

Meeting of:	EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	3 JULY 2025
Report Title:	BRIDGEND YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE AND BRIDGEND YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICE
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION, EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG PEOPLE
Responsible Officer:	CHRISTA BONHAM-GRIFFITHS STRATEGIC YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE MANAGER OWEN SHEPHERD YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICE MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect on policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	<p>This report provides an update on Bridgend Youth Justice Service and Bridgend Youth Support Services.</p> <p>Bridgend Youth Justice Service has made notable improvements in early intervention and trauma-informed practices, strengthened multi-agency collaboration, and enhanced youth voice in governance. Key developments include trauma screening capacity, education and employment support, and violence prevention initiatives. However, sustainability is threatened by short-term funding, growing complexity of youth needs, rising first-time entrants into the justice system, and gaps in school-related data and trauma resources.</p> <p>Bridgend Youth Support Services has improved not in education, employment or training (NEET) performance, expanded open-access youth provision, and strengthened partnerships with third-sector organisations. Initiatives like the Period Dignity project and the “Your Voice” youth forum demonstrate a strong focus on youth-led engagement and wellbeing. Nonetheless, significant reduction in grant funding and looming financial uncertainties risk reducing staff and capacity.</p>

	<p>Both services have deepened joint working through panels, shared facilities, and joint staff development. The report concludes with next steps focusing on sustainable funding, greater youth involvement, workforce development, and improved trauma-informed practice across settings.</p>
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Bridgend Youth Support Service and the Bridgend Youth Justice Service.
- 1.2 The report provides an update and highlights actions aimed at:
 - improving service delivery;
 - strengthening multi-agency support and engagement;
 - enhancing trauma-informed practice; and
 - ensuring young people's voices and needs are central to service planning and delivery.

2. Background

Bridgend Youth Justice Service

- 2.1 The Bridgend Youth Justice Service 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 (SWP), 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.
- 2.3 The principal 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.
- 2.4 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.

- 2.5 In February 2022, an inspection conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation assessed Bridgend Youth Justice Service in two main areas: the organisational delivery of the service and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. The inspection report indicated that the service was rated as 'Requires improvement.' However, it also acknowledged the significant progress made by Bridgend Youth Justice Service in a short period, elevating the service from its March 2019 'inadequate' rating as part of the Western Bay (Bridgend Neath, Port Talbot and Swansea combined Youth Justice Services) to the 'requires improvement' rating it received.
- 2.6 In response to the inspection's findings and recommendations, Bridgend Youth Justice Service underwent a transformation under the leadership of a new Strategic Manager. This has enabled further proactive measures to be implemented to address the identified issues and prioritise the safety and well-being of the children under the service's care. Through the planning, implementation and delivery of the six recommendations outlined by His Majesty Inspectorate of Probation, Bridgend Youth Justice Service continues to demonstrate its commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in its operations. There is a revised inspectorate framework for youth justice services which commenced in May 2025 which has a greater emphasis on work with victims, child-first approaches, out-of-court diversion strategies and disproportionality. The service is currently developing practice to ensure these requirements can be achieved.

Bridgend Youth Support Service

- 2.7 Legislative developments such as the Education Act (1996) and the Learning and Skills Act (2000) reinforce the statutory responsibilities placed on the local authority to provide youth support services to young people aged 11 to 25.
- 2.8 More recently, Welsh Government's Youth Work Strategy for Wales indicates as one of their five aims is that 'youth work happens in safe spaces and is available to everyone'. As a result, youth work provision is offered through youth services universally across Wales, seeking to ensure that all 11 to 25-year-olds, have the services, support and experiences they need to achieve their full potential.
- 2.9 Historically, youth services have had strong focus on the provision of universal services (youth centres) and had a heavy reliance on core funding. In Bridgend, staffing levels rose year-on-year to a peak of 147 part-time staff in the financial year 2012-2013 with a core operating budget of £1.123m.
- 2.10 In April 2015, linked to planned budgetary reductions at the time, the part-time statutory youth service was reduced from operating 18 youth centres to 3. The remaining centres were located at Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen (CCYD), Cynffig Comprehensive School and Pencoed Youth Engagement Centre offering three evenings of provision per week.

- 2.11 Staffing levels were also reduced, especially those on part-time contracts that were employed specifically to support the youth centres. Numbers reduced from 88 part-time members of staff in April 2014 to 14 in April 2015.
- 2.12 In recognition of the role youth work can play in developing relationships with hard-to-reach young people, coupled with many youth services facing budgetary pressures, Welsh Government increased the scope of the Youth Support Grant (its main grant to local authorities for the provision of youth work) for the 2019-2020 financial year to include allocated funding to support:
- mental/emotional health and wellbeing; and
 - youth homelessness
- 2.13 In June 2023, following an extensive consultation exercise with young people, Corporate Management Board endorsed a rebranding of the then Youth Development Service, to Bridgend Youth Support Service.
- 2.14 The consultation gave a clear recommendation to adopt the name 'Bridgend Youth Support Service' as it provides a clearer representation of the service's purpose with young people. This choice also supports generating more visibility and higher search rankings on the internet.
- 2.15 In the 2023-2024 financial year, linked to recommendations from the Interim Youth Work Board to Welsh Government, the Youth Support Grant was extended further to include an additional two elements:
- Welsh language; and
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- 2.16 As of April 2025, the numbers of full-time equivalent members of staff (50.5) are higher than that of April 2014 (26). However, the majority of these staff deliver targeted (not universal) youth support services funded from grants including:
- the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF);
 - Families First funding;
 - the Period Dignity Grant; and
 - the Youth Support Grant.

3. Current situation/proposal

Bridgend Youth Justice Service

Key responsibilities

- 3.1 The Bridgend Youth Justice Service is a statutory multi-agency partnership that has a legal duty to co-operate to secure appropriate local youth justice services. The principal aim of youth justice services in England and Wales is to prevent offending and re-offending by children.

Team structure

3.2 The service has a multi-faceted personnel structure consisting of 26 staff and 15 volunteers.

3.3 The service consists of:

- social workers;
- intervention officers;
- Police officers;
- Health professionals;
- Probation officers;
- Education officers;
- Speech and Language Officers;
- a Substance Officer;
- a Victim Liaison Officer;
- trauma specialists;
- therapeutic service providers;
- community reparation workers;
- a court and bail specialist; and
- custody specialists.

3.4 The service is currently recruiting for the following staff (to fill vacancies in the service):

- a social worker;
- two intervention officers;
- one education specialist; and
- one trauma practitioner.

Strategic and corporate aims/objectives

3.5 Key Bridgend Youth Justice Service activity is identified in the Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate's Strategic Plan 2023-2026 and the Corporate Plan where applicable.

3.6 Bridgend Youth Justice Service activity also aligns with the Youth Justice Board's Strategic Plan 2024-2027 to ensure the service seeks to shield children from undue criminalisation stemming from their vulnerabilities and obstacles. This plan commits to empowering children to overcome challenges and thrive in a nurturing environment.

Strengths

3.7 The service has rescoped its range of specialist support to meet the complex needs of children entering the criminal justice system. This has enabled the service to provide an improved response to the issues children present with including complex emotional and mental health concerns, childhood trauma,

neurodivergent concerns, speech and language delay and cognitive, social emotional difficulties.

- 3.8 The service is aligned to a number of key regional groups that assist in developing youth justice practice and provide strategic oversight, guidance and a partnership approach to responding to key youth justice issues. Some of these groups include:

- Organised Serious Crime Board;
- South Wales Criminal Justice Board and subgroups;
- Serious Violence Strategic Group;
- Youth Justice Board Hwb Doeth Research, Development and Training Group;
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board and subgroups;
- Youth Offending Team (YOT) Managers Cymru;
- Community Safety Partnership groups; and
- Managed Moves Panel

Police/school engagement improvements

- 3.9 Since September 2023, South Wales Police have redefined school liaison officer roles, emphasising early intervention and education-based support. Improved coordination with a dedicated Bridgend Youth Justice Service police officer has led to better information sharing and clearer prevention pathways with secondary schools. The recently established Weapons-Related Incidents in Bridgend Educational Settings Strategic Group (WRIBESSG) support this key area of the service's work. Bridgend Youth Justice Service has partnered with schools to deliver targeted awareness sessions on youth violence and knife-related risks. Bridgend Youth Justice Service actively encourages schools and police to refer children to early intervention services to prevent escalation into formal youth justice involvement.

Police Incident Notification Process

- 3.10 A revised Police Incident Notification Process has been implemented to ensure Bridgend Youth Justice Service is notified when a child comes into contact with the police. Police representation at the Early Years and Young People (EYYP) Prevention Triage Panel ensures early identification and offers of intervention before criminalisation. These changes aim to provide earlier support for children, aligning with child-first principles.

Youth voice in governance

- 3.11 While a young person representative for the Bridgend Youth Justice Service Management Board has not yet been identified, the service is committed to incorporating the voice of the child in strategic decision-making.
- 3.12 Actions taken include using the 'All About Me' feedback tool, sharing aggregated feedback quarterly with the Management Board, developing child-

led reparation projects, and using child-led interview panels for staff recruitment.

- 3.13 Bridgend Youth Justice Service is exploring piloting youth focus groups with board member attendance and working with youth participation specialists to explore models that avoid re-traumatisation or undue burden.

Trauma screening staffing and capacity

- 3.14 There are four designated trauma leads across Youth Support Services, 20 trained trauma-informed practitioners, and 40 staff trained through the Trauma Recovery Model (TRM) Academy with psychology team support. The Relationship Building Together (RBT) project has enhanced multi-agency case formulation for complex trauma cases. Current capacity is sufficient to meet demand, although the scale and complexity of trauma presentations are growing. A three-tiered trauma intervention strategy is being implemented, and trauma screening is routine with escalation pathways for complex needs. A cross-service resource pack is in development for consistency and integration.

Accommodation stability

- 3.15 Nearly all children known to Bridgend Youth Justice Service are in suitable housing.

Mental health service access

- 3.16 Access to mental health services has improved due to strengthened links with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and in-service screening through a health triage process.

Trauma work in schools

- 3.17 Since April 2025, Bridgend Youth Justice Service has engaged with over 50 primary and secondary schools to help understand trauma-informed practices and support early identification for intervention. Schools have proactively requested materials and tailored support for specific issues like managing distress, improving parental engagement, and understanding trauma. Several schools have implemented 'safety bases' or dedicated safe spaces to support pupil resilience and emotional intelligence.

New Education, Training and Employment worker

- 3.18 Bridgend Youth Justice Service has recruited a dedicated Education, Training and Employment Worker to identify and engage children disengaged from education or facing significant challenges, working with schools, alternative providers, families, and partners to develop tailored support plans. This aims to reduce offending risk by addressing poor or disrupted educational experiences.

Violence prevention

- 3.19 The service continues to plan and provide intervention in partnership to reduce violent incidents in schools. Collaboration with a local authority group and contact with a violence prevention unit and a neighbouring authority are exploring a new protocol for widespread partnership working. The service already operates weapons awareness sessions in schools and alternative provisions covering risks, legal frameworks, and statistics.

Areas for development/Challenges

Funding sustainability

- 3.20 A large amount of Bridgend Youth Justice Service funding comes from temporary or year-on-year grants, such as the Turnaround Grant and the Children and Communities Grant. Turnaround funding is due to end in March 2026, and Youth Endowment Fund trauma project funding ends in August 2025, which will lead to the loss of trauma lead posts, psychology posts, and part-time specialist trauma posts. A Home Office funding bid that has been proposed will only extend funding until April 2026, and its success is currently unknown.

Probation capacity

- 3.21 While Bridgend Youth Justice Service benefits from a part-time probation officer (18.5 hours/week) providing valuable expertise, their capacity is stretched. Future joint planning will focus on reviewing probation capacity, exploring alternative models (shared regional staff or floating practitioners), and developing clear escalation routes for intensive probation input. This issue will be raised at the Management Board and to Welsh Government through YOT Managers Cymru (YMC) to ensure strategic visibility and compliance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

First-time entrants

- 3.22 First-time entrants rose from 18 to 30 (rate: 217 per 100,000), exceeding the Youth Justice Board family average. An audit found a 50% increase in current year first-time entrants compared to the same period last year (18 compared with 12). This rise is likely due to delayed outcomes and recent policy changes, with limited prevention opportunities.

In-school violence data disconnect

- 3.23 Only 12% of offences recorded by Bridgend Youth Justice Service are classified as violent, highlighting a disconnect between in-school violence data and youth justice pathways. This was attributed to police managing violent incidents involving children independently without consistent referral to Bridgend Youth Justice Service. This issue has been recognised, and a police representative will attend the Early Youth and Youth Prevention (EYYP)

Referral Panel to ensure appropriate support for children involved in violent behaviour.

School attendance and NEET concerns

- 3.24 Over 40% of school leavers known to the Bridgend Youth Justice Service are NEET. School attendance remains a major risk factor for youth offending. The top factor contributing to school leavers becoming NEET was health conditions (physical and pregnancy) and mental health issues.

Trauma understanding and resource constraints in schools

- 3.25 Schools demonstrate varied understanding and confidence in implementing trauma-informed approaches. Many schools reported budget reductions impacting capacity and increasing staff workload, highlighting the need for accessible trauma-informed strategies for pupil and staff well-being.

Staff attitudes

- 3.26 Senior leaders in schools have identified a need for comprehensive, whole-staff training, to avoid unintentionally escalating trauma responses in pupils.

Language accessibility

- 3.27 We need to ensure relevant documentation and resources/materials are available in Welsh.

Impact of COVID-19

- 3.28 Schools reported Key Stage 3 pupils appear particularly affected by the aftermath of the pandemic, with increased emotional, behavioural, and regulatory challenges.

Increased challenges with self-regulation

- 3.29 Schools have observed a notable increase in children with emotional regulation difficulties, including those not on child protection plans or who are looked-after, which is difficult to manage and underlines the importance of trauma-informed training across all settings.

Partnership working

Probation Service

- 3.30 While not providing direct financial contributions, Probation contributes staff time. Bridgend Youth Justice Service aims to formalise and quantify in-kind contributions in future reporting.

Health services

- 3.31 Health partners provide significant in-kind support through seconded professionals and joint-working initiatives, including access to mental health practitioners, speech and language therapists, and substance misuse workers, all contributing to Bridgend Youth Justice Service's holistic, trauma-informed model. Health services do not contribute financially but actively participate in the Prevention Triage Panel, multi-agency trauma work, and strategic governance. Efforts are underway to improve tracking of all in-kind contributions.

Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

- 3.32 The Bridgend Youth Justice Service works closely with the CSP to align community safety decisions involving children with broader community safety and crime reduction goals, strengthening collective efforts for a safer environment. Regular meetings facilitate discussions on strategies, joint efforts to reduce violence, information sharing, and co-ordinated responses. This partnership helps identify emerging trends and risks, enabling proactive crime prevention and re-offending reduction.

Police

- 3.33 A partnership audit with Police, Bridgend Youth Support Service, Children's Social Care, and the Anti-Social Behaviour Team examined 90 youth crime incidents, identifying notification gaps. As a result, South Wales Police will provide additional staffing to ensure all youth crimes are notified early and preventative services are offered at the earliest point to those children most at risk.

Education

- 3.34 The service sits within the Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate and works in close collaboration with the relevant education teams to share vital information where necessary, plan in partnership for individual children who are experiencing education difficulties and provide meaningful intervention that meets the needs of those children. Regular meetings are held with schools, colleges and education safeguarding services with an aim to ensure the best possible plan is implemented for the child, with an aim of improving children's engagement, attendance and attainment.

Substance Use Services

- 3.35 The service works in close collaboration with Barod who employ a substance use worker who is integrated into the service. This ensures substance use support for all children assessed as requiring advice, support and intervention. The service also refers to CAMHS tier three services for those children who are experiencing complex substance use issues and need higher level intervention. The Barod officer will work alongside CAMHS with the child to

ensure an intense level of support where necessary, particularly in cases where significant harm incidents are a major risk factor for the child.

Stakeholder voice

- 3.36 The Bridgend Youth Justice Service remains fully committed to incorporating the voice of the child in all strategic decision-making.
- 3.37 The “All About Me” feedback tool is utilised as standard practice with every child engaged with the service. The service uses the individual feedback to inform the child’s plan and ensure their strengths and needs are included in the intervention provided to the child and their family. Aggregated feedback from the ‘All About Me’ feedback tool is shared quarterly with the Management Board to provide a strategic partnership oversight of the issues children are expressing is a cause for concern for them.
- 3.38 Parents and carers are asked to provide their views about their child in a feedback questionnaire form. This is also collated so the service understands the needs and wishes of parents and carers and is able to respond to them in a collaborative way.
- 3.39 All victims of crime are offered the opportunity for their views to be heard in relation to the restorative support being offered by the service. This ensures victims thoughts and feelings are integral to the intervention provided to children. This can help to repair any harm caused and to provide victims with choices over service delivery and support.

Next steps

- 3.40 The Bridgend Youth Justice Service will continue to explore safe, supported ways of involving young people more directly in governance, including piloting youth focus groups with board member attendance and working with youth participation specialists. Presentations and training sessions on trauma-informed approaches will continue a rolling basis through September and October, in line with each school’s capacity and readiness.
- 3.41 The Bridgend Youth Justice Service will continue to work in partnership with education colleagues to ensure all schools are equipped to identify and support children early through effective formulation and intervention planning.
- 3.42 The Education, Training and Employment (ETE) worker will work closely with schools, alternative education providers, families, and partner agencies to develop tailored support plans that promote re-engagement, improve attendance, and support positive progression routes.

Bridgend Youth Support Service

Key responsibilities

- 3.43 Provision of youth support services and youth work is based under section 123 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, which states that a local authority must:
- provide or secure the provision of youth support services in its area; and
 - participate in the provision of those services.
- 3.44 For the purposes of the above, the provision of youth support services must include the operation and strategic management of youth work which:
- assesses the needs of young persons in the local authority's area;
 - establishes the extent and nature of the resources required to meet the needs of young people, and
 - secures, provides and co-ordinates the delivery of resources as required to respond to the needs of young people.

Team structure

- 3.45 The Bridgend Youth Support Service currently consists of 50.5 full-time equivalent qualified youth workers based in schools, youth centres, or working peripatetically within community settings.
- 3.46 As of May 2025, all practising youth workers must be registered with the Education Workforce Council (EWC) and be qualified to a minimum of Level 3 in Youth Work.
- 3.47 To assist recruitment, the service has partnered with Adult Learning Wales to offer new recruits the opportunity to obtain Level 2 and 3 Youth Work qualifications while employed. Access to these qualifications is also provided free of charge to the third sector workforce to ensure standardisation of professional competencies.

Strategic and corporate aims/objectives

- 3.48 In response to the proposed release of Welsh Government's Youth Support Services (Provision of Youth Work) (Wales) Directions 2025, Bridgend Youth Support Service is developing a new 5-year strategic plan in partnership with Bridgend Youth Matters (BYM) and young people, which will include a workforce development plan to meet new EWC requirements.
- 3.49 Within the Education, Early Years and Young People Strategic Plan, Bridgend Youth Support Service leads on two strategic indicators:
- reducing the number of young people not in education, employment, or training (12.4); and
 - increasing open-access youth provision (12.7).

Strengths

Reducing the number of young people not in education, employment, or training

- 3.50 The Inspire 2 Achieve+ and Inspire 2 Work+ programmes provide vital engagement and support for young people aged 11 to 25, focusing on early identification of those at risk of becoming NEET. Youth work helps prevent issues like unemployment, anti-social behaviour, or mental health struggles from escalating by engaging young people early and providing positive role models. The initiative ensures young people are 'work ready' for sustainable employment after leaving statutory, or further education.
- 3.51 Published data for Year 11 school leavers presenting as NEET for 2023-2024 increased from 1.4% (23 young people) in 2022-2023 to 1.9% (31 young people).
- 3.52 Despite an increase, Bridgend's performance (1.9%) remains above the all-Wales average of 2.4%. Bridgend is joint fifth with Wrexham when compared to other local authorities.
- 3.53 For 16 to 18-year-olds who are NEET, the average over the last year is 1.4% compared to an all-Wales average of 2.3%, placing Bridgend as the second-best performing local authority in Wales.

Increasing open-access youth provision

- 3.54 In early 2022, Bridgend Youth Support Service had a growth proposal approved to increase the core allocation to develop our open access offer to young people.
- 3.55 Bridgend Youth Support Service now operates a mix of open-access and targeted youth work across five venues: Brackla, CCYD, Cynffig, Evergreen Hall, and Pencoed, providing 10 evenings of weekly provision resulting in a year-on-year increase in the number of young people who access, as detailed below:

Table 1 Footfall in local authority run youth centres since 1 April 2021

	Financial Year			
	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
Number of individuals reached during the year	259	714	882	1,143
Number of contacts made during the year	795	3,740	4,093	5,570

Period Dignity

- 3.56 Bridgend Youth Support Service is the lead service for Period Dignity, developed in partnership with Bridgend Youth Council (BYC) which has led on the implementation and direction of the initiative since its inception.
- 3.57 The project has developed beyond provision to both primary and secondary schools, to include sites countywide, through a partnership with Halo Leisure, offering community access to a range of environmentally friendly single-use and reusable products free of charge. Based on the frequency of restocks, and the quantity of products provided, it is estimated that the project has supported over 5000 pupils.
- 3.58 In addition, the service has pioneered a home delivery subscription service, with Grace and Green, which during the last financial year (2024-2025) saw a total of 4,008 participants receiving menstrual products delivered straight to their home.
- 3.59 The project has been praised by both Estyn and Welsh Government for its approach and having a strong young person influence and governance.

Young people obtaining qualifications through informal settings

- 3.60 Bridgend Youth Support Service is a registered award centre with Agored Cymru, providing opportunities for young people to gain nationally recognised qualifications as part of their respective interventions with the service.
- 3.61 In 2022-2023, 8.4% (219) of young people achieved a nationally recognised accreditation (all-Wales average: 6.2%).
- 3.62 Aside from nationally recognised qualifications, the service also has partnerships with Learn Direct (Bridgend College), Coleg Sir Gar and Adult Learning Wales to deliver locally recognised accreditations.
- 3.63 The service has seen a steady rise in young people achieving local accreditations: 257 in 2022-2023, 315 in 2023-2024, and 343 in 2024-2025.

Areas for development

Celebrate young people and their achievements

- 3.64 Bridgend Youth Support Service will develop a platform to celebrate the achievements of young people supported by the service.

Diversionary activities

- 3.65 Utilising our mobile youth centre 'Bobi', the services will continue to work with SWP to respond to and engage with young people perpetrating anti-social behaviour with a view to diverting them into meaningful and constructive activities.

C-Card scheme

- 3.66 The C-Card scheme has been relaunched by the service recently, in partnership with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, providing young people aged 13 to 25 with free condoms, sexual health information, and advice at all sites. Young people can also receive sexually transmitted infection (STI) screening through test and post STI screening kits.

Expansion of open-access offer

- 3.67 Bridgend Youth Support Service is exploring the use of Higher Litchard Community Centre as a potential youth hub and also delivering issue-based workshops in partnership with South Wales Police and Penybont FC to the youth football teams. These sessions will cover important topics such as the "Not the One" knife crime awareness campaign and the C-Card scheme, providing vital education and support on personal safety and sexual health.

Partnership working

Bridgend Youth Matters

- 3.68 Bridgend Youth Support Service is an active member of the local third-sector youth work forum, Bridgend Youth Matters (BYM). This group consists of third sector organisations including the Support, Training, Employment, Enterprise Routes (STEER) Enterprise Academy, Noddfa Community Project, the Boys' and Girls' Club of Wales, Kenfig Pyle and Cornelly (KPC) that discuss the issues that impact the effective delivery of services to young people.
- 3.69 Participation in the forum also enable links with local services to ensure there are no duplication of services, map areas of development and consultation on services provided to young people.
- 3.70 With the historical cuts in statutory-run, open-access youth provision, Bridgend Youth Support Service provide annual financial support to the value of £38k to members of BYM to ensure there is a sufficient geographical coverage of provision across the county borough.
- 3.71 During the 2024-2025 financial year, this funding ensured that an additional 520 young people were able to access youth work within the county borough through funding of the following providers:
- Aberkenfig Boys' and Girls' Club
 - Bettws Boys' and Girls' Club
 - Caerau Youth Club
 - KPC
 - Menter Bro Ogwr
 - Nantymoel Boys' and Girls' Club
 - Nantyffyllon Youth Club
 - Positive Programmes CIC

- Raw Performance CIC
- STEER
- Wildmill Youth Club

South Wales Police

- 3.72 BYSS, in partnership with South Wales Police and supported by the BCBC Wellbeing and Prevention Team, responded proactively to concerns raised by Coity Councillors regarding anti-social behaviour (ASB) and attempted vandalism at the 3G pitch at Parc Dderwen. Drawing inspiration from the successful Caerau Kicks programme, the partners launched a new initiative called Bobbies, Bridge and The Bont. This collaboration has led to the creation of a free weekly Kickabout football session every Tuesday from 5pm to 7pm, delivered by staff from BYSS, Health and Wellbeing, and the SWP Youth Engagement Officer. Since its launch on 29 April 2025, the programme has already engaged 96 young people aged 11 to 16, offering them a safe, structured, and positive space in the heart of their community.

Young Inspectors Project

- 3.73 This project was devised to undertake work under the Welsh Government Interim Youth Work Board - Recommendation 11: Welsh Government and the youth work sector should work together to promote equality, inclusion and diversity, both in terms of access to youth work services in Wales, and in relation to the role that youth work services can play in proactively challenging discriminatory attitudes and behaviours within society.
- 3.74 To deliver on the recommendation BYSS and BYM (in collaboration with young people) decided to implement a Young Inspectors Project to map provisions, services and resources available to young people across the county of Bridgend and provide a young person's insight into their effectiveness, suitability and any areas for improvement.
- 3.75 Having BYM lead on the project enabled Young Inspectors to assess and provide constructive feedback on youth provisions (both statutory and third sector). Their observations and recommendations have encouraged youth workers and centres to reflect on their services, making necessary improvements to better meet the needs of young people. This active participation in evaluating youth work has empowered the inspectors, showing them that their voices matter and can drive change.

Stakeholder voice

- 3.76 As part of the services Participation Strategy, the main avenue for promoting young people's voice is through our Bridgend Youth Council (BYC).
- 3.77 Replicating the Cabinet, BYC has an elected Youth Mayor, Deputy Youth Mayor and Cabinet to lead on members priorities. Delivery is a blend of both face-to-face and online sessions including regular socials. Meetings are held

every Wednesday of the month with a specific focus, whether a workshop/ guest speaker/ debate or consultation.

- 3.78 To ensure that issues highlighted by young people in Bridgend are escalated onto a national and UK footing, there are close links between BYC and the respective members of the Welsh Youth Parliament and UK Youth Parliament members.
- 3.79 To ensure a wider representation of young people have a voice and can influence the decision-making process that involves them, the service has also led on the countywide 'Your Voice' digital forum which feeds into the BYC.
- 3.80 The forum has been developed through collaboration with BYC, the Children's Rights and Participation team and runs annually focusing on young people's priorities as identified through the British Youth Parliament's 'Mark Your Mark' ballot.
- 3.81 For this year, the survey focussed on emotional health and consisted of questions on factors that contribute towards happiness and unhappiness, current support for emotional wellbeing/ mental health, if and how they would like to access support and the barriers that may stop them from getting support.
- 3.82 The survey received 790 responses and has highlighted a range of strengths and some possible areas for development and has been shared with professionals with a view of enhancing and shaping service delivery all of which are feedback through our dedicated 'Your Voice' page on our webpages: <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/residents/children-and-young-people/bridgend-youth-support/your-voice/>

Next steps

- 3.83 Within the Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate Strategic Plan 2023-2026, Bridgend Youth Support Service committed for the next financial year (2025-2026) to:
- work with partners to develop a summer programme of opportunities aimed at Year 11 school leavers that have not secured a suitable post-16 progression route;
 - develop a three-year growth proposal for youth support services in line with increased demand;
 - work with colleagues from Education Engagement Team and BYJS, will establish a multi-agency panel to identify appropriate support packages for pupils on 50% or less school attendance;
 - explore more ways for young people to broaden their horizons and experience opportunities outside of the county borough;
 - implement the findings, and learning, from the Young Inspectors, Prosiect Gwlad and 'Your Voice' projects respectively; and

- improve the digital offer to young people through progressing a trial of a corporate TikTok account.

Joint Initiatives between Bridgend Youth Justice Service and Bridgend Youth Support Service to improve outcomes for children and young people

Prevention and Diversion Panel

- 3.84 This panel ensures weekly communication between the two services with joined-up action planning for all identified cases. It runs twice weekly and receives all referrals from partner departments to ensure cases have the widest prevention offer of support and are not closed without necessary support.

Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

- 3.85 Both services work closely with the CSP to align community safety decisions involving children with broader community safety and crime reduction goals, strengthening collective efforts to create a safer environment. Regular meetings facilitate discussions on strategies, joint efforts to reduce violence, information sharing, and co-ordinated responses to issues contributing to youth offending. This partnership helps identify emerging trends and risks, enabling proactive measures to prevent crime and reduce re-offending.

Joint programmes

- 3.86 "Tackle After Dark," funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner's Operation Sentinel fund, targeted anti-social behaviour hotspots in Caerau, Porthcawl, and Wildmill/Bridgend Town. Delivered in partnership between Bridgend Youth Support Service, Bridgend Youth Justice Service, South Wales Police, and Ospreys Rugby, the project used the mobile youth centre to engage 306 young people, promoting social inclusion, community engagement, and restorative justice. As a result, ASB calls reduced in each 'microbeat' area as seen below:

Table 2 ASB statistics by sector comparison

Sector	Volume of ASB calls reported		Change (%)
	April 2023 to February 2024	April 2024 to February 2025	
Bridgend	630	409	-35.1
Caerau	191	151	-20.9
Porthcawl	227	203	-10.6
Combined	1048	763	-27.2

Staff development

- 3.87 Staff benefit from joined-up staff development days, creating opportunities for shared professional learning on topics like vaping, mental health, and knife

crime, understanding of roles, and shared practice to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Shared priorities and robust self-evaluation processes

- 3.88 The service areas have combined focus and shared priorities within the directorate's current three-year strategic plan. Both service areas have jointly created effective self-evaluation processes to regularly monitor practice standards for optimum performance.

Combined duty rota for Evergreen Hall

- 3.89 Bridgend Youth Justice Service and Bridgend Youth Support Service operate a combined staff and manager duty rota for managing the day-to-day operation of Evergreen Hall, which is used for youth activities and support. This has fostered effective and close working relationships.

Health insights

- 3.90 Bridgend Youth Support Service benefits from the specialist community public health nurse from Bridgend Youth Justice Service attending bi-weekly emotional health triaging, providing insight into young people's progress from health-led interventions and suggesting alternatives to ensure appropriate service access.

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. 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	The approach family support services focus on meeting the needs of a wide range of service beneficiaries including children, young people, adults, and families.
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Prevention	The focus of family support services is upon early identification of need and ensuring that there is appropriate provision in place to meet individual needs.
Integration	The approach to family support 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-centred way.

6. Climate Change and Nature 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 Both services have 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 has ensured quality of strategy meetings, thereby fostering improved coordination and integrated planning for children who are subject to interventions from both the Bridgend Youth Justice Service, Youth Support Services and social care.
- 7.2 Demonstrating a proactive commitment to holistic safety planning, service staff have undertaken comprehensive training in the Signs of Safety model alongside colleagues in Children's Social Care. This joint training provides both teams with a shared framework, language, and approach, promoting consistency in safety planning and strengthening collaboration. It reinforces the crucial partnership between the services and Children's Social Care in safeguarding and supporting children. In addition, both services actively participate in the regional Cwm Taf Morgannwg safeguarding groups to stay aligned with any changes or developments from a multi-agency perspective and is also involved in the Bridgend exploitation subgroups to support local safeguarding efforts.
- 7.3 Our 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. We recognise 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 a better response to those needs.

- 7.4 Aligned with this ethos, the Youth Justice Board's Strategic Plan for 2024 - 2027 underscores Bridgend Youth Justice Service'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 Our 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 a youth support and justice service 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

Table 3 Financial breakdown of Bridgend Youth Justice Service's operational budget for 2025-2026

Funding source	Amount (£)	Staff employed full-time equivalent
Local authority (core funding)	498,000	6.0
Youth Justice Board (YJB) Grant	249,461	4.2 and cost of ChildView data systems
His Majesty's Prison and Youth Offenders Institute (HMP and YOI) Parc	59,300	1.0 seconded staff
HMP and YOI Parc – 10% strategic manager contribution	6,654	Strategic oversight support
Children and Communities Grant/Positive Engagement	184,828	3.8
Police and Crime Commissioner	39,850	1.0
Turnaround Programme	40,077	1.0
Total	1,078,170	17

The above does not include seconded staff provided in kind by external services.

Table 4 Funding sources and allocations for Bridgend Youth Support Service for financial year 2025-2026

Funding Source	Amount (£)	Staff Employed (FTE)
Core	358,600	9
Earmarked reserves	262,375	7
SPF	960,520	18
Families First	165,443	4
Youth Support Grant	514,252	12
Period Dignity Grant	126,005	0.5
Total	2,387,195	50.5

- 8.1 The UK Government confirmed that 2025-2026 will be a ‘transition year’ for SPF funding at a reduced level of £900 million across the UK – estimated to be a 40% reduction from the 2024-2025 allocation. Consequently, Bridgend Youth Support Service received a 38.5% reduction to the SPF allocation for 2025-2026 amounting to a reduction of £601,903.
- 8.2 The resultant impact of the reduction in grant funding meant the service had to reduce by 13.5 full-time equivalent staff, most of whom were allocated to support vulnerable young people who were at risk of becoming, or NEET.
- 8.3 The service’s largest grant (SPF) currently only has confirmed funding for 2025-2026, with an anticipated programme for 2026-2027 onwards not yet announced. The earmarked reserve allocations in Table 4 will be fully utilised in 2025-2026. This could result in the service having to make further redundancies to an estimated 25 members of staff if continuation of funding is not identified.
- 8.4 Council approved a recurring budget pressure of £141,000 for 2025-2026 as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025-2026 to 2028-2029 for the Bridgend Youth Justice Service to continue to reduce youth offending and provide vital support to young people affected by trauma. The budget pressure is set against additional demands in the system and the loss of some grant funding.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
- consider the contents of the report; and
 - provide feedback.

Background documents

None