to support children to stop offending was consistently sufficient. We found timely plans in place that identified suitably the work that needed to be carried out to achieve positive outcomes for children. The plans included a detailed account of the child's personal circumstances, including their broader familial situation. In addition, plans were informed by the trauma and adverse childhood experiences that many children had experienced. This meant that practitioners identified appropriate services in most cases. We found good examples of plans that included statutory and voluntary interventions (arts and crafts, and photography projects).

Planning to keep the child safe was mostly done well. We found that practitioners had carefully considered how to keep children safe. For instance, they had considered the most appropriate locations for meeting them, and thoroughly risk-assessed reparation projects. Plans with other agencies were largely aligned, and each service provider was clear about the actions needed to keep the child safe. Practitioners were aware of tailored interventions and identified these appropriately in planning. They had made referrals to, and liaised with, services such as the emotional wellbeing practitioner, the child and adolescent mental health services nurse, and the substance misuse service (Be di'r Sgôr). Controls to maximise safety and wellbeing had been examined well but contingency planning was particularly weak and required further attention.

Planning to keep other people safe was detailed. The responsibilities of other service providers in managing risk were clear. For example, there were effective information-sharing protocols, supported by attendance at a range of multi-agency meetings, including risk management and health panel meetings. Practitioners had identified external controls to mitigate risks in most of the inspected cases. Interventions to address concerns about harmful behaviours, involving 'Tim Emrallt', were evident, including peer associations and individualised interventions to protect harm being caused to others. Practitioners had considered actual and potential victims in most of the required cases, and there was a clear emphasis on victims' safety. However, contingency planning was not consistent. Arrangements needed to be much more precise about the actions required if the level of risk increased.

⁴ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating⁵ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?	100%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	88%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	75%

Practitioners were competent at developing meaningful and effective working relationships with children and their parents or carers. They were creative and imaginative, and personalised interventions to the children's strengths and protective factors to encourage them to participate. For example, they helped children to access Be di'r Sgôr, complete 'Harmful Sexual Behaviour: Change for Good' sessions and set up personalised reparation projects. Delivery was strengths based, with a focus on making the best use of community resources (such as gym membership or boxing clubs). Practitioners were aware of the services available and used them well. Work to meet diversity needs was done well, especially in responding to the needs of children with autism and other additional needs.

There were well-established multi-agency arrangements in place to support children's safety and wellbeing. However, operational relationships with children's social care services were often challenging and did not always lead to positive outcomes for all children. Services were largely well organised, and partners shared the responsibility for managing risk. Practitioners were responsive when risks to the child changed, and adjusted plans and interventions to keep the child safe, such as providing emotional wellbeing support following a crisis.

Inspectors found that the partnership did not always monitor risks to others. While there were positive relationships with partners and information-sharing protocols in place, practitioner's coordination of services was variable. Generally, case managers worked well with children and their parents or carers to help them to understand external controls and encourage them to see how these were supporting victim safety. Practitioners delivered a range of interventions creatively, covering dangerous driving, harm resulting from accessing pornography, and victim empathy work. Inspectors found appropriate referrals to the police public protection unit resulting in home visiting to check mobile and laptop devices kept by children.

⁵ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

2.4. Reviewing



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

Requires improvement

Our rating⁶ for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	88%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	75%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	63%

The reviewing of work to assess the impact of interventions on reducing reoffending was done well in most cases. Practitioners generally carried out formal, informal, and dynamic reviews as personal circumstances changed. Consideration of a child's strengths and diversity needs, where relevant, as well as an analysis of personal and familial circumstances, were visibly consistent in most casework inspected.

When required practitioners reviewed children's motivation in most of the inspected cases and considered appropriately any barriers that they identified whether individual or structural. Regular engagement with children and their parents or carers was evidenced well in almost all the inspected cases. This helped practitioners gain a fuller understanding of the children's general day-to-day lived experiences and allowed parents or carers to become actively involved in their children's supervision.

The quality of reviewing activity in keeping children safe was not done well in all the cases inspected. Generally, where required, reviewing responded appropriately to changes linked to safety and wellbeing, as evidenced by one enhanced case management consultation completed by a clinical psychologist. This had led to a professionals meeting creating an action plan to support the child. Disappointingly, information was not always sought from other agencies that were involved, and this meant that plans remained unchanged.

Practitioners did not always respond effectively to changes in factors related to risk of harm, which meant that plans to protect others from harm were not adjusted. In a number of medium risk of harm cases, we found delays in case managers' responses to new information from children, such as being arrested for further offences. Additionally, decisions taken at risk management panels to keep others safe were not always actioned in a timely manner. However, written reviews were completed efficiently in all the inspected cases. This ensured that other practitioners involved in delivering risk of harm work had access to the most current information.

⁶ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 12 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of two youth conditional cautions, no youth cautions, 10 community resolutions, and no other disposals. We interviewed the case managers in 11 cases.

3.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

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

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	92%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	50%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	75%

Overall, analysis of desistance was completed well, and practitioners had sought to understand how much responsibility the child took for their behaviour, their attitude towards their offending, and their explanations for becoming involved. This approach enabled practitioners to dive deeper into how children's lived experiences may have contributed to their offending. Practitioners' attention to the role that diversity factors had played in the children's offending was strong overall. Additionally, they actively sought information from other agencies. This helped them to consider trends in previous behaviour and any barriers to engagement.

Assessment work to identify and analyse risks to the child's safety and wellbeing was much weaker. Practitioners, while generally accessing information well, did not use the information from other agencies regularly. We identified failures to appropriately consider or respond to exploitation concerns and suggest this is an area that requires additional training, understanding and focus by the service. Inspectors did not agree with almost half of the risk classifications made by case managers.

Assessment activity, analysing the risk of harm to others posed by the child, was better but not consistently completed well in all the inspected cases. We found several examples where case holders had underestimated the risk of harm to others. This included a failure to identify who was at risk and the nature of that risk. Some assessments lacked a forensic analysis, and the context of risk of harm in these cases was not recognised well enough. Information gathering from other agencies about the potential risk of harm to known victims was mostly done well.

⁷ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

3.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

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

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	58%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	83%

Planning was associated appropriately with work to support the child's desistance. Plans mostly included key services or identified which agencies would deliver these interventions, and within what timescales. Attention to the child's personal circumstances, including the broader familial and social context, was impressive. The wishes and needs of victims were well integrated into planning, and children's parents or carers were invited to contribute to identify the interventions that would help their children avoid becoming involved in further offending. This had been helped by the large amount of time that practitioners spent with the children's parents or carers.

However, planning did not promote the safety and wellbeing needs of children consistently in just under half the inspected cases. This area of work needs to improve. In these cases, there was insufficient evidence to reassure inspectors that all staff recognised fully the need for comprehensive plans that would help to keep children safe. The information included in planning frequently lacked detail. Furthermore, practitioners had not always aligned their plans with those prepared by children's social care services to support safeguarding. Additionally, contingency planning was not completed sufficiently well in six of the 11 cases.

Planning activity to promote other people's safety was better. Practitioners generally liaised effectively with other agencies, including the police, and risks to actual and potential victims were included in plans.

Contingency planning was too generic in a number of the inspected cases and did not always include the timings of when action might be needed. The absence of robust arrangements had the potential to result in further harm being caused to others, often those known to the child or in the home. Encouragingly, inspectors found that practitioners engaged well with the victim worker who had been identified to deliver victim awareness and restorative justice work. More comprehensive plans that considered the safety of all actual and potential victims were needed, helping practitioners to ensure that, in their supervision of children, they remained focused on reducing harm to others.

⁸ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

Our rating⁹ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	100%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	75%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	92%

The quality of delivered services to help children avoid committing further offences was much better. Examples include practitioners supporting a child to sit examinations after failing to attend a lesson in which the examination timetable had been distributed. Additionally, several children were able to access enrichment activities and were given help to set up a gym membership. These initiatives were improving children's emotional wellbeing and supporting desistance. Reparation work was personalised to the individual child and focused on using the activity to engage in conversations that led them to have a better understanding of their offending behaviours.

Practitioners maintained regular contact with children and their parents or carers, with high levels of engagement. This was not limited to 'checking in' and information gathering, but also involved delivering a range of interventions that supported the child's development and progress. It was encouraging to find that the care and sensitivity with which interventions had been delivered showed how well practitioners understood the individual learning needs of children.

Services delivered to keep children safe were mostly carried out well. Practitioners made good use of specialist services, such as Be di'r Sgôr (substance misuse) and Tim Emrallt (problematic and harmful sexual behaviour). In several cases, practitioners used the learning they had acquired about the impact of trauma to support work on safety.

Work with partners to keep children safe was not consistent, and collaboration in this work was variable. There had been insufficient attention to resolving this variability in practice. In some cases, inspectors found that when YJS practitioners became involved in a case where there was active social services involvement, social workers often reduced their level of contact or closed cases. This issue needed to be escalated to managerial level to ensure that the needs of vulnerable children would be met fully. In most inspected cases, enough services were delivered to keep other people safe. There was evidence of risk management and health panel meetings taking place. Attention was clearly paid to the needs of potential and actual victims, and this was combined well with victim empathy work and the preparation of letters of apology.

⁹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. [A more detailed explanation is available on our website.](#)

3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision



There is a high-quality, evidence-based out-of-court disposal service in place that promotes diversion and supports sustainable desistance.

Requires improvement

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

Strengths:

- There was a clear joint protocol between the Gwynedd & Ynys Môn YJS and the North Wales Police, explaining how prevention (early and targeted) and out-of-court work was to be carried out in the region. The out-of-court policy ('the Bureau') covered pre-panel, at-panel, and post-panel information gathering, eligibility criteria, enforcement, escalation arrangements, decision-making in cases where children had previous offending histories, and liaison procedures with partners to support diversion.
- Arrangements were in place to ensure that the voice of victims, and also that of the children and their parents or carers, was included in the decision-making process. Children received effective out-of-court services, and the provision and delivery of interventions were strong.
- The YJS had an out-of-court joint decision-making process which allowed access to information from a range of agencies, including the police, social services, and education providers. External scrutiny arrangements of the joint decision-making process worked well. Compliance mechanisms were clear, with the use of warnings, engagement with partners, and, as a last resort, final warnings and charges to court.
- Children receiving an out-of-court disposal had access to the same range of interventions that were available for post-court cases. Interventions were delivered using a strengths-based approach.

Areas for improvement:

- Areas relating to the safety and wellbeing of children were not explicitly covered in the policy. There was limited attention to wellbeing needs, vulnerability, and the perception of the child about her/his safety concerns.
- There were no guidelines to support practitioners better to assess, analyse, and plan for work to keep children safe and protect others from harm.
- The regional assessment tool was not providing sufficient detail to help practitioners gather and analyse the information they needed for effective assessments to keep children safe and protect others from harm.
- There were no internal scrutiny processes or procedures to assure decision-making. Arrangements, including social services and education staff representation at the Bureau, were not yet embedded.

- Children and their parents or carers had not been directly involved in any evaluation of the out-of-court disposal policy.
- Insufficient consideration had been given to the introduction of Outcome 22.

4.1. Resettlement

4.1. Resettlement policy and provision



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

Requires improvement

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

Strengths:

- Gwynedd & Ynys Môn YJS had a resettlement policy dated September 2022. Guidance on what practitioners needed to do was described well. Pathways, including suitable accommodation, health and education, training, and employment, all featured well in the policy. The five principles of constructive resettlement were embedded appropriately.
- The policy emphasised the significance of the principles of constructive resettlement, including well-coordinated services with partners. The need for effective communication and information exchange with service providers and other key stake holders was communicated clearly in the document.
- The importance of developing a positive identity (building resilience) and providing individualised services was integrated well into the arrangements.
- The importance of maintaining engagement with family members and home visiting was strongly emphasised.

Areas for improvement:

- Insufficient attention was given to supporting practitioners in promoting children's safety and wellbeing (safeguarding) and risk of harm to others.
- Meeting the needs of actual and potential victims was not explicit in the policy.
- There was no mention of MAPPA in the policy.
- The recommended reading list had not been updated to include more current information about diversity and other resettlement areas of practice.
- Insufficient attention was given to broader protected characteristics.

Further information

The following can be found on our website:

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