

Meeting of:	CABINET COMMITTEE CORPORATE PARENTING
Date of Meeting:	7 MAY 2025
Report Title:	YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE UPDATE ON CARE-EXPERIENCED CHILDREN
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	LINDSAY HARVEY – CORPORATE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG PEOPLE
Responsible Officer:	CHRISTA BONHAM-GRIFFITHS – SERVICE MANAGER, BRIDGEND YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	The report provides an update on Bridgend Youth Justice Service provision for care-experienced children. The service is committed to responding to the needs and strengths of all children who come to the attention of the service. There is often an increase in complexity of care-experienced children’s needs which has required the service to develop its interventions to prioritise stability, safety, wellbeing, recovery from trauma and desistance from offending or harm-related behaviours.

1. Purpose of report

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

2. Background

- 2.1 The BYJS operates as a statutory multi-agency partnership, underpinned by a legal requirement to collaborate in delivering appropriate local youth justice provision. The service receives financial support from multiple streams, including the UK and Welsh Governments, as well as key statutory partners - Bridgend County Borough Council, South Wales Police, the Probation Service, and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.
- 2.2 Legislation governing youth justice sets out the duty to prevent offending, including the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, and the Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System (2019). The core objective of youth justice services in both England and Wales is to reduce offending and reoffending among young people,

as stated in the Crime and Disorder Act. In addition, Welsh local authorities are legally obliged under section 15 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 to deliver preventative services that:

- 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.

2.3 As of 1 April 2025, BYJS was working with 95 children. 11 (12%) of these are children who are classified as care-experienced. Of the 11 children, the data below outlines the number of children who have received a trauma intervention.

Assessment status	Number of children	Notes
Completed formulation and trauma-responsive assessment	6	Plans include timelines and mapped progression completed
Scheduled for April	3	Awaiting a formulation
Awaiting trauma assessment	2	To be scheduled

2.4 The intervention strategies for the 11 children are as indicated below.

Intervention type	Number of children
Youth Restorative Disposal (voluntary intervention where child accepts responsibility for the incident)	4
Outcome 22 (educational preventative disposal)	1
Youth Rehabilitation Order (statutory community court order)	1
Section 250 Through Care Programme (statutory custodial court order)	1
Detention Training Order / Custody Programme (statutory custodial court order)	1
Preventative work (voluntary intervention programme for children at risk of offending)	3

2.5 Demographics of the 11 care-experienced children are:

Age group	Number of children
10-12	1
13-15	4
16-17	5
18	1

Gender	Number of children
Male	8
Female	3

- 2.6 All BYJS cases receive either a Prevention and Diversion Assessment or an ASSET Plus assessment. This is a child-centered 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 assessed as high risk in the youth justice three domains of concerns which include concerns for future offending, concern of safety and wellbeing to others and concerns for their 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 (2019), which promotes a child-centred and trauma-aware model;
- the All-Wales Protocol aimed at reducing the criminalisation of care experienced children, focusing on their protection and well-being; and
- the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which mandate early intervention and long-term support to improve outcomes for children.

- 3.2 Initiatives to meet these requirements include:

- **Early trauma identification:** Increased efforts to recognise and respond to trauma at an early stage to ensure timely support.
- **Prevention and diversion panel:** Collaborative work that diverts children away from the justice system towards constructive and preventative solutions.
- **Child-first philosophy:** Ensuring that the needs and rights of children are at the centre of all decision-making and intervention strategies.

- **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.
- **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.
- **Partnership with multiple agencies:** through the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board (CTMSB) and its Exploitation Steering Group to support and implement safeguarding measures for care-experienced children. As part of this collaborative effort, BYJS remains actively involved in a multi-agency child sexual exploitation mapping exercise, aimed at identifying children at risk and enhancing targeted safeguarding responses across the region.

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	Family support services focus on meeting the needs of a wide range of service beneficiaries including children, young people, adults, and families.
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 principle 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 and Family Services 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 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 2023-2025 underscores BYJS 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 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. Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet Corporate Parenting Committee:
- consider the contents of the report; and
 - provide feedback.

Background documents

None