

Meeting of:	CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING
Date of Meeting:	8 MAY 2024
Report Title:	YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE UPDATE ON CARE-EXPERIENCED CHILDREN
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	LINDSAY HARVEY
Responsible Officer:	CHRISTA BONHAM-GRIFFITHS
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	<p>The report provides an update on Youth Justice Service provision for care-experienced children or those at risk of becoming care-experienced. The service is committed to responding to the needs and strengths of all children who come to the attention of the service. There is an increase in complexity of those children’s needs which has required the service to develop its interventions to optimise those provisions of risk management, care and support.</p> <p>Developments in service provision for all our children but specific to those with complex needs, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individualised trauma support and planning; • improved speech and language support; • mental health and substance use support; • resettlement and transition planning; • exploitation planning, safeguarding support and planning; and • referrals to external partners for specific support for children where necessary.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update the Committee on the Bridgend Youth Justice Service (BYJS) provision available for care-experienced children who enter the criminal justice system.

2. Background

- 2.1 BYJS is a statutory multi-agency partnership that has a legal duty to co-operate to secure appropriate local youth justice services. The service is funded from a variety of sources including UK Government, Welsh Government, and the statutory partners (that is, Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC), South Wales Police, the Probation Service and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board).
- 2.2 Statutory duties to prevent offending are outlined in criminal justice and civil legislation, including the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System 2019. The principle aim of Youth Justice Services in England and Wales is to prevent offending and re-offending by children in line with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Local authorities in Wales also have statutory duties to provide preventative services contained in section 15 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Local authorities must provide services to:
- encourage children not to commit offences;
 - avoid the need for children to be placed in secure accommodation and enable children to live their lives as independently as possible; and
 - work with victims of crime in compliance with the Code of Practice for Victims to offer restorative services and referral to specialist support services where necessary. The aim of this intervention is to repair harm and ensure the needs of victims are met.
- 2.3 Currently, BYJS is currently working with 92 children (as at April 2024), 12 (13%) of them are children who are classified as looked after. Among these children, 9 (10%) have undergone a formulation process and trauma-responsive assessment, resulting in the development of a comprehensive plan that includes timelining and mapping of their progress. Of the three who have not received formulation to date, one case is still awaiting early years information from the original home authority, and the other two cases are awaiting BYJS trauma assessments.
- 2.4 The criminal disposal for the nine children who have undergone the formulation process and assessment are diversified. Two children are under a youth rehabilitation order, while another two are engaged in voluntary interventions. Additionally, three children are participating in prevention interventions, one is undergoing a youth restorative disposal, and one is enrolled in a section 250 of the sentence Code and is on a custodial through care programme.
- 2.5 Of the nine, three of the children fall within the 14 to 15 age bracket, five are aged between 16 and 17, and one is 18 years old. Among these nine children, there are eight males and one female, reflecting the general gender composition of service.
- 2.6 All BYJS cases receive an ASSET Plus assessment (the youth justice specific risk of offending and harm assessment tool), a child-centred plan, and their voice is integral to this process in ensuring that it is child first, offender second approach. Additionally, a risk and vulnerability planning meeting can be convened for those children who are high risk in the BYJS three domains of risk which include risk of offending, risk of harm to others and their own and safety and wellbeing.

3. Current situation/proposal

- 3.1 BYJS has aligned its intervention strategies for care-experienced children with several key frameworks and legislation, including:

- the Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales (Welsh Government, 2019), emphasising a child-first approach and early trauma recognition;
- the All-Wales Protocol for reducing the care-experienced children and young people, focusing on safeguarding and promoting the well-being of vulnerable youth; and
- the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which mandate local services to prevent children from offending and promote their future welfare.

3.2 Initiatives to meet these requirements include:

- early trauma recognition (BYJS has bolstered its capacity to identify and address early signs of trauma in youth involved in the justice system, ensuring timely and appropriate support);
- Prevention and Diversion Panel: through collaborative efforts, BYJS diverts at-risk youths towards supportive interventions, focusing on prevention and positive development[
- child-first approach: central to BYJS's ethos is prioritising the needs and well-being of children, ensuring that interventions are tailored to meet their individual circumstances and support their best interests;
- consideration of first-time entrants: BYJS provides targeted support to children who are navigating the justice system for the first time, aiming to prevent further involvement in criminal activities and promoting positive pathways.
- safeguarding measures: robust safeguarding protocols are implemented by BYJS to ensure the safety and protection of care-experienced children within the justice system, prioritising their well-being and security;
- support in education, training, and employment: comprehensive support is provided to help care-experienced children access educational and vocational opportunities, empowering them to build brighter futures and achieve their full potential;
- speech and language support: recognising the importance of effective communication, BYJS offers specialised support to address speech and language barriers among care-experienced children, facilitating their integration and participation;
- mental health support: BYJS prioritises the mental health and wellbeing of care-experienced children, providing access to appropriate resources and interventions tailored to their unique needs, ensuring they receive the support they require for optimal wellbeing;
- substance use: the service offers one to one support through its Barod service, and the intervention worker will work on a one-to-one harm reduction model of practice with any child experiencing substance issues to assist them overcoming those difficulties and reducing the risk of harm through that use;
- BYJS implements a multi-agency constructive resettlement and transition approach for all care-experienced children, collaborating with relevant stakeholders to ensure smooth transitions and holistic support as they navigate through various life stages; and
- as an active participant in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board (CTMSB) Exploitation Steering Group and the CTMSB Safeguarding Board, BYJS plays a crucial role in ensuring the implementation of relevant multi-agency safeguarding measures to protect care-experienced children.

Additionally, BYJS has conducted an extensive child sexual exploitation mapping exercise aimed at identifying children who may be at risk of exploitation, further reinforcing their commitment to safeguarding vulnerable youth within the community.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The well-being goals and principles prescribed for within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 connect directly to the approach to supporting children, young people and their families. The approach is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle and more specifically as follows:

Long term	Early Help services focus on meeting the needs of a wide range of service beneficiaries including children, young people, adults, and families.
Prevention	The focus of Early Help services is upon early identification of need and ensuring that there is appropriate provision to meet individual needs.
Integration	The approach to Early Help services addresses the need for a coherent delivery of economic, social, environmental, and cultural outcomes.
Collaboration	A fundamental principal of the approach to family support focuses on improving collaboration and creating a unified system.
Involvement	Ensuring that children, young people, adults, and families are at the heart of the system and that needs are discussed in a person-centered way.

6. Climate change implications

6.1 There are no climate change implications resulting from this project. However, we are committed to supporting the implementation of the local authority's 'Bridgend 2030 – Net Zero Carbon Strategy' and Welsh Government's carbon reduction commitments.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent implications

- 7.1 BYJS has a commitment to establishing and maintaining effective ties with Children's Social Care and this is evident through their engagement across various pivotal areas, including the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) services, long-term teams, and safeguarding leads. Involvement with these services ensures quality of strategy and planning meetings, thereby fostering improved coordination and integrated planning for children subject to interventions from BYJS and social care. Managers and staff are integrated into team meetings, safeguarding sub-groups, training and specific forums and panels to ensure consistency of service delivery for those children who are involved with both services.
- 7.2 In a clear demonstration of the proactive approach to holistic safety planning, BYJS staff have participated in the comprehensive 'Signs of Safety' model training alongside their counterparts in social care. This synchronicity in training equips both teams with a shared framework, vocabulary, and methodology, allowing for consistent and coherent safety planning. This endeavour reinforces the vital connection between BYJS and Children's Social Care, creating a unified front in safeguarding and nurturing the well-being of the children they collectively serve. In line with this commitment to holistic safety planning, BYJS integrates trauma interventions that align closely with the principles of the 'Signs of Safety' model, ensuring a cohesive and unified approach to addressing the complex needs of young individuals.
- 7.3 BYJS's continuing involvement with care-experienced children provides a wider depth of understanding of the unique challenges and needs faced by these individuals who have traversed the care system. The child's experience in foster care, residential care, or other forms of out-of-home placement necessitates a tailored and empathetic approach of support. BYJS recognises the imperative of comprehending the intricate tapestry of these care journeys to deliver interventions that are sensitive, relevant, and efficacious. The trauma model enables robust multi-agency formulation and understanding of the child's needs and strengths, how to avoid re-traumatisation and provide an improved response to those needs.
- 7.4 Aligned with this ethos, the Youth Justice Board Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 underscores BYJS's alignment with a broader vision that seeks to shield children from undue criminalisation that stems from their vulnerabilities and the obstacles they encounter. This overarching plan provides a commitment to empowering children to overcome challenges and thrive in a nurturing environment.
- 7.5 BYJS's multi-faceted engagement with Children's Social Care, their emphasis on tailored care for those with unique experiences, and their alignment with progressive strategic goals exemplifies an organisation that not only recognises the importance of collaboration and understanding but actively champions the holistic well-being and development of all children under their care.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. The ongoing development work is funded through the Youth Justice Grant, Welsh Government, Police and Crime Commissioner, Ministry of Justice Turnaround fund, Youth

Endowment funding and Bridgend County Borough Council and partner agency funding.

9. Recommendation(s)

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting notes the contents of the report.

Background documents

None