

Under embargo until 00:01 15 February 2022

Swansea Youth Justice Service 'Requires improvement'

Swansea Youth Justice Service (YJS) has received an overall rating of 'Requires improvement' following an inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation.

Swansea YJS formed in 2019 following the disaggregation of Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service (YJEIS). The Western Bay service had previously been subject to a joint inspection in 2019 and was then rated as 'Inadequate', with significant concerns about service delivery.

Chief Inspector of Probation Justin Russell said: "The creation of Swansea YJS has resulted in improvements for the benefit of the service, children under their supervision and the local community. The rating of 'Requires improvement' is a sign that Swansea YJS is addressing previous issues and has made progress in a relatively short space of time, although there is plenty of work still to do."

Swansea YJS work with children aged 10 to 17. The majority of children under their supervision are aged 15 to 17 (83%), male (80%) and white (83%). The YJS supervise children with complex needs and some in the care of the local authority (Looked After Children).

The inspection looked at standards of organisational delivery (leadership, staffing and facilities), their management of children serving court sentences (court disposals) and children serving cautions or community resolutions (out-of-court disposals). We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Requires improvement'.

Inspectors felt Swansea YJS now has a clear strategy for the service and what they can offer. The management board is more proactive and supportive and there was better provision for children – highlighting that specialist services are now in place to support children's speech, language and communication. However, the board need to do more to raise the profile of Swansea YJS with other organisations locally and its partners need to improve the integration of their services with the YJS.

Mr Russell added: "The management board, and the service, need to look closely at disproportionality and diversity. Girls (20 per cent of the cohort) and Black, Asian and minority ethnic children (17 per cent of the cohort) are overrepresented in its caseload, and the YJS has not identified this as a key priority in their youth justice plan. This has impacted all elements of service delivery and is one of the reasons why the service was not rated higher than 'Requires improvement'."

However, inspectors found that each child at Swansea YJS is actively involved in how the service develops. It was evident that they are a learning organisation that is child-centred

and conducts regular reviews to identify areas for improvement. This is be commended, but the inspection concluded that there is still some inconsistency in service provision.

For example, out-of-court disposals are having positive outcomes and children have access to a number of up-to-date interventions, including education, training and employment. But, over half of the work done on out-of-court disposals we inspected was insufficient in its delivery to ensure the safety of other people. This needs to be a key priority for the service to address.

Similarly, Swansea YJS is working with partners to improve and embed resettlement guidance and provision, but this was not yet in place at the time of the inspection and provision was not meeting the needs of all children and young adults.

Mr Russell concluded: "Swansea YJS have made a promising start to life as a new service. Change takes time, and they have shown intention and ambition in this inspection, and some improved work in each area we inspected. Consistency will be important for them over the coming years, and we look forward to seeing them develop further and address the key areas for improvement in our recommendations."

This inspection made seven recommendations to Swansea YJS, including to 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, ensure that actual and potential victims have been considered and that there are effective contingency arrangements.

In addition, Swansea Youth Justice Board should work with the YJS to develop an understanding of diversity and disproportionality within its cohort of children and identify how the needs of these children will be met.

ENDS

Notes to editor

1. The report is available at www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation on 15 February 2022 00.01.
2. HM Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services across England and Wales.
3. The Inspectorate uses a four-point scale: 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Requires improvement' and 'Inadequate'. The Inspectorate rates specific aspects of each service and also gives an overall rating.
4. Fieldwork for this inspection took place in October 2021.
5. For media enquiries, please contact Corporate Communications Manager Diane Bramall 07929 790 564 or media@hmiprobation.gov.uk