



Report of the Cabinet Member for Care Services

Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel 7th March 2023

Youth Justice Service

Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide an overview of the Youth Justice Service (YJS)
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This report includes a summary of the recent developments and progress within the Youth Justice Service The report includes the Swansea Youth Justice Service Performance Report for quarter 3
Councillors are being asked to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Endorse the report and its conclusions
Lead Councillor(s)	Cllr Louise Gibbard, Cabinet Member for Care Services
Lead Officer(s)	David Howes, Director of Social Services Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services
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Legal Officer	N/A
Finance Officer	N/A
Access to Services Officer	N/A

1. Background

- 1.1 Swansea Youth Justice Service is a multi-agency statutory service made up of staff from the Local Authority, Police, National Probation Service and Health. The service supports children and young people between the ages of 10 and 17 who are subject to statutory Court Orders or are on the periphery of becoming involved in the criminal justice system.
- 1.2 Approximately 80% of the work undertaken by the Youth Justice Service sits within Prevention and Early Intervention. The service works closely with partner agencies to engage relevant children and young people at the earliest opportunity. Proportionate assessments are undertaken for every child or young person to ensure interventions are specific and focused on identified individual needs.
- 1.3 The service is required to regularly report performance data to the Youth Justice Board and Swansea Youth Justice Management Board, chaired by the Director of Social Services and attended by key stakeholders. The most recent performance report is added as **Appendix 1**, for reference.
- 1.4 Following an inspection by HMIP in October 2021, the service has been continuing to improve practice and performance in line with the action and improvement plan developed from the recommendations made.
- 1.5 The recommendations from the inspection were as follows:
 - Develop clear guidance and process for resettlement in collaboration with partner services
 - Work with managers and practitioners so that expectations of prevention work are understood
 - Provide training to staff so that they are confident in working with children who have engaged in sexually harmful behaviour
 - Improve the quality of planning to address risks to and from the child – ensuring actual and potential victims have been considered and that there are effective contingency arrangements

Recommendations for the Youth Justice Service Board:

- Work with the YJS to develop an understanding of diversity and disproportionality within its cohort of children and young people and identify how the needs of these children will be met.
- Raise the profile of the YJS with board members services to ensure the needs of YJS children are understood and prioritised

- Support the YJS in prioritising and addressing access to appropriate facilities for children and young people

1.6 The following report will outline the progress and developments of the Youth Justice Service since the HMIP inspection and will highlight the key priority areas for the service moving forward.

2. Briefing

2.1 Over the past 12 months the Youth Justice Service has experienced several staffing changes. The service has welcomed new social work and probation colleagues who take a lead role in statutory case management within the service. There have also been changes at Managerial level with the Team Manager leaving post in September 2022 to take on the role of Principal Officer for the service. The service was also without a Practice Lead for Prevention and Early Intervention for a few months towards the end of 2022. Positively, both these roles have now been filled on a permanent basis, the Team Manager has had previous experience of working within the Service as a Practice Lead and has positive relationships with staff members and a good understanding of the overall service provision.

2.2 There were additional pressures on the service in 2022 when there was an increase in the number of young people going through the Court process, receiving intensive community Orders as direct alternatives to custodial sentences. In order to effectively manage this demand, agency support at social work and project worker levels was utilised. This meant that there was enough capacity within the service to meet the demands. We did have to manage a short waiting list at this time for prevention interventions as the statutory work needed to be prioritised.

2.3 A key focus for the service over the past few years has been on developing and maintaining a positive culture and learning environment. There has been a focus on ensuring that all staff members feel supported and have opportunities to raise any issues at the earliest opportunity. Forums such as team meetings, supervisions, check ins and daily support from senior staff in the service are prioritised. Staff members are also invited to attend the Management Board to ensure they have the opportunity to speak directly to Board members on a regular basis.

2.4 The service has also been continuing to develop participation of our children and young people in service development. Feedback from children and young people has been part of the Management Board for some time and the feedback received helps the service to reflect on where learning can be identified, and improvements made. More

recently we have had a couple of young people attend the Board in person to talk openly about their experiences.

- 2.5 The work the service does to support victims is of equal importance and is often key in supporting both victims and children and young people to come to terms with their actions or experience. Every victim is contacted by our Victim Liaison Officer who will ensure the perspective of the victim is included in reports for Bureau or Court. Where direct reparation is appropriate this will be supported by the service. The service focuses on restorative justice and the use of restorative conferencing which provides the opportunity for victims to come together in a safe environment with the child or young person who committed an offence against them. This process allows for open dialogue between both parties and is highly successful in helping children/young people reflect on their actions and the impact this has had on others. Over the past 12 months the service has undertaken several restorative conferences including a group conference where a number of young people were involved in one incident.
- 2.6 There have been developments in the direct work being offered by the service. An outdoor pursuit group is currently being delivered, enabling project staff to tackle issues such as anti-social behaviour, criminal exploitation, youth violence and weapons, in a safe and engaging environment for young people. The service also works closely with partner agencies such as the Contextual Missing Exploited and Trafficked Team, Media Academy and St Giles Trust, all of which have expertise in working with children and young people around exploitation and youth violence.
- 2.7 There has been an increase over the past 12 months in motoring offences, all of which are heard at the Magistrates Court and often result in children and young people receiving fines or Conditional Discharges and having no contact with the Youth Justice Service. Work has been ongoing with colleagues from the Police and Fire Service with support from the magistrates Court to explore the development of a specific motoring intervention which would enable those who commit motoring offences to be dealt with through the Bureau (out of Court) process. This intervention has now been developed and it is hoped that this positive development will be rolled out in 2023.
- 2.8 The team have also received AIM3 training to support in assessments and direct work with children and young people who demonstrate sexually harmful behaviour. It is recognised that owing to changes in staffing over the past few months this will need to be revisited to ensure confidence within the team to address this area of work.
- 2.9 Following collation of feedback from children and young people accessing the service it became apparent that more female focused interventions were required. In consultation with young people and in partnership with Police colleagues the service was able to source

funding to develop a hair and nail salon in the Intervention Centre. This is a new development, and it is envisaged that opportunities for learning and training in this area will be identified.

- 2.10 Across the last three years the Youth Justice Service has built upon and developed positive working relationships with partner agencies. The service holds fortnightly drop-in sessions with Careers Wales and three weekly consultations with the NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) team to identify and target young people who are at risk of or who are currently NEET. The team also has positive links with local colleges and training providers.
- 2.11 The service has a Speech and Language and CAMHS provision shared regionally with Neath/Port Talbot Youth Justice Service. Both provide an invaluable resource and support to both children and young people and staff within the service and enable interventions to be better tailored to meet individual need.
- 2.12 The service works closely with partner agencies from the Local Authority, Barod substance misuse service, Media Academy and Police in offering intervention in local schools and youth clubs.
- 2.13 Following the inspection, the service has focused on two key areas of resettlement and disproportionality. Policies have been written for both these areas; the resettlement policy has been fully completed while there are some additional changes required in the disproportionality policy which is due to be ratified by Board in May this year. The service has also been focusing on improved risk management assessments and planning. There are fortnightly planned risk management meetings in place. These provides a multi-agency forum in which to discuss ongoing concerns or escalation in risk and support professionals to develop effective and meaningful risk management plans. Staff feedback suggests that this develops confidence with managing risk.
- 2.14 In April 2022, following the outcome of the HMIP Inspection which evidenced the progress made by the service, the Youth Justice Board issued a letter confirming the de-escalation of Swansea Youth Justice Service as a priority status service. This letter is attached as **Appendix 2**.
- 2.15 The service has recently been awarded some additional funding from the Ministry of Justice to develop a project called Turnaround. This is a project focused on early intervention and prevention and will enable to service to expand the already existing prevention offer. The intention will be to reach more young people with a focus on those who are involved in anti-social behaviour or are released under investigation.

- 2.16 Since November 2022 the service has been going through a system review. This has involved gaining direct feedback from children, young people, staff and stakeholders.
- 2.17 From the feedback received by children and young people accessing the service at all levels, the positive relationships they build with staff in the team matters a lot to them. They have informed us that being listened to and understood is important to them and in terms of outcomes, they have reported that, in addition to not getting into further trouble with the police, they have seen better relationships with family members and better outcomes in education or training. A clear message from many of the children and young people spoken to is that staff spending time with them is what makes the greatest difference.
- 2.18 Staff feedback has highlighted some frustrations with the complexity of the system and quality assurance processes, which some find onerous. In addition, time spent in meetings and undertaking paperwork can lead to them spending less time with children and young people. Staff members have reported feeling supported in their roles and having line managers who listen. Many of the staff have highlighted that changes in management in recent months has created some instability within the service, however, feel that now roles have been filled stability will be restored.
- 2.19 It is hoped that this system review will provide the leadership and staff members an opportunity to review themselves against what matters to children and young people with a view to understand the systemic and cultural things that get in the way of achieving this. This element of the review is due to conclude in March 2023. A potential redesign will follow, where developments are identified as being needed to achieve what matters to the children, young people, families and victims.
- 2.20 The Youth Justice Service is currently running out of two separate buildings in two different areas of Swansea. It is recognised that this is not conducive to team development, nor is it beneficial to the children and young people we work with. Options to identify one building to house the whole service are currently being explored.

3. Conclusions/Key Points Summary

- 3.1 There have been continued positive developments within the Youth Justice Service and with stability at managerial level it is envisaged that these will be maintained and built up.
- 3.2 The recommendations following the latest HMIP inspection have been actioned and positive progress is being made in each area.

- 3.3 Partnership working is well developed, and the Youth Justice Service is involved in wider work within the community, reaching children and young people in schools and youth clubs.
- 3.4 Key developments in direct work have been evidenced and participation of children and young people in developing the service is prioritised.
- 3.5 The ongoing system review provides a key opportunity for evaluation of the Youth Justice Service and will assist us to understand better, the service from the perspective of the children/young people, parent/carers and victims who access the service. Through this greater understanding we will be able to consider key areas of development for the service and ensure that the work undertaken continues to focus on what matters.
- 3.6 Following the system review we would like to bring an update report to Scrutiny to share the outcome and learning and any developments that will be taking place.

4. Legal implications

- 4.1 None

5. Finance Implications

- 5.1 None

6. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 6.1 None

Glossary of terms: None

Background papers: None

Appendices:

- 1. Swansea Youth Justice Service Performance Report, Quarter 3**
- 2. Youth Justice Board, De-escalation Confirmation Letter – April 2022**