



HM Inspectorate  
of Probation

An inspection of youth offending services in

# Monmouthshire & Torfaen

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HM Inspectorate of Probation, October 2022



# Contents

<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Ratings</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Background</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Domain one: Organisational delivery</b> .....	<b>7</b>
1.1. Governance and leadership .....	7
1.2. Staff.....	9
1.3. Partnerships and services.....	10
1.4. Information and facilities.....	11
<b>Domain two: Court disposals</b> .....	<b>15</b>
2.1. Assessment.....	15
2.2. Planning .....	16
2.3. Implementation and delivery .....	17
2.4. Reviewing.....	18
<b>Domain three: Out-of-court disposals</b> .....	<b>19</b>
3.1. Assessment.....	19
3.2. Planning .....	20
3.3. Implementation and delivery .....	21
3.4. Out-of-court disposal policy and provision.....	22
<b>4.1. Resettlement</b> .....	<b>23</b>
4.1. Resettlement policy and provision.....	23
<b>Further information</b> .....	<b>23</b>

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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.

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## Foreword

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This inspection is part of our programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOS 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, Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOS was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Requires improvement'.

Our inspection found a skilled service, with strengths clearly evident in the implementation and delivery and reviewing of court disposal casework, and in assessment, planning and delivery of casework across out-of-court disposals. The service has a strong understanding of desistance, and work to promote this was evident. However, improvements were required in specific elements of court disposal work, such as the assessment of children's safety and wellbeing, and in planning to manage and mitigate identified risks to others. Activity to address issues related to victims also needed to be more consistent.

Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOS's arrangements for staffing, partnerships and services are a strength. Staff are motivated, experienced and child centred. They receive regular supervision and have access to beneficial training and positive development opportunities. The YOS partnership has access to a wide volume and range of quality services, including specialist and mainstream interventions.

However, the service needs to improve its governance and leadership. Statutory and non-statutory partners are represented on the YOS Management Board, but some members' attendance is sporadic, and many are not of sufficient seniority to make decisions or commit the necessary resources. Alongside a recent change in the board chair and vice chair, this has had an impact on the board's continuity and cohesiveness. We also found a disconnect between the board and frontline YOS staff. However, we were encouraged to learn that the new board chair recognises these challenges and has prior YOS operational experience and strategic knowledge, which they will utilise to strengthen relationships and clarify expectations.

Moving forward, the challenge is for the YOS Management Board to establish a consistent, cohesive membership and set of arrangements, to allow it to communicate a clear vision across the partnership and to key stakeholders. The YOS also needs to improve its analysis, understanding and use of data on disproportionality, children's participation, resettlement, and out-of-court disposals.

There is much to commend Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOS and the partnership for, which is reflected in their overall rating of 'Good'. We were encouraged by their candid self-assessment of the issues to be addressed and make several recommendations that will enable the YOS to improve further.



**Justin Russell**  
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

## Ratings





**Monmouthshire & Torfaen Youth Offending Service**      **Score** 22/36  
Fieldwork started June 2022

**Overall rating**      **Good** 

### 1. Organisational delivery

1.1	Governance and leadership	<b>Requires improvement</b>	
1.2	Staff	<b>Good</b>	
1.3	Partnerships and services	<b>Good</b>	
1.4	Information and facilities	<b>Requires improvement</b>	


### 2. Court disposals

2.1	Assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>	
2.2	Planning	<b>Requires improvement</b>	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	<b>Outstanding</b>	
2.4	Reviewing	<b>Outstanding</b>	

### 3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1	Assessment	<b>Good</b>	
3.2	Planning	<b>Good</b>	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	<b>Outstanding</b>	
3.4	Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>	

### 4. Resettlement<sup>1</sup>

4.1	Resettlement policy and provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>	
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<sup>1</sup> The rating for Resettlement does not influence the overall YOS rating.

## Recommendations

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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 Monmouthshire & Torfaen. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth offending services, and better protect the public.

### **The Monmouthshire & Torfaen Youth Offending Service Management Board should:**

1. review its membership, role and function to make sure that its representatives have the seniority to make decisions and commit necessary resources
2. improve its analysis and use of data to shape strategic and operational delivery
3. develop a strategy and response that meets the needs of girls supervised by the YOS.

### **The Monmouthshire & Torfaen Youth Offending Service should:**

4. improve the quality of assessment of children's safety and wellbeing in court disposal cases
5. strengthen the quality of contingency planning in court disposal casework to manage risk of harm to others
6. develop a standalone resettlement policy and formal practice guidance, with partners, to strengthen current arrangements.

### **The Probation Service should:**

7. provide a probation officer to the YOS, to support effective transitions and risk management.

## Background

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We conducted fieldwork in Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOS over a period of a week, beginning 20 June 2022. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence commenced between 21 June 2021 and 15 April 2022; out-of-court disposals that were delivered between 21 June 2021 and 15 April 2022; and resettlement cases that were sentenced or released between 21 June 2021 and 15 April 2022. We also conducted 12 interviews with case managers.

Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOS covers the boundaries of two local authorities: Torfaen County Borough Council and Monmouthshire County Council. The YOS is hosted by Monmouthshire County Council and sits within the Social Care and Housing Directorate. Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOS is a multi-agency partnership. The service is led by the service manager, who was seconded to the YOS in January 2019 and permanently appointed in May 2020. Governance of the YOS is provided by the Local Management Board. This is chaired by the Chief Officer for Social Care and Housing (Torfaen Council), and its vice-chair is Head of Children's Services (Monmouth Council). In March 2022, the postholders in both positions changed due to retirement and promotion, respectively. Monmouth & Torfaen is one of three YOSs covering the Gwent Police area, which work collaboratively to deliver training and provide services.

Staff and senior leaders consider the YOS caseload to be complex. Children in Monmouthshire & Torfaen have experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences and trauma, and prevalent issues include child criminal exploitation, substance misuse, poor emotional wellbeing and challenges in accessing education, training and employment (ETE).

At the point of inspection, Monmouthshire & Torfaen had a 70 to 30 per cent split between out-of-court disposals and court orders. Although court disposal numbers have remained virtually identical, there has been a reduction in the number of out-of-court disposals (particularly youth cautions and youth conditional cautions) and an increase in prevention referrals. This reflects the partnership's commitment to intervening earlier with children who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system. The YOS has identified that children who commit offences of violence are the most prevalent in both the court and out-of-court cohort.

The YOS partnership has identified that black and mixed-race children are not over-represented in the overall number of children sentenced or cautioned. Girls form 28 per cent of the YOS caseload, compared with 13 per cent nationally, and many have committed offences of violence or aggression. Looked after children are over-represented.

The Youth Justice Board's key performance indicators show that Monmouthshire & Torfaen currently has a first-time entrant (FTE) rate of 121. This is broadly comparable with the Wales rate of 118, but below the England and Wales rate of 145. Although figures remain higher than national England and Wales figures, reoffending has been on a downward trajectory for the last four quarters.

## Domain one: Organisational delivery

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To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YOS and conducted 13 meetings, including with staff, volunteers, managers, board members, and partnership staff and their managers.

Key findings about organisational delivery were as follows.

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### 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:

- There is a current strategic plan, which sets out the YOS partnership's board mission statement and a set of actions.
- The new board chair is the Head of Children's Services in Torfaen and has previous senior management experience in the YOS. He understands the risks and challenges faced by the YOS and the wider partnership.
- There are terms of reference for the YOS management board, which set the expectations of board members' roles and responsibilities.
- The board chair, vice chair and some board members are connected with other strategic boards across the wider partnership.
- The YOS Head of Service has links with a range of local, regional and national strategic groups and arenas.
- Operationally, YOS managers have designated lead responsibilities and sit on relevant multi-agency operational groups.
- Provision of staffing from partners is a strength. There is a seconded police officer, a substance misuse worker, a clinical nurse specialist from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), and a speech and language therapist.
- The YOS's financial position is stable, with an annual underspend and a healthy reserve.

#### Areas for improvement:

- Not all board members are of sufficient seniority to commit resources and make decisions.
- Induction processes for new board members lack structure and formality, and attendance has been erratic and inconsistent in the previous 12 months.
- There is a disconnect between the board and YOS frontline operational staff, and not all board members advocate effectively for YOS children in their own agencies.
- The seconded probation officer post has been vacant for over 10 months.

- The YOS Head of Service has previously managed a looked after children and care leavers service but considers that he is still learning the specialist nature of YOS work.
- The YOS relies too much on the experienced YOS operational managers; this draws them into strategic work and functions, and away from operational activities.
- The workload, spans of control and responsibilities for operational managers require review and realignment, as they are not currently equitable.
- Performance data needs wider and richer analysis to provide the board members with a greater understanding of the risks and needs of the YOS cohort of children, particularly in relation to disproportionality.



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## 1.2. Staff



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

Good

### Strengths:

- Staffing levels are sufficient, with 21 out of 27 staff stating their workloads are manageable.
- Supervision is regular and deemed of good quality by staff. It consists of monthly formal supervision and daily 'open door' informal mechanisms, which staff welcome.
- Succession planning has been evident throughout the YOS – with progression evident from volunteer to paid work, and from practitioner to management roles.
- Induction processes are good, with various activities and opportunities for new staff.
- There is a varied training offer, which is accessible and supported by managers.
- Staff are motivated to deliver a quality service, with 26 out of 27 answering positively within the staff survey.
- Staff are skilled and experienced, and able to build positive relationships with children to engage them.
- Managers support staff's wellbeing (particularly in issues related to Covid-19) and staff report that they feel safe in their day-to-day work.
- Staff work together collaboratively and there are strong peer support networks across the service.
- Management oversight was effective in 100 per cent (six out of the six inspected cases) in post-court and 88 per cent (seven out of eight cases) in out-of-court-disposals.

### Areas for improvement:

- Completion of appraisals is poor – the staff survey indicates that 15 out of 26 staff reported their appraisals were either overdue or not valuable. This is recognised as an issue by YOS leaders.
- Staff report that links with the YOS Management Board are weak. Responses to the staff survey indicate that over a third of staff are not aware of the board's activities.
- The YOS has no workforce development or needs analysis, and no formal written workforce development plan.
- There are minimal reward and recognition arrangements, activities or incentives in place for staff.
- There is a very limited pool of volunteers (just three at present), although the YOS was recruiting new volunteers at the time of the inspection.

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## 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 satisfactory strategic and operational analysis of YOS children's desistance needs.
- Children can swiftly access a range of services and support, and there are specific pathways for universal, targeted and specialist provision.
- The YOS has a full-time police officer, full-time CAMHS clinical nurse specialist, full-time ETE officer, and full-time substance misuse worker.
- Further resource is evident via a part-time speech and language therapist (SALT). Practitioners also can access a psychologist who supports with case formulation work around those more complex children within the cohort.
- Workers across all roles collaborate well, facilitate children's engagement effectively and foster positive relationships with children.
- The YOS has three additional fixed-term support workers. Two work in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub to screen children and pick up any prevention referrals. A specialist worker also supports looked after children and aims to reduce their criminalisation.
- The YOS contributes to a variety of internal and external multi-agency operational groups and panels for children deemed to present a high risk of harm to others or a high level of safety and wellbeing concerns.
- Partnership managers have a broad understanding of the specialist work their staff undertake with YOS children and there is regular supervision, joint oversight and communication with relevant YOS team managers.
- The YOS has a Resettlement Panel. Any child with unmet needs (from community resolution to those leaving custody) are eligible for discussion, and a specific focus upon effective exit planning is evident.
- Feedback from the chair of the youth bench highlighted the high quality of work carried out by the YOS within the youth court.

### Areas for improvement:

- The YOS partnership recognises that it needs to do more to capture the views of children and families who specifically access the YOS.
- The part-time (0.5 FTE) seconded probation officer post has been vacant for over 10 months.
- Although there is a policy that sets out expectations for how children's services and YOS should work together, staff perceive an inconsistency in support and direct work offered by children's services when the YOS is involved.
- Reparation projects have just started up again since the Covid-19 pandemic, but progress has been slow due to lack of availability of venues.

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## 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.

Requires improvement

### Strengths:

- Referral pathways are clear. There are service level agreements and working protocols between the YOS, key partners and services.
- Processes for learning lessons are in place across the partnership. Critical learning reviews are shared at board level and disseminated to staff through team meetings, individual supervision and email.
- Throughout the pandemic, staff have used home visits and other outdoor locations creatively to deliver one-to-one work.
- YOS staff have been tenacious in ensuring that children can access the digital technology to partake in relevant virtual meetings and panels.
- The YOS office is on the border of Monmouth & Torfaen and provides a central location for staff to be based. Children are not seen at the office base, but through home visits and community venues.
- Thirteen children or parents responded to our text survey, of which 11 were very complimentary about the YOS. We also interviewed four children and two parents, who also spoke highly of the service provided by the YOS practitioners and partnership staff.

### Areas for improvement:

- The necessary policies and processes are in place; however, some require review, and many are not sufficiently assessed for their impact on diverse groups.
- There is mixed evidence that performance and quality systems drive improvement.
- The YOS is supported by a full-time data analyst. However, the data is not used well enough, nor sufficiently owned or understood across all the partners, to fully identify gaps in performance or practice.
- Although there are quality assurance framework activities, there is no coordinated, formal quality assurance policy document, where processes are clear and in one place.
- There was a broad understanding of children's needs, but this had not translated into a comprehensive audit plan.
- The YOS does not have IT access within the youth court, which can affect the work of staff. These issues have been raised with senior leaders and the board for several years but have still not been resolved.
- Practitioners and managers have highlighted ongoing challenges in re-establishing community venues for delivering interventions with children since the pandemic restrictions were lifted.

## **Involvement of children and their parents or carers**

The YOS partnership recognises that it needs to do more to capture the views of children and families who access the YOS.

There are limited processes in place to gather the views of children, such as the completion of a viewpoint survey when children finish their out-of-court disposal or court disposal with the YOS. The service also carried out a focused survey during June 2020 to ascertain how children were coping with Covid-19. Although responses were positive, in that many children perceived that the YOS was still meeting most of their needs, we found that feedback from children and parents/carers is not drawn together or analysed holistically. Consequently, it does not shape or inform the YOS's strategy or operational delivery.

The YOS 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 21 children who consented, with 13 responses from a mix of children and parents.

They were asked to rate the YOS on a scale of 1 to 10. Eight gave it a 10, four gave it between 7 and 9, and one scored it a 2.

Children commented:

*"Before I got put on the YOT I was a troublemaker but now I have changed my life around."*

*"They are really understanding and there if you have any problem."*

*"The YOT service gave me the right support and guidance to be a better person."*

The two parents who responded commented:

*"Support has been so important to help myself, family and son to get in the right track. I don't know what I would have done without them."*

*"X was great with my son and very helpful."*

Children were asked to rate the YOS on a scale of 1 to 10 on how much it had helped them stay out of trouble. Five scored it a 10, one a 9, two an 8, one a 7 and two scored a 1.

Children commented:

*"The YOS gave me constant support and help with problems with peers and drugs."*

*"They just helped me realise what I did was wrong."*

*"They made me realise how dangerous it is to get involved in troubled situations and how it will only make my life worse."*

We also interviewed four children and two parents, who spoke highly of the service provided by the YOS practitioners and partnership staff. One child commented:

*“My YOT worker really supported me – she was doing the jobs of the police and social services and I can’t fault her. She planned lots of activities and I had a good timetable – different workers would come and pick me up for a couple of hours each day – they were keeping me busy. I can phone my old YOT worker if I need her, and she will phone me to check I am okay. Mom can phone her too. I’d like to work for the YOT, so I am getting advice on how to do that.”*

## Diversity

- The YOS management board has demonstrated some evidence of work to address diversity and disproportionality. However, this has not been consistent and is not explicitly highlighted as a strategic priority in the current YOS strategic plan.
- The partnership has identified that black and mixed-race children are not over-represented in the overall number of children sentenced or cautioned).
- Girls make up 28 per cent of the YOS caseload, compared with 13 per cent nationally, and many have committed offences of violence or aggression. The YOS has yet to fully identify the reasons for this. Inspectors saw impressive work being delivered with girls in some of the individual cases inspected.
- Looked after children are over-represented. They make up 12 per cent of the YOS cohort, compared with 1.2 per cent (Monmouthshire) and 2.3 per cent (Torfaen) of the general age 10-17 population. There are initiatives to address this over-representation. The YOS employs a PCLA (Protocol Children Looked After) support worker, who delivers training to residential staff, foster carers and the police regarding the decriminalisation of this cohort of children.
- Despite activity to gather and analyse some of the data on disproportionality, the YOS has not developed a specific action plan to identify the key strategic and operational tasks and actions needed.
- The YOS Head of Service stated that there have been no children who speak Welsh as their first language on the YOS caseload for over three years. However, there is a designated staff member who is Welsh speaking. In addition, arrangements are in place with a staff member in the local authority to support children who are identified as Welsh speakers.
- In terms of staffing profile, ethnic minority groups are not represented in the service. Although the YOS states that this is broadly comparable to the general population demographic (which is 97 per cent White Welsh/British), this is an area where recruitment could be improved.
- Organisational data provided by the YOS indicates that 61 per cent of staff are female. There are three volunteers; two are female and one male. The YOS is currently recruiting volunteers and is aware that increasing the diversity of this staff group would be beneficial.
- The staff survey indicates that, of those staff with a diversity need, 14 out of 17 feel their diversity needs are met very well or quite well.
- We judged that case managers in the inspected cases were effective in taking account of the children's diversity needs in their assessments, planning and the way that they delivered and implemented services.

## Domain two: Court disposals

We took a detailed look at six community sentences managed by the YOS.

### 2.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

Our rating<sup>2</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	83%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	<b>50%</b>
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	83%

Assessment of desistance factors was consistently strong. Staff gained a thorough understanding of children, their diversity needs, and the wider familial and social context. They achieved this by liaising effectively with partner agencies to access information and previous assessments, and by ensuring that children, and their parents/carers, were central to the assessment process in every case. Assessment of victims' needs and wishes was more variable, which limited opportunities for restorative justice. In all the inspected cases, we saw a strengths-based approach and high levels of attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and the likelihood of engaging with the court disposal.

In a majority of cases, inspectors agreed with the case manager's assessment of safety and wellbeing. These assessments drew on information from other agencies. However, there was inconsistency and shortfalls in how the information was drawn together and analysed. Consequently, not all assessments sufficiently reflect the impact of those complex issues that increase the level of risk to the child. Some cases would have been further improved with a clearer and more evident investigative and reflective approach to the assessment of safety and wellbeing.

Assessment work should provide an analysis of how other people will be kept safe when there are signs that the child could present a risk of harm to others. We saw consistent evidence of this in court disposal cases. Case managers drew together current and historical issues or behaviours, which in turn resulted in balanced and well-reasoned assessments. Inspectors saw evidence that case managers had used information from other agencies and sources, including social care, police, education and health.

<sup>2</sup> 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 in the data annexe.](#)

## 2.2. Planning



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

Requires improvement

Our rating<sup>3</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	100%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	67%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	<b>50%</b>

Planning to support the child's desistance was a strength in all the inspected cases. It built on the assessment of desistance factors and, in the referral orders, agreements made at the panels. Children were fully involved in planning, as were their parents or carers, where appropriate. The inspected cases consistently highlighted strong joint planning between YOS case managers and other agencies and professionals, such as substance misuse, CAMHS and ETE workers. This enabled case managers to identify and sequence interventions. Planning to address the child's diversity was evident in all cases, and it was clear that case managers made every effort to plan for the child's individual needs, personal circumstances and social context.

Planning to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child was strong and clearly informed by other agencies, such as social care, CAMHS and the substance misuse service. This led to the necessary controls and interventions being put in place to address the issues of many children within the YOS cohort. Nevertheless, inspectors found shortfalls in the quality of some contingency plans for safety and wellbeing. This is important, as there should be a clear plan of action if the risk to a child were to either increase or decrease. Contingency plans were too vague and did not clearly set out adequate actions or responses to be taken if, or when, circumstances changed. Despite these shortfalls, the overall quality of planning to keep the child safe was sufficient in a reasonable majority of cases.

We were pleased to see that planning to manage the risk of harm to others involved other agencies. However, while there were examples of planning to address the safety of specific victims, many cases did not sufficiently plan for the necessary controls and interventions to effectively manage the risk of harm that some children pose to others. Alongside this, circumstances in a child's life can change quickly. Case managers need to consider the potential for change in each case so that, should concerns escalate, they are prepared and more likely to respond effectively. In most cases, inspectors found that contingency planning in relation to public protection lacked clarity and detail about specific actions to keep others safe.

<sup>3</sup> 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 in the data annexe.](#)



## 2.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>4</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	<b>% 'Yes'</b>
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?	<b>100%</b>
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	<b>100%</b>
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	<b>100%</b>

Implementation and delivery to support the child's desistance was sufficient in every inspected case. Inspectors found a high level of engagement from children, which reflected the proactive approach of staff and their capacity to develop and maintain meaningful relationships with them. In the services most likely to support desistance, particularly ETE, case managers consistently paid sufficient attention to sequencing and the available timescales. Service delivery reflected the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents/carers or significant others in every case, with a specific example here:

### Good practice example

The case manager has worked hard to break down some of the barriers Georgia and her mum presented with, particularly around their views towards criminal justice agencies. Work included joint home visits with the social worker and ETE officer and the use of outdoor venues, such as local parks and the wharf, which helped to relax Georgia and enabled an open dialogue regarding desistance-related factors. The case manager regularly provided positive reinforcement, helping to increase Georgia's belief in her ability to change, whilst ensuring that boundaries were consistently reinforced. For example, to highlight the positive changes Georgia had made, the case manager showed her a photograph of Georgia when she was younger, looking gaunt, unkempt and under the influence of substances. Georgia did not recognise herself and now uses the photo to remind herself of how far she has progressed.

Inspectors noted that there was a high level of coordination and information exchange between the YOS case managers and partnership staff, both internally and externally. Case managers kept a balance between a strong focus on safety and wellbeing, and risk of harm to others, and worked consistently with a range of agencies, such as education, health, social care, substance misuse and third-sector

<sup>4</sup> 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 in the data annexe.](#)

projects. For keeping other people safe, case managers had considered the protection of actual and potential victims in their delivery of all the inspected court disposal cases.

## 2.4. Reviewing



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

Our rating<sup>5</sup> for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	<b>% 'Yes'</b>
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	100%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	100%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	<b>83%</b>

In all relevant cases, reviewing considered the diversity of the child and their personal circumstances and familial and social context. Formal reviews were completed at key points in the order and following a change in circumstances. Reviewing was consistently evident through written documentation, case recording or regular information-sharing between agencies in meetings and day-to-day case management discussions. This responsiveness to changing circumstances helped to maintain children's engagement and ensured that the work delivered was effective and meaningful. Reviewing continued to focus sufficiently on building on the child's strengths, enhancing protective factors and assessing motivation and engagement levels in every relevant case.

A written review of safety and wellbeing was completed in every case. Reviewing identified and responded to changes in factors relating to safety and wellbeing, and we saw examples where multi-agency meetings were arranged to ensure a coordinated partnership approach to addressing the issues to keep the child safe. Inspectors found that reviews completed by case managers led to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work in a majority of cases. Many of the children supervised by the YOS had complex lives, and their circumstances could change rapidly. There were evident links to Child Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation arenas, alongside the use of joint review between the child, parent/carer and CAMHS professionals in many of the inspected cases.

Reviewing was informed by the necessary input from other agencies to manage the risk of harm posed to others. Inspectors found that case managers consistently completed written reviews, which were supported through the activity of the YOS risk management panel, sharing of police intelligence and strong relationships between internal and external targeted, specialist and mainstream partnership services. As a result, we saw cases that benefited from changes to reporting, increased structure and positive activities, or allocation of additional police resource, as determined by the needs of the case.

<sup>5</sup> 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 in the data annexe.](#)

## Domain three: Out-of-court disposals

We inspected eight cases managed by the YOS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of three youth conditional cautions, one youth caution and four community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in seven cases.

### 3.1. Assessment



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

Good

Our rating<sup>6</sup> for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	<b>63%<sup>7</sup></b>
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	75%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	88%

In most of the inspected cases, inspectors judged that assessment sufficiently analysed how to support the child's desistance, identifying both positive and negative influences. AssetPlus assessments were completed for all out-of-court disposals, which were used to capture and analyse information from interviews with children and their parents or carers. A strength was the YOS case managers' ability to obtain information from key agencies in relation to desistance. The assessments for the out-of-court disposal panel provided a good understanding of the child, their attitudes and motivation for offending. However, case managers did not sufficiently consider opportunities for restorative justice in half of the cases we inspected, and some assessments lacked sufficient attention to any structural barriers facing the child.

We judged that assessment of a child's safety and wellbeing could be further improved by including information from other agencies more consistently, where relevant. YOS case managers are effective in facilitating engagement and fostering positive relationships with children, which did allow them to consider relevant social, emotional and physical factors, such as attachments, mental health, substance misuse and risks from others. In all cases, there was a clear written record of the child's wellbeing and how to keep them safe.

Assessments drew on relevant information and, in most cases, considered who was likely to be at risk from the child's behaviour, internal and external controls, and the nature and imminence of any risk occurring. In every inspected case, the YOS case manager had used available sources of information, including other assessments, to inform their own judgement.

<sup>6</sup> 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 in the data annexe.](#)

<sup>7</sup> The ratings panel exercised professional discretion to apply a rating of 'Good' to the overall standard.

## 3.2. Planning



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

Good

Our rating<sup>8</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does planning focus 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?	<b>63%</b> <sup>9</sup>

Planning to address desistance was consistently good. The work planned was proportionate in a large majority of the cases inspected and could be achieved within the timescale of the out-of-court disposal. In all but one of the inspected cases, case managers included actions on all the key areas and services to support desistance and sequenced these appropriately. Planning for the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change was a strength, as was the planning to reinforce and develop the child's protective factors. However, of those cases where there was a direct victim, planning activity for restorative work was found to be weaker. The main desistance factors identified included: substance misuse, lifestyle, mental health, and self-identity. Case managers struck a good balance between interventions to support desistance and the need to complete specific work related to offending behaviour.

In all but one of the relevant cases, there was sufficient planning to keep children safe. When this was done well, there was strong multi-agency working, which aligned the YOS plan with other plans. Inspectors judged that most children's plans addressed identified concerns, such as substance misuse, poor mental health and emotional resilience, sufficiently. Appropriate referrals were made to key agencies such as social care, CAMHS and substance misuse services as a result.

YOS case managers involved other agencies in their planning processes in all relevant cases. Children subject to out-of-court disposals and assessed as presenting a high risk of harm to others were managed through the YOS risk management panel arrangements. However, we found that planning was variable in addressing the specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims. Alongside this, circumstances in a child's life can change quickly. We recognise the need for proportionate planning in out-of-court disposals, where interventions may be brief, but would have expected to see more detailed contingency planning in some of the cases we inspected. Contingency planning to manage public protection is important and there should be a clear plan of action if a child's risk of harm to others were to either increase or decrease.

<sup>8</sup> 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 in the data annexe.](#)

<sup>9</sup> The ratings panel exercised professional discretion to apply a rating of 'Good' to the overall standard

### 3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Outstanding

Our rating<sup>10</sup> for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% 'Yes'
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	<b>88%</b>
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	<b>88%</b>
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	100%

Delivery of services to support children's desistance was consistently good, building on the assessments and plans made. There was a high level of engagement and compliance with interventions, which were mainly voluntary. Case managers demonstrated persistence in gaining the support of children and their parents or carers. They matched interventions to children's needs and learning styles and took account of their diversity and other commitments. A key strength was the quality of activity within, and following, the resettlement panel. This forum has a wide remit and includes exit planning for any unmet need for all children (including those on out-of-court disposals). We saw several cases where children had been linked effectively into mainstream services or had been able to access further voluntary support from the YOS and key partner agencies, including accommodation, education, employment and training, health, substance misuse, and family services or parenting.

Implementation and delivery to support the child's safety and wellbeing was evident throughout the inspected cases. The YOS maintained a strong focus on safety and wellbeing, consistently working with a range of agencies and organisations to deliver well-coordinated packages of support. We saw good work by the case managers and other specialist workers in the YOS. Case managers advocated on behalf of children at multi-agency safeguarding hub meetings, attended Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings, and made timely referrals to specialist and mainstream services such as CAMHS, SALT and substance misuse.

The involvement of other agencies across the YOS partnership was evident and well-coordinated, particularly where there were issues concerning actual or potential risk of harm to others. We saw strong evidence of children being discussed within risk management panel arrangements and delivery of interventions to manage the safety of other people. In a large majority of cases, inspectors judged that case managers paid attention to the protection of actual and potential victims.

<sup>10</sup> 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 in the data annexe.](#)

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### 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 is a Gwent out-of-court disposal policy, which sets out arrangements for decision-making, provision and delivery of out-of-court disposals.
- The out-of-court disposal policy is supplemented by a prevention process and guidance notes, which sets the distinction between prevention work, community resolutions and formal out-of-court disposals.
- The out-of-court disposal framework incorporates a two-tiered approach. There is flexibility in out-of-court disposal decision-making and each case is considered individually.
- Inspectors found that the YOS is very proactive in engaging children and families before they receive an out-of-court disposal.
- All interventions and services available to children on statutory orders are available to those receiving an out-of-court disposal.
- The YOS operates a resettlement panel, which acts as a multi-agency arena to support exit planning for children who have completed an out-of-court disposal.
- Gwent has an out-of-court disposal scrutiny panel that the YOS Head of Service attends.
- Out-of-court disposal cases that are assessed as either high risk of harm, safety and wellbeing, or reoffending are referred into, and managed through, the YOS risk management panel process; therefore, they receive the same oversight and process as post-court cases.

#### Areas for improvement:

- The out-of-court disposal policy does not expressly detail how diversity and disproportionality are to be addressed.
- Bureau panel members should include those agencies that are focused on the safeguarding and welfare of children as well as those that are part of the criminal justice system.
- Although some YOS performance reports are generated in relation to out-of-court disposals, they do not lead to sufficient analysis of out-of-court disposal work.
- YOS senior leaders acknowledge that wider board and service activity is needed, to develop a disproportionality action plan and shape a more granular out-of-court disposal analysis and evaluation.
- The YOS does not sufficiently capture and collate the views of children who have attended the community resolution clinic or the Bureau.

## 4.1. Resettlement

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### 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 YOS that had received a custodial sentence. Our key findings were as follows.

#### Strengths:

- There are clear and accessible referral and intervention pathways in relation to key areas such as accommodation, ETE and health.
- Information-sharing and communication between the YOS and the secure estate is strong, reciprocal and swift.
- Joint working and relationships between the YOS and key partner agencies (such as social care) are mature and collaborative, which ensures best outcomes for resettlement children.
- YOS partner staff (such as the substance misuse worker and ETE officer) work well with their counterparts in the secure estate, which leads to continuity of relationships and interventions for children.
- YOS case managers who hold resettlement cases are experienced and confident in such work.
- The YOS operates a monthly resettlement panel, chaired by a YOS operational manager. This consists of a range of professionals and allows discussion, joint planning and review of individual resettlement cases, to ensure that the children's needs are met.
- There was good management of children's safety and wellbeing, and the risk that they posed to others, through additional internal and multi-agency risk management meetings.

#### Areas for improvement:

- There is no written resettlement policy that formalises the resettlement procedures and processes.
- The YOS does not have a specific and detailed custody and resettlement practice guidance document for staff to use.
- Better coordination and analysis of gathered data is required to further shape and develop resettlement provision.
- Not all staff have received specific resettlement training.
- YOS staff do not know enough about the role of the national probation service victim liaison officer.
- The voices of children and their parents should be sought and used to inform the evaluation of resettlement services.

## Further information

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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.](#)