

An inspection of youth offending services in

# Wrexham

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HM Inspectorate of Probation

MARCH 2019

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This inspection was led by HM Inspector Tracy Green, supported by a team of inspectors, as well as staff from our operations and research teams. The Head of Youth Offending Team Inspections, responsible for this inspection programme, is Alan MacDonald. We would like to thank all those who helped plan and took part in the inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

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## Foreword

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This inspection is part of our programme of youth offending service inspections. As planned, we have inspected and rated Wrexham Youth Justice Service (YJS) across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery, and the quality of court disposal work and out-of-court disposal work.

We have given Wrexham YJS an overall rating of 'Good'. Many aspects of its work are impressive, and, with a little further development, this service can aspire to achieve a higher rating in the future.

Wrexham YJS has a strong leadership team that provides robust challenge and meaningful support. Professional relationships are strong and the YJS is well supported by key partner agencies.

Staff are committed and enthusiastic. They know their young people well and are creative in responding to their needs. They do not see the social and economic deprivation in parts of the area as a barrier to their young people succeeding in their goals. Staff are well trained and keen to work with the enhanced case management model that will be rolled out across the whole of Wales. There is a good range of community resources and interventions. The YJS offices have recently been refurbished and they are now a pleasant and welcoming working environment.

We rated post-court work as outstanding across three standards. The quality of out-of-court work was rated less well. Nevertheless, there is a strong out-of-court process, which offers suitable prevention work for cases that do not meet the threshold for a more formal outcome. This includes a prevention and support service for young people involved in anti-social behaviour and those who had received a community resolution. With small adjustments to the assessment tool, the scores for this aspect of work could improve considerably.

There are a few areas for improvement. For example, assessments are not always completed on time, which needs to be addressed. A late assessment, or lack of a full review, could delay the right interventions being delivered to protect the public or the young person.

Wrexham YJS should reflect on and celebrate its strengths, while acknowledging there is still work to do to build on the improvements it has made already.



**Dame Glenys Stacey**  
Chief Inspector of Probation

## Overall findings

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Overall, Wrexham YJS is rated as **Good**. This rating has been determined by inspecting the YJS across three domains of its work. The findings are described below.

	<b>Organisational delivery</b>
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Our key findings about organisational delivery are as follows:

- There is a skilled and enthusiastic workforce, who deliver creative interventions.
- The Board is fully constituted with good, committed members.
- The Board and YJS know their young people well and are responsive to their needs.
- There are strong prevention services, which provide support and intervention to young people who have been given a yellow card or community resolution, or are identified as being at risk of offending.
- A good range of interventions are available, including a Junior Attendance Centre, which provides reparation services and education for suitable young people.
- The investment in the YJS premises has provided an appropriate and welcoming environment.
- Probation services are not represented on the Board at a strategic level and there was no date for the probation officer vacancy to be filled.
- There are read-only rights on the children's social care case management systems.
- Management tools are not well developed to track whether AssetPlus assessments are completed on time.

	<b>Court disposals</b>
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Our key findings about court disposals are as follows:

- Assessments are completed to a high standard and make good use of information from other agencies.
- License conditions and youth rehabilitation requirements are used creatively and constructively with young people on youth rehabilitation orders.
- There are strong multi-agency arrangements and these are used well to manage post-court cases.

- Staff have excellent engagement skills and are committed to achieving the best outcomes for their young people.
- AssetPlus assessments are sometimes completed late and there needs to be a better process to ensure they are completed on time.
- Victims' views are not well integrated into assessments and plans.
- Reviews do not take full account of the changes in the young person's circumstances or fully analyse their impact on risk.



### **Out-of-court disposals**

Our key findings about out-of-court disposals are as follows:

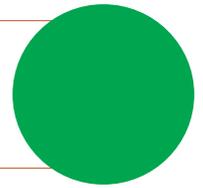
- The bureau process is an excellent example of joint decision-making.
- There are interventions and support for children and young people who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system, including for those who have received a community resolution or yellow card.
- The assessment of factors that may assist a young person to desist from offending is excellent.
- Staff have good engagement skills and are responsive to individual needs.
- Staff are persistent in attempts to engage with children and young people whose participation is voluntary.
- Assessments do not draw all the relevant information together to provide an analysis and explanation of the recorded categorisation of risk.
- Victims' views are not well integrated into the assessment or planning processes.
- Staff do not make enough use of information from other agencies, particularly out-of-area children's social care.

Service: Wrexham Youth Justice Service

Fieldwork started: December 2018

Overall rating

Good



### 1. Organisational delivery

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

### 2. Court disposals

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

### 3. Out-of-court disposals

3.1	Assessment	Requires improvement	
3.2	Planning	Requires improvement	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Requires improvement	
3.4	Joint working	Outstanding	

## Recommendations

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

### **Wrexham Youth Justice Service should:**

1. make sure that AssetPlus assessments are completed on time
2. ensure that the out-of-court assessment tool enables staff to analyse and explain all risk factors in relation to a young person and that staff are trained to use it
3. ensure that the voice and views of the victim are integrated into young people's assessments and plans, subject to requirements on recording data related to victims
4. address access rights and permissions for RAISE, the children's services database, and Careworks, the YJS casework application.

### **The Chair of the Management Board should:**

5. Work with the National Probation Service to ensure the probation officer vacancy is filled.

## Introduction

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Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) supervise 10–18-year-olds who have been sentenced by a court, or who have come to the attention of the police because of their offending behaviour but have not been charged – instead, they were dealt with out of court. HMI Probation inspects both these aspects of youth offending services.

YOTs are statutory partnerships, and they are multi-disciplinary, to deal with the needs of the whole child. They are required to have staff from local authority social care and education, the police, the National Probation Service and local health services.<sup>1</sup>

YOT work is governed and shaped by a range of legislation and guidance specific to the youth justice sector (such as the National Standards for Youth Justice) or else applicable across the criminal justice sector (for example Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements guidance). The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) provides some funding to YOTs. It also monitors their performance and issues guidance to them about how things are to be done.

Wrexham is a county town in North Wales. The council has made significant savings over the last two years, and this has led to a restructuring of the YJS, with the overall number of case managers reducing. The YJS is located in the education department, with a service manager for prevention and support and two team managers: one for statutory youth justice cases and one for community and restorative cases. Responsibility for reparation, victim contact, participation and most out-of-court activity sits in the latter team.

### **The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation**

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We provide assurance on the effectiveness of work with adults and children who have offended to implement orders of the court, reduce reoffending, protect the public and safeguard the vulnerable. We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice, and use our data and information to encourage good-quality services. We are independent of government, and speak independently.

### **HM Inspectorate of Probation standards**

The standards against which we inspect are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. These standards are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with people who have offended.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* set out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

<sup>2</sup> HM Inspectorate's standards are available here:

<https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

## Contextual facts

### Population information



	Wrexham	England and Wales
Total population <sup>3</sup>	135,571	58,744,595
Youth population <sup>3</sup>	12,416 (9.2%)	8.9%
Youth black and minority ethnic (BME) population <sup>4</sup>	452 (3.6%)	18.6%

### Caseload information<sup>5</sup>

Age	10-14	15-17			
	Wrexham	26%	74%		
National average	24%	76%			
Race/ethnicity	White	BME	Not known		
	Wrexham	82%	6%	12%	
	National average	73%	24%	3%	
Gender	Male	Female			
	Wrexham	88%	12%		
	National average	83%	17%		



**Total recorded crime<sup>6</sup>**  
(rate per 1,000 households)

76.9

North Wales  
Police Force

84.7

England and Wales

**Offences<sup>5</sup>**  
(per 1,000 10-17-year-olds)

23.3

Wrexham YJS

13.8

England and Wales

**First-time entrants<sup>7</sup>**  
(rate per 100,000)

290

Wrexham YJS

273

England and Wales

**Reoffending<sup>8</sup>**

Rate  
Frequency per offender

**Wrexham**

56.5%  
2.64

**England and Wales**

41.6%  
1.62

<sup>3</sup> Office for National Statistics. (2018). *UK population estimates for mid-2017*.

<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics. (2012). *Census 2011*.

<sup>5</sup> Youth Justice Board. (2018). *Youth justice annual statistics: 2016-2017*.

<sup>6</sup> Office for National Statistics. (2018). *Crime in England and Wales (table P3)*.

<sup>7</sup> Youth Justice Board. (2018). *First-time entrants, April 2017 – March 2018*.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2018). *Proven reoffending statistics, January 2016 – December 2016*.

# 1. Organisational delivery



Organisations that are well led and well managed are more likely to achieve their aims. We inspect against four standards.

<b>1.1 Governance and leadership</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
The governance and leadership of the YOT supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people.	

There is a clear local vision for the YJS. All staff understand the vision either quite well or very well. It is prominently displayed on a poster in the YJS office. The vision has existed for a number of years and is aspirational. A youth justice plan that outlines the aims of the YJS is shared with the staff group.

The Management Board includes all statutory partners and some non-statutory partners, such as the Chair of the youth court bench. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner is not represented. Membership of the Board is reviewed regularly. There are four elected members. Three-quarters of staff are aware of the Management Board's activities.

The Management Board meets regularly and receives reports and information from the YJS. This includes information on performance. The reports are of good quality. Each member of the Board has an area of responsibility linked to performance. Board members challenge the YJS on its performance. This has included undertaking a thorough analysis of the YJS's custody cases to see what lessons can be learned and report on performance at an individual case level.

Board members and YJS staff have high aspirations for the children and young people of Wrexham.

There has been some turnover in the police officers who attend the Board, but the police are represented at the right level. There has been irregular attendance from the probation representative. The Board's chair has identified and addressed this, and attendance has improved, although the probation representative may not be at a sufficiently strategic level.

The YJS has links with all the relevant key strategic partnership boards and attends and participates in these meetings. There are good strategic partnership arrangements in place with the police and health and education services. The links with probation services are less strong. The YJS has had a vacancy for a probation officer for two months, with no date for a replacement identified.

Of the eight young people who provided feedback about how highly they rated the YJS, the average rating was nearly 9 out of 10.

The YJS has read-only access to RAISE, the children's social care database. If the YJS had limited input rights, this would enable staff to flag when a case opens, and correspondingly, if children's social care had access to Careworks, the YJS case recording system, it would be easier to know if a case was open to the YJS justice.

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

All staff reported that caseloads are manageable. Ninety-five per cent of staff were highly motivated in their work with children and young people, and the remaining 5 per cent were quite motivated. The service was restructured two years ago, and the new model has been well received by staff. There are two teams: a statutory one, which manages post-court cases, and a community and restorative team, which manages out-of-court disposals and prevention work.

New posts have been created and specialist posts have been reviewed to meet the changing needs of the children and young people of Wrexham. There is an education worker, police officer, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) practitioner and substance misuse workers. There are also volunteers and reparation workers and a youth worker and victim liaison officer who are in the community and restorative team. All are co-located at the YJS office.

Staff and volunteers are skilled at meeting the young people's needs and take a flexible approach. They are imaginative in developing interventions. Examples include the energy drink intervention programme, Couch to 5K and the Junior Attendance Centre (JAC). The JAC provides a blend of reparation, for example making sandwiches for the homeless, and education input, such as knife crime awareness. This is tailored to the needs of the young people and the community; for example, in October they do fire awareness work in preparation for Bonfire Night.

Staff have access to a specialist harmful sexual behaviour resource (Woodlands) for case discussion. There is also a culture of peer learning and support, sharing best practice and sharing skills and resources.

The YJS identifies and meets the training needs of its staff. Staff have received training in county lines and adverse childhood experiences (ACE). Three staff have recently been supported to complete their effective practice certificate. Secondment opportunities are available. The YJS has its own training budget to commission specialist training. It also has access to the Wrexham council training programme, and partnership training.

While managers know their team's cases well, and staff reported that they were knowledgeable and approachable, inspectors found that case management oversight was inadequate in 38 per cent of the court disposal cases inspected. This was mainly because AssetPlus assessments were not being completed on time.

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

Staff and managers analyse their children and young people and know their cases well. Wrexham YJS is using the YJB reoffending toolkit and has used this to respond differently to children and young people who reoffend quickly after the start of an order. This includes higher intensity contact at the start of the order and an emphasis on building a positive working relationship. Wrexham YJS has completed an analysis of the children and young people in custody cohort and has used this to develop a more targeted response to those who are at risk of receiving a custodial sentence.

The YJS is able to track the offending of the children and young people who receive an out-of-court disposal.

The YJS used data and information from the police to identify that there were fewer 'yellow cards' (the North Wales Police response to anti-social behaviour) in Wrexham than in other areas of North Wales. As a result, it developed a training programme for police community support officers, which is being delivered with the seconded police officer and youth worker. An increase in referrals has already been noted.

There are very strong arrangements for prevention cases. This includes an offer for intervention in community resolution plus cases, and a prevention offer following a yellow card for anti-social behaviour. Case managers are persistent in engaging those young people who have been identified as most at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

There is a good range of appropriate resources, which are accessible to staff. Staff are good at sharing resources they have used. Staff have access to iPads to use in their work with young people. They use these to access YouTube videos and online material. Inspectors found there was access to suitable resources in the vast majority of cases inspected.

There have been problems in contacting and working with children's social care. It was reported by the YJS that children's social care had a high turnover of staff and a lot of agency workers. There is an escalation process in place and this is used well. There is a good relationship at a strategic level with children's social care.

There is a meeting to discuss high-risk cases. The meeting would benefit from a wider range of attendees, for example a representative from the school the young person attends rather than an education worker. Actions and planning from this meeting could be structured better and linked more clearly to the young person's plan.

In the absence of a probation officer, the YJS and probation services have developed a workaround that involves all cases transferring to the Integrated Offender Management unit. It was reported by the YJS that this may not be appropriate for all cases. The key skills and knowledge of the probation officer are missing in the YJS due to a staff vacancy.

<b>1.4 Information and facilities</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
Timely and relevant information is available and appropriate facilities are in place to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children and young people.	

The YJS office has recently undergone a significant refurbishment and is now a suitable and pleasant working environment. There are safety features, such as CCTV and alarms in the rooms where young people are interviewed. The office is located near a large housing estate where most of the young people live. It is also near the bus station. The YJS has access to mini-buses for transporting young people and has a reparation workshop on site.

The young people helped to design the meeting rooms, choosing the paint colours, drawing the graffiti boards and making the furniture. They are currently redesigning the logo.

Referral order panels take place in the YJS office. The meeting space is suitable; however, use of this is contrary to the referral order guidance, which recommends that panels take place in community venues.

Staff have access to suitable IT equipment. The management team reports that the case management system does not always give it all the details it needs for managing performance; therefore, it has developed a number of spreadsheets, which provide the data that it needs.

The review and congratulate panel has been independently evaluated by Wrexham Glyndwr University and the findings of this positive evaluation have been shared.

Information on education, specifically the number of children educated 'elsewhere', on alternative programmes, or receiving home education, is being used to highlight levels of school attendance with relevant headteachers. This is in response to an identified issue by the YJS of children being recorded as educated elsewhere, often at home, and this education not meeting their needs.

## Summary

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### **Strengths:**

- There is a skilled and enthusiastic workforce, who deliver creative interventions
- The Board is fully constituted with good, committed members
- The Board and YJS know their young people well and are responsive to their needs
- There are strong prevention services, which provide support and intervention for young people who have been given a yellow card or community resolution or are identified as being at risk of offending
- There is a Junior Attendance Centre, which provides reparation services and education for suitable young people

- The investment in the YJS premises has resulted in an appropriate and welcoming environment.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Probation services should be represented on the Board at a strategic level and the probation officer vacancy should be filled
- Greater use could be made of the children's social care and YJS case management systems to increase the safety and well-being of children and young people
- Management tools should be used to track AssetPlus assessments to see when these are completed and take steps to ensure the timeliness of these assessments.

## 2. Court disposals



Work with children and young people sentenced by the courts will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases we inspect against four standards.

2.1 Assessment	Outstanding
Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	

Initial case assessments were outstanding. Case managers made good use of a range of information when undertaking assessments, including social care and police information. Case managers demonstrated a broad knowledge of the potential impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and a strong understanding of mental health issues. Case managers have access to RAISE, the children's social care database, and the seconded police officer undertakes police checks for new cases. There were good assessments of the young person's desistance in over 90 per cent of cases and evidence of good engagement with the young person and their family/carers.

Where there was contact with the victim, the victim's perspective was not always included in the main assessment. This information was included in the assessment in less than half the cases. This information was recorded separately in the case record and was not part of the integrated assessment.

There were a number of cases where the assessment was completed late or was not updated following sentencing. This was sometimes because the case manager wanted to find more information about the young person, and this unnecessarily delayed the completion of the initial assessment at the start of the order.

Assessments of safety and wellbeing were good. Staff made effective use of all available information, including information from the young person's family and, where appropriate, from previous custodial sentences. Inspectors agreed with the classification of safety and wellbeing in over 90 per cent of cases.

Assessments of risk of harm to others were good in nearly 90 per cent of cases. They included a good analysis of a wide range of information, including information that did not result in a criminal conviction but was pertinent to risk. This included information from residential children's homes. An appropriate case was escalated to be managed at MAPPA Level 2 as required.

2.2 Planning	Outstanding
Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	

Case managers used the AssetPlus pathways and planning document for developing plans for intervention. This was supplemented with risk-planning meetings and case

recording. Planning was strong and took account of the young person's diversity factors and their strengths and protective factors.

In every case inspected, staff paid sufficient attention to the maturity and motivation of the young person. Planning was weaker in relation to the wishes of the victim. This was because victims' wishes were not incorporated into the plan or, where restricted activities were used, there was no evidence that the victim was made aware of this requirement.

Planning was strong following a custodial sentence. There were good links with the custodial estate and good use of licence conditions following release.

An area of planning that needed development was engagement with the young person and their family. Nearly a quarter of the cases lacked evidence that the young person and their family had been meaningfully engaged in the planning process. As an inspector noted:

*“Planning of interventions is informed by the assessment of risks and desistance factors and is followed throughout the delivery of the order. Planning involves the use of other agencies to deliver parts of the plan, including the in-house substance misuse worker, as well as the case manager making use of in-house ETE workers when education was flagged as an issue. The case manager rightly avoids duplication of fire safety work already completed prior to the order but revisits key issues as part of the decision-making target. Only issue is around parents' views being missing from the planning process”.*

Planning was proportionate to the court outcome in all the cases that were seen.

Planning to keep the child or young person safe was carried out well. Staff engaged effectively with other agencies where they were involved in the case. These included social care services, education and the custodial estate. Staff used appropriate controls and interventions in the majority of cases. These included greater use of home visits and support for families.

Planning to keep other people safe was also strong, with good use of external controls and legal requirements. This included licence conditions, non-association requirements and restricted activity. There was both good use of internal specialist staff, including substance misuse specialists and CAMHS, and external agencies to keep others safe.

Two of the young people were in high-supervision residential placements due to their high level of risk of harm to others.

Wrexham YJS has a fortnightly risk management meeting where high risk of serious harm and safety and well-being cases are discussed. There had been problems with attendance from children's social care, but these have now been addressed. Nevertheless, invitations to these meetings could be extended to a wider range of practitioners who know the young person directly, rather than relying on information from systems such as police databases and from education services. The risk planning from these meetings should be captured more clearly on AssetPlus planning documents.

2.3 Implementation and delivery	Outstanding
High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child or young person.	

Implementation of services is a particular strength in Wrexham. Case managers are committed to building positive working relationships and tenacious in their approach to engaging young people. Staff knew their young people well and demonstrated a genuine belief that they could lead law-abiding lives. Inspectors noted:

*“The case manager made a lot of effort and was persistent and flexible in order to get the order started and, when it was, this approach continued during the referral order”.*

*“It is clear that the case manager has been able to develop an excellent relationship with the young person in a short time. He has delivered the work using a lot of creativity that the young person really bought into”.*

Work to support desistance was done well in over 90 per cent of cases. Case managers used a personalised approach to meet the needs of the young person and were good at supporting their compliance with the YJS. They made good use of reparation placements, and not just to make amends to the community. Sessions were also used to build self-esteem and to develop an understanding of consequences.

Interventions provided by CAMHS and substance misuse services were particularly strong. These workers delivered services that were both reactive and responsive to meet young people’s needs.

In most cases, breach action was taken when it should have been and case managers used a breach panel. Where appropriate, they adapted their interventions to try and re-engage the young person to improve compliance.

Exit planning was a particular strength. In a number of cases inspected, the case manager was making meaningful exit and contingency plans for the young person, where these were needed. For example, they continued with substance misuse interventions, provided ongoing CAMHS, or referred the young person to other agencies, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award and education services.

Staff promoted the safety and well-being of young people well in over 90 per cent of cases. Case managers were persistent in engaging with other organisations, particularly children’s social care, to access services that could meet the needs of the children and young people. Cases were referred to social care in a timely and appropriate manner. When responses did not meet the young person’s needs, this was escalated through managers.

Children’s social care did not have access to the youth justice system database.

Staff communicated well with the young person’s family to support safety and wellbeing.

The quality of staff’s work to manage risk of harm to others was good in nearly 90 per cent of cases. Staff delivered interventions to manage this risk and made good

use of other agencies. There was intelligent use of police information. The seconded police officer put a 'notify if' flag on the police database, which meant he was immediately informed if cases open to the YJS came to police attention. This meant that case managers could respond immediately to any changes in risk.

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

Reviewing was less strong, although it was still rated as good. In a quarter of cases, reviews did not focus sufficiently on the young person's desistance. In one case, there was a referral order report review, but the AssetPlus assessment had not been reviewed, meaning the impact of factors that affected the child's desistance, such as family environment, were not considered in a formal way.

An inspector noted:

*"There is evidence of reviewing activity and liaison with social care regarding concerns in this area ... but this does not prompt a formal review to be completed to capture this information".*

Reviews that focused on keeping the child or young person safe were carried out in over two-thirds of cases. In some cases, a formal review had been completed following a new sentence but this did not include information on and analysis of the impact of that sentence. There were two cases where the case manager had been on sick leave and no review was completed.

In other cases, reviews did take account of the changes in safety and wellbeing. They included clear explanations as to why there was a change in the assessment. Reviews were completed following risk management meetings.

Reviews to keep other people safe were done well in most cases. Staff used information from other agencies in three-quarters of cases. Reviews were less strong when the AssetPlus assessment was technically reviewed but the analysis of risk factors was not updated. There was also a lack of input from children and young people and parents/carers to the reviewing process.

Wrexham YJS has a review and congratulate panel process. While this was not seen in any of the court disposal cases inspected, it is recognised as a good process for young people who have done particularly well on their intervention. This panel is able to formally recognise and provide feedback to the young person and their family on the progress they have made. Young people who have made good progress are recommended by case managers for this panel.

## Summary

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### **Strengths:**

- Assessments are completed to a high standard and make good use of information from other agencies
- Staff make good use of licence conditions following the young person's release from custody and make creative and appropriate use of requirements on youth rehabilitation orders
- There are strong multi-agency arrangements and these are used well to manage young people
- Staff have excellent engagement skills and are committed to achieving the best outcomes for young people subject to youth justice supervision
- Staff have access to a range of resources and are creative and responsive to the needs of their young people.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- AssetPlus assessments are sometimes completed late, and there needs to be a better process to ensure that they are completed on time
- Victims' views need to be better integrated into assessments and plans
- Reviewing needs to take more account of the changes in the young person's circumstances and fully analyse the impact of these on safety and well-being concerns and risk to others.

### 3. Out-of-court disposals



Work with children and young people receiving out-of-court disposals will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases we inspect against four standards.

The out-of-court disposals process in Wrexham is particularly strong. Interventions are offered to prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system following a 'yellow card'. Yellow cards are administered by police community support officers in response to incidents of anti-social behaviour. The YJS is informed that a yellow card has been issued and writes to the family to offer an intervention. If the young person is issued with a second yellow card, the YJS undertakes a home visit. This is a proactive approach to providing support.

There is a clear process for dealing with all criminal matters, which is understood by the police. For very low-level first-time offences, the police can administer a community resolution. If the child or young person does not accept responsibility, or the matter is more serious, the decision is referred to the Crown Prosecution Service for a decision on charging. All other matters are referred to the YJS for the disposal decision to be made by the bureau.

Cases are allocated to a worker, who undertakes an assessment and makes recommendations for intervention.

The bureau is made up of representatives from the police and the YJS and a community volunteer. Bureau members have an equal say in the decision-making process and they decide on the disposal type. They have a full range of disposal decisions available to them. These are: no further action, community resolution, community resolution plus, youth caution, youth conditional caution or charge. In the cases inspected, there was evidence of the full range of disposal decisions being used.

<b>3.1 Assessment</b>	Requires improvement
Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	

Wrexham YJS used an in-house assessment tool and AssetPlus to complete assessments of out-of-court disposals. The in-house tool had recently changed, and the new version had more space for safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others issues to be recorded. The cases inspected used a mix of previous and current tools, and AssetPlus. The prompt question of 'why?', after a risk level was identified, had been removed from the new tool. This means there is a possibility that the professional analysis for that decision may not be clearly articulated.

Most out-of-court disposal cases are managed by the community and restorative team, but if risk factors are evident, the case is managed by the post-court team. The out of court cases in the inspection sample were seven community resolutions, four youth cautions and two youth conditional cautions.

In over 90 per cent of cases, the assessment analysed how to support the child or young person's desistance. These assessments were completed within an appropriate time period, all engaged the young person and parent and demonstrated a good understanding of the young person's maturity and ability to engage in the intervention.

One area that needs further development is integrating the victim's views and wishes into the assessment. Victims were being contacted by the victim worker and a report was prepared for the bureau, but this information was stored separately from the core assessment. Additionally, as this information is, correctly, password-protected, the case managers could then not easily access it.

Assessments on analysing how to keep the child or young person safe were done less well, with under three-quarters of these assessments being sufficient. This was for a range of reasons. One deficiency noted was that wider safeguarding issues relating to the peer group and community, and their impact on the child or young person, were not being fully considered. Taking such issues into account is known as contextual safeguarding. A second reason was that, while information was included in the assessment, such as exposure to child sexual exploitation, there was no analysis or explanation of the impact of that experience on the young person's safety and wellbeing. The exception was the youth conditional caution cases, where this was done well in both cases.

Inspectors agreed with the assessment of safety and wellbeing in nearly two-thirds of the cases.

Assessments of how to keep other people safe needed further development. These were done well enough in only over half the cases. Inspectors agreed with the assessment of risk of harm to others in half the cases. Where they did not, this was sometimes because information was missing or incomplete, such as why a child was placed in a specialist residential home. Where assessments were done well, there was good use of information, particularly police information. An inspector noted:

*"There is a good assessment of risk to others. This is due to police intelligence in relation to his possession of a knife and his behaviour towards the police".*

Assessment on how to keep others safe was done well in the two youth conditional caution cases inspected.

As with safety and well-being, there were examples of information being available and recorded on the assessment but, again, there was no analysis or explanation of the impact on the risk of harm to others from the young person.

It is anticipated that the new assessment tool that has been developed by the YJS will address this last issue.

<b>3.2 Planning</b>	Requires improvement
Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	

Planning to support the young person’s desistance was very strong, and was done well in every case. Planning took account of diversity needs, maturity and motivation, and engaged with the young person. An inspector noted:

*"Sufficient planning in respect of supporting the young person’s desistance and a good understanding of the young person’s maturity, ability and motivation to change.*

*The priority in this case is getting the young person to engage with the case manager and build trust that will enable the completion of victim work and provide a platform for purposeful activity. Due to the young person’s learning needs, the case manager has prioritised building a relationship with them prior to completing work that he may find difficult to understand. They have adapted the plan to meet the needs of the young person”.*

Planning to keep the young person safe was done well in over three-quarters of the cases. Areas for development include getting information from other agencies, such as social care, particularly if the child comes from outside the area. Information from local children’s social care and education services was used when it was available.

Planning to keep other people safe needs further improvement. Inspectors found that this was done well in only half the cases. There was insufficient information from other agencies to inform planning and a lack of contingency planning to manage risk of harm to others in many cases. When looking at just the youth conditional caution cases, planning for both risk to others and safety and wellbeing was done well. Examples of this included police warning markers being placed on a victim’s address and appropriate use of stop and search following information that the young person was carrying a knife.

<b>3.3 Implementation and delivery</b>	Requires improvement
High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child or young person.	

Inspectors found that the desistance of the child or young person was supported well in every case. Every case also identified diversity needs, gave sufficient focus to an effective working relationship with the young person and their parents/carers and supported compliance.

An example of service delivery identified by an inspector was:

*"There has been some excellent intervention delivered in this case; of particular note, the young person has a diagnosis of ADHD but does not take medication but does drink energy drinks. The substance misuse worker has delivered sessions on the*

*potential health issues with energy drinks, giving information about their content, both sugar and caffeine, and the health risks. She has also worked with him on health issues and is currently doing the Couch to 5K sessions with him to build health and self-esteem. He has also done a restorative DVD.*

*The index offence was wasting police time, and as he was being driven home by the case manager, they came across a police incident which had a high level of police attendance, with no obvious incident. When back at home this incident was cartooned and a discussion held on the potential impact to a police response if a real incident had occurred".*

There was good use of home visits to support compliance if this was needed.

The safety and wellbeing of the young person were promoted well in over three-quarters of cases. This was sometimes hampered by lack of information from other agencies, either because it was not requested, or because it had not been provided by the relevant agency.

Service delivery to support the safety of others was done well in only half the cases. This was again mainly due to the lack of information from other agencies, but also cases where the YJS should have shared information with partners about risk. For example, information about a young person who was subject to child protection procedures was not shared with relevant agencies in a timely manner.

Services were delivered well in both youth conditional caution cases for desistance, risk to self and risk to others.

3.4 Joint working	Outstanding
Joint working with the police supports the delivery of high-quality, personalised and coordinated services.	

Joint working is an area of particular strength in Wrexham. There is an out-of-court disposals bureau where a joint decision is made on all suitable cases. The decisions are aided by a bureau assessment and panel report. The report contains recommendations for intervention, but the decision on disposal is made by the bureau. In nearly all the cases, inspectors found that the recommendations were appropriate and proportionate. In every case, the recommendations took account of the level of the young person's understanding and the YJS made a positive contribution to decision-making.

The YJS worked effectively with the police to implement the out-of-court disposal in every case inspected. The seconded police officer delivered the disposal as soon as was practicable following the bureau's decision, often the same evening. When it was possible, this was also done with the YJS case manager. The police officer then recorded the disposal on both the police and YJS databases. He has a system for ensuring that he is able to log when the disposal has ended and also records this directly on the police database.

## Summary

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### **Strengths:**

- The bureau decision-making process is an excellent example of joint decision-making
- There is intervention and support for young people who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system, including those who have received a community resolution or yellow card
- There are excellent assessments of young people's desistance
- A good range of interventions are available for children and young people, including the Junior Attendance Centre, reparation and specialist staff support
- Staff have good engagement skills and are responsive to individual needs
- Staff are persistent in attempts to engage with young people who have been identified as most at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Assessments should draw all the relevant information together to provide an analysis and explanation of the categorisation of risk
- The views of the victim are not integrated into the assessment or planning processes
- There should be better use of information from other agencies, particularly out-of-area children's social care.

## Annex 1 – Methodology

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The inspection methodology is summarised below, linked to the three domains within our standards framework. Our focus was on obtaining evidence against the standards, key questions and prompts within the framework.

### **Domain one: organisational delivery**

The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance and the head of education (current chair of the Management Board) and prevention and support manager delivered a presentation covering the following areas:

- How do organisational delivery arrangements in this area make sure that the work of your YOS is as effective as it can be, and that the life chances of children and young people who have offended are improved?
- What are your priorities for further improving these arrangements?

During the main fieldwork phase, we surveyed 21 individual case managers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. Various meetings and focus groups were then held, allowing us to triangulate evidence and information. In total, we conducted 15 of these.

### **Domain two: court disposals**

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Sixty per cent of the cases selected were those of children and young people who had received court disposals six to nine months earlier, enabling us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and reviewing. Where necessary, we also interviewed other people significantly involved in the case.

We examined 25 post-court cases. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of 5), and we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

### **Domain three: out-of-court disposals**

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. Forty per cent of cases selected were those of children and young people who had received out-of-court disposals three to five months earlier. This enabled us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and joint working. Where necessary, we interviewed other people significantly involved in the case. One case was taken out of the out-of-court sample and moved to post-court as the bureau had recommended the case was charged.

We examined 14 out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of 5), and we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

## Annex 2 – Inspection results

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### 1. Organisational delivery

Standards and key questions	Rating
<p><b>1.1. Governance and leadership</b></p> <p>The governance and leadership of the YOS supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people.</p> <p>1.1.1. Is there a clear local vision and strategy for the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people?</p> <p>1.1.2. Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?</p> <p>1.1.3. Does the leadership of the YOS support effective service delivery?</p>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<p><b>1.2. Staff</b></p> <p>Staff within the YOS are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people.</p> <p>1.2.1. Do staffing and workload levels support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people?</p> <p>1.2.2. Do the skills of YOS staff support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children and young people?</p> <p>1.2.3. Does the oversight of work support high-quality delivery and professional development?</p> <p>1.2.4. Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?</p>	<b>Good</b>
<p><b>1.3. Partnerships and services</b></p> <p>A comprehensive range of high-quality services is in place, enabling personalised and responsive provision for all children and young people.</p>	<b>Good</b>

- 1.3.1. Is there a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of children and young people, to ensure that the YOS can deliver well-targeted services?
- 1.3.2. Does the YOS partnership have access to the volume, range and quality of services and interventions to meet the needs of all children and young people?
- 1.3.3. Are arrangements with statutory partners, providers and other agencies established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services?

<b>1.4. Information and facilities</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
Timely and relevant information is available and appropriate facilities are in place to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children and young people.	

- 1.4.1. Are the necessary policies and guidance in place to enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children and young people?
- 1.4.2. Does the YOS's delivery environment(s) meet the needs of all children and young people and enable staff to deliver a quality service?
- 1.4.3. Do the information and communication technology (ICT) systems enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children and young people?
- 1.4.4. Is analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement?

## 2. Court disposals

Standards and key questions	Rating and % yes
<b>2.1. Assessment</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	
2.1.1. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child or young person's desistance?	92%
2.1.2. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child or young person safe?	92%

2.1.3. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	88%
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<b>2.2. Planning</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	

2.2.1. Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child or young person’s desistance?	96%
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2.2.2. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child or young person safe?	86%
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2.2.3. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	81%
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<b>2.3. Implementation and delivery</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child or young person.	

2.3.1. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child or young person’s desistance?	96%
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2.3.2. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child or young person?	89%
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2.3.3. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	89%
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<b>2.4. Reviewing</b>	<b>Good</b>
Reviewing of progress is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.	

2.4.1. Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child or young person’s desistance?	75%
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2.4.2. Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child or young person safe?	69%
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2.4.3. Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	70%
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### 3. Out-of-court disposals

Standards and key questions	Rating and % yes
<p><b>3.1. Assessment</b></p> <p>Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.</p>	<p><b>Requires improvement</b></p>
<p>3.1.1. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child or young person's desistance?</p>	<p>93%</p>
<p>3.1.2. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child or young person safe?</p>	<p>71%</p>
<p>3.1.3. Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?</p>	<p>57%</p>
<p><b>3.2. Planning</b></p> <p>Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child or young person and their parents/carers.</p>	<p><b>Requires improvement</b></p>
<p>3.2.1. Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child or young person's desistance?</p>	<p>100%</p>
<p>3.2.2. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child or young person safe?</p>	<p>78%</p>
<p>3.2.3. Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?</p>	<p>50%</p>
<p><b>3.3. Implementation and delivery</b></p> <p>High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child or young person.</p>	<p><b>Requires improvement</b></p>
<p>3.3.1. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child or young person's desistance?</p>	<p>100%</p>
<p>3.3.2. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child or young person?</p>	<p>78%</p>

3.3.3. Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people? 50%

**3.4. Joint working Outstanding**

Joint working with the police supports the delivery of high-quality, personalised and coordinated services.

3.4.1. Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the child or young person, supporting joint decision-making? 93%

3.4.2. Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal? 100%

## Annex 3 – Glossary

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<b>AssetPlus</b>	Assessment and planning framework tool developed by the Youth Justice Board for work with children and young people who have offended, or are at risk of offending, that reflects current research and understanding of what works with children.
<b>Community resolution</b>	Used in low-level, often first-time, offences where there is informal agreement, often also involving the victim, about how the offence should be resolved. Community resolution is generic term; in practice, many different local terms are used to mean the same thing.
<b>Court disposals</b>	The sentence imposed by the court. Examples of youth court disposals are referral orders, youth rehabilitation orders and detention and training orders.
<b>Child protection</b>	Work to make sure that all reasonable action has been taken to keep to a minimum the risk of a child experiencing significant harm.
<b>Child sexual exploitation</b>	A type of child abuse, occurring when a child or young person is encouraged, forced and manipulated to take part in sexual activity for something in return, for example presents, drugs, alcohol or emotional attention.
<b>Desistance</b>	The cessation of offending or other anti-social behaviour.
<b>ETE</b>	Education, training and employment: work to improve learning and to increase future employment prospects.
<b>First-time entrants</b>	A child or young person who receives a statutory criminal justice outcome (youth caution, youth conditional caution or conviction) for the first time.
<b>HMIP</b>	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation.
<b>Local authority</b>	YOTs are often a team within a specific local authority.
<b>MAPPA</b>	Multi-agency public protection arrangements: where probation, police, prison and other agencies work together locally to manage offenders who pose the highest risk of harm to others. Level 1 is single agency management, where the risks posed by the offender can be managed by the agency responsible for the supervision or case

	management of the offender. Levels 2 and 3 require active multi-agency management.
<b>Out-of-court disposal</b>	The resolution of a normally low-level offence, where it is not in the public interest to prosecute, through a community resolution, youth caution or youth conditional caution.
<b>Risk of Serious Harm</b>	Risk of Serious Harm (ROSH) is a term used in AssetPlus. All cases are classified as presenting either a low/medium/high/very high risk of serious harm to others. HMI Probation uses this term when referring to the classification system, but uses the broader term risk of harm when referring to the analysis that should take place in order to determine the classification level. This helps to clarify the distinction between the probability of an event occurring and the impact/severity of the event. The term Risk of Serious Harm only incorporates 'serious' impact, whereas using 'risk of harm' enables the necessary attention to be given to those young offenders for whom lower impact/severity harmful behaviour is probable.
<b>Referral order</b>	A restorative court order which can be imposed when the child or young person appearing before the court pleads guilty, and where the threshold for a youth rehabilitation order is not met.
<b>Safeguarding</b>	A wider term than child protection that involves promoting a child or young person's health and development and ensuring that their overall welfare needs are met.
<b>Safety and wellbeing</b>	AssetPlus replaced the assessment of vulnerability with a holistic outlook of a child or young person's safety and wellbeing concerns. It is defined as "...those outcomes where the young person's safety and well-being may be compromised through their own behaviour, personal circumstances or because of the acts/omissions of others" (AssetPlus Guidance, 2016).
<b>Youth caution</b>	A caution accepted by a child following admission to an offence where it is not considered to be in the public interest to prosecute the offender.
<b>Youth conditional caution</b>	As for a youth caution, but with conditions attached that the child is required to comply with for up to the next three months. Non-compliance may result in the child being prosecuted for the original offence.
<b>YOT/YOS</b>	Youth offending team is the term used in the <i>Crime and Disorder Act 1998</i> to describe a multi-agency team that aims to reduce youth offending. YOTs

	are known locally by many titles, such as youth justice service (YJS), youth offending service (YOS) and other generic titles that may illustrate their wider role in the local area in delivering services for children.
<b>YOT Management Board</b>	The YOT Management Board holds the YOT to account to ensure it achieves the primary aim of preventing offending by children and young people.
<b>Youth rehabilitation order</b>	Overarching community sentence to which the court applies requirements (e.g. supervision requirement, unpaid work etc).
<b>YJB</b>	Youth Justice Board: government body responsible for monitoring and advising ministers on the effectiveness of the youth justice system. It provides grants and guidance to the youth offending teams.



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