



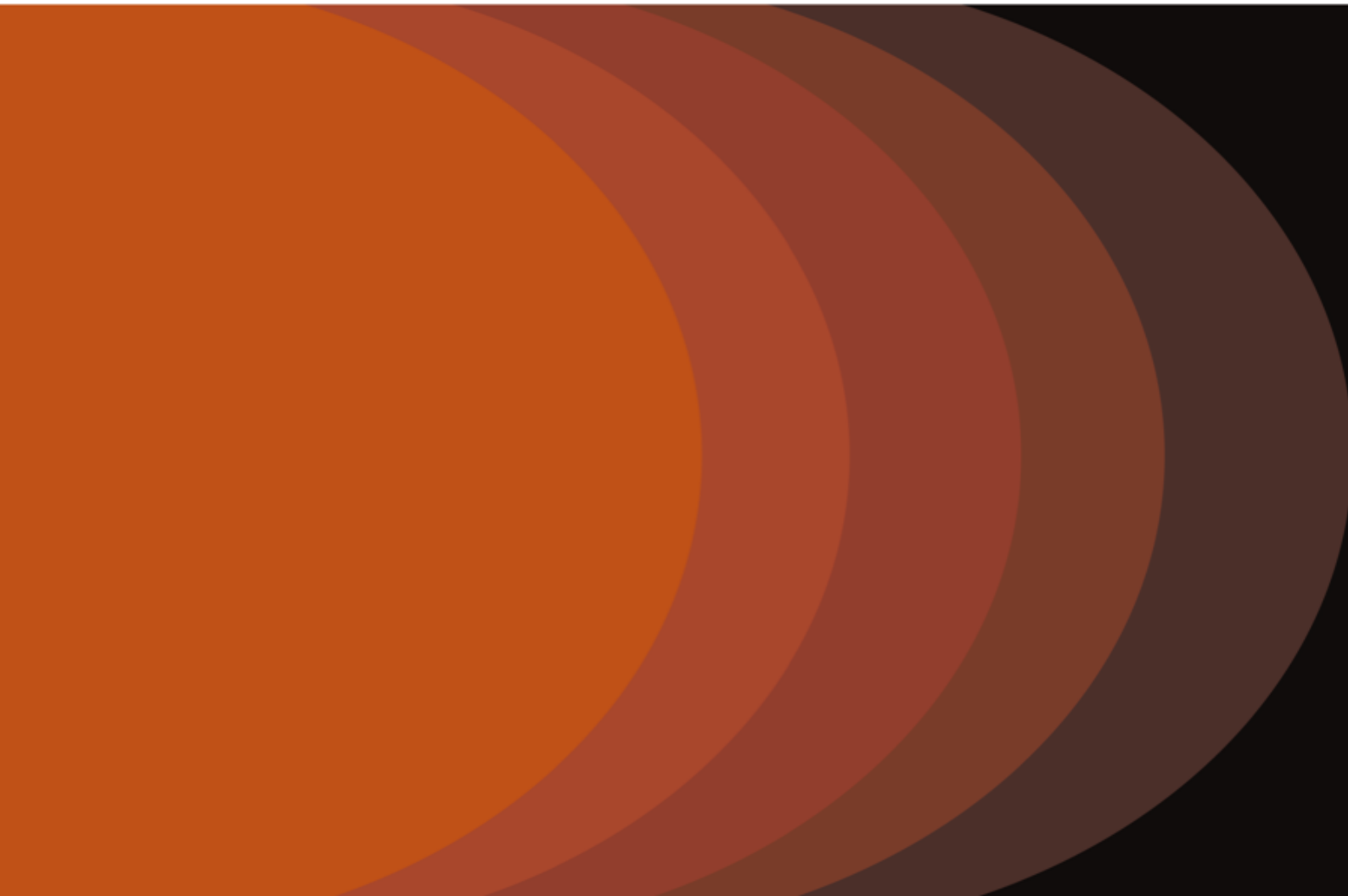
HM Inspectorate  
of Probation

An inspection of youth justice services in

# Pembrokeshire

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HM Inspectorate of Probation, March 2025



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## Foreword

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This inspection is part of our programme of youth justice services (YJS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Pembrokeshire YJT 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, Pembrokeshire YJT was rated as 'Good'. We also inspected the quality of resettlement policy and provision, which was separately rated as 'Requires Improvement'.

Pembrokeshire YJT is a reflective and forward-thinking service. Leaders, practitioners, and the management board are committed to reviewing the effectiveness of services delivered to children and invite academics to evaluate aspects of their work. Data is used to analyse changes in the profile of children's needs resulting in a responsive partnership approach to adapting pathways and commissioning services. The management board is invested in the YJT, and board members ensure that the profile of the service is sufficiently elevated among wider strategic partnership arrangements. The management board and YJT recognise that the absence of a speech, language and communication resource is a gap in service provision. We found that partnership arrangements were supportive of resettlement, but further work is needed to develop an effective policy and practice guidance outlining the specific responsibilities of key agencies.

YJT staff and managers are committed and knowledgeable, they show genuine care in achieving positive outcomes for children and victims. Embedded trauma-informed approaches and the use of the enhanced case management model promotes individualised and tailored approaches to considering and meeting children's developmental needs. We found consistent high-quality practice in the assessing, planning, delivery and reviewing of post-court work.















The YJT has recently undertaken a whole system review of the use of out-of-court disposals. This has resulted in the creation of an out-of-court disposal framework for children, development of a multi-agency decision-making panel and the commissioning of training to improve out-of-court disposal assessing practices. The YJT have escalated concerns regarding the inconsistent use of deferred prosecutions and diversionary outcomes across the Dyfed-Powys Police force area to the YJT management board, but the absence of strategic police representation at the management board has been a barrier to timely progression, and is therefore addressed in our recommendations.

The YJT has experienced a period of transition resulting in increasing demands placed on practitioners and managers. We found that spans of control are vast, and the delivery of effective services to children, parents or carers, and victims is maintained by practitioners and managers routinely going above and beyond to meet service needs. Despite the challenges, this is a motivated service which should be proud of its progress to date. Moving forward, the management board has a critical role in ensuring that the YJT is sufficiently resourced to build on its existing strengths and to make important improvements in its delivery of services to children.



**Martin Jones CBE**  
HM Chief Inspector of Probation

## Ratings

<b>Pembrokeshire Youth Justice Team</b> Fieldwork started October 2024		<b>Score</b>	<b>26/36</b>
<b>Overall rating</b>		<b>Good</b>	
<b>1. Organisational delivery</b>			
1.1	Governance and leadership	<b>Good</b>	
1.2	Staff	<b>Good</b>	
1.3	Partnerships and services	<b>Good</b>	
1.4	Information and facilities	<b>Outstanding</b>	
<b>2. Court disposals</b>			
2.1	Assessment	<b>Good</b>	
2.2	Planning	<b>Outstanding</b>	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	<b>Outstanding</b>	
2.4	Reviewing	<b>Outstanding</b>	
<b>3. Out-of-court disposals</b>			
3.1	Assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>	
3.2	Planning	<b>Good</b>	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	<b>Good</b>	
3.4	Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>4. Resettlement<sup>1</sup></b>			
4.1	Resettlement policy and provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>	

<sup>1</sup> The rating for Resettlement does not influence the overall YJT rating.

## Recommendations

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As a result of our inspection findings, we have made eight recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of youth justice services in Pembrokeshire. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with the youth justice team, and better protect the public.

### **The Pembrokeshire Youth Justice Team should:**

1. implement and embed the Pembrokeshire out-of-court disposal framework for children 2024-2026 and ensure that the multi-agency decision-making panel has consistent representation from the partnership
2. ensure that YJT managers have the capacity to provide consistent and effective management oversight of the assessing of out-of-court work
3. work with partners to review the resettlement policy and develop practice guidance to strengthen current arrangements
4. consistently capture and analyse the voices of children, parents or carers, and victims to inform the reviewing of policies, process, and provision.

### **The Youth Justice Management Board should:**

5. ensure that the YJT is sufficiently resourced to deliver high quality services to children, parents and carers, and victims. This includes building service capacity to effectively implement the revised out-of-court disposal framework
6. make sure that children supported by the YJT are assessed for and have specific access to services that meet their speech, language, and communication needs.

### **Dyfed-Powys Police should:**

7. review the use of Outcome 22 or other deferred prosecution options to ensure that children receive timely and consistent access to appropriate diversionary interventions at the earliest opportunity
8. ensure that police representation, of sufficient seniority, attends the YJT management board.

## Background

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We conducted fieldwork in Pembrokeshire YJT over a period of a week, beginning 28 October 2024. We inspected cases where the sentence or licence began, out-of-court disposals were delivered, and resettlement cases were sentenced or released between 30 October 2023 and 23 August 2024. We also conducted 13 interviews with case managers or their line managers.

Pembrokeshire is a unitary local authority located in south-west Wales. The population of Pembrokeshire is 125,000 making the county the fourth least densely populated of the 22 local authorities in Wales. Children aged 10 to 17 make up 9.2 per cent of the overall population of Pembrokeshire compared with 9.7 per cent across England and Wales. Rurality is a significant factor in the demographics of Pembrokeshire, and limited transport links means that the YJT travels across the county to deliver services to children, parents or carers, and victims.

The 2021 Census details that 97.6 per cent of people in Pembrokeshire identified their ethnic group as being white and 52.7 per cent identified themselves as white Welsh rather than white British or white Welsh/British. 17 per cent of the residents of Pembrokeshire speak Welsh.

Pembrokeshire YJT sits within the education directorate of Pembrokeshire County Council. The YJT is one of four teams within the integrated youth service overseen by the chief officer for youth support services. The YJT operates alongside a targeted youth team, community youth team and homelessness prevention team. Operationally, this provides wraparound support for children accessing the YJT as youth workers are based in all local secondary schools, the college and outreach education provisions. The community youth team supports the YJT with diversionary activities and exit-planning strategies and the homelessness prevention team provides tenancy support. The chief officer also oversees the post-16 education service, and this has provided opportunities for children within the YJT cohort to access literacy tuition.

In line with the Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales, Pembrokeshire YJT promotes early intervention and diversion from the justice system. At the time of inspection fieldwork, the YJT had 61 open interventions of which 27 were for prevention and diversion work. Data provided by the service identifies that almost half of the children working with the YJT have additional learning needs (ALN) and approximately a third are assessed as high safety and wellbeing concerns demonstrating the vulnerabilities of the cohort. The YJT has a strong commitment to child-first principles which are supported by a trauma-informed and strengths-based practice model.

Governance arrangements for the service are overseen by a YJT management board which is held to account by an independent chair. The Dyfed-Powys Police force areas cover Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, and Powys.

Pembrokeshire YJT acknowledges that its number of first-time entrants (FTE) is high when compared to the average in Wales, and the service has responded by undertaking an analysis of the cohort and implementing a whole system review of the use of out-of-court disposals.

## Domain one: Organisational delivery

To inspect organisational delivery, we reviewed written evidence submitted in advance by the YJS and conducted 16 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 YJS supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.

Good

#### Strengths:

- The YJT's vision is embedded. There is a cohesive strategic partnership response to supporting the needs of children and families.
- Board members are invested in the YJT's work. They understand their roles and responsibilities, the needs of the service and the profile of children working with the service.
- The board members are mainly the statutory partners; they prioritise attendance and ensure that the YJT has a visible profile within the partnership arrangements.
- Board members provide strong linkage between the YJT and other key strategic partnerships' boards on a local, regional, and national basis. This ensures a clear focus on early intervention, prevention, and effective integration with wider services to meet children's needs.
- Commissioning and partnership arrangements enable in-house provision for substance misuse work and support from educational psychologists. The service benefits from secondments from the police and probation service.
- The YJT plan has been developed in meaningful consultation with board members, stakeholders, and staff. The YJT plan has been shared with the Community Safety Partnership forum.
- Board members have established relationships and there is a culture of transparency and healthy challenge.
- There has been a recent change in management board chairing arrangements. Both the current and previous independent chairs have extensive strategic knowledge and experience. They are committed to achieving positive outcomes for children and hold board members and the YJT to account.
- The YJT has a stable and knowledgeable leadership team which is respected within the authority and wider partnership. It provides an effective link between the YJT and the board.
- Case studies are presented to the board, and it has oversight of children sentenced, remanded, or at risk of custody. The management board is also cited on all breaches.

- Effective induction arrangements for board members ensure that senior leaders understand their roles and responsibilities.
- The newly appointed independent chair of the management board has met with YJT leaders and staff, and they are keen to develop connectivity between the management board and team.
- The service has successfully implemented and embedded a child-first and trauma-informed approach.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Changes and vacancies within Dyfed-Powys Police force have meant that a police representative of sufficient seniority is not allocated to the Pembrokeshire management board. The current police representation, while making valued contributions to the operational and strategic work of the YJT, is not of sufficient seniority to respond to the escalation of concerns, particularly those related to the equitable use of deferred prosecutions and diversionary outcomes across the Dyfed-Powys Police force area.
- Board members are not routinely providing data from their own service to promote a holistic analysis of themes and trends across the partnership. Current data reporting to the YJT board does not include the number of children supported by exploitation plans, the timeliness of referrals from the police to the YJT, or the use of operating without registration (OWR) placements for children open to the YJT.
- YJT leaders consistently share management board updates with the team, but board members do not hear directly from staff, volunteers, children or their parents or carers. Connectivity needs to be strengthened to ensure there is effective strategic oversight of operational activity.
- Routine screening for speech, language and communication identifies a high level of unmet need in the youth justice cohort. There is acknowledgement that the absence of a speech and language specialist creates a gap in service provision.
- The YJT and board has a comprehensive understanding of the risks to the service, but this is not formally captured in a service-specific risk register.



## 1.2. Staff



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

Good

### Strengths:

- Managers and staff are committed, enthusiastic and passionate about their work. They show genuine care for children, and we found a team approach to supporting the needs of children, parents or carers, and victims.
- The YJT has a statutory and a prevention team. In practice we found that the teams worked seamlessly together with focus on the best interests of the child.
- There is a holistic approach to the allocation of cases, and children are matched to practitioners with appropriate knowledge and skills to meet their needs.
- Supervision is frequent and balances service needs with practitioner wellbeing. Joint supervision occurs when staff are seconded or have multiple line managers. Annual appraisal and wellbeing plans inform the YJT training needs analysis.
- There is a comprehensive offer of mandatory and specialist training for staff. The YJT is trained in the Enhanced Case Management (ECM) approach and several practitioners have completed the AIM3 harmful sexualised behaviour training. The team has recently undertaken training to develop assessment skills.
- Volunteers have access to the local authority training portal and speak positively about the quality of the training focused on safeguarding, exploitation, and domestic abuse.
- The YJT promotes a culture of learning and development with opportunities for staff to engage in academic courses including the Youth Justice degree, Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate, and Youth Work award. Managers have completed leadership courses and are encouraged to participate in regional and national forums to keep abreast of current youth justice practices.
- YJS managers have supported new staff well. There is an induction handbook and an individualised timetable ensuring that new practitioners have opportunities to observe practice and to engage directly with partnership staff.
- The practitioner forum provides an opportunity for staff to meet as a group to discuss topical themes. Discussions from the practitioner group are collated and fed into the monthly team meetings promoting a culture of collaboration.
- Managers recognise that changes to staffing arrangements has impacted on the wellbeing of the team. Managers have been responsive by formalising wellbeing initiatives into policies. Team wellbeing events are held several times per year.
- Staff speak positively about the group clinical supervision arrangements facilitated by education psychologists.
- The diversity needs of staff are recognised and supported well.
- Succession planning was a strength. Several staff had progressed through various YJT roles, and from practitioner to management roles.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Staffing changes and absences have impacted on the YJT's ability to complete its core responsibilities within standard working hours. We found examples of staff and managers going above and beyond to ensure that the quality of services delivered to children was sustained during this period of transition.
- YJT managers and senior practitioners have wide spans of control and responsibilities. Senior practitioners are balancing case management responsibilities with other tasks, such as quality assurance, supervision, partnership meetings and development activity. Senior managers are balancing the additional requirements of operational practice with the demands of strategic commitments.
- Inspectors found variability in the quality of out-of-court disposal practices. Oversight processes do not consistently support the safety of the child and safety of others.
- Volunteers do not receive supervision and are not routinely invited to team events.
- Formal mechanisms are not in place to recognise and reward exceptional practice.

### 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:

- The YJT is respected by the wider partnership and the partnership is invested in the work of the YJT. Effective partnership working is underpinned by established strategic and operational links, constructive communication, and healthy challenge.
- The partnership understands the profile of children accessing support from the YJT. There is a sense of shared responsibility and ownership in meeting the needs of children.
- The integrated youth service model promotes holistic and wraparound support for children. Inspectors found effective co-working relationships between the YJT and the wider youth service teams.
- The partnership response to supporting the safety of the child and safety of others is a strength. YJT-led risk and safety multi-agency meetings are attended well, and the partnership is responsive when the YJT convenes urgent 'standalone' risk meetings.
- Commissioning arrangements with the education psychology team has resulted in an innovative way of delivering the ECM approach underpinned by the Trauma Recovery Model (TRM). Education psychologists facilitate multi-agency formulation meetings with the report detailing the child's developmental profile enabling professionals to tailor interventions to meet individual needs.
- There is a holistic partnership approach to meeting the education, training and employment (ETE) needs of children. The youth outreach team and youth workers based in schools provide direct and individualised support to children. Pathways for escalation routes if ETE provision is not sufficient are understood and used effectively.
- There are cohesive working relationships between the YJT and children's social care. The YJT is invited to strategy meetings, the multi-agency child exploitation forum, care and support and child protection meetings. Children's social care attend the YJT-led risk management forums. Inspectors found individual examples of strong collaborative working and appropriate escalation when required.
- Children at risk of exploitation receive an appropriate multi-agency response to manage risks.
- The YJT benefits from secondment arrangements with police providing support for the bureau decision-making panel and contributions to the risk management forums.
- Partnership arrangements with health are appropriately targeted and children can access support for wellbeing and mental health.
- Children have access to substance misuse support with in-house provision ensuring a timely and tailored response to assessment and intervention.
- A seconded probation officer has recently joined the team to develop youth to adult transition processes.

- Victim processes are established and understood. Inspectors found that the victim's wishes and safety are considered in the majority of cases. The YJT is actively taking action to develop the victim worker role.
- The YJT has an impressive preventative offer for children. The prevention panel discusses individual referrals with children provided with opportunities to engage in voluntary support to reduce the likelihood of entering the justice system. The multi-agency working group discusses antisocial behaviour hot spot areas and develops a targeted partnership response.
- The YJT has established relationships with the courts, and there are processes for obtaining feedback regarding the quality of pre-sentence reports. The YJT has delivered training sessions to magistrates.

**Areas for improvement:**

- The YJT routinely screen children's speech, language, and communication needs. This has identified a high level of unmet need. There are existing pathways via the local authority and schools, however, it is acknowledged that this is not sufficient in meeting the needs of the cohort.
- Capturing feedback from children and parents or carers is an embedded part of YJT's practices, but views are not holistically collated and analysed to inform future service delivery.
- The youth service has an accreditation framework, but reparation activity does not result in formal qualifications for children.

## 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.

Outstanding

### Strengths:

- YJT leaders promote a culture of learning and development, and they are passionate about keeping up to date with the latest developments in youth justice practices. The YJT routinely reflects on the effectiveness of its service delivery and invites academics to evaluate aspects of its work.
- The YJT operational manager has co-chaired Multi-Agency Practitioners Forum learning events and has led reviews of serious incidents. Learning is captured and disseminated to the YJT, management board and wider partnership.
- Policies and procedures are frequently reviewed and ratified by the YJT management board. Reviewing incorporates changes in national guidance and HM Inspectorate of Probation reports. Policies are accessible to staff and are regularly discussed in team meetings.
- Performance reports contain granular detail regarding the cohort of children open to the YJT on a statutory, diversion and preventative basis. Data is analysed with a narrative provided to the management board. Performance reports include use of the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) serious violence toolkit and the disproportionality toolkit. The service would benefit from consistently capturing all children's protected characteristics.
- Performance data is used to analyse changes in the profile of children. Recognition of high numbers of FTE resulted in a deep-dive analysis of the offences and cross-referencing with police and education data.
- The YJT's Welsh Language, Culture and Heritage guide includes reference to Welsh legislation and policies promoting equity between the use of the Welsh and English languages.
- The YJT has several quality assurance processes to proactively drive improvements and ensure a high quality of service delivery. The YJS leadership team has undertaken extensive audits as a means of identifying themes for development. This resulted in the commissioning of training to improve the quality of assessing activity.
- The YJT understands the impact of rurality and limited public transport links on children's ability to engage with the service. Children are seen in a range of community-based venues or at home. The location in which they are seen is determined by where they feel safe and what is accessible to them.
- Referral order panels are held in person with opportunities for online or hybrid engagement if this meets the needs of children, families, and volunteers.
- There has been a renewed focus on lone working processes. Staff and volunteers feel safe undertaking their work.
- YJT practitioners have access to children's social care systems, and partners have access to their respective systems ensuring effective information sharing.

- The ICT systems enable staff and managers to work flexibly to meet the needs of children and families.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Individual policies do include some focus on the victim and processes in relation to victim work, but there is an absence of an overarching victim policy to provide a grounding for practice.

## Involvement of children and their parents or carers

The YJT uses a variety of methods to capture the voices of children and their parents or carers. We heard audio clips from a child who was eager to share how the YJT had been instrumental in providing positive opportunities to support their desistance from offending. The audio clips were shared on social media platforms to celebrate Youth Week in Pembrokeshire.

Case studies are presented to the management board and the YJT plan contains direct quotes from children. Children and parents or carers also contribute to the assessment, planning, delivery, and review of their interventions. Managers and practitioners actively seek feedback at the end of a child's involvement with the service. The YJT has trialled several methods of collating feedback in an attempt to develop meaningful processes that consistently capture the voices of all children and parents or carers.

The YJT 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, and nine children replied.

We also spoke to six children during fieldwork. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and all participants agreed that practitioners had the right skills to do the job. Children stated that they felt comfortable talking to their workers and that the workers listened to what they had to say. One child stated:

*"I have the freedom to say what I need to say without being judged and I can get the advice I need."*

Children appreciated practitioners' responsiveness to meeting in venues that were accessible. Several commented that the lack of public transport in their area was problematic but that the YJT had recognised this issue and facilitated sessions within their locality. All children stated that they felt safe in the places that they were seen.

Children and parents or carers had been supported to access the right services to help them stay out of trouble with one child commenting that the YJT:

*"...are usually open to anything I ask for help with, like the other day they helped me sort getting my provisional licence, filling in the forms and taking me to post them. It's those sorts of things, bits that are important to me."*

Several children commended the summer activities programme facilitated by the YJT. We heard that the activities were fun, enjoyable, and helped children to learn new skills.

There was little negative feedback about the YJT, although two children did say that they had several changes of case managers, reflecting perhaps the changes in staff and period of transition noted in the domain one 'staff' standard. Nonetheless, it was noted that this did not affect relationships with their workers, or the quality of service, which was viewed as a strength. This was reflected by one parent who noted that:

*"You done everything possible to help my son, great service to give these youths a chance to sort their life, before it's too late."*

## Diversity

- Inspectors found impressive individual examples of culturally sensitive practices. Staff are confident in having conversations with children about their lived experiences. Their understanding and awareness in dealing with diversity issues is commendable.
- In line with the Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales, trauma-informed practices are embedded and there is a strong focus on diverting children away from the justice system at the earliest opportunity. The YJT-led multi-agency working group uses contextual safeguarding approaches to target partnership resources at communities identified as having high levels of need.
- Educational psychologists and the forensic adolescence consultation team (FACS) support the implementation of the ECM approach for children who have experienced extensive trauma. ECM is underpinned by the TRM, and psychology input and assessment supports the YJT and partner agencies in determining how trauma has impacted the child's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Inspectors found excellent examples of interactions and interventions being tailored to meet children's individual developmental needs.
- The 2021 Census identifies that 17 per cent of Pembrokeshire residents were Welsh speakers and it is perceived that this has increased due to the expansion of Welsh-medium schools in the county. The YJT has one fluent Welsh speaker and several members of staff with some understanding of Welsh. The YJT needs to monitor the number of children, parents or carers, and victims opting for services in Welsh to ensure that the YJT can continue to meet need.
- There is an up-to-date analysis of the children's desistance needs. This analysis considers diversity needs across several protected characteristics. The YJT utilise the YJB's disproportionality toolkit to monitor the cohort of children entering the youth justice system and the data is presented at the quarterly YJT management board.
- Demographically, the population of Pembrokeshire is largely white, and the offending population has, over the years, reflected this. In September 2024 two children from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups were involved with the YJT, which accounted for approximately six per cent of the offending population. The proportion of children aged 10 to 17 of Black, Asian and minority ethnicity in Pembrokeshire is four per cent indicating a slight over-representation, which has been identified by senior leaders and discussed at the YJT management board.
- The integrated youth service model is a strength. Children open to the YJT, on any type of programme or disposal, have direct access to the wraparound support of the youth service teams. Youth outreach workers support all children open to the YJT who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). There is an understanding that not all children are ready to engage in ETE and therefore sessions are tailored to the child's circumstances providing a supportive and staggered approach to accessing appropriate provisions.
- The YJT has created and delivered specific interventions for use with girls.
- The YJT does not have a dedicated speech and language resource. Despite mitigations and access to resources, this remains a significant gap in service provision.
- Out of the eight staff and three volunteers who identified a diversity need in the HM Inspectorate of Probation survey, all reported that their diversity needs had been responded to 'very well' or 'quite well'.



## Domain two: Court disposals

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

### 2.1. Assessment



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

Good

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

Does assessment sufficiently analyse:	% 'Yes'
how to support the child's desistance?	100%
how to keep the child safe?	83%
how to keep other people safe?	<b>67%</b>

Assessment of desistance was done well in all cases. The YJT has embedded strengths-based approaches to its work with children and we found that all assessments engaged the child well and focused on building their protective factors.

Practitioners consistently used a range of information from other agencies to holistically analyse the child's personal circumstances and motivations underpinning their behaviours. Practitioners were confident in holding conversations with children to understand their lived experiences and individual needs. We found examples of culturally sensitive assessing practices in which the case workers spent time meaningfully engaging with children and their parents to understand cultural norms. We found that the YJT were successful in engaging with children and families that had lost trust in other professionals and agencies.

The ECM approach and use of education psychology-led multi-agency formulation meetings supported in-depth analysis of the impact of trauma on a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Involvement of partner agencies in the formulation meetings supported effective information sharing to keep the child safe, which was pertinent in view of the high level of complex needs and vulnerabilities in the case sample. Inspectors found several examples of effective multi-agency assessing with children's social care, education and health, resulting in a holistic assessment of the child's safety.

Assessing to keep other people safe considered the needs and wishes of the victim in all relevant cases. There was an appropriate level of persistence and support in contacting direct victims. Consideration of the safety of the wider public and potential future victims could be strengthened by ensuring that all harmful behaviours are identified and analysed to determine the specifics of who is at greatest risk and in what circumstances harm could be caused.

<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.

Outstanding

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

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

Planning for desistance is a strength and was enhanced by the YJT's child-first and trauma-informed practices. Planning considered the impact of a child's developmental profile, diversity needs and personal circumstances which collectively informed how interactions and interventions would be delivered. Children's plans were co-produced with the child and parent, or carer and we found meaningful engagement in all cases inspected. Positively, this resulted in the creation of individualised and tailored plans which provided a firm foundation for the delivery of interventions with children.

Planning between the YJT and youth outreach team to support children with ETE opportunities was a strength in promoting desistance. We also found examples of effective planning between the YJT and health to mitigate concerns related to self-harming behaviours, and between the YJT and substance misuse specialists to ensure a shared understanding of the harm reduction plans.

Planning to keep the child and others safe was sufficient in the large majority of cases. The YJT-led risk and safety meetings are well attended by the partnership and this provides multi-agency oversight for children assessed as presenting high safety and wellbeing concerns and/or high risks of serious harm to others. We found an array of other partnership meetings hosted by children's services, health and education encouraging multi-agency discussions, but it was not always clear how the planning activities and specific agency plans were aligned. For example, children at risk of extra-familial harm would have, as a minimum, a care and support or child protection plan, a child exploitation plan, and a YJT plan. Whilst we found several examples of effective joint working between the YJT and children's social care, this did not consistently result in congruence between the plans.

Contingency planning to keep the child and others safe was sufficient in all cases. This was done particularly well when the contingency plan was individualised to the child's circumstances and captured specific actions related to the roles and responsibilities of the partnership, and timescales in which actions should be complete.

<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:

Does the implementation and delivery of services:	% 'Yes'
effectively support the child's desistance?	<b>83%</b>
effectively support the safety of the child?	<b>83%</b>
effectively support the safety of other people?	<b>83%</b>

The strong partnership approach that we had seen evidenced within assessing and planning continued with the delivery of services to children. The YJT, education, health, children's social care, police and the youth service worked together to keep the child and others safe in the large majority of cases. Where children were placed in the care of the local authority, we found tenacious efforts by practitioners to engage both the child and the care provider in the requirements of the court order. Inspectors found several examples in which YJT leaders held other agencies to account if the delivery of services was not meeting the needs of children.

The embedded TRM and ECM formulation meetings meant that practitioners were routinely adapting interactions and interventions in accordance with children's developmental profiles. The meaningful engagement of partnership staff in the formulation meetings resulted in a shared understanding of the approaches required to meet children's needs. For example, having attended an ECM formulation meeting, the youth outreach worker understood that a child was not ready to engage in full-time employment and therefore agreed with the child that they would meet regularly to build a routine and a sense of structure. This resulted in a positive outcome with the child completing constructive activities and courses in cooking and manual handling.

In another example a child struggling to regulate their emotions due to the impact of trauma and potential mental health concerns was supported extensively by a practitioner to engage in their YJT sessions. The practitioner implemented consistent boundaries and ensured that follow-up support was provided to the child following particularly difficult sessions.

In the one case deemed to be insufficient in keeping the child and others safe, there had been barriers to engaging the child, and changes to staffing arrangements meant that this had not been addressed or actioned in a timely manner.

<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.](#)

## 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:

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

Formal reviews and ongoing reviewing of desistance, the safety of the child and the safety of others was a strength. This was supported by effective and timely information sharing among the partnership.

Reviewing supported the child's desistance in all cases inspected. Children's engagement with interventions and their overall progress was considered well. Practitioners routinely adapted interventions and sessions based on reviewing activity and feedback from other agencies. Reviewing continued to build on children's strengths and considered changes in their personal circumstances, although it would be beneficial for more parents or carers to be involved in the reviewing process.

Inspectors found that reviewing towards the end of the court order included consideration of services and professionals that would be key to exit-planning strategies. The integrated youth service model was utilised well to provide wraparound support for children.

Ongoing reviewing of emerging concerns linked to the child's safety resulted in timely safeguarding referrals, strategy discussions and the use of urgently convened 'standalone' YJT risk and safety meetings. Similarly, information shared by police and school detailing concerns to the safety of others was shared with relevant professionals in a timely manner resulting in the creation of safety plans and increased support and monitoring measures.

The responsive partnership approach to identifying and addressing emerging concerns led to effective adjustments to the ongoing plan of work to keep the child and others safe in all relevant cases.

In the one case that insufficiently kept the child safe, reviewing activities had not been aligned with information received from children's services and the content of the child exploitation plan.

<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 six cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of one youth conditional caution, two youth cautions and three community resolutions.

### 3.1. Assessment



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

Requires improvement

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

Does assessment sufficiently analyse:	% 'Yes'
how to support the child's desistance?	50%
how to keep the child safe?	50%
how to keep other people safe?	<b>33%</b>

The YJT has undertaken a whole system review of out-of-court disposals, and the new policies, processes and multi-agency decision-making panel were not fully implemented at the time of the inspection. We found delays between the date of the offence and the police referral to the YJT. However, once the information was received by the YJT, we found the issuing of disposals timely in all cases.

Inspectors found variability in the quality of assessing for out-of-court disposals. We found several examples of good practice with a strong assessment of a child's desistance, their safety, and the safety of others, but this was inconsistent.

Assessing sufficiently analysed how to support the child's desistance in half of the cases inspected. Where it had been done well, information obtained from other agencies had been collated and analysed to provide a holistic picture of the child's needs and strengths. We found several examples of practitioners effectively analysing children's diversity needs and demonstrating insight into the impact of neurodiversity and trauma on the child's behaviour and engagement style. However, this happened in too few cases, and there was inconsistency in how the information was drawn together and analysed. Several assessments contained too much description and too little analysis.

Assessing to keep the child safe was sufficient in half of the cases inspected. We found missed opportunities to use the information held by children's social care to inform a holistic analysis of all factors linked to the safety of the child. In other instances, adverse outcomes were listed but there was an absence of professional curiosity in analysing the impact on the child's physical safety and their emotional wellbeing.

Assessing to keep other people safe was sufficient in the minority of cases inspected. Practitioners did not consistently evidence why they had excluded some children's relevant harmful previous behaviours in their current risk analysis. This led to some gaps in the understanding of who was at risk, the nature of that risk, and what could be put in place to keep other people safe. Quality assurance and management oversight processes had not identified shortfalls in assessing practices.

<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.](#)

## 3.2. Planning



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

Good

Our rating<sup>7</sup> for planning is based on the following key questions:

Does planning focus on:	% 'Yes'
supporting the child's desistance?	83%
keeping the child safe?	<b>67%</b>
keeping other people safe?	<b>67%</b>

Inspectors found effective use of the 'my plan' document co-produced by practitioners and children and their parents or carers. Planning activity was strengths-based and built on children's protective factors. We found examples of individualised planning to promote a child's engagement with ETE and community-based diversionary activities. Where planning sufficiently considered the child's diversity needs, it was done well with impressive analysis of the impact of a child's maturity, learning style and neurodiversity.

Planning to promote the safety of the child was sufficiently promoted in a reasonable majority of cases. Where this was done well, we saw examples of joint planning with children's social care, education and youth services promoting cohesive approaches to keeping children safe. Planning activities were stronger for those children discussed at the YJT-led multi-agency risk and safety forums and ECM formulation meetings. However, while the multi-disciplinary forums enhanced communication and the sharing of information, this did not always result in the alignment of plans to keep the child safe. The YJT has recently expanded the membership of the out-of-court disposal decision-making panel to include representatives from children's social care and education, providing an opportunity for early collaboration and the alignment of plans to keep the child and others safe.

Planning gives sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of victims in the large majority of cases. Inspectors found examples of joint planning with education provisions to keep the victim and other pupils safe and appropriate consideration of restorative justice.

Overall, inspectors found sufficiency in the quality of contingency planning for the safety of the child and the safety of others. This is pertinent, as there should be a clear plan of action if the level of risk to a child, or to others, were to increase or decrease. In a majority of the relevant inspected cases, contingency plans set out actions that were individualised to the circumstances of the child and detailed responses to be taken if, or when, circumstances changed.

<sup>7</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.](#)

### 3.3. Implementation and delivery



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

Good

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

Does service delivery effectively support:	% 'Yes'
the child's desistance?	<b>67%</b>
the safety of the child?	83%
the safety of other people?	83%

Inspectors found tenacious efforts to promote the engagement of children who were struggling to participate in their out-of-court disposals. Practitioners linked in with other professionals and parents or carers as a means of understanding how they could best adapt their approach to build rapport with the child. Practitioners routinely screened children's communication needs and they had a good understanding of the importance of tailoring interventions. The services delivered to children would be enhanced by input from a speech, language, and communication specialist.

The YJT delivered a range of interventions that were appropriate to the child's individual needs and risks including sessions focused on emotional regulation, impact on victims, and raising awareness of exploitation. The delivery of substance misuse interventions was a strength in the cases inspected, and we found sensitive approaches which balanced the safety of the child with the safety of others.

The YJT-facilitated summer programme was used positively to support children to engage in activities, in small groups, as a means of developing social skills and confidence. Inspectors spoke to children during fieldwork who reaffirmed the positives of the summer programme in providing structure and opportunities to engage in activities that would not otherwise be accessible to them.

In all cases we found that the YJT promoted community integration and access to mainstream services. It did this for the duration of the out-of-court disposal, but also used it as a mechanism to ensure that universal and targeted youth services could offer support when the disposal was coming to an end.

Delivery to support the safety of the child was done well in the large majority of cases. Practitioners were responsive in identifying emerging safety concerns resulting in timely and appropriate safeguarding referrals to children's social care and tenacity in following up the outcomes of the referrals. The YJT-led multi-agency risk and safety forum provided effective oversight to keep the child and other people safe. Practitioners' safety was also considered with examples of co-working to mitigate concerns regarding risks to staff.

<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.](#)



### 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:

- The YJT has recently undertaken a whole-system review of out-of-court disposal practices. The Pembrokeshire out-of-court framework for children 2024-2026 is in draft format and has been created to reflect the latest case management guidance, child gravity matrix, findings from inspection reports and the introduction of the prevention and diversion assessment tool. The draft framework has been shared with the partnership for consultation and will be presented to a children's participation group. The management board meeting in January 2025 will provide final scrutiny and ratification of the framework.
- As part of the whole-system review, YJT leaders undertook an audit of out-of-court disposal casework. The findings led to the development of a multi-agency out-of-court disposal decision-making panel and the commissioning of assessment training for staff.
- The YJT has delivered out-of-court disposal training to representatives from children's services and education as a means of promoting their meaningful engagement in the revised bureau decision-making panels.
- The individual needs of children and parents or carers inform arrangements for the bureau decision-making panel.
- The voluntary elements of out-of-court disposals are understood, and intervention is offered for all disposals. Children subject to out-of-court disposals have equitable access to interventions and services.
- Although not often required, there is an established escalation process should the panel not reach a disposal decision. This enables cases to be reviewed by senior staff within the YJT and police for resolution.
- Victims are contacted and their individual needs are considered in determining future methods of engagement. Victim impact statements are appropriately shared with the multi-agency decision-making panel.
- The regional out-of-court disposal scrutiny panel analyses the appropriateness and consistency of the application of disposals.
- YJT leaders have been proactive in escalating concerns in relation to the availability of all diversionary disposals to children in Pembrokeshire.

#### Areas for improvement:

- Police have consulted on the revised out-of-court disposal framework for children but there is an absence of a joint working protocol between Dyfed-Powys Police (DPP) and the YJT. Inspectors found examples of significant delays between the offence



and police referral to the YJT and an inconsistent approach to the use of diversionary outcomes and deferred prosecutions. A DPP regional joint working policy would promote a standardised and equitable approach to the use out-of-court disposals.

- Out-of-court policy, processes and provision are in a stage of transition. Bureau decision-making panel representation has been extended to include children's services and education, but arrangements are in their infancy, and will require investment from the partnership to ensure effectiveness.
- Outcome 22 is available, but work is needed to ensure that processes are developed and embedded.
- In several instances, children were appearing in court for offences that may be eligible for out-of-court disposals. The YJT has not undertaken specific evaluation looking at the increase in referral orders.
- Quality assurance of out-of-court assessing activities needs greater consistency to ensure the safety of the child and the safety of others.

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

#### Strengths:

- The management board has oversight of children remanded or sentenced to custody. There is a proactive and collaborative partnership response to resettlement planning, involving a range of statutory and non-statutory partners.
- The Pembrokeshire YJT Resettlement Policy was approved in 2023 following consultation with the partnership. The policy includes the principles of constructive resettlement and the seven pathways to resettlement.
- YJT risk and safety management meetings provide a holistic forum for resettlement planning. The meetings are attended by police, children's services, health, and education representatives. Additional value is provided by non-statutory partners who are involved in supporting the child and the parent or carer.
- The importance of maintaining contact with children in custody and their parents or carers was understood. Contact from the YJT was frequent and meaningful, which enabled ongoing support and early identification of risk and safety concerns.
- Partnership approaches support bail packages and alternatives to custodial sentences.
- The YJT and partnership have advocated for children to be placed in secure and custodial provisions in Wales as a means of meeting cultural and diversity needs.
- Enhanced case management approaches are available and used with children sentenced to custody.

#### Areas for improvement:

- Challenges in providing suitable accommodation mean that provision is not always the most appropriate and children can be placed in OWR placements<sup>9</sup>. Scrutiny and monitoring arrangements are in place, but this information needs to be routinely shared with the YJT management board. The partnership recognises these issues and is working to address deficits in the accommodation placements available.
- The management board has oversight of resettlement but there is an absence of formal learning processes to provide ongoing evaluation of provision.
- The policy does not sufficiently consider children's diversity needs and protected characteristics.

<sup>9</sup> Operating Without Registration

- Meeting the needs of actual and potential victims was not explicit in the policy.
- There was no mention of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) in the policy.
- Not all staff had received specific training in resettlement practices.
- The views of children and their parents or carers were not formally captured to inform the evaluation and review of resettlement policy and provision.
- The recommended reading list had not been updated to include current resettlement areas of practice.

## 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.](#)