



Youth Justice Plan 2026 – 2027

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Comisiynydd
yr Heddlu a
Throseddau
De Cymru

South Wales
Police
and Crime
Commissioner

Gwasanaeth Prawf
Cenedlaethol
National Probation
Service



South Wales Police
Heddlu De Cymru



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Cardiff and Vale
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INTRODUCTION, VISION, AND STRATEGY



I am pleased to share with you the Youth Justice & Early Support Service Plan for 2026/27. The context for this plan is a challenging environment impacted by socio economic deprivation and inequity requiring us to take a wide ranging and flexible approach. The context of the previous year in relation to knife crime has had far reaching consequences which continues to influence the work of the service and partnerships in taking a holistic and multifaceted approach to Serious Youth Violence.

During the year, the service has experienced an increase in demand alongside increasing complexity of need linked to significant trauma, educational disengagement, emotional wellbeing concerns, exploitation and neurodevelopmental vulnerabilities with increasing numbers of children presenting with additional learning needs (ALN). There has been a rise in school exclusions overall with an increase in exclusions among girls.

It is important therefore that this plan is realistic, whilst also aiming to become one of the best of such services in Wales. As a partnership we strive to deliver the most effective Child First and trauma informed services whilst recognising the constraints placed on us separately due to financial pressures. Partnership working remains central to the success of the service and we have continued to strengthen operational and strategic relationships across all statutory and wider community partners.

As a board we are still trying to utilise the lived experiences of the children that we support to enhance our learning and approaches in developing services. We have established and maintained in depth case reviews of First Time Entrants to inform our development and our priorities to those we serve. Through linking the operational delivery of the team, the experience of those we support and the strategic oversight of the board, and related boards, we believe we can still make a real difference. This plan is intended to address some of the areas where challenges have emerged and also to push us to build further on children's strengths and help them fulfil their potential.

Director of Social Services

Vale of Glamorgan Council.

This Youth Justice Plan sets out the strategic direction, priority areas, and delivery framework for the **Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice & Early Support Service (YJESS) 2026–2027**. It has been developed in accordance with the Youth Justice Board (YJB) 2026 guidance and reflects statutory duties under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, alongside key Welsh legislation and policy frameworks, including the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The plan provides a comprehensive, evidence-led overview of local need, current service performance, and key priorities for development. It is intended to ensure that the YJESS continues to deliver high-quality, effective, and child-centred youth justice services that achieve positive outcomes for children, victims, and communities across the Vale of Glamorgan.

This plan has been shaped through a robust programme of analysis and service and Board member engagement, drawing on a wide range of evidence and insight.

These sources include:

- Review of the **Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice and Early Support Service Plan 2025–2026** and its associated delivery outcomes;
- Youth Justice Board performance data alongside local trend analysis for 2025–2026;
- findings from internal quality assurance processes;
- thematic audits and in-depth case reviews; and
- feedback from children, parents and carers, victims, staff, and partner organisations.

We have focused on understanding the lived experiences of children and ensuring that their voices shape service delivery. This reflects the YJESS's ongoing commitment to the Child First approach, recognising children as individuals with strengths, potential, and rights, rather than defining them solely by their behaviour.

This plan has been developed in the context of an increasingly complex and demanding environment. Children known to the YJESS are presenting with higher levels of need, often involving multiple and interrelated vulnerabilities. In addition, the past year has been particularly challenging within the Vale of Glamorgan, with a range of pressures including high demand, management capacity constraints and change, and significant and high-profile incidents involving serious youth violence. These factors have reinforced the need for a coordinated, proactive, and responsive partnership approach.

The Management Board has identified the ongoing need to strengthen strategic alignment and improve joint working across youth justice, police, probation, safeguarding, and exploitation services. This includes reducing fragmented approaches between services and ensuring more coordinated, timely responses for children at risk of exploitation and serious youth violence. Discussions through the Youth Justice Strategic Management

Board and staff consultation have highlighted the importance of shared systems, clear communication pathways, and embedding a consistent, whole-system approach that is trauma-informed and aligned with Child First principles across all partner agencies.

In response, this plan sets out a clear and coordinated strategic approach, with a focus on:

- continuing to strengthen prevention and early intervention;
- further reducing the number of first-time entrants into the youth justice system;
- reducing offending and building safety;
- strengthening governance and partnership alignment and outcomes in relation to serious youth violence, custody and resettlement.
- strengthening outcomes in education, training, and employment, with a clear focus on ensuring children with Additional Learning Needs receive appropriate support and exclusions are minimised.
- strengthening safeguarding and responses to exploitation; and
- ensuring consistent, high-quality service delivery across all areas of practice.

Ultimately, this plan demonstrates our commitment to continuous improvement, strong partnership working, and achieving measurable, positive outcomes for children, families, and communities across the Vale of Glamorgan.

The **Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice & Early Support Service (YJESS)** is a statutory multi-agency partnership with a legal duty to co-operate to secure appropriate local Youth Justice Services across the local authority area. The service represents the main vehicle through which Youth Justice services are coordinated and delivered.

The principal aim of Youth Justice Services in England and Wales is to prevent offending and re-offending by children under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Section 39(1) of the act places a duty on each Local Authority, acting with its statutory partners (Police, Probation and Health) to establish Youth Offending Teams in their local area to deliver Youth Justice Services. Section 38(3) of the Act placed a duty on the Local Authority and its statutory partners to make payment towards the expenditure incurred in providing youth justice services. Membership is prescribed by the legislation. It must include a Probation Officer, Social Worker, Police Officer, Health representative and Education representative.

Local Authorities in Wales also have a statutory duty to provide preventative services, contained in Section 15 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (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.
- enable children to live their lives as independently as possible.

The YJESS Strategic Management Board is made up of senior representatives from each of the statutory partners and other agencies and authorities. It oversees the operation of the service and the funding arrangements. The representation and structure of the Board is subsequently detailed in this plan.

The YJESS Management Board is chaired by the Director of Social Services, Lance Carver and the service is headed by the YJESS Service Manager, Kirsty Davies.

Section 40 of the 1998 Act places a duty on the Local Authority to produce an annual Youth Justice Plan in consultation with its statutory partners.

In April 2022 the YJESS was part of an inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation and received positive feedback and overall rating of **'Good'**. The inspectorate commended the **"stability, passion and experience"** of the service citing **"that children have access to what they need to succeed and move away from further offending"**.

Since this time, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) have embedded a new Youth Justice Inspection framework, which introduced revised standards informed by current research and evidence. It brings together statutory court work, out-of-court disposals, resettlement, and bail and remand within a single Domain Two standard and includes a new Victims' Standard. Organisational delivery standards have also been strengthened, with increased emphasis on Appropriate Adult arrangements.

On the 28th of May 2026 we received notice that The **Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice and Early Support Service** will be one of nine Youth Justice Services across England and Wales to be included in a Thematic Inspection of Youth Justice Strategic Arrangements. This inspection will commence from the week beginning the 21st of September 2026, along with Wrexham YJS; the other Welsh Youth Justice Service being inspected.

This thematic will explore the factors impacting upon strategic arrangements. There will be a particular focus on governance and leadership, delivery models and organisational structures, resources, workforce and compliance with statutory responsibilities and multi-agency functioning. It is recognised that it is a crucial juncture in time for the youth justice system, given recently announced plans by the government to reform and modernise youth justice. Alongside this, an evolving landscape of factors such as public sector reform, local authority boundary changes and devolution impact upon the strategic world within which youth justice services operate.

The vision and ambition of the Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) was established by a collaborative working group led by the Chair of the YJESS Management Board. The service also actively promotes the Vale of Glamorgan's core values of being:

Ambitious

Together

Open

4

Proud

The YJESS functions as a fully integrated multi-agency service, utilising support from both internal and external partners to address the needs of children and families in a timely manner. Collaboration with local third-sector organisations is also vital to prevent offending and anti-social behaviour (ASB).

The service is also closely aligned with the Vale of Glamorgan Community Safety Partnership, recognising that children's vulnerability can, at times, manifest through anti-social behaviour and other community-based concerns. This partnership is vital in ensuring that responses are preventative, proportionate, and focused on improving outcomes for children, families, victims, and communities.

Community Safety and YJESS share a commitment to prevention, early intervention, safeguarding, and child-centred practice. Through strong partnership working, both services ensure that children's voices, experiences, and needs inform strategic planning and operational delivery. Effective information sharing and joint problem-solving enable partners to identify emerging trends, hotspot locations, and unmet needs, supporting timely and coordinated responses.

The partnership plays a key role in addressing anti-social behaviour by combining risk assessment, family engagement, targeted interventions, and diversionary opportunities to prevent escalation and reduce the likelihood of children entering the criminal justice system. Working collaboratively, partners develop community-based initiatives, educational interventions, and positive activities that build resilience, enhance community safety, and address the underlying causes of concerning behaviour.

Strong professional relationships, shared intelligence, and a culture of collective responsibility allow services to respond quickly to emerging risks and adapt to changing local needs. Learning from frontline practice informs service planning, commissioning, and continuous improvement, ensuring resources are targeted effectively and delivering measurable benefits for children, families, and communities.

Overall, the partnership between Community Safety and YJESS is a significant strength, providing coordinated, child-centred support that helps prevent harm, promotes positive outcomes, and contributes to safer and more resilient communities.

“The strength of this partnership lies in its ability to operate effectively at both strategic and operational levels, underpinned by strong leadership, mutual trust, and a shared commitment to achieving positive outcomes. Through its flexibility, responsiveness, and willingness to embrace creative approaches, the partnership consistently adapts to emerging challenges and delivers impactful solutions that make a tangible difference to our communities”

(Community Safety Manager)

VISION

Supporting
children to build
on their strengths
and fulfil their
potential.

Ambition:
Fairness, Inclusion,
and equality

We value the importance of children and are driven by fairness, inclusion, and equality.

Ambition:
Child Centred
Approach

We will work with children to build on their strengths, enhance their opportunities, and encourage better decisions through a person-centred approach.

Ambition:
Restorative Approach

We are committed to working together to improve the lives of children, their families, victims, and the community through a restorative approach.

LOCAL CONTEXT



The Vale of Glamorgan, often referred to as 'the Vale', is a county borough on the south-east coast of Wales with a population of 133,492 people. Its eastern neighbour is the Welsh capital, Cardiff, however it covers a more rural area of 335 square kilometres made up of small towns, villages, hamlets, farms, coastal walks, holiday parks and beaches.

The county headquarters are based in Barry, the Vale's largest town of 53,353, with the famous beach, family amusements and pleasure park of Barry Island. The diverse areas of the Vale of Glamorgan comprise of very diverse communities with differing levels of affluence and social deprivation, social structures, aspirations, needs and concerns. In more deprived areas it is estimated that 32% of people are living in income deprivation and 53% of children are living in poverty. 11% of the population are Welsh speakers.

The Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice & Early Support Service is an integral part of the Children and Young People's Service and works closely with partner statutory agencies, third sector and voluntary organisations. We focus on prevention and diversion, taking an integrated approach to divert children from offending and re-offending. Alongside the alignment with local authority services, including education and housing, there is a strong, active set of working relationships with South Wales Police, the Probation service, Cardiff and Wales University Health Board and the voluntary and community sector.

In 2026 – 2027 Vale of Glamorgan YJESS will continue to work with children from the age of 8 to 18 in the following areas:

- Preventative support as part of its Prevention Service or Turnaround project
- Early diversionary support with children who have committed lower-level offences where it is assessed as appropriate and in the public interest not to charge to court.
- Children subject to Court orders, both in custody and the community.
- Voluntary Support interventions and exit planning.

The YJESS also provides support to parents and carers and with the victims of offences or anti-social behaviour in accordance with the 12 overarching rights enshrined in the Victim Code of Practice 2021(updated 2024)

There has been a notable and sustained shift in the focus of YJESS delivery towards early intervention, prevention, and diversionary support. This is evidenced by a reduction in statutory court orders and a corresponding increase in the use of voluntary and out-of-court resolutions (OOCR). Preventative and diversionary activity accounts for 93% of the current YJESS caseload, reflecting a strong commitment to minimising formal system involvement and promoting proportionate responses.

This direction of travel has been significantly shaped by the Welsh Government's Youth Justice Blueprint for Wales (2019), which set out a whole-system, child-first vision for youth justice. The Blueprint established key priorities across prevention, pre-court diversion, community-based interventions, resettlement and transition, and custody, all underpinned by trauma-informed and rights-based practice. While the Blueprint programme has formally concluded, its key principles continue to shape practice across Wales and are progressed through the national oversight framework provided by the Welsh Youth Justice Advisory Panel (WYJAP). The YJESS Service Manager plays an active role within this group, representing Youth Justice Services across South Wales and helping to drive the strategic development of youth justice services at a national level.

The YJESS places children at the centre of all activity, recognising their strengths, needs, and circumstances. We are committed to delivering high-quality, personalised interventions that support positive change, promote safety and well-being, and reduce the likelihood of reoffending. This includes a clear focus on understanding the child's lived experience, including the impact of trauma, adversity, and structural inequalities.

We will continue to ensure that services are well-coordinated, timely, and proportionate, with strong multi-agency collaboration to avoid duplication and maximise impact. Emphasis is placed on effective assessment, planning, and delivery, alongside robust oversight and review. Our practice supports early identification of need, smooth transitions between services, and clear, appropriate exit strategies, all of which contribute to sustainable desistance and improved safety and positive outcomes for children.

Children supported by the service present with an increasingly complex profile of need, as reflected in the Vale of Glamorgan YJESS profile of children for 2026 (Figure 1). This highlights a continued shift in the cohort towards greater vulnerability, with a higher prevalence of multiple and interrelated needs.

Children's behaviours are shaped by their lived experiences. For many children within the YJESS cohort, these experiences include adversity, disrupted relationships, and exposure to trauma, all of which can significantly impact their development, well-being, and engagement with services.

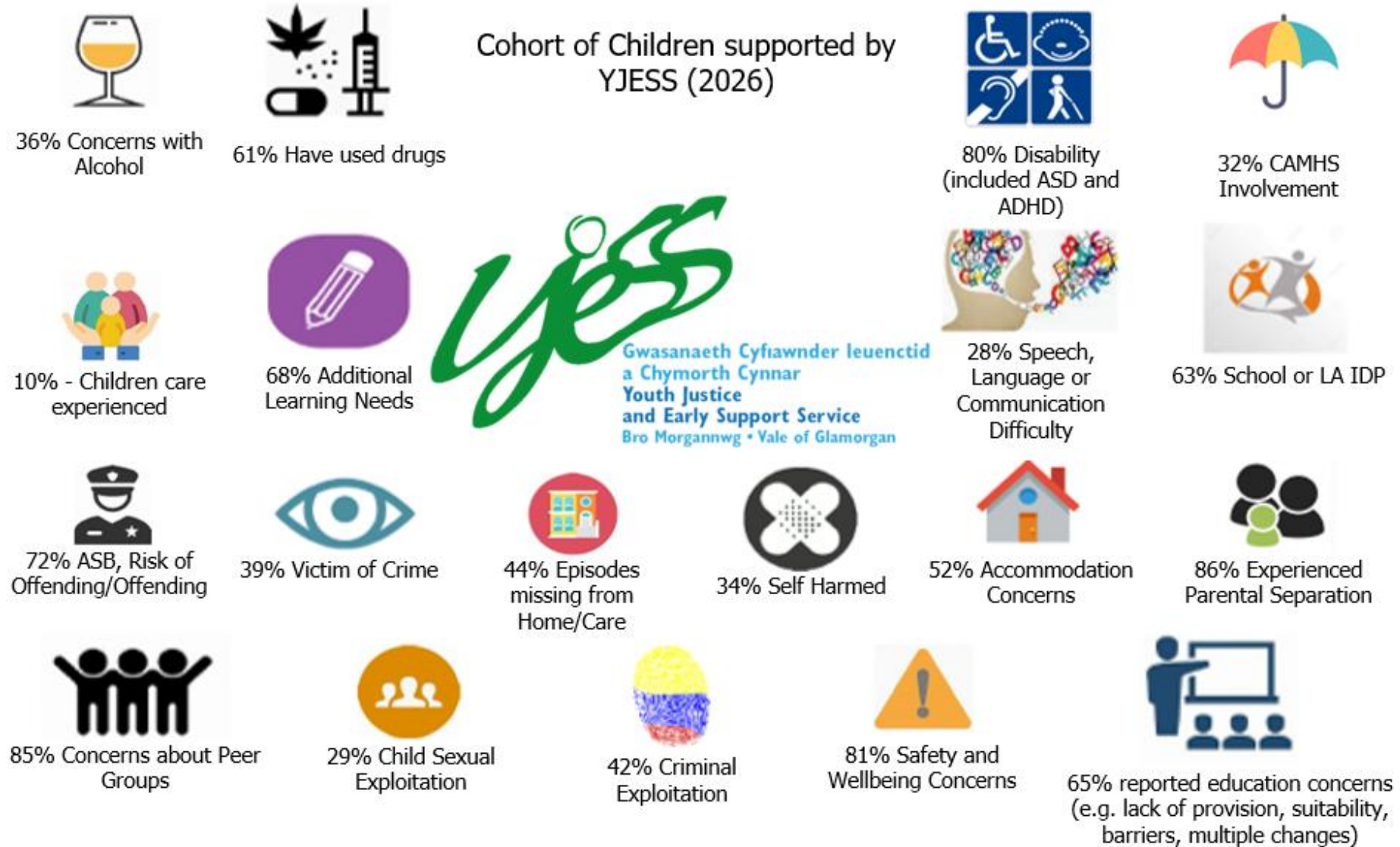
Analysis of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), as set out in Figure 2, further illustrates the extent of this vulnerability. It shows that 95% of children supported by YJESS have experienced at least one ACE, with a substantial and increasing proportion experiencing multiple adversities. Notably, 63% of children have experienced five or more ACEs, representing a significant rise from 35% in 2025. This demonstrates the growing complexity of the cohort and reinforces the need for trauma-informed, multi-agency responses that are responsive to both risk and need.

To safeguard children, improve outcomes, and prevent offending and anti-social behaviour, it is essential that the service delivers a meaningful *Child First* and strengths-based approach. This approach recognises children as individuals with unique strengths,

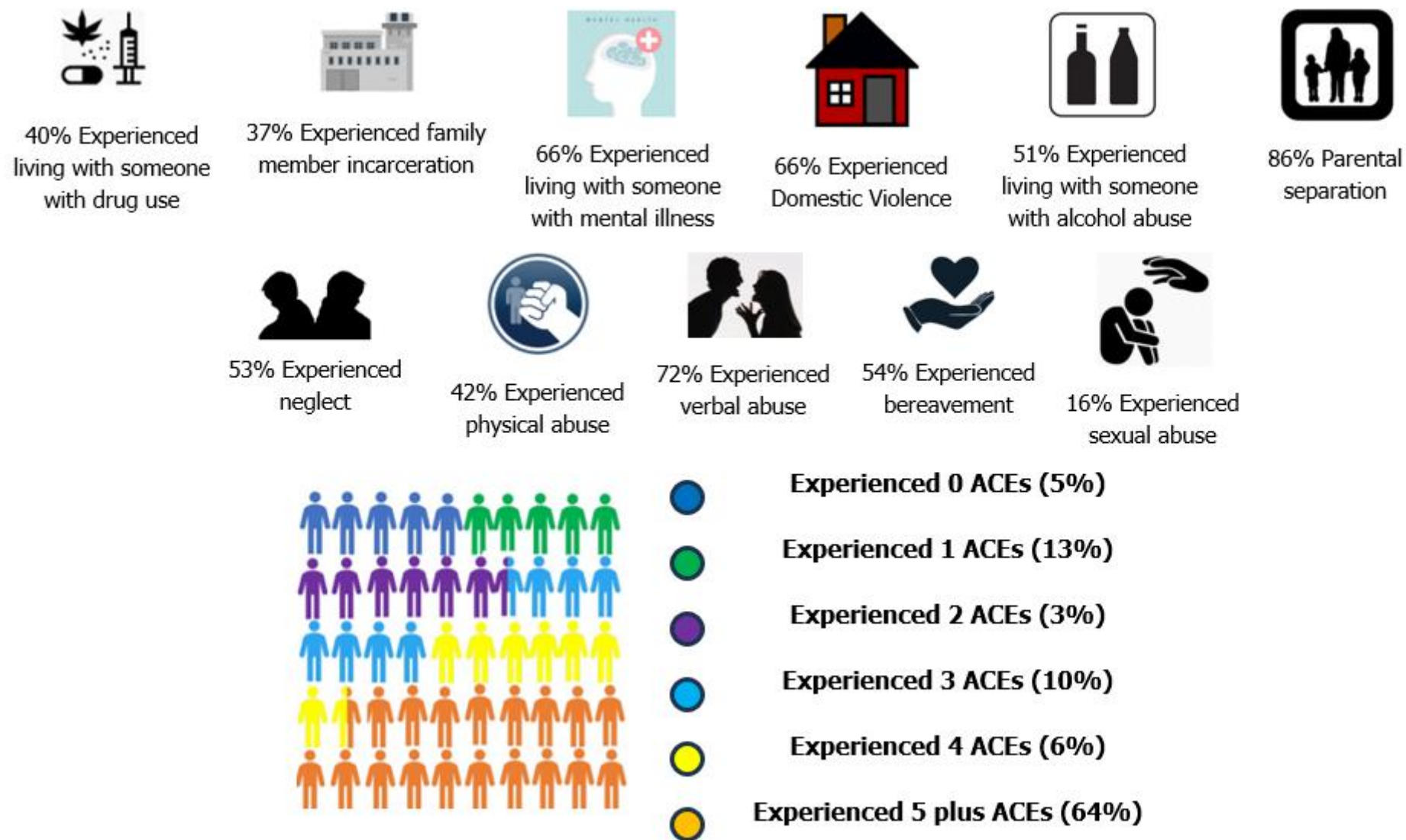
capacities, and potential, while also acknowledging the impact of their lived experiences, including trauma, adversity, and unmet need.

Our practice is centred on understanding the child's circumstances holistically. We are committed to working collaboratively with families, partners, and communities to provide coordinated, timely, and proportionate support. Through this approach, children are supported to have their voices heard, to be actively involved in decision-making, and to achieve their aspirations. The service remains focused on empowering children to realise their full potential, supporting sustainable desistance, and reducing the likelihood of further involvement in the youth justice system.

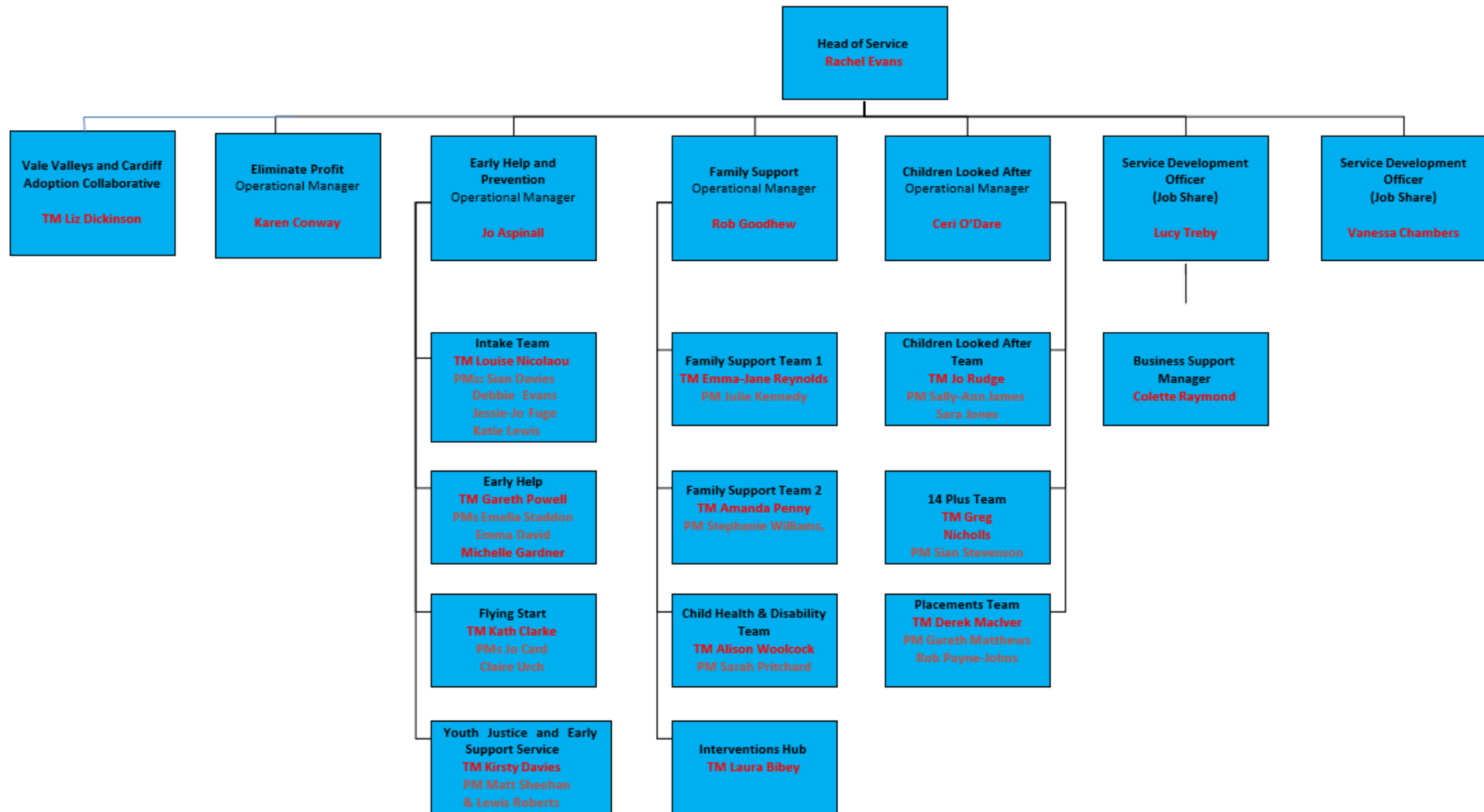
Children supported by the YJESS have a complex set of needs as highlighted within the Vale of Glamorgan profile of children for 2026 in fig 1.



A profile of the ACEs experienced by children supported by the YJESS 2026 (fig 2)



GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS



The Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) sits within Children and Young People's Services, one of three divisions within the Social Services Directorate. The Director of Social Services, Chair of the YJESS Management Board, is a member of the Council's Senior Leadership Team, the Regional Partnership Board, and Co-Chair of the Regional Safeguarding Board.

The YJESS Service Manager is an active member of key local and regional partnerships, ensuring children and families are represented in strategic decision-making while influencing service development across safeguarding, public protection and violence prevention agendas.

The YJESS is aligned to the Early Help and Prevention offer, alongside Intake, Early Help, and Flying Start, supporting a shared focus on prevention, early intervention, and collaborative working. Services operate a strengths-based approach, placing children and families at the centre of decision-making, building relationships, recognising rights, and supporting improved well-being and outcomes.

The Vale of Glamorgan's Corporate Strategy for Children who Need Care and Support (2024–2028) underpins this approach, promoting early engagement, co-production, and supporting families to remain together where safe to do so.

A key development is the Vale Family Compass, a single, integrated front door for Early Help and statutory services. This simplifies access, strengthens early intervention, and enables timely, proportionate responses through improved triage, reduced duplication, and stronger multi-agency coordination.

In addition, a temporary Operational Manager post has been established to lead the Eliminate and Radical Reform agenda, focusing on placement sufficiency, reducing the number of children looked after, developing not-for-profit provision, and providing strategic leadership to drive service improvement.

The YJESS Management Board is made up of statutory partnership agencies in addition to locally agreed agency representatives as illustrated in the organisational chart below. Representatives have the appropriate seniority and authority to make strategic decisions related to financial and staffing resources and for the purpose of escalation and development of gaps in service provision. Board attendance is monitored and provided within the quarterly returns.

The Board reviews the performance of the service, including levels of first-time entrants, rates of re-offending, the use of custody, access to education, training and employment, substance misuse, emotional wellbeing issues and accommodation, along with YJB Key Performance Indicators. These metrics allow the board to evaluate the effectiveness of the youth justice service, identifying areas that require improvement. By integrating these measures into its governance framework, the YJESS can ensure a strategic focus on service quality and accountability.

Significant progress has been made in developing local performance reporting, providing the Board with a broader view of organisational health and service effectiveness. Reporting includes workforce, attendance, financial performance, intervention activity, offence profiles, and quality assurance outcomes.

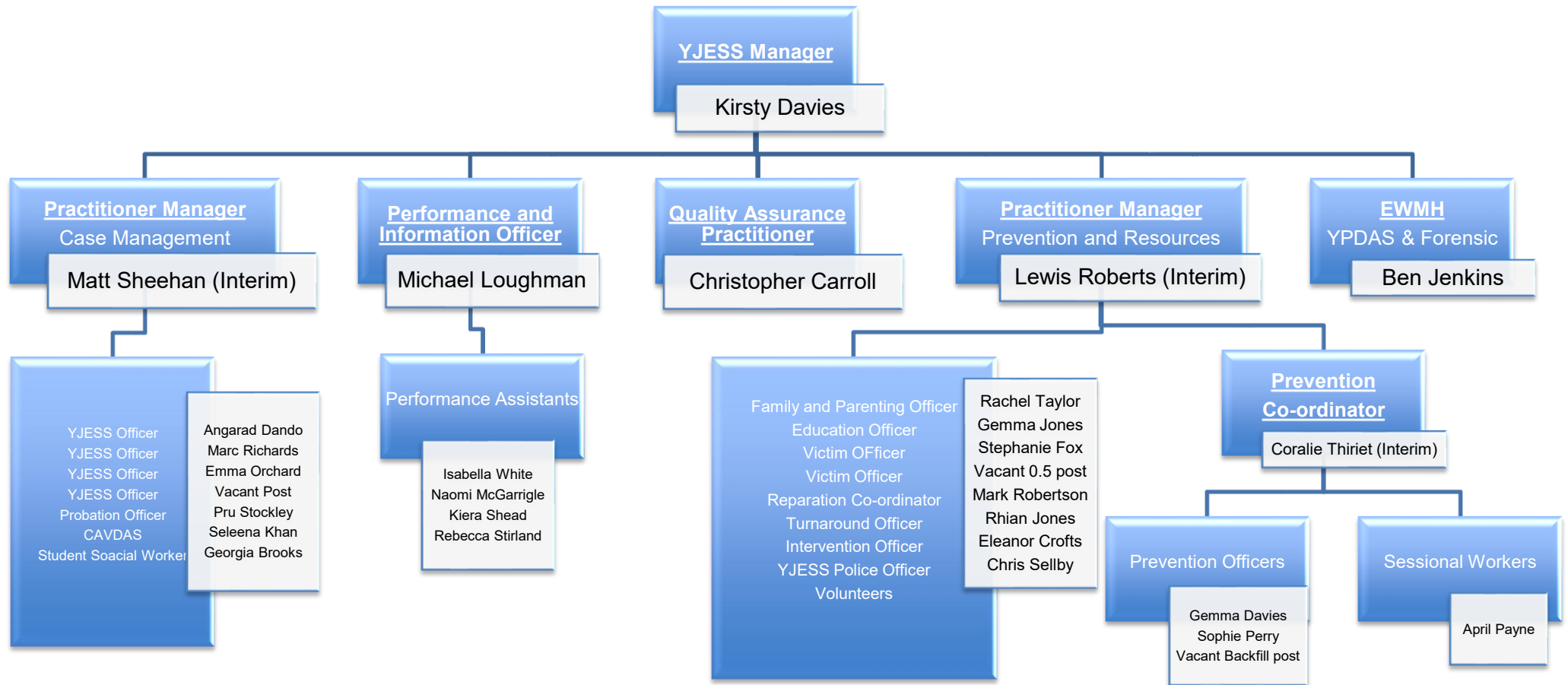
Continuous review of performance information remains a priority. Greater use of partner data will strengthen analysis, support evidence-based planning and improve strategic oversight. Alongside performance reports, YJESS practitioners will continue to present updates on their roles, interventions and impact, ensuring Board members maintain a comprehensive understanding of service delivery and how individual roles contribute to preventing and reducing offending.

By integrating key performance measures, enhancing performance reporting and themed audits, operational staff inclusion and development and collaboration with external partners, the YJESS aims to create a governance framework that supports the service to empower children and promote a childhood removed from the justice system.

VALE OF GLAMORGAN YOUTH JUSTICE AND EARLY SUPPORT SERVICE (YJESS) MANAGEMENT BOARD

Name	Position	Agency
Lance Carver	Director of Social Services	VoG
Cllr Eddie Williams	Cabinet Member	Social Care & Health
Rachel Evans	Head of Children & Children Services	VoG
Kirsty Davies	Service Manager- YJESS	VoG
Debbie Gibbs	Community Safety & Partnership Team Manager	C&V
Kate Fitzgerald	Head of Probation	Probation
Claire Scott	Temporary Detective Chief Inspector, Justice Services	South Wales Police
Lisa Morgan	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusions Policy Officer	South Wales Police & Crime Commissioner
Paula Wade	Victim Focus Manager	Victim Focus
Morwen Hudson	Head of Standards & Provision in Education - Learning & Skills	VoG
Martin Dacey	Lead Officer for Social Inclusion & Wellbeing in Education	VoG
Becci Ingram	General Manager for Children, Children and Family Health Services	C&V
Sarah Redrup	Lead Officer for ALN and Complex Case - Learning and Skills	VoG
Mark Davies	Prevention and Partnership Manager	VoG
Mike Ingram	Head of Housing & Building Services	VoG
Jo Aspinall	Operational Manager - Early Help & Prevention	VoG
Emily McCauley	Justice Oversight Manager - Wales	YJB
Lewis Roberts	Acting Practitioner Manager - Prevention and Resources	YJESS
Matt Sheehan	Interim Practitioner Manager - Case Management	YJESS
Michael Loughman	Performance & information Officer	YJESS
Chris Carroll	Quality Assurance Officer	YJESS

The staffing structure of the YJESS, including specialist provision, is illustrated in the chart below:



UPDATE ON THE PREVIOUS YEAR

Progress on Priorities in Previous Plan

The past year has been characterised by significant challenges, including rising demand, reduced management and performance support capacity at critical periods, recruitment delays, incidents of serious youth violence, and increasingly complex levels of need, vulnerability and risk among children and young people.

Despite these challenges, positive progress has been made in supporting children, their families and victims of crime. We have remained resilient and responsive to emerging needs and committed to delivering effective, high-quality services.

Throughout the year, we have progressed key priorities through a structured improvement plan (Appendix 1), providing a clear framework for delivery, accountability and continuous improvement. This approach has enabled us to maintain focus on our strategic objectives, strengthen partnership working and collaborate effectively with Board members to deliver measurable outcomes. Regular monitoring and review have ensured progress is sustained and that service developments are informed by performance, evidence and need.

A key achievement has been the strengthening of governance and strategic oversight. Board membership has been reviewed and enhanced, including the addition of specialist Additional Learning Needs (ALN) representation. This has broadened expertise, strengthened multi-agency collaboration and improved our collective ability to respond to the diverse needs of children and young people.

Demand for services has continued to grow. During the year, YJESS supported 210 children through 267 interventions, ranging from prevention and early intervention to statutory court-ordered work. This represents a 28.7% increase on the previous year, and a 58% increase compared with two years ago, reflecting both increasing demand and greater complexity of need.

Despite these pressures, the service has maintained a strong focus on prevention, early identification and timely intervention, ensuring children receive the right support at the right time. This is reflected in continued positive performance against key national indicators, including sustained reductions in first-time entrants to the youth justice system.

Progress has also been made in tackling serious youth violence through evidence-informed partnership working. Targeted collaboration with local agencies has supported the development of sustainable responses to education-based violence, strengthening prevention, early intervention and community safety.

The service has continued to embed trauma-informed and child-centred practice across assessment, planning and intervention delivery. Reflective practice sessions have supported practitioners to develop biopsychosocial formulations of children's strengths, needs and risks, resulting in more informed planning, improved decision-making and personalised interventions. This has enhanced our ability to deliver responsive support while ensuring the voices of children, victims and families remain central to practice.

Workforce development has been a further priority. The service has been trained in Safety Building, strengthening our approach to working with children, victims and communities through a greater focus on strengths, resilience and sustainable safety planning.

The service has also embraced innovative approaches to engagement and learning, including the use of virtual reality technology to support decision-making and behaviour change. Children have been able to explore realistic scenarios relating to knife crime, anti-social behaviour, peer pressure and exploitation, helping them better understand risks and consequences in a safe and engaging environment.

Partnership working remains a considerable strength. Revised policies, protocols and service level agreements, regular audits, quality assurance reviews and detailed case analysis have strengthened accountability and supported evidence-based improvements to practice and service delivery.

Alongside this, YJESS has invested in locally developed training, expanded its volunteer workforce and proactively explored external funding opportunities to enhance capacity and support future service development.

While we are proud of the progress achieved during a demanding and challenging year, we recognise that the needs of children, families and communities continue to evolve. Increasing complexity, persistent pressures on services and ongoing concerns around serious youth violence and escalated custody rates highlight the need for continued improvement, stronger partnerships and further service development. The service remains committed to building on its achievements, addressing emerging challenges and delivering effective support that improves outcomes for children, families, victims and communities across the Vale of Glamorgan.

Performance over the Previous Year

YJESS Interventions Overview

Between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026, the YJESS supported 210 children across 267 interventions. These interventions ranged from preventative support to statutory court orders.

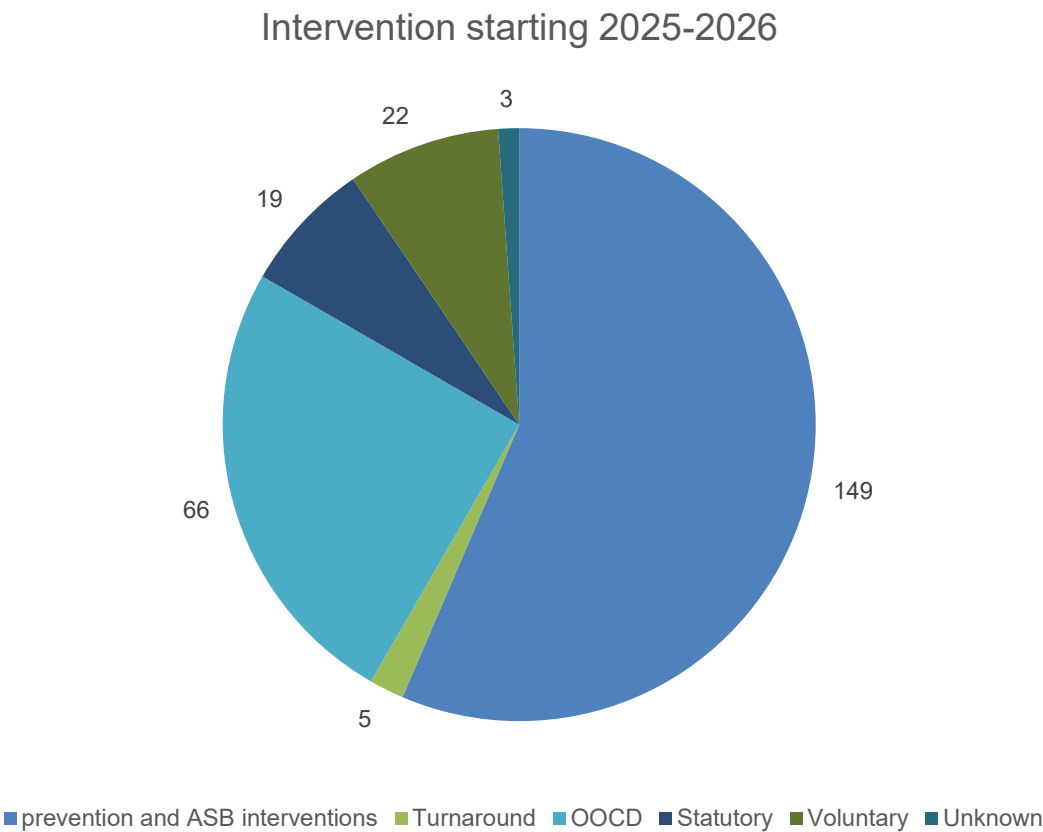
This represents a 18% increase from the previous year (173 children, 242 interventions)
58% increase from two years ago (122 children, 156 interventions)

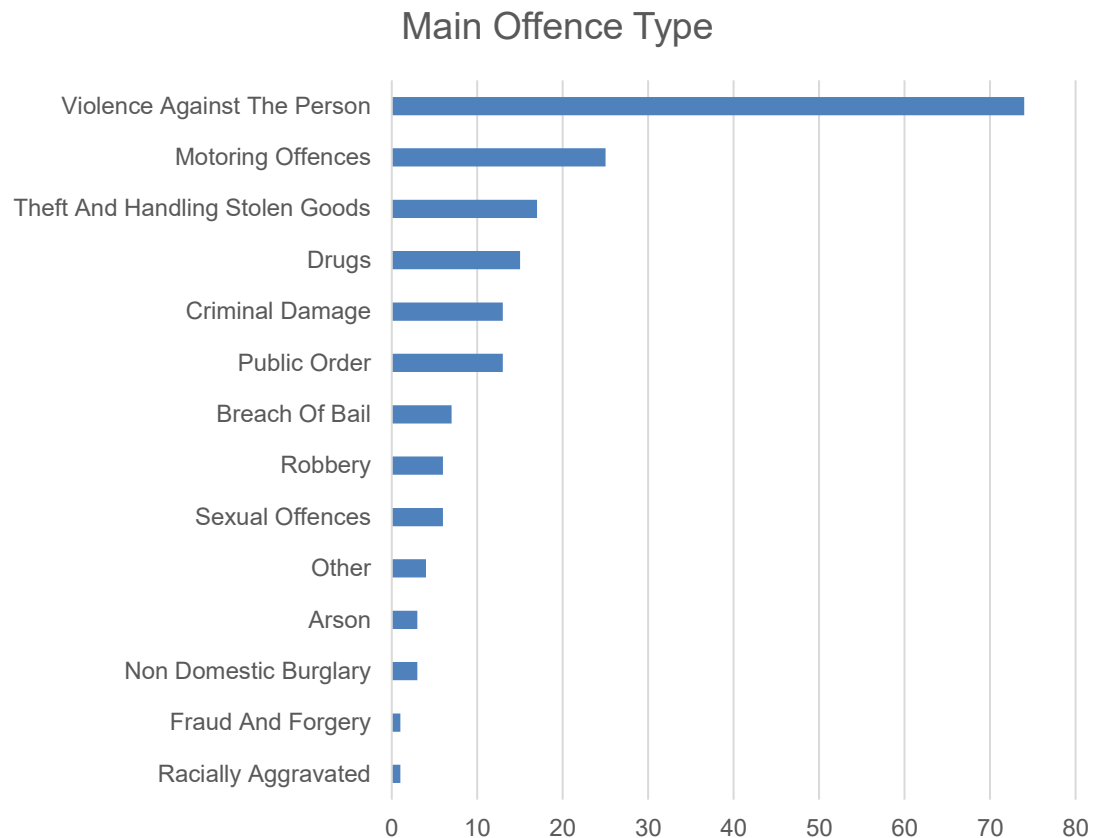
The service has also supported 50 parents and families individually with therapeutic interventions undertaken by the YJESS Parenting and Family worker.

Breakdown of 2025-2026

Interventions

- 149 (56%) Prevention and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) support.
- 5 (2%) Turnaround Programme.
- 22 (8%) alternative voluntary interventions.
- 66 children (25%) were supported through an Out of Court Resolution (OOCR).
- 19 children (7%) were subject to statutory youth justice interventions, including Pre-Sentence Reports and remanded into custody.





During the 2025/2026 period, out of 267 interventions 111 interventions were linked to offences relating to 75 children.

Types of Main Offences

Violence Against the Person: 39% (74 offences)

Public Order Offences: 7% (13 offences)

Criminal Damage: 7% (13 offences)

Acquisitive offending 14% (27 offences)

Motoring offences 13% (25 offences)

Arson 2% (3 offences)

Drugs 8% (15 offences)

Sexual offences 3% (6 offences)

Breach of bail 4% (7 offences)

Other 3% (4 offences)

This data highlights that violent offences were the most common, making up nearly half of all main offences linked to interventions.

The YJESS Strategic Management Board receives regular updates on offence types. These include:

- Detailed analysis through intervention audits and case studies
- Contextual insights to support deeper understanding
- Trend identification to inform decision-making

- Multi-agency action planning
- Resource planning, where additional support may be needed

This approach ensures that the Board can scrutinise data effectively and respond with targeted strategies.

Gender Breakdown of Children Supported by the YJESS

Out of 267 interventions undertaken during this period

175 (66%) were undertaken with children who identify as male

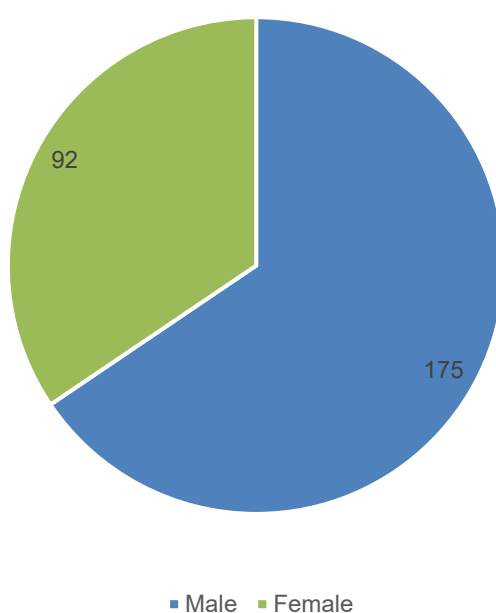
92 (34%) with children who identify as female

This reflects a 9% increase in the number of interventions undertaken with girls compared to the previous year.

Although boys continue to make up much of the youth justice cohort, the increasing number of girls highlights the need for services that respond to their specific experiences and needs. National research shows that girls in the youth justice system are more likely to have experienced trauma, mental health difficulties, exploitation and involvement with social care services

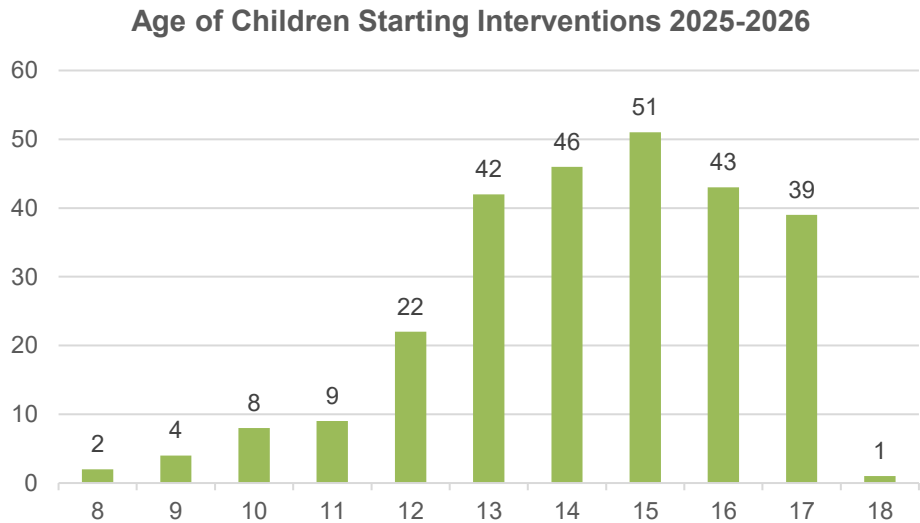
The service remains committed to delivering trauma-informed, gender-responsive support that recognises these vulnerabilities, strengthens protective relationships and promotes positive outcomes for girls

Gender of Children Starting Interventions 25/26



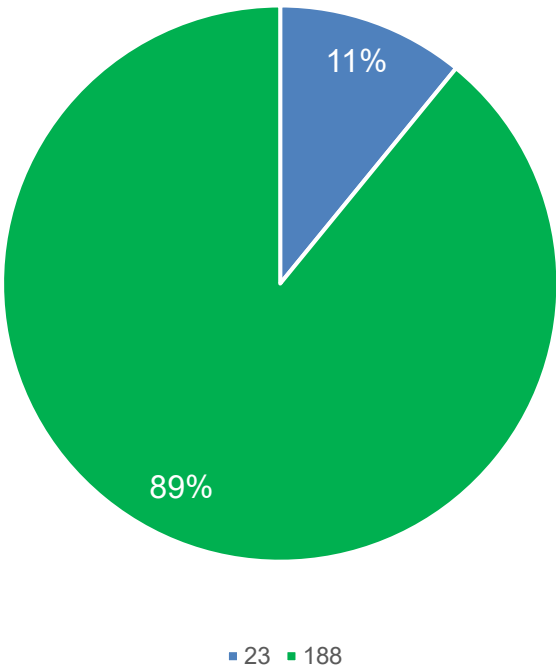
In relation to the age range of children supported by the service 52% are aged between 14-16 years. This is consistent with the previous year (57%).

The graph below also details the age of children starting interventions in 2025-2026

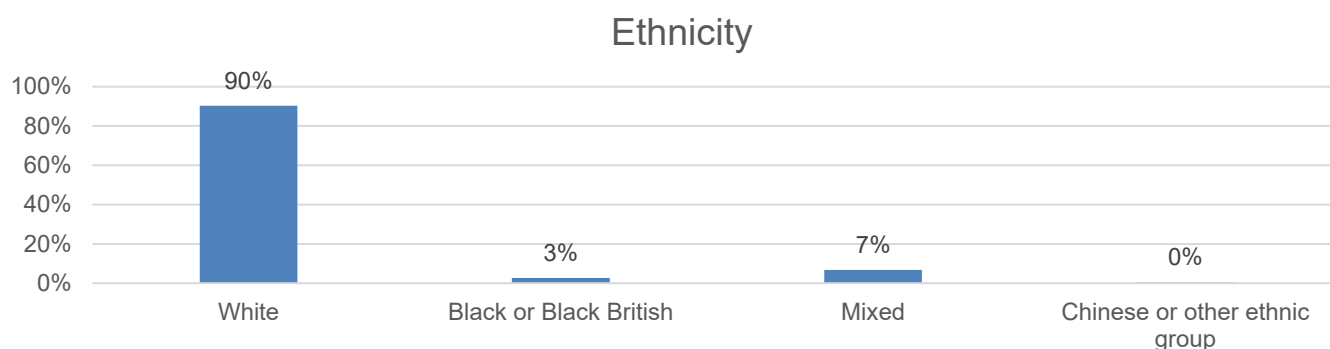


In addition, 11% of children with an intervention starting in 2025-2026 were Care Experienced during the period.

Care Experienced Children



Within this period, 90% of the children supported by the YJESS identified as White British, while only 10% identified as global majority. This is reflective of the population of children aged 10–17 in the Vale, where 91% identify as White British, according to census data.



It is notable that for those children who received a statutory outcome during the same period, 85% identified as White British. Children from Black and other Global Majority backgrounds accounted for 15% of those receiving a statutory outcome during the reporting period, a proportion that exceeds their representation within the local population. Whilst this pattern is consistent with the previous year and relates to a relatively small cohort, addressing racial disproportionality remains a matter of critical importance for the Service. The YJESS is committed to understanding the drivers of this overrepresentation and will continue to monitor trends, review outcomes, challenge inequity, and develop culturally responsive approaches to ensure that all children experience fair and equitable treatment throughout their journey within the youth justice system.

“We know that ending racial disparity in the criminal justice system will take honesty, collaboration and long-term commitment. This report gives us a roadmap for doing exactly that, putting people, not process, at the heart of reform.

“Wales has shown what is possible when public services act together. This is about building a system that works for everyone and ensures we’re all working to deliver the truly anti-racist Wales we all need and want.”

Police and Crime Commissioner Emma Wools

First Time Entrants Overview

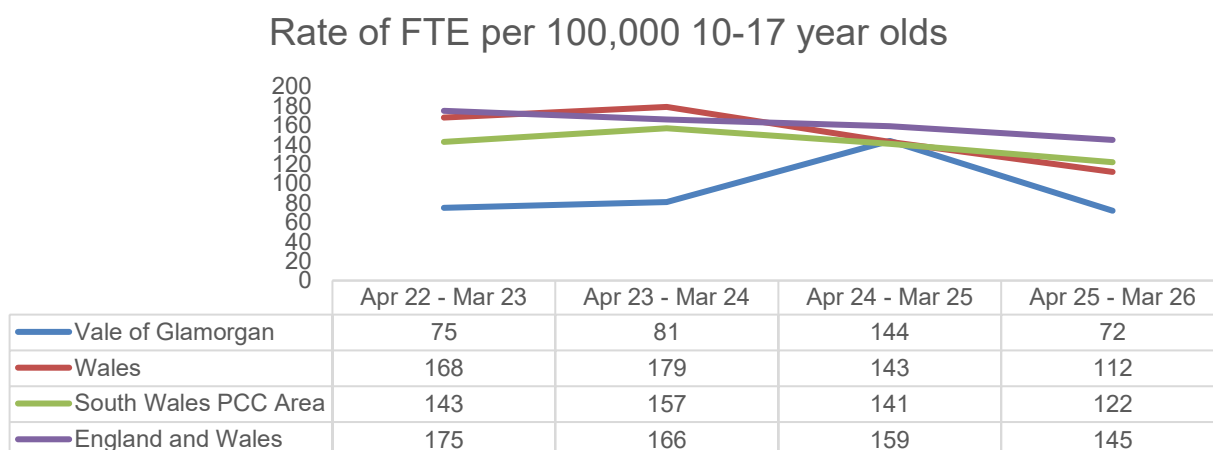
The reduction of First-Time Entrants (FTEs) remains a key priority for the Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) and continues to highlight an area of strong performance. FTEs are children aged 10–17 who receive their first substantive outcome within the youth justice system, including a Youth Caution, Youth Conditional Caution, or conviction at court. The FTE rate is measured per 100,000 children aged 10–17

FTE Trends: Vale of Glamorgan vs. England and Wales (2020–2026)

The Vale of Glamorgan has achieved a significant reduction in First-Time Entrants over recent years. Following a decrease from 141 per 100,000 in 2020/21 to 75 per 100,000 in 2022/23, there was a temporary increase in 2024/25 to 144 per 100,000. However, performance has improved substantially during 2025/26, with the rate reducing to 72 children per 100,000. This represents a 50% reduction from the previous year, and the lowest rate recorded across the reporting period.

Strong performance in this area reflects the impact of effective prevention, diversion and early intervention activity, supported by strong partnership working. It should also be considered alongside South Wales Police's increased emphasis on child-centred policing, greater use of Outcome 22 and enhanced scrutiny of outcome decisions for children diverted from court.

While small population numbers can create fluctuations in the rate, the overall trend remains positive. The current figure of 72 per 100,000 is substantially lower than the Wales average of 112, the England and Wales average of 145, and the family group average of 123 per 100,000. These comparisons demonstrate that the Vale continues to outperform regional, national and comparator areas.



Reduction in First Time Entrants

The YJESS Service Manager and Management Team closely monitors FTE figures, regularly provides performance data to the Strategic Management Board and undertakes audits of First Time Entrants and offending. This enables effective oversight and ensures that children are being supported appropriately and in line with agreed processes across South Wales.

Audit activity helps identify emerging themes, opportunities for earlier intervention, good practice and areas for improvement. Learning is shared with partners to support continuous improvement and further reduce the number of children entering the youth justice system.

A key strength of Vale YJESS is its strong, strengths-based prevention offer. Effective relationships with South Wales Police, improved liaison with schools, streamlined referral pathways and close links with the Community Safety Partnership support the early identification of children who may benefit from preventative intervention.

First-Time Entrants will remain a key area of focus during the coming year. Prevention activity will be further strengthened through joint working with South Wales Police to identify, monitor and review children who come to police attention at the earliest opportunity.

The recently published Knife Crime Guidance may have implications for future FTE figures, as a greater proportion of knife-related incidents may result in a Youth Conditional Caution. The YJESS has developed local guidance based on the national framework and will continue to monitor the use of Deferred and Conditional Cautions to ensure outcomes remain proportionate, child-centred and effective.

Next Steps

- Update the Board on the Regional Out of Court Resolution Policy including the updated knife crime guidance being implemented across South Wales to improve consistency and governance.
- Strengthen joint monitoring arrangements with South Wales Police to identify opportunities for earlier intervention and prevention.
- Monitor the impact of the new Knife Crime Guidance on Out of Court Resolutions and First-Time Entrant performance.
- Share developments arising from Serious Violence Duty.
- Develop a Board-led, multi-agency response to address emerging themes and risk factors linked to first-time entry and offending.

Reoffending Rates

The data for this indicator is sourced from the Police National Computer and published by the Ministry of Justice.

The cohort includes all children who, within a 12-month period, received a pre-court or court disposal, or were released from custody. The YJESS has a key objective to reduce the number of children re-entering the criminal justice system year on year.

Due to the time required to track reoffending outcomes, this measure is typically around 18 months behind real time.

The most recent validated reoffending data (April– June 2024) shows a binary reoffending rate of 36.4% which equates to 2.63 reoffences per reoffender. In comparison the previous year showed a 30% reoffending rate which equated to 2.67 reoffences per reoffender. Whilst this represents an increase in the binary rate, the very small cohort size in the Vale means the data is highly sensitive to individual cases and should be interpreted with caution.

In response to these limitations the Vale of Glamorgan YJESS has developed a local reoffending tracker. This approach and tool for reducing reoffending has been published on the Youth Justice Board (YJB) Resource Hub to share good practice with other Youth Justice Services as it enables us to provide more timely and contextualised insight into reoffending. This is utilised alongside robust auditing and performance monitoring to identify learning and establishing timely action plans across the partnerships.

The service continues to operate within a challenging environment. The increase in the number of children entering or engaging with the service, alongside the complexity of presenting needs, has placed additional pressure on capacity across both the YJESS and partner agencies. This is particularly evident in areas such as educational engagement, where the data highlights ongoing challenges in ensuring that all children are accessing appropriate and suitable provision, as well as in the identification and recording of additional learning needs.

Performance trends and wider contextual factors indicate that the service continues to deliver positive outcomes for children through its commitment to prevention, diversion and early intervention. The increasing use of holistic, child-focused approaches in supporting children to access the right support at the right time, helping to reduce unnecessary involvement in the formal youth justice system.

While this progress is encouraging, it has been achieved within an environment of increasing demand, complexity and system pressures. Continued strategic leadership, performance oversight and partnership working will be key to sustaining these positive outcomes and ensuring the service remains effective, adaptable and sustainable in meeting current and emerging needs.

Custody

The impact of serious youth violence has had significant and far-reaching consequences for communities, victims, families and the children involved in the Vale of Glamorgan during the reporting period. Following a sustained period of four years in which no children from the Vale of Glamorgan were sentenced to custody, four children received custodial sentences between April 2025 and March 2026.

Two children were convicted of a joint offence of murder and received custodial sentences under Section 259, with minimum terms of 14 years and 16 years respectively. A further two children were convicted of a joint offence of Grievous Bodily Harm with Intent (Section 18) and received custodial sentences under Section 250 of 48 months and 33 months respectively.

Given the seriousness of the offences, the two children convicted of murder were remanded into custody prior to sentencing. Throughout this period, the service worked closely with the children and their families, Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), custodial establishments and the Youth Custody Service to ensure coordinated planning, support and

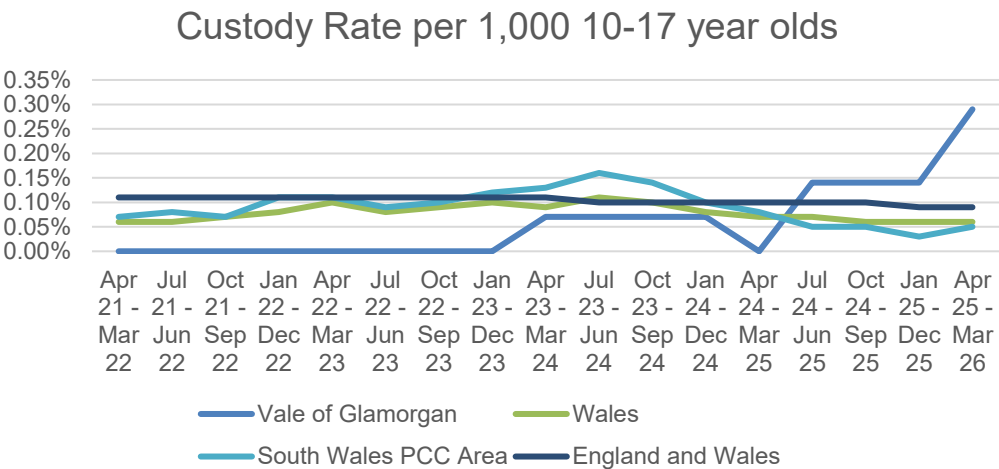
communication. Appropriate safeguarding, public protection and risk management arrangements were implemented, including Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

The two children convicted of Grievous Bodily Harm with Intent were granted bail and directed by the court to reside in accommodation identified by the Local Authority pending sentence. These arrangements remained in place for over seven months. During this period, the YJESS coordinated an intensive multi-agency Bail Support Programme involving CYPS, the Department for Learning and Skills, South Wales Police, the YJESS Victim Practitioner, and the children and their families.

This coordinated approach provided a comprehensive package of support, including access to education, mentoring, emotional wellbeing interventions, offence related work and wider family support. CYPS secured appropriate out-of-area accommodation to promote the safety and wellbeing of all involved, support effective supervision arrangements and reduce the risk of further harm. Regular multi-agency reviews ensured that the safety of victims, the wider community and the children themselves remained central to all decision-making, with risks closely monitored and managed throughout.

Following sentencing, intensive Constructive Resettlement planning has been undertaken with all four children. This work is focused on supporting rehabilitation, promoting positive future outcomes and reducing the risk of further offending and serious harm. YJESS continues to work closely with custodial establishments, the Youth Custody Service, partner agencies and families to deliver coordinated plans that support successful resettlement while maintaining a strong focus on victim, community and public safety.

The seriousness of the offences and the profound impact on victims, families and communities highlights the continued importance of effective early intervention, risk management and multi-agency partnership working in preventing serious violence and safeguarding children from harm.



Risks and Issues

The Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) continues to operate within a challenging and increasingly complex environment. The past year has presented significant challenges, including growing demand, greatly reduced management capacity and key performance support at critical times, recruitment delays, incidents of serious youth violence and increasing levels of need, vulnerability and complexity within the cohort of children.

Throughout this period, the service demonstrated resilience and adaptability, maintaining effective delivery of its statutory responsibilities and ensuring strong safeguarding, risk management and public protection arrangements. Strong and visible leadership provided stability during a period of uncertainty, enabling the service to refocus priorities on critical operational delivery, complex case oversight and statutory compliance while continuing to support staff wellbeing and morale.

Capacity challenges were mitigated through the deployment of an experienced agency manager and acting-up opportunities for existing staff, strengthening service resilience while supporting workforce development. Comprehensive induction and support arrangements enabled managers to become effective quickly and maintain continuity of leadership and oversight.

Alongside sustaining operational performance, the service continued to demonstrate strong strategic leadership, including through the Service Manager's role as Vice Chair of the Serious Violence Board. Effective governance, partnership working and engagement with the Youth Justice Board were maintained throughout the year.

These achievements reflect the resilience, adaptability and commitment of managers, staff and partners, who remained focused on priorities and continued to deliver high-quality services and positive outcomes for children during a period of significant challenge and change.

Over the next year, financial constraints remain a key area of concern, with ongoing pressure on public sector budgets affecting the capacity of services to sustain and further develop early intervention, prevention and specialist support. Workforce capacity and resilience also continue to be an important area of focus, particularly in meeting increasing demand, maintaining manageable caseloads, retaining experienced practitioners and ensuring access to specialist expertise in areas such as trauma, exploitation and serious violence.

The Board recognises the importance of continuing to strengthen strategic collaboration and information sharing across youth justice, policing, probation, safeguarding and exploitation services. Further development of integrated approaches will help reduce duplication, improve communication and ensure that children at risk receive timely and coordinated support. This includes a continued commitment to embedding Child First and trauma-informed approaches consistently across the partnership network.

Alongside these system-wide challenges, the service is responding to increasing concerns relating to serious violence, knife crime and exploitation. These issues require intensive multi-agency interventions and are frequently linked to wider factors such as trauma, poverty, adverse childhood experiences, mental health difficulties and unmet additional learning needs. Educational disengagement also remains an area of significant concern, with an increase in children experiencing exclusion, persistent absence, additional learning needs and limited access to suitable and specialist educational provision, increasing their vulnerability to adverse outcomes.

Demand pressures across partner agencies continue to present challenges, particularly within specialist services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Variations in service thresholds and decision-making processes can affect the timeliness and consistency of support available to children. Of particular concern are significant delays in accessing neurodevelopmental assessments and diagnoses, including for ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), for children within the youth justice cohort, who are known to be disproportionately affected by neurodiverse needs. Delays in identification and support can increase vulnerability, hinder educational engagement and limit opportunities for early intervention and tailored responses.

There is compelling evidence that children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) are significantly overrepresented within the youth justice system. The Senedd Equality and Social Justice Committee report '*60% – Giving Them a Voice*' (2023) found that around 60% of children involved in youth justice services have SLCN, compared with approximately 10% of children in the wider population. Communication difficulties can hinder engagement with education, interventions and justice processes, increasing vulnerability and the risk of poorer outcomes. Despite sustained efforts to mitigate this, the absence of a dedicated SLCN resource remains a significant gap in local provision and limits the service's ability to fully meet the needs of this cohort. Addressing unmet communication needs therefore remains an important strategic priority.

The increasing complexity of presenting needs, including unmet neurodevelopmental, communication and mental health needs, places growing pressure on both statutory and preventative services, particularly within safeguarding, exploitation and serious violence contexts.

The provision of twenty-four-hour Appropriate Adult service (AA) requires further review of arrangements to explore potential gaps in provision. Work remains underway to explore sustainable solutions, including collaboration with neighbouring Youth Justice Services and potential third-sector partnerships.

A further challenge relates to maintaining continuity within key partner agencies. During the past year, frequent changes in senior police leadership have on occasion occurred with limited notice and transition planning, affecting continuity and slowing progress on some regional priorities. This has presented challenges in maintaining momentum around key

developments, including the South Wales Out of Court Resolution (OOCR) framework and regional knife crime guidance. The Board will continue to promote strong governance, effective communication and succession planning to minimise the impact of organisational change and support delivery of shared objectives.

Without effective intervention and partnership responses, these pressures have the potential to increase demand on youth justice, safeguarding and social care services. There is a risk that children may experience poorer outcomes, including greater vulnerability to exploitation, reduced educational engagement, increased offending behaviour and fewer opportunities to achieve positive long-term outcomes. Workforce pressures may also impact the capacity of services to respond as quickly and effectively as required.

The Vale of Glamorgan YJESS is addressing these challenges through a continued focus on prevention, early intervention and effective multi-agency working. The service is working closely with partners to strengthen coordinated responses to children's needs, particularly in relation to safeguarding, education, diversion and exploitation. Key activities include strengthening governance arrangements, improving escalation pathways and enhancing multi-agency oversight and planning processes.

Developing and supporting the workforce remains a priority. Continued investment in training, reflective supervision, staff wellbeing and trauma-informed practice helps ensure practitioners are equipped to respond to increasingly complex needs and deliver high-quality interventions. The service also continues to review demand, capacity and service delivery arrangements to ensure resources are targeted effectively and aligned to emerging priorities.

Looking ahead, potential risks include the impact of ongoing youth justice reform, changes to performance and inspection frameworks, uncertainty around future funding streams and the continued growth in cases involving serious violence, trauma and exploitation. To address these challenges, the Vale of Glamorgan YJESS Service manager remains actively engaged in local, regional and national planning and development activity, ensuring the service remains adaptable and well positioned to respond to future changes.

Despite these pressures, the Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) remains committed to delivering high-quality, child-centred and trauma-informed services. Through strong partnership working, early intervention and a sustained focus on prevention, the service will continue to support improved outcomes for children, families, victims and communities.

PLAN FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR

Child First and Voice of the Child

The Child First framework is underpinned by four tenets:

1. Seeing children as children by prioritising their needs, capacities and interests through developmentally informed work that acknowledges structural barriers children face and meets responsibilities towards children
2. Building a pro-social identity by recognising children's strengths and fostering positive relationships that empower them to contribute meaningfully to society
3. Collaborating with children by ensuring meaningful participation and engagement with both children and their parents or carers
4. Diverting children from stigma by minimising contact with the criminal justice system through prevention, diversion, and minimal intervention

The YJESS continues to ensure it takes a Child First approach when supporting children. The service promotes participation, social inclusion, and early prevention to steer children away from crime and towards positive futures. The service is committed to involving children in shaping their own journey. This means:

- Co-production – the children are an integral part of their own assessment and support planning, allowing them to share their goals and to provide feedback on progress and the services they receive. We also include their carers within the assessment process.
- Prevention and Diversion assessments are written to the child. This ensures that the voice of the children is fully embedded in assessments and intervention plans.
- Active integration – Every meeting that is held by our service is informed by the child's and parent/carer's views. This is emphasised within the structure of the meetings by the 'child and family's perspective' being its own section and therefore considered within the planning.
- Informed practice – Whole team formulations are taking place every 2 weeks whereby a child's circumstances are explored and analysed and fed into the assessments which are completed with the child.
- YJESS prioritises opportunities for children and their families to provide feedback on their experiences and help shape service delivery. Feedback is gathered through assessments, reviews, one-to-one discussions, paper forms, QR codes, and online surveys, which can be completed independently or with support. Feedback is reviewed regularly to inform service improvements. Children's views have directly influenced the design of activities, the timing and location of appointments, and opportunities to contribute to recruitment and service development.

The use of digital technology has strengthened our ability to capture children's voices and respond to their needs. Children have also helped create more welcoming environments,

including redesigning rooms and working with graffiti artists to develop creative spaces where they feel safe, respected, and able to express themselves.

Children are at the centre of all YJESS interventions and are actively involved in shaping the support they receive. This approach helps build confidence, responsibility, and a sense of ownership, strengthening engagement and improving outcomes. The Service promotes the least restrictive and most proportionate responses for children within prevention, diversion, and out-of-court processes. In line with Child First principles, the service seeks to minimise unnecessary contact with the youth justice system and supports children to access positive community-based opportunities and resources.

Child Centred Practice within the Prevention Model



This model focuses on a child centred and strength-based way of working with children and families. Along with their support networks, the children/Children and their families complete a report with a YJESS or Prevention Officer as part of an assessment and planning process, and agree a plan together based on their views of their needs. It is the allocated workers role, as part of the collaborative assessment and planning process, to ensure the child is aware of factors such as concerns shared by practitioners, positive reinforcements, and praise, and of the YJESS Practitioner's own assessment findings. The assessment and proposed plan created with the child and family is discussed within a Prevention Meeting, which includes YJESS and partner agencies, to explore how the child and their family can best be supported to achieve their goals.

Resources and Services

The Youth Justice Board Effective Practice Grant for 2026/2027 has been confirmed and set out in the table below. This illustrates how the core grant contributes to providing YJESS practitioners and support for the work of the YJESS, as well as how partner agencies provide equivalent contributions to staffing.

Agency	Staffing Costs	Payments in Kind	Other Delegated funds	Total
Youth Justice Board	187,928			187,928
Local Authority	597,010		202,769	799,779
Police	3,445	59,722	6,925	70,092
Crime Commissioner	19,401		3,799	23,200
Probation		24,699		24,699
Health		91,317		91,317
Welsh Government	194,026			194,026
Other	29,713			29,713
Total	1,028,823	175,738	213,493	1,420,749

The Vale YJESS operates through a strong multi-agency funding model, combining Youth Justice Board (YJB) grant funding with significant local authority and partner investment to deliver statutory youth justice services alongside prevention, diversion, and targeted interventions. The local authority provides the majority of funding (£799,000), supporting core staffing, programme delivery, accommodation, and operational costs, ensuring children receive timely, coordinated, and trauma-informed support.

The YJB contributes £187,928 through the Youth Justice Core Grant, which is used strategically to address the complex needs of children, prevent offending and reoffending, and support early intervention, diversion, safeguarding, victim services, restorative justice, and risk management. The grant also supports evidence-based interventions, service development, performance monitoring, and workforce development.

Partnership contributions further strengthen the service's ability to deliver a Child First approach. Additional funding via Turnaround funding has increased capacity to support children at risk of offending and anti-social behaviour.

Health partners make a contribute to the Vale YJESS through the provision of a part-time CAMHS Specialist and a full-time Children and Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service (CAVDAS) worker. This dedicated resource enhances the service's response to emotional

wellbeing, mental health, and substance misuse needs, providing direct support to children and consultation to practitioners, parents, carers, and partner agencies. This strengthens trauma-informed practice and helps ensure children receive the right support at the right time.

The effective use of funding and partnership resources has contributed to fewer first-time entrants to the youth justice system, greater use of prevention and diversionary approaches, reduced reliance on formal justice outcomes, improved engagement in education and positive activities, enhanced victim support, and stronger multi-agency responses to trauma, exploitation, and safeguarding concerns.

As demand and complexity continue to increase, the Vale YJESS remains committed to reviewing resources and service delivery to ensure support remains proportionate, responsive, and focused on achieving positive outcomes for children, victims, and communities.

The partnership contributors to the provision of services for children supported by the YJESS are shown below based on full-time equivalents.

Type of Contract	Strategic Manager (FT)	Operational Manager (PT)	Operational Manager (FT)	Practitioners (PT)	Practitioners (FT)	Administration (PT)	Administration (FT)	Sessional	Total
Permanent	1		3	1.3	7	2.1	1	2	17
Fixed term		0.8			4				0
Temporary									0
Vacant									0
Secondee Children's Services									0
Secondee Probation				0.4					0.4
Secondee Police					1				1
Secondee Health (Substance misuse)									0
Secondee Health (Mental health)				0.5					0.5
Secondee Health (Physical health)									0
Secondee Tier 2 Substance Misuse				1					1
Secondee Education				0.5					0.5
Total	1	0	3	3.7	8	2.1	1	2	21
Disabled (self-classified)	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	4

Staffing of the Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice & Early Support Service by gender, ethnicity, and Welsh language:

Ethnicity	Manager Strategic		Managers operational		Practitioners		Administrative		Sessional		Volunteers		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Asian						1						1	0	2
Black													0	0
Mixed						1							0	1
White		1	3	1	5	10		5		2	3	8	11	27
Total	0	1	3	1	5	12	0	5	0	2	3	9	11	30
Welsh Speakers	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2

With this diverse array of professionals, the YJESS is well-appointed to adopt an integrated approach in its work with children. The Services collective expertise enables us to effectively address the complex needs of children. This comprehensive approach increases the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes with the children involved, supporting their development, and reducing the risk of reoffending.

Board Development

The YJESS Management Board continues to provide strong governance, strategic leadership and effective challenge to support positive outcomes for children, families, victims and communities across the Vale of Glamorgan. During 2025–2026, the Board strengthened its governance oversight and accountability, oversight of performance, safety planning, partnership working and continuous improvement, ensuring the service remains responsive to local need, emerging risks and national priorities.

Governance arrangements are underpinned by regular performance reporting, audit findings, inspection updates, financial reports and thematic reviews. These enable members to scrutinise performance across key areas which have including safeguarding, education, disproportionality, victim engagement, workforce capacity and service delivery. Learning from audits, inspections, and feedback continues to inform improvement activity and future planning.

The Board has also strengthened the connection between strategic governance and operational practice through the active involvement of frontline staff in Board meetings. Using a blended approach, meetings are scheduled to take place both in person within the YJESS offices and virtually via Microsoft Teams, enabling practitioners to contribute directly to governance discussions. Presentations on restorative justice, trauma-informed practice and Enhanced Case Management have provided valuable operational insight, ensuring Board discussions and strategic decision-making remain firmly connected to frontline practice and the lived experiences of children.

Partnership working remains central to effective youth justice delivery. The Board continues to promote collaboration across education, health, police, social care, probation and voluntary sector partners, supporting coordinated responses to vulnerability, safeguarding concerns and offending behaviour. Membership and attendance are regularly reviewed to ensure appropriate senior representation, accountability and compliance with Youth Justice Board expectations. During the year, representation was strengthened in key areas, including Additional Learning Needs provision and engagement.

A significant achievement during the year was the Youth Justice Board Governance and Planning Workshop held in June 2026. Co-facilitated by representatives from Youth Justice Board Cymru, the YJESS Service Manager and Operational Manager. The workshop was extremely well received and secured full engagement from Board members. The event provided an opportunity to undertake a self-assessment against the HM Inspectorate of Probation Governance and Leadership Standards, review strategic priorities, consider examples of effective practice and agree collective actions to strengthen partnership ownership and accountability. The workshop generated constructive challenge, reflection and shared learning, further strengthening the Board's effectiveness and collective commitment to improving outcomes for children.

The Board has maintained oversight of high-risk and complex cases, including safeguarding, exploitation and serious violence concerns, ensuring effective scrutiny, escalation and strategic support where required.

Looking ahead, priorities include Serious Youth Violence, maintaining a reduction in first-time entrant through diversion-first approaches, strengthening thematic governance arrangements, embedding trauma-informed practice, enhancing information sharing and ensuring workforce and financial sustainability. The Board will also support the continued expansion of prevention and early intervention services, ensuring children receive support at the earliest opportunity and improving outcomes across the youth justice system.

Workforce Development

The Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) remains committed to developing a highly skilled, resilient and trauma-informed workforce capable of responding effectively to the increasingly complex needs of children, families, victims and communities. Workforce development continues to be a strategic priority, recognising that the quality of outcomes achieved for children is directly linked to the knowledge, skills, wellbeing and professional confidence of practitioners.

Over the past year, the service has continued to invest in targeted training and innovative interventions to strengthen professional capability and deliver evidence-based, child-centred and trauma-informed practice. All staff have received training in Remedi's Building Safety for Children, Victims and Communities programme and Virtual Decisions, following the service's investment in the full suite of Virtual Decisions programmes and VR headsets. Remedi's

approach strengthens restorative practice, promotes victim awareness and supports children to take responsibility for their actions whilst contributing to safer communities. Virtual Decisions uses immersive scenarios linked to anti-social behaviour, exploitation, peer influence and knife crime, enabling children to safely explore consequences, reflect on choices and develop safer decision-making. Together, these approaches strengthen prevention, diversion and early intervention activity while supporting positive behavioural change and reducing vulnerability.

The service has continued to strengthen its trauma-informed approach through specialist training, practitioner forums and psychologically informed practice development. This has included a focus on trauma-informed formulations, helping practitioners better understand the impact of trauma, adverse childhood experiences, neurodiversity and wider contextual factors on children's behaviour and presentation. Fortnightly whole-service reflective practice sessions provide a dedicated forum for joint formulation of complex cases, shared learning and problem-solving, strengthening assessment, intervention planning and professional decision-making. These sessions also promote practitioner confidence, reflective practice and resilience when working with children presenting with significant vulnerability, complexity and harm related behaviour.

Recognising the increasing complexity of the youth justice cohort, workforce development has also focused on safeguarding, exploitation and serious violence. The service continues to embed a culture of strengths-based and relationship-focused practice through participation in *Building on Strengths* workshops delivered jointly with Children's Services. Together with service-wide Non-Violent Resistance training, these initiatives reinforce collaborative, restorative and trauma-informed approaches to working with children and families and continue to influence day-to-day practice, supervision and management oversight.

Staff wellbeing remains a key priority. Practitioners have access to regular supervision, peer support, reflective practice opportunities and wellbeing initiatives, recognising that a supported workforce is essential to delivering effective services and maintaining positive outcomes. The service also continues to support professional development through social work placements, practice assessor opportunities, specialist training, webinars and partnership learning events, helping to build future workforce capacity and strengthen links across the wider children's services workforce.

As part of its commitment to workforce sustainability, the YJESS actively supports the Council's Grow Your Own Social Worker Programme, creating opportunities for employees to develop and progress into qualified social work roles while retaining valuable skills and experience within local services. This investment strengthens succession planning, supports recruitment and retention, and helps ensure the service maintains a skilled, stable and sustainable workforce capable of meeting future demand.

A significant investment has also been made across Children's and Young People's Services to develop compassionate leadership at all levels of the organisation. Managers have

participated in a comprehensive leadership development programme designed to strengthen emotionally intelligent, values-led and relational leadership. By fostering psychological safety, trust, collaboration and staff wellbeing, compassionate leadership supports a positive culture where staff feel valued, empowered and supported to deliver their best work. This has strengthened engagement, improved reflective practice and reinforced a learning culture focused on continuous improvement and achieving the best possible outcomes for children and families.

Future workforce development priorities will continue to be informed by analysis of cohort needs, audit findings, performance data, supervision discussions, appraisal processes and emerging practice developments. Planned training includes further specialist in relation to Prevention and Diversion Assessments and Neurodivergence, Vulnerability and Radicalisation. Through continued investment in learning, wellbeing and leadership, the Vale of Glamorgan YJESS remains committed to maintaining a skilled, confident and resilient workforce equipped to meet the evolving challenges of youth justice and deliver high-quality services to children, victims and communities.

Knife Possession Guidance

In response to the recently published Government guidance relating to children involved in knife possession offences the service has developed a local approach to support the consistent implementation of the new requirements. This sets out the process for information sharing between South Wales Police and Vale YJESS and ensures that local operational procedures are aligned with the national guidance.

As the new arrangements are embedded across England and Wales, Vale YJESS will continue to review and update its operational practice to ensure that decision-making remains proportionate, child-centred and consistent with national expectations. Particular attention will be given to the appropriate use of Deferred Prosecutions and other diversionary disposals, ensuring that children receive the most suitable response based on their individual circumstances and level of risk.

To support robust governance and regional consistency, knife related Out of Court Resolution (OOCR) cases will continue to be scrutinised through the quarterly OOCR Scrutiny Panel, facilitated by the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office. This provides independent oversight and helps ensure consistency in decision-making across South Wales.

In addition, children have participated in knife awareness interventions delivered by practitioners. These sessions provide a safe environment for discussion about the risks and consequences of carrying a knife, the influence of peers, personal safety and positive decision-making. The aim is to increase children's understanding of the potential impact of knife crime and support them to make informed and safer choices within their communities.

Evidence-based practice & Innovation and Evaluation

Within the Vale YJESS a core principle remains clear – youth justice practice should be evidence-based or evidence-led. As the service moves through 2026 and into 2027, we remain committed to aligning our work with the best available research to reduce reoffending, safeguard children, and protect the wider public. The service believes that the most effective outcomes are achieved when practice is rooted in an evolving evidence base.

The YJESS's approach to evidence is holistic and multi-faceted. The service draw insights from a wide range of research-based approaches and models. Through this lens, a number of critical factors appear to be key in improving outcomes for children at risk of offending or harm related behaviour.

These centre around: -

- Building strong, trusting relationships with children utilising one-to-one relationship building, underpinned by the trauma-informed model of practice.
- Collaboration and strength-based planning - assessments and intervention plans are co-created, goal-oriented, and strengths based.
- Individualised approaches - tailoring interventions to the child's particular circumstances and understanding the complexity of their lived experiences.
- Developmentally appropriate and trauma-informed practice. The YJESS aims to help build motivation, resilience, and a sense of optimism with the children we support.
- Pro-social modelling and problem-solving to encourage positive decision-making and behaviour change.
- Whole system support ensures that services are available at the right time and in the right way—flexible, responsive, and holistic—so that change is sustainable, and transitions are smooth.
- Supporting long-term change – the goal of the YJESS is to empower children move to independence and universal services

The YJESS promotes services that are child-centred, relational, compassionate, culturally aware and collaborative. Over the past year, the YJESS has conducted several internal evaluations and will continue to embed evaluation and reflective practice across all areas of our service. This commitment includes whole-team involvement in learning and development through quality assurance activities feedback and audits. The focus remains on building a service that is accountable, reflective, and, most importantly, responsive to the needs of the children, families, and victims who are being supported.

Relationship Based Practice

YJESS staff prioritise relationships with children, Children and their families. There is a core understanding that risk is relational and it's critical to build safety. Working on relationships is not only in the best interests of the child and their welfare but also supports a reduction in

offending and harm to others where the relationship dynamic has been central to the concerns.

For example, whilst assessing and establishing a relationship with a child sentenced to a Referral Order for a violent offence against an immediate family member, a wider formulation took place of the family dynamics resulted in a focus on a dyadic approach comprising the child and their parents. This relationship is where safety needed to be built this is where resources were directed. This was a difficult path to tread, particularly in discouraging an instinct by the family to locate risk within the child. Through a joint working relationship between the YJESS Family and Parenting support practitioner and the case manager, careful and sensitive steps have been taken towards a dyadic, developmental and PACE (playful, accepting, curious & empathic) oriented approach with the family. This work is ongoing and long term, further evidencing the dedication to this approach.

The YJESS Family and Parenting Support Practitioner works directly with families, typically parents and carers, to develop strategies for managing difficult relationships and behaviours within the home and community. This practitioner is trained in NVR (Non-Violent Resistance) which is an evidence based, therapeutic approach to supporting the presence of key, caregiving adults in a Child's life to foster positive relationships.

NVR can be applied to multiple situations where a child presents with behaviour that is harmful to others such as hitting, kicking, spitting and verbal threats and also violence to themselves in the form of self-harm, suicidality, disrupted eating patterns and self-isolation. The Family and Parenting Support Practitioner is skilled in utilising this approach to build strong relationships with parents and carers to support and enhance their ability to manage and improve these situations. She is also due to commence accredited training in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (an evidence-based approach relying on attachment theory) and Dialectic Behaviour Therapy (DBT) which focusses on four core tenets of emotion regulation, distress tolerance, inter-personal effectiveness and mindfulness. It is recognised within the service that parents can often be doing the best that they can whilst also struggling with unresolved traumas of their own.

BEFORE

Teenage female living with grandparents.
Bereavement experience.
Grandparents report feeling overwhelmed and out of control
Education concerns.
Daily conflicts within the home and escalating risk-taking behaviours.



INTERVENTION



Supported grandparents to prioritise self-care and emotional wellbeing while managing grief and caring responsibilities.
Intervention focused on three core NVR principles: Raising Parental Presence, Reconciliation Gestures, and De-escalation.
Encouraged positive interactions regardless of ongoing behavioural difficulties
Taught active listening and emotional regulation
Supported development of a wider support network involving school staff, the school wellbeing team, Barnardo's, the young person's father, GP services, bereavement support services, and a YJESS Prevention Worker

AFTER

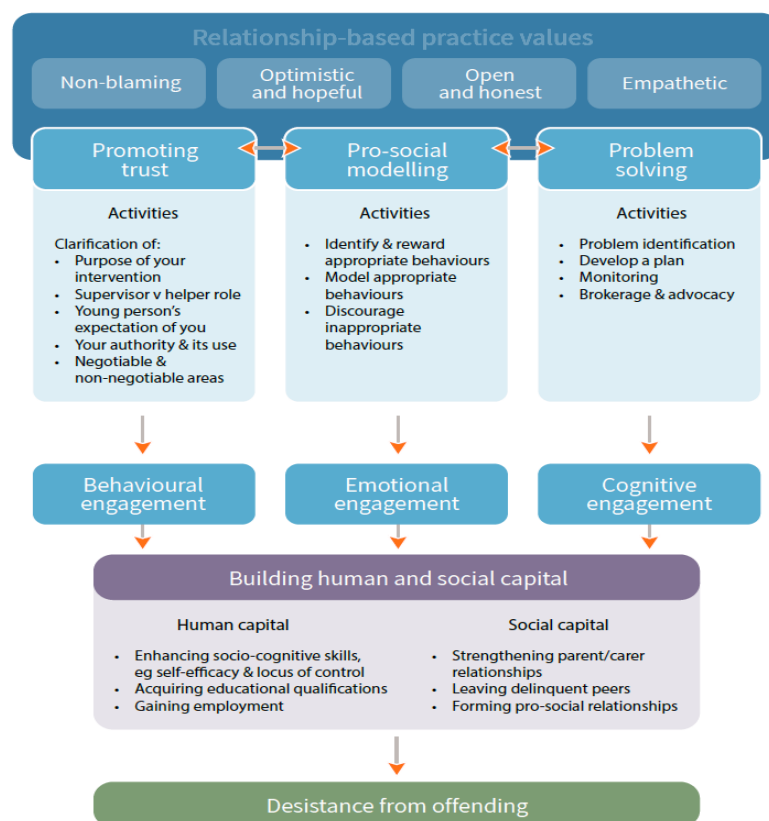
Family conflict reduced significantly, with explosive incidents decreasing from daily occurrences to approximately once per fortnight.
Arguments became shorter and less intense, reducing from lasting hours to lasting minutes.
Grandparents reported feeling more in control of themselves, more confident in managing situations, and less overwhelmed by their granddaughter's behaviour.
Improved family relationships through consistent use of reconciliation gestures, leading to quicker repair following disagreements.
Home environment became calmer, safer, and more emotionally supportive, reducing power struggles and increasing feelings of connection and belonging.



YJESS practitioners, in addition to their established approach to relational work, have also undertaken a workshop around formulation and relational trauma. There is a greater focus on developing biopsychosocial formulations to understand the predisposing, precipitating, perpetuating and positive factors within a Child's presentation and this necessarily draws attention to trauma and chronic disruptions in relationships. By highlighting and prioritising these factors within intervention planning, practitioners focus more on therapeutic and relational responses to trauma, aligned with the Trauma Recovery Model (TRM). Alongside this and through, through expanding the range of therapeutic support available to parents and carers, the service strives to provide a trauma-responsive, systemic approach to referrals into YJESS.

YJESS practitioners are supported to develop and maintain skills in formulation and trauma-responsive, child first practice through fortnightly Reflective Practice, where the team comes together to jointly consider a biopsychosocial formulation of presenting behaviours by a child or Child and to collectively develop ideas around subsequent intervention planning.

Practitioners use the *Relationship Based Practice Framework's*¹ 4 base values of being **Non-Blaming, Optimistic & Hopeful, Open & Honest and Empathetic** and work towards further promoting trust, displaying pro-social modelling, and assisting in problem solving which will further build human and social capital from within the child. This in turn would increase the likelihood of a child desisting from offending.



¹ Stephenson, M., & Dix, H. (2017). Relationship Based Practice. In M. Stephenson, & R. Allen, *Exploring Youth Justice* (pp. 32-51). Norwich: Unitas.

PRIORITIES FOR THE COMING YEAR

Vale Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) remains committed to delivering high-quality, child-first services that promote positive outcomes for children, families, victims and communities. Service development continues to be driven by a culture of continuous improvement, informed by performance data, quality assurance activity, feedback from children and families, and learning from partners at both local and regional levels.

A key priority is to further reduce offending and reoffending by strengthening child-centred, trauma-informed interventions and ensuring that support is well-coordinated, proportionate and responsive to individual need. The service will continue to build effective early intervention and prevention pathways, working closely with statutory and third-sector partners to identify and support children at the earliest opportunity, reducing first-time entrants to the youth justice system and preventing escalation into more harmful behaviours. This will include the delivery of preventative and diversionary activities throughout the year.

Improving education, training and employment outcomes remains a significant focus. Through strong partnerships with schools, local authority education services and alternative provision, Vale YJESS will continue to promote engagement, improve attendance and support access to flexible and appropriate learning pathways. Alongside this, meeting the needs of children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) remains a recognised area of development. The service will continue to work strategically with partners to address gaps in provision and improve outcomes for children whose communication needs can present significant barriers to engagement and progress.

The service will also continue to prioritise the safeguarding of children at risk of exploitation through strengthened operational and strategic multi-agency arrangements. This includes embedding robust systems to identify, assess and respond to exploitation risks, ensuring vulnerable children receive timely and coordinated support.

Responding effectively to Serious Youth Violence remains a key priority. Through the Violence Prevention Strategic Partnership Board and associated multi-agency groups, Vale YJESS will support the implementation of a coordinated and targeted response that strengthens prevention, disruption and safeguarding activity for children at risk of violence, exploitation and related harm.

The service remains committed to ensuring that children are treated fairly and appropriately throughout their contact with the criminal justice system. Work will continue with South Wales Police and regional partners to further embed Child First policing principles, particularly in relation to children's experiences of arrest and detention in police custody. This includes strengthening escalation processes, promoting shared accountability across police departments, and creating opportunities for reflection and learning from children lived experiences. Alongside this, the service will support the review of policies and procedures relating to the 24-hour Appropriate Adult provision to ensure children have timely access to the safeguards they require.

Regionally, Vale YJESS will continue implementing the revised Out of Court Resolutions policy including guidance in relation to knife crime across South Wales. This will ensure greater consistency, strengthen Child First practice and support equitable access to interventions and proportionate outcomes, reducing the risk of differing approaches based solely on geographical location.

Partnership work with health services will remain a priority. The service will continue to work with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to strengthen specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provision for children within the YJESS cohort to ensure that health services are responsive to the complexity of children's needs and that there is parity of provision across the region.

Quality assurance remains central to maintaining high standards of practice. Through a robust audit framework, plans and reviews will be scrutinised to ensure that children's voices are evident, safety is built, risks are appropriately managed, victims are considered, and interventions are tailored to individual strengths, needs and circumstances. Continuous evaluation and learning from audits, supervision and feedback will support ongoing improvement and consistency across the service.

Supporting victims remains a core priority. The service will continue to strengthen restorative justice provision, ensuring that victims' needs, safety and opportunities for participation are central to intervention planning. Multi-agency collaboration will further support the development of effective victim-focused practice and improve the quality of services available.

The contribution of community volunteers also remains highly valued. Vale YJESS will continue to recruit, retain and support volunteers who play an important role in helping children and families achieve positive outcomes and maintain links with their communities.

Strong governance and partnership arrangements will continue to underpin service development. Board member attendance, engagement and contribution will be monitored through agreed performance indicators to ensure that strategic partners provide effective leadership and support delivery of shared priorities. The service will also continue to strengthen links across Children's Services, Early Help and wider council services through active participation in divisional meetings, development forums and collaborative planning arrangements.

Finally, Vale YJESS will continue to strengthen participation and engagement mechanisms so that children and families can meaningfully influence service development. Feedback systems, consultation tools and performance measures will be continually reviewed and refined to better capture children's views and experiences, ensuring services remain responsive, effective and aligned to the needs of those they support.

Overall, Vale YJESS will continue to build on its strengths through innovation, partnership and a steadfast commitment to Child First principles, ensuring children receive the right support, at the right time, to achieve positive and sustainable outcomes.

Standards for children

The Service remains committed to delivering a high-quality, consistent service that places children at the centre of all activity. Practice standards reflect national standards and are clearly defined and monitored through audit and performance processes. The service is focused on ensuring that all children receive equitable, trauma-informed and responsive support that meets their individual needs and promotes positive outcomes.

Service Development

Service development within Vale YJESS is underpinned by a strong commitment to continuous improvement, informed by performance data, audit activity, feedback from children and families, and learning from partners and national guidance. The service remains responsive to emerging needs, ensuring support is effective,

high quality and focused on achieving positive outcomes for children, families and communities.

In response to increasing demand and complexity, the service continues to adapt its delivery model to ensure resources are targeted appropriately and interventions remain proportionate to individual need.

A key area of development has been the strengthening of the service's relationship-based and trauma-informed practice model. The Family and Parenting Support Practitioner has undertaken accredited training in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) which supports effective engagement with families affected by adversity and generational trauma, helping practitioners and wider support networks to better understand the impact of trauma on behaviour, relationships and emotional wellbeing.

To further embed reflective and formulation-led practice, Vale YJESS has introduced fortnightly Reflective Practice sessions for practitioners. These sessions provide dedicated opportunities for professional reflection, team formulation and shared learning, strengthening the quality of assessment, intervention planning and service delivery. This approach supports practitioners to develop a deeper understanding of children's experiences, needs and strengths, resulting in more responsive and individualised interventions.

The service has also further refined its multi-agency risk management framework through the development of Keeping Everyone Safe in Partnership (KESP) meetings. The KESP process is now structured around the findings of formulations, the Trauma Recovery Model (TRM) and the Fresh Air principles of Child First practice, ensuring that assessment, planning and intervention are consistently informed by a shared understanding of the child's circumstances. Partner agencies contribute to each aspect of assessment and planning, supporting a coordinated and strength-based response to managing risk and promoting safety.

This framework produces clear and purposeful records for partners, supported by visual representations of individual formulations and progress within the Trauma Recovery Model. Review meetings revisit these core areas, enabling partners to evaluate progress, adapt plans and maintain a focus on sustainable outcomes. Central to this approach is a shared commitment to identifying the changes required to safely step-down support and exit a child from the KESP process.

Another significant area of development has been the service's work on Serious Youth Violence and the successful recruitment of a Violence Prevention (VioPr) Worker, ensuring sustained capacity and expertise to deliver targeted prevention and early intervention support. This role has been established through a positive partnership with Media Academy Cymru (MAC), combining the strengths of statutory and third-sector services to better support children at risk of violence, exploitation, peer-on-peer harm, adolescent-to-parent violence and abuse (APVA), and weapon-related offending.

MAC's established trauma-informed, youth-centred approach complements existing provision, creating a more integrated and responsive service for vulnerable children. The partnership provides access to specialist interventions, including Braver Choices, Parallel Lives, Cerridwen, Delivering Resilience and Positive Masculinity programmes, alongside MAC's trusted adult model, which has proven effective in engaging children.

This partnership represents a significant investment in prevention, strengthening multi-agency working, expanding evidence-based support, and improving outcomes through coordinated, person-centred services.

Recognising that high-quality practice depends on a skilled and confident workforce, Vale YJESS continues to invest in professional development through specialist training, multi-agency learning opportunities, reflective practice and participation in regional and national forums. This strengthens professional knowledge, promotes innovation and enhances partnership collaboration across the service.

Evaluation and reflective learning remain central to service improvement. Findings from audits, supervision, staff feedback, inspection activity and outcomes for children are used to identify strengths and priorities for development. This supports greater consistency in practice, ongoing service refinement and an effective response to emerging challenges.

Overall, Vale YJESS demonstrates a proactive, reflective and evidence-informed approach to service development, ensuring practice continues to evolve in line with local priorities, emerging need and national expectations while maintaining a strong focus on relationship-based, child-first and trauma-informed practice.

NATIONAL PRIORITY AREAS

Children from Groups who are Over-represented

Trauma and Care Experienced Children

The Service has adapted processes to encourage reference to the Trauma Recovery Model (TRM). We are placing an emphasis on identifying the most likely level of the TRM within each assessment that we undertake. Similarly, we have adapted the framework of our risk management meetings (KESP - Keeping Everyone Safe in Partnership) to include the TRM as a reviewable and distance travelled tool within our multi-agency work. Further to these steps, we have introduced fortnightly Reflective Practice sessions which focus on the entire team supporting an individual case manager to develop a collaborative biopsychosocial formulation. These processes are intended to support a trauma-informed and Child-First approach to assessment and the design of developmentally matched interventions as a response to the very clear evidence of trauma within the YJESS cohort of children. For example, 66% of our Children experienced domestic abuse and 53% experienced evidenced neglect (though these figures do not represent experiences which occur but are not reported).

Welsh Government data indicates that 1.12% of children in Wales are 'Looked After'. Despite representing a relatively small proportion of the overall child population, care-experienced children remain overrepresented within youth justice services. During the reporting period, 11% of children within our cohort were care-experienced, demonstrating their disproportionate involvement with the youth justice system

We continue to scrutinise referrals for 'proven' offences through both the Out of Court Resolution panel and through the Courts. We advocate strongly for the lowest possible outcome for children who are care experienced, who by the nature of their status as looked after children, have very often experienced multiple traumas as well as being under professional observation more than their peers who remain within their families.

Gender:

The Vale YJESS has seen an increase in the number of females referred into the service.

In 2024-2025 we worked with 173 children of which 43 were female (25%). This year, 2025-2026 we have worked with 210 children of which 73 were female (35%). This figure not only represents an increase in the number of Children referred to YJESS for support, but also that the proportion of the total number of Children who are female has risen by 9%

Whilst the service responds to each Child as an individual, we devote service time to understanding and responding to wider trends such as this. Our 'Girls Group' provides a space for young females within YJESS to exist within already established groups, but with the support of YJESS staff to engage young females in co-produced activities. We understand that as professionals, it is difficult to 'compete' with the needs being met through problematic peer groups and as such, we invite these Children to engage together in a safe and supported environment and to touch on issues of, for example, exploitation, in a more conversational and spontaneous manner. Aside from our statistics, we observed an increase in police activity around females within our daily flag reports which are monitored to provide us with the best possible chance of early identification of themes and trends. This process has helped us to consider working with a specific, connected group of young females and mapping the likelihood of offending alongside concerns around and links to exploitation.

Ethnicity:

According to the 2021 Census, the breakdown of ethnicity across the Vale of Glamorgan was:

Ethnic group	Approx. number	Share
White	124,800	~94.6%
Asian / Asian British	2,807	~2.1%
Mixed / multiple	2,987	~2.3%
Black / African / Caribbean	624	~0.5%
Other ethnic group	721	~0.5%

Whilst we recognise that changes there might well be changes to demographics between each census, we have compared the ethnicity of children accessing the Vale YJESS over the reporting period.

Of the 210 children accessing YJESS services over the reporting period, the breakdown of ethnicity was:

Ethnic group	Approx. number	Share
White	185	~88%
Asian / Asian British	1	~0.5%
Mixed / multiple	15	~7%
Black / African / Caribbean	4	~2%
Other ethnic group/unknown ethnicity	6	~2.5%

These figures do not represent a significant difference to those contained within the Census data, particularly when we account for the fact that small changes to a small cohort can result in seemingly disproportionate representation. For example, 2% of our cohort were of black heritage compared this same ethnic group accounting for 0.5% of the general population of the Vale. In this case we are comparing percentages of a cohort of 210 children with around 132,000 people within the Vale population. However, we are mindful of any trends that cause concern or a departure from expected, for example, with the observations around potential concerns of disproportionality in children receiving statutory outcomes previously referenced and we endeavour to raise such issues with partners on the Board and within our service.

We recognise that our reported Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) figures are restricted to formally diagnosed cases and are therefore likely to significantly underestimate need across the cohort. Without access to a dedicated Speech and Language Therapy resource, opportunities for screening, assessment and diagnosis are limited. Given the high proportion of children with additional learning needs we are implementing screening tools across all cases to improve our understanding of likely SLCN needs while continuing to seek additional specialist resource support.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2025 - 2029 sets out the context and ambitions for delivering services that support the diverse communities that make up our society. This plan sets out equality objectives for both operational and strategic requirements. The YJESS Disproportionality Policy has recently been revised and enables the service to contribute to the success of this plan and provide a better, fairer, more inclusive service for children, victims and communities. This is essential to analyse how we can address the inequality experienced by children within a system which should be fair and equal.

Policing

The service continues to benefit from a strong and effective partnership with South Wales Police, underpinning the delivery of Child First principles and a shared commitment to diverting children away from the formal criminal justice system wherever appropriate. This collaborative approach ensures that children are supported through proportionate, child-centred interventions that seek to minimise unnecessary criminalisation and promote positive outcomes.

The YJESS is supported by a full-time seconded Police Officer, overseen by a Sergeant with responsibility for both Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. This arrangement provides resilience, flexibility and continuity of service, while ensuring police involvement is embedded throughout both operational delivery and strategic governance, including active representation on the YJESS Management Board.

Partnership working has strengthened opportunities for diversion, enabling children who come to police attention to access timely and appropriate support. A well-established multi-agency Out of Court resolution Panel supports decision-making for children receiving Out of Court Resolutions, ensuring that responses are tailored to individual circumstances, address underlying needs and avoid unnecessary escalation into the justice system.

The seconded Police Officer plays a key role in supporting children who enter police custody. Working closely with YJESS duty staff and custody officers, they promote timely decision-making, facilitate information sharing and help minimise the length of time children spend in custody. End-of-day checks are undertaken to identify children who may require Appropriate Adult support, while monthly monitoring of Appropriate Adult provision ensures children receive the assistance they are entitled to and helps inform service development. Cases involving overnight detention or extended periods in custody are routinely reviewed to identify learning and opportunities to improve children's experiences within the custody process.

In addition, to supporting diversion and custody arrangements, the Police Officer contributes to a range of statutory youth justice functions, including monitoring court order requirements, supporting victim liaison processes, sharing relevant intelligence and information, and contributing to shared and effective multi agency safety planning.

Across the region, the development of child-centred policing continues to strengthen the Child First approach. Through the Regional Safe and Secure Group, partners work collaboratively to reduce the time children spend in police custody and ensure detention is used only when necessary and proportionate.

In response to concerns of inconsistency of approach in Out of Court Resolution (OOCR) decision-making and access to diversionary outcomes across South Wales, YJESS Managers and South Wales Police have developed a Regional OOCR Policy which is nearing completion. This promotes a fair and consistent approach, reducing the risk of "justice by geography" and ensuring children receive equitable outcomes regardless of where they live. The policy will incorporate national knife crime guidance and establishes clear expectations regarding the use of diversionary interventions and OOCRs.

The partnership continues to enhance information sharing, early intervention and performance reporting arrangements to support informed decision-making, maximise opportunities for diversion and improve oversight of children's experiences in police custody. Work is ongoing in relation to the process for the completion of joint audits in areas identified for analysis by the Vale Management Board to enhance strategic oversight, provide constructive challenge and support continuous service improvement

Despite organisational changes within South Wales Police, including leadership changes and structural realignment, collaborative partnership arrangements have

continued to focus upon supporting effective outcomes for children and ensuring a coordinated, child-centred response across the youth justice system

Diversion

The Vale of Glamorgan Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) continues to deliver a well-established and bespoke Out of Court Resolution (OoCR) model as a cornerstone of its Child First and diversionary approach. The model provides a range of proportionate and responsive interventions tailored to the individual circumstances and needs of each child. These include Outcome 22, Community Resolutions, Youth Cautions, Youth Conditional Cautions, referral back to the Custody Sergeant for consideration of No Further Action, and, where appropriate, prosecution through the courts.

Diversion from the formal criminal justice system remains a key priority for the service, reflecting the strong evidence that avoiding unnecessary criminalisation improves long-term outcomes for children. Across South Wales arrangements have been strengthened through regional decision-making processes and a revised protocol. National knife crime guidance is also being embedded to support proportionate, evidence-based decisions that reflect each child's circumstances.

Governance and quality assurance arrangements have continued to evolve in response to recommendations from the Police and Crime Commissioner and wider national developments. Enhanced scrutiny processes have strengthened oversight, accountability and consistency across the region, providing greater assurance that decisions are child-centred, equitable and evidence-based. This work has been complemented by ongoing collaboration with the Youth Justice Board to implement learning from HM Inspectorate of Probation thematic inspections, driving continuous improvement in the quality and effectiveness of Out of Court Resolution processes and interventions.

The joint Youth OoCR Scrutiny Panel, established between Vale YJESS and Cardiff Youth Justice Service, provides robust independent multi-agency oversight of decision-making and outcomes. Independently chaired by Community Safety Partnership representatives, the panel operates in accordance with the All Wales Out of Court Resolutions Guidance and is underpinned by Child First, trauma-informed and restorative principles. Through detailed review of individual cases, the panel assesses whether outcomes are proportionate, appropriate and responsive to the needs of both children and victims, whilst also identifying emerging trends, areas of good practice and opportunities for service development and system improvement.

During the reporting period, the panel undertook a thematic review of incidents occurring within school settings. The review identified strong evidence of child-centred practice and high-quality professional decision-making, with practitioners consistently demonstrating an understanding of children's developmental needs, vulnerabilities, adverse experiences and wider contextual factors. The panel found that opportunities to divert children from the formal justice system were actively explored and

appropriately utilised, reflecting the service's commitment to minimising unnecessary criminalisation and promoting positive outcomes.

The review also identified opportunities to further strengthen communication and support for victims. While interventions and outcomes were generally considered appropriate and effective, victims did not always receive timely updates regarding case progression or final outcomes. Strengthening victim engagement and communication has therefore been identified as a key area for improvement, ensuring that victims feel informed, supported and reassured that their views and experiences have been fully considered throughout the process.

As a result of these robust diversionary arrangements, increasing numbers of children are being supported to take responsibility for their behaviour without entering the formal justice system. This approach reduces the potential stigma and longer-term consequences associated with criminalisation, while promoting rehabilitation, inclusion and positive future outcomes. Continued investment in governance, scrutiny, partnership working and regional consistency is helping to ensure that decision-making remains fair, transparent, proportionate and child-centred, while appropriately balancing the needs of victims, communities and public confidence in the youth justice system.

Prevention

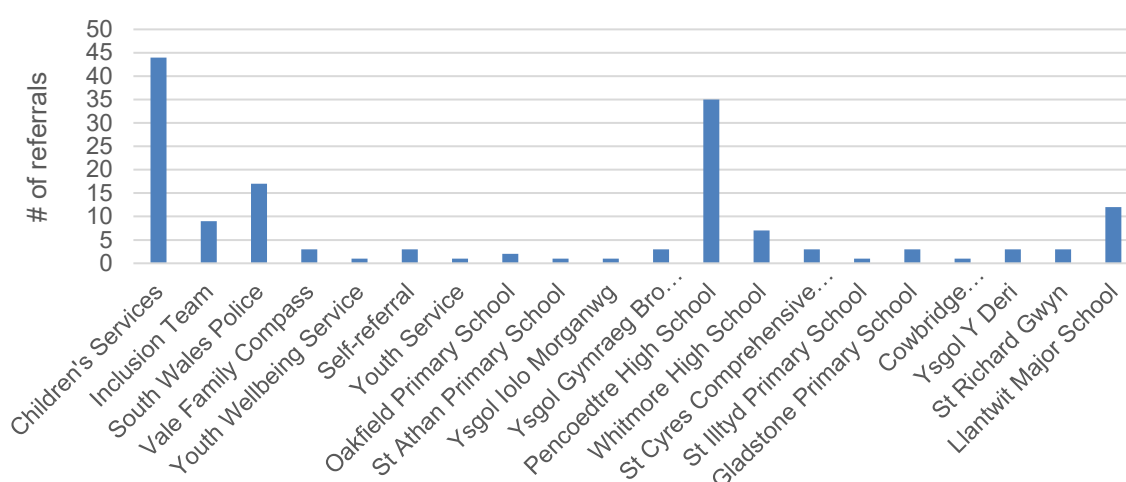
The Vale of Glamorgan YJESS Prevention strategy is underpinned by the fundamental aim of seeking to prevent children from entering the Criminal Justice System by identifying concerns around offending or anti-social behaviour. The Prevention Service works proactively with children and families and utilises strength and evidence-based interventions designed to reduce future offending and harm to children, victims and communities.

Evidence demonstrates that children who receive early, targeted intervention are significantly less likely to enter the formal youth justice system. The YJESS Prevention strategy is underpinned by this fundamental aim. The Service works proactively with children and families and utilises strength and evidence-based interventions designed to reduce the risk of offending and promote pro-social behaviour. The service aims to provide timely interventions which increase resilience and empower children.

Prevention Referrals

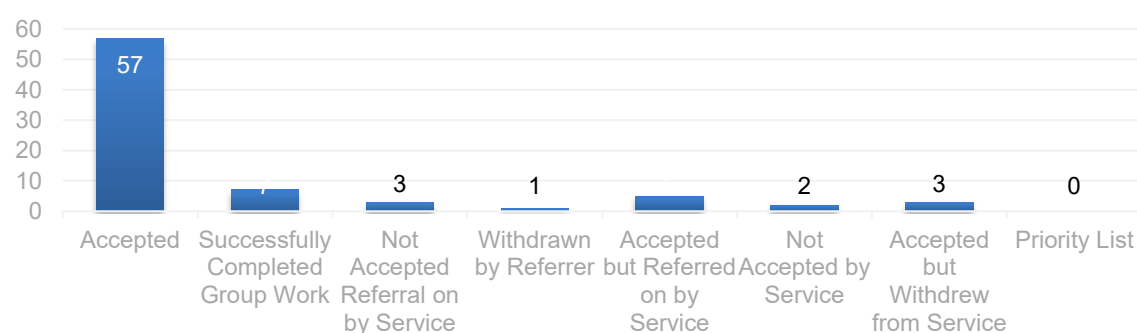
Referrals can be made through a variety of means including Children's Services, local schools, South Wales Police, Youth Wellbeing and Mental Health Service, the family themselves.

Referrers into Prevention 2025-26



A large proportion (49%) of prevention referrals come from schools due to concerns regarding behaviours being displayed within the school and community environments. These children are also more likely to be on a reduced timetable, have experienced exclusions, and are at risk of permanent exclusion. This has contributed to the YJESS Prevention service coming alongside local schools and offering tailored educational support and introducing new technologies, such as Virtual Reality, in group work in schools to explore and challenge decision making, consequences, and share views in a safe and contained setting.

Referral Outcome



Our verification process ensures that referrals submitted are appropriately assessed and the right support is given at the right time. This process is strengthened by robust weekly allocation discussion within the leadership teams to discuss identified needs. This resulted in 82% referrals made within the six months to March 2026 being accepted into interventions (1:1 and group work). The remaining 18% were made up of referrals whereby identified need could be most appropriately met through signposting to partnerships agencies, some children and families revoked consent when support was offered, and other referrals were eligible for Turnaround support via YJESS.

The Service has already adopted a tiered support system based on the needs identified from the referral and the concern level indicated through a verification process. This includes educational work around anti-social and criminal behaviour and proportionate assessments for children assessed at a lower level of potential risk of offending or ASB involvement, to a full Prevention and Diversion assessment and unique intervention for those assessed as at higher need.

Brief Prevention Packages are offered as part of the close working partnership with the Community Safety Team and educational services to children involved, or risk of being involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour at earlier stages to provide support. This includes undertaking a proportionate assessment and tailoring a briefer preventative intervention that meets the child's needs.

The Prevention Service maintains strong relationships with fellow early intervention services in the Vale of Glamorgan. Partnership with the Community Safety Team thrives due to the ongoing efforts from all organisations included. This includes weekly meetings to discuss the needs and behaviours of children who have been involved in anti-social behaviour, regular



community engagement sessions and reviews of processes to ensure effective targeting of the ever-changing dynamics and challenges that are presented within communities in need of support.

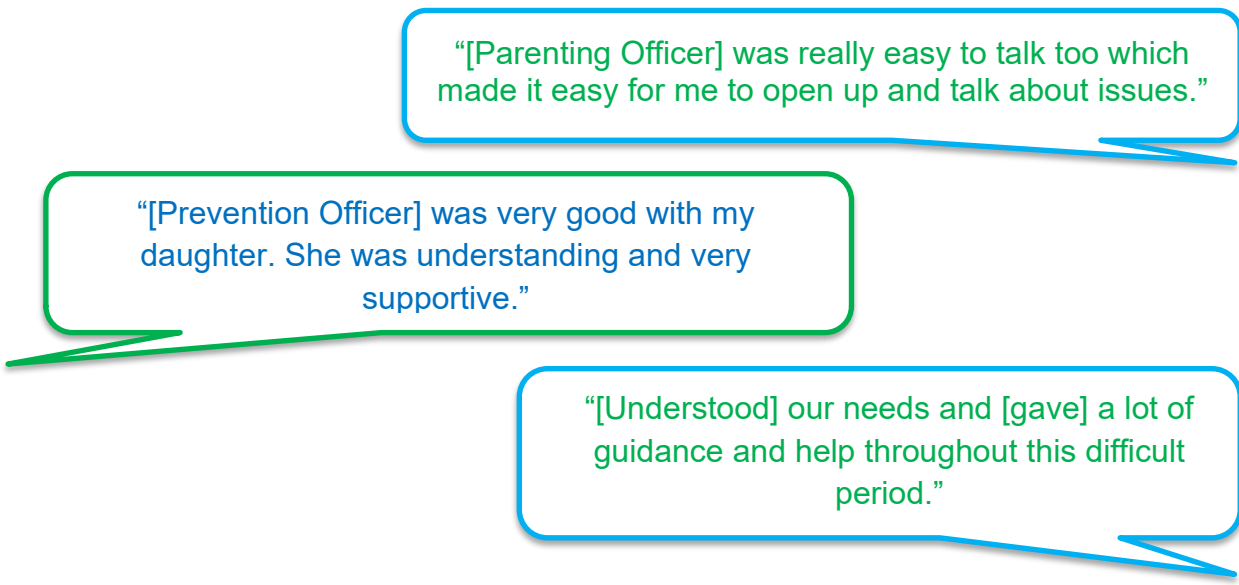
When undertaking Outreach projects in areas across the Vale of Glamorgan the Prevention Service often link in with Community Safety and Police partners to ensure effective strategies and outcomes are in place for engaging with children and their communities. Several of these outreach sessions have taken place during specific times of the year such as Halloween, exam results, and fireworks night. This is something the service would like to enhance over time so the strong link with communities continues to grow.

It is important to ensure that services refer children to the correct agency for additional support based on their identified needs. As part of the Vale Family Compass, the Prevention Service offers and expedited processes to ensure appropriate and timely support is provided. The YJESS will ensure information and advice in a variety of formats is available to practitioners within the Vale of Glamorgan to ensure that they

meet their responsibilities as a tier 1 preventative service but are also aware of the additional support service provided by the YJESS.

Each intervention plan developed within the 3 tiers is done so utilising a Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool; this allows each assessment and plan to be written to the child and ensure their involvement within this process. A child's plan belongs to, and is created by, them and our role is to facilitate them achieving the completion of their plan; this has led to feedback such as YJESS practitioners being “really inclusive” and children identifying that they really “...like working with YJESS”. Another child expressed that “Appointments were arranged through me [and I] felt like I could talk to about anything” while another child highlighted the positive that sessions were located “where they wanted and worked best for them.”

Using the Child First and trauma-informed approaches, the model allows the YJESS practitioner to support the child, and their parents/carers, identify their needs and strengths and create a plan to positively move forward.



“[Parenting Officer] was really easy to talk too which made it easy for me to open up and talk about issues.”

“[Prevention Officer] was very good with my daughter. She was understanding and very supportive.”

“[Understood] our needs and [gave] a lot of guidance and help throughout this difficult period.”

This enables the child to receive the appropriate support, either on a 1:1 basis or in group settings, with access to the specialist resources available within the wider YJESS partnership support offer.

Evaluations take place through feedback from the child and family at the beginning and end of intervention support, and the prevention service is part of the First Time Entrant and Offending/Reoffending audits which take place if the child commits an offence. Prevention practice examples are detailed below including initial concerns, support undertaken, and outcome.

Good Practice Example (Prevention)

BEFORE

Child – 13 – female
Engaging in bullying and threatening behaviours in person and online.
Substance use (Alcohol).
Education concerns leading to fixed term exclusions.
Problematic friendship groups.
Lots of unsupervised time due to parent's work responsibilities.
Self-harming behaviours.



The child has successfully completed their Prevention intervention having engaged in weekly sessions. Reflection session took place around relationships with peers and the impact this has on themselves. ASB Awareness was tailored to online behaviours. This covered victim empathy, consequential thinking, local processes and education around crime and anti-social behaviour. Sessions took place within school to maximise engagement. Strength based work around relationships at home. Education support with added resilience to the school-based report. Referral supported to Strive Brief substance use work engaged with and completed.

AFTER

No further ASB reports.
Behaviour manageable within school.
Better communication between parent and child, resulting in better oversight and safeguarding.
Home behaviour calmer due to improving relationships.
Better awareness of peer influence and has displayed positive decision-making skills when with certain friends.



BEFORE

Child 11 years old. Adverse Childhood Experiences: parental separation, parental alcohol misuse, parental substance misuse, parental incarceration, parental mental health, death of close family member.

Referred to Prevention in May 2025 for concerns around throwing items at pupils at school, including scissors, causing damage within parent's home, and threatening to harm themselves and others with a knife.

Inconsistent living arrangements.

Child started Year 7 however due to accommodation moves, child had to move schools which exacerbated the instability.

Child struggled with instability, trusting others, and maintaining friendships leading to verbal/physical conflict with other peers at school and within the community.

Multiple Anti-Social Behaviours incidents and disengagement from school.

Child assaulted another Child in the community. Outcome 22 issued.

Child was a victim of an assault by a Child in the community.



INTERVENTION



Discussions focused on child's wellbeing including increasing self-confidence and a safe space to share worries/concerns.

Anti-Social Behaviour Awareness programme and identifying the consequences of behaviours on themselves and others.

Increase child's awareness of risks and dangers associated with being in possession of a weapon/sharp object, reflect on impact of behaviours/actions on others in a trauma-informed way such as third person to avoid feelings of shame.

Emotional regulation, which included helping the child understand how he may feel, what the feelings mean, and how to manage certain emotions, such as anger and frustration.

Intervention sessions adapted to regular breaks of engaging in an activity such as a game, and having the specific intervention work to be conversation or activity based.

Attending professional multi-agency meetings for the child and family, including Child Protection and Child Looked After meetings.

Health consultation with CAMHS Nurse in relation to child's trauma and heightened emotions.

Referral to YJESS Family and Parenting Practitioner to support Mum at home, such as boundaries and emotional warmth.

AFTER

Child is currently supported by Children's Services and has accommodation stability with extended family.

Child is starting to build positive and trusting relationships with teachers at school due to current school stability.

There have been no further Anti-Social Behaviour/Offending incidents within the community or any concerns around behaviour at home.

No further concerns in relation to child being in possession of weapons/sharp objects or threatening to harm himself.

Child is able to independently reflect on own behaviour and impact of actions on others including physical and emotional harm. This was a difficulty for the child at the start of the intervention whereby the child required YJESS Practitioner support in exploring and reflecting on impact of behaviours on others.

It is evident that child is using their voice more in sharing thoughts/feelings and worries/concerns with extended family at home and with practitioners.

Child has reflected on positive progress that has been made during intervention and has expressed feeling pride for making positive decisions.



Education, Training and Employment

Education remains one of the most significant protective factors in preventing offending, reducing vulnerability, and improving long-term outcomes for children. However, children known to YJESS continue to experience disproportionately high levels of poor attendance, exclusion, educational disruption and disengagement when compared with their peers (65% of current cohort). These challenges are often linked to trauma, adverse childhood experiences, unmet additional learning needs, social, emotional and mental health difficulties, and wider family or community factors. Reduced engagement in education can increase vulnerability to exploitation, anti-social behaviour and offending, whilst also limiting opportunities for positive peer relationships, achievement and future progression.

In recognition of these risks, YJESS has continued to strengthen its partnership with Learning and Skills, which remains one of the service's most effective partnerships. Feedback has highlighted that ***“collaboration is underpinned by a shared drive to ensure the best support and outcomes for some of the most vulnerable children in the authority... Services are coherent and joined up. Whilst there is still a great deal to address and areas to develop, the structures in place and close working relationships ensure that the local authority is well placed to continue to improve its services to children known to the YJESS/Learning and Skills partnership”***

Significant progress has been made over the last twelve months to improve educational outcomes through earlier identification of need, coordinated intervention and enhanced multi-agency planning. Through participation in Team Around the Child meetings, school-based planning forums, Risk of Permanent Exclusion meetings and the Education, Training and Employment (ETE) interface meetings. The service works collaboratively with partners to identify barriers to engagement and implement timely support to prevent exclusion and educational disengagement.

A key strength has been the continued development of specialist educational support which has been located within the YJESS. Through strong partnerships with schools, education services and community providers, children have been able to access tailored programmes designed to re-engage them in learning and build confidence, resilience and motivation.

Alongside operational developments, there has been growing emphasis across the local authority on strengthening collaborative approaches to identifying and supporting vulnerable learners at the earliest opportunity. Improved information sharing, joint planning arrangements and a focus on preventative intervention are helping to reduce the risk of exclusion and ensure that children receive coordinated support before difficulties escalate. YJESS continues to play a key role in this work, bringing expertise in trauma-informed practice, vulnerability and child-centred intervention to support education partners in developing effective responses for children at risk.

A particularly successful example of this partnership has been the development of joint working with Derw Newydd, the Vale's specialist provision for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. Recognising increasing demand and the complexity of

need amongst some learners, Derw Newydd has delivered education from space within YJESS offices, enabling children already engaged with the service to access learning within a familiar, trusted and supportive environment.

This innovative approach has strengthened educational engagement, improved continuity of support and reduced barriers to participation for some of the most vulnerable learners. It exemplifies the creativity, flexibility and commitment of both the YJESS and Learning and Skills to developing bespoke solutions that place children's needs at the centre of service delivery. The approach is particularly important given that 68% of children known to the service have identified Additional Learning Needs (ALN), highlighting the importance of personalised educational pathways and strong partnership working to improve outcomes for this vulnerable cohort of children.

The strength of the education partnership is further demonstrated through collaborative working with Camau Fynni, ensuring that children with the most complex needs can access bespoke educational pathways that maintain engagement and progression. Through coordinated planning and flexible provision, partners work together to support children facing significant barriers to education, including those requiring resettlement support, restrictive bail conditions, or intensive intervention. This personalised approach has contributed to positive Education, Training and Employment (ETE) outcomes, with all permanently excluded learners supported to achieve qualifications and progress into post-16 education, training or employment opportunities. Encouragingly, the number of children within this cohort has reduced, while the breadth and flexibility of educational support available has continued to expand. Collectively, these arrangements reflect a shared commitment to inclusion, early intervention and preventing educational disengagement, recognising the critical role that education plays in improving long-term outcomes and reducing the risk of future offending.

Supporting positive post-16 destinations remains a significant strength. The YJESS contributes to practical skills development, individual mentoring and employability support to young people transitioning from statutory education. Strong partnerships with Careers Wales and Communities for Work enable young people to access tailored advice, guidance, training and employment opportunities that meet their individual aspirations and needs. These well-established relationships support smoother transitions into education, employment and training, helping to improve confidence, raise aspirations and secure positive long-term outcomes for young people.

Improving attendance, reducing exclusions and strengthening engagement in education will remain key priorities over the coming year. Further development of preventative work within schools, expanded access to alternative engagement opportunities and continued investment in partnership working will support the shared ambition of ensuring that all children known to YJESS are able to access, participate in and benefit from education, training and employment opportunities that maximise their potential and support positive futures.

Restorative Approaches and Victims

Following the implementation of the Victims' Code of Practice in 2021 (updated 2024) and the completion of our baseline audit assessing compliance, YJESS introduced a number of changes and improvements to ensure alignment with the Code. With the introduction of HMIP's new Inspection Framework in 2025, emphasising support for victims, victim safety and the victim journey within inspections for the first time, development from the outcomes of the detailed audit against these standards continues.

Options for restorative processes are discussed with each victim who agrees to be contacted by the YJESS victim officers, as well as alternative options for how the impact on them of an offence can be fed-back to the child in order to help support the restorative process.

In addition to this, each victim is now also offered the opportunity to take part in a formal assessment process to help identify strengths or specific needs that they benefit from support. This is especially beneficial for child victims who can benefit from the full range of intensive resources and professional relationships within the multiagency YJESS and partner agencies, including consultations with health and education professionals and support from our Family and Parenting Officer.

The service has provided intensive, child-centred support to victims of crime and their families, responding flexibly to individual needs and circumstances. This has included advocacy with education providers to secure appropriate support and provision, attendance at school meetings to ensure the child's voice is heard, and practical assistance to reduce barriers to engagement. Support has also extended to parents and carers through emotional guidance and practical help, strengthening their capacity to support their child. Where appropriate, practitioners have accompanied children and their parents to court, helping to build confidence, promote self-advocacy, and enable meaningful participation in the justice process. This holistic approach has contributed to improved engagement, increased resilience, and better outcomes for children and families and critically enhanced victim safety and wellbeing.

Recognising the importance of feedback in improving services for victims, we have adapted our questionnaire to support feedback from victims on the service provided to them. We have also adapted ways in which this feedback can be given, either on hardcopy forms, web-links or through a QR code in order to help capture the views of as many victims as possible to support our service development.

The YJESS continues to strongly promote restorative approaches, facilitated by the victim officers and community volunteers, throughout our work with children. We are nearing the end of our latest recruitment and training process for volunteers, using a bespoke restorative and trauma informed training package developed within the service. YJESS volunteers facilitate restorative Referral Order panels in line with Youth Justice Legislation, help support community reparation, facilitate other face-to-face restorative meetings, and provide appropriate adult support in custody. The ongoing supervision and development of the

YJESS volunteers, who are an extremely important part of the YJESS, will continue through group supervision and ongoing training provision.

The Vale of Glamorgan YJESS benefits from a full-time enthusiastic and skilled Reparation Officer who leads a range of innovative, skills-based community reparation projects. He works closely with the YJESS Victim Liaison Officers to support both direct (as identified by the victim) and indirect reparation work. Planned reparation work within the community for the next year includes:

Environmental Tasks

Beach Cleans

Beach clean activities are undertaken weekly across the Vale of Glamorgan, including Heritage Coast beaches and coastal pathways. These activities help children develop a greater understanding of the impact that waste and pollution can have on the environment and local communities. They also encourage personal responsibility and demonstrate how individual actions can contribute to environmental improvement and community wellbeing.

Community Clean-Up Projects

Community clean-up activities are carried out across the Vale of Glamorgan in partnership with the Council's Visible Services team. This successful partnership has been in place for approximately 24 years.

Visible Services provides a dedicated vehicle to support the project, which is fully maintained and fuelled at no cost to YJESS. Through the active involvement of children, the project has delivered significant benefits to local communities and has previously been recognised with a Keep Wales Tidy Award.

Graffiti Removal

Graffiti removal activities are undertaken throughout the Vale of Glamorgan as part of our ongoing partnership with Visible Services.

Children contribute to improving local environments by assisting with the overpainting and removal of graffiti from walls, buildings, shop frontages, alley gates, and other community locations. These activities help restore public spaces, reduce anti-social behaviour concerns, and enhance community pride.

Gardening and Grounds Maintenance

The YJESS delivers a small gardening project that enables children to prepare, maintain, and cultivate growing areas while developing practical skills and an understanding of environmental sustainability. The service also supports community-based organisations and projects with gardening and grounds maintenance tasks and can undertake work as part of direct reparation activities where appropriate. More recently, the YJESS has commenced a

new community project involving the monthly grass-cutting and maintenance of the grounds at Gileston Church and the adjacent graveyard, helping to preserve an important local community asset

CSCS Card Training

Alongside reparation activities, the Reparation Coordinator supports children to develop their employability and practical work-based skills by preparing them to undertake the **Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) Health and Safety qualification**. This includes providing guidance through training materials, videos, and practice quizzes, helping children to build their knowledge, confidence, and understanding of workplace health and safety requirements.



Community project at Gileston Church



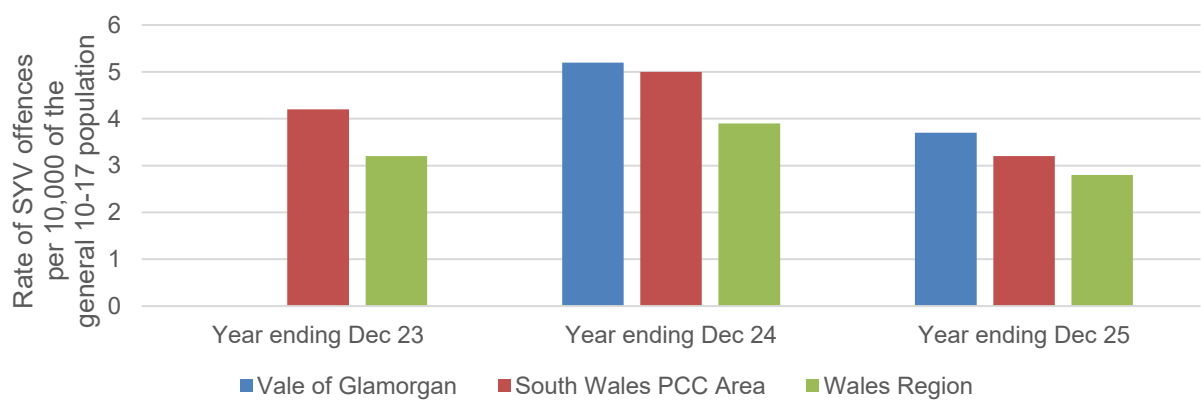
SERIOUS VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION, AND CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING

The YJESS has seen an increase in the number of offences which meet the YJB's criteria for Serious Youth Violence between 2023 and 2024, from five in 2022, zero in 2023 and seven offences in 2024. Whilst the 2024 increase was notable to the 2023 figure. It is significant to note that that the Vale of Glamorgan's rate of Serious Youth Violence per 10,000 of the 10-17 population is currently 3.7 which represents a decrease of 1.5 from the previous year.

Whilst this reflects a decrease, it must be acknowledged that due to significant and devastating incidents of serious youth violence across the Vale of Glamorgan, it remains higher than the overall figures for Wales and South Wales PCC area.

Implementation of the Serious Violence Duty in the Vale of Glamorgan

<i>Vale of Glamorgan</i>	<i>Year end Dec 2025</i>	<i>Year ending Dec 2024</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>Year ending Dec 2023</i>	<i>Change</i>
<i>Number of SV offences</i>	5	7	-2	0	5
<i>Rate of SV offences</i>	3.7	5.2	-1.5	0	4
<i>Proportion SV offences comprise of all offences</i>	9%	13%	3.1pp	0%	9.4pp



The Serious Violence Duty ('the Duty'), introduced in January 2023 under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, places a statutory obligation on specified authorities to collaborate in reducing serious violence within local communities. The Duty aims to ensure relevant services work together to share information and allow them to target their interventions, where possible through existing partnership structures, collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence within their local communities.

The impact that violence can have on individuals, communities, and society is well established in research. Exposure to and involvement in violence can seriously affect life trajectories and health, educational attainment, career prospects, and relationship dynamics and interactions. Beyond this, the ramifications of violent crime can also be felt by wider society through strain on public services and increased fear of violent victimisation.

The Duty enables the YJESS to play a key part of the government's programme of work to collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence: utilising a multi-agency approach to understand the epidemiology and impact of serious violence, focusing on prevention and early intervention, and being informed by evidence collated through the serious violence performance measure for Youth Justice Services.

Following the completion of the Serious Violence Needs Assessment, commissioned by the Serious Violence Board, a clear priority emerged around incidents of serious violence occurring within educational settings. The Board is chaired by Dan Jones, Serious Violence Lead for the Police and Crime Commissioner, with Kirsty Davies, Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) Manager, serving as Deputy Chair. The assessment provided valuable insight into local trends, risks, and vulnerabilities affecting children and highlighted the need for a coordinated multi-agency response to address violence and improve safety within schools.

In response to these findings, a dedicated multi-agency subgroup was established to undertake a more detailed examination of the data, explore the underlying causes and contributing factors, and identify practical actions to reduce the impact of serious violence on children, Children, and school communities. The subgroup is led by Education but benefits from strong partnership working and expertise from YJESS, Social Services, Community Safety, the Youth Service, Health partners, and South Wales Police. This collaborative approach ensures that interventions are informed by a broad range of professional perspectives and are focused on both prevention and early intervention.

The subgroup has identified a number of key areas of focus aimed at strengthening schools' ability to prevent, respond to, and recover from incidents of violence. These include reviewing and enhancing guidance and procedures relating to emergency lockdown arrangements to ensure schools are well prepared to respond effectively in the event of a serious incident. Work is also underway to support the implementation of the Weapons in Schools and Educational Settings Guidance, ensuring that schools have a

clear and consistent framework for managing concerns relating to weapons possession and associated risks.

In addition, the group is exploring opportunities to introduce and further develop Violence Champions within schools. These champions will play an important role in promoting awareness, supporting prevention initiatives, facilitating early identification of concerns, and strengthening links between schools and partner agencies. The aim is to embed a culture of safety, prevention, and support within educational settings, whilst ensuring that children have access to trusted adults who can provide advice, guidance, and intervention where required.

A significant area of concern identified through the assessment and subsequent discussions is the increasing number of school exclusions. Recognising the strong correlation between exclusion, vulnerability, and adverse outcomes for children, partners are committed to developing a greater understanding of the factors contributing to exclusion. To support this, work is being undertaken to map the child's journey leading up to an exclusion, including identifying the involvement of partner agencies, previous interventions and support provided, and any unmet needs that may have existed.

This approach seeks to move beyond the exclusion event itself and instead consider the wider context of a child's experiences, vulnerabilities, and interactions with services. By reviewing agency involvement and identifying patterns or missed opportunities for support, partners aim to better understand whether additional interventions could have prevented the escalation of issues leading to exclusion. This learning will help inform future practice, promote earlier identification of need, and ensure that children receive the right support at the right time.

Ultimately, the work of the subgroup reflects a shared commitment amongst partners to reducing serious violence, supporting children to remain engaged in education, and creating safe and supportive school environments. Through strong multi-agency collaboration, evidence-based decision making, and a focus on prevention and early intervention, the partnership is working to improve outcomes for children, Children, school staff, and the wider community.

Tackling serious violence is a key priority for the Vale of Glamorgan. The YJESS working closely with the Community Safety Partnership, remain committed to working collaboratively with children, families, and communities to foster a cultural shift—emphasising that violence is not inevitable, but preventable.

This requires collective and coordinated action to address the root causes. Without strong, trauma informed, targeted responses and early interventions, violence can become normalised and lead to more serious offences and long-term justice involvement for children. Many of whom are extremely vulnerable and have experienced victimisation and Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Child Exploitation

The YJESS actively supports and participates in multi-agency forums addressing Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), in response to specific incidents of concern. The exploitation pathway is now firmly established across children's services with regular reviews of the children who are subject to these procedures.

In addition, there is currently the development of a formal multi-agency strategic oversight panel to consider children presenting significant emerging needs within the context of exploitation, or where safeguarding concerns are escalating. The panel will provide a coordinated forum for multi-agency oversight, enabling the review of all actions and interventions undertaken to date, whilst identifying any additional measures that may be required.

Through a holistic and multidisciplinary approach, the panel will strengthen safeguarding arrangements, ensure risks are effectively assessed and managed, and promote the wellbeing of children by considering their needs from a comprehensive and multifaceted perspective. This will support timely, coordinated decision-making and enhance the effectiveness of partnership responses to complex and emerging safeguarding concerns.

Further work is planned to further strengthen exploitation responses including a review of the Regional Safeguarding Board's exploitation framework, the development of an accompanying delivery plan and development of a local exploitation strategy.

When appropriate, high-risk case operational meetings for Children open to YJESS are integrated with CYPS-led exploitation meetings. This joint approach ensures that all relevant information is shared within the appropriate forum, allowing for effective safeguarding plans to be created and disseminated.

These meetings are co-chaired by a YJESS Practitioner Manager and the Child Exploitation lead officer and are attended by police officers with specialist expertise in exploitation.

Where there is significant concern involving multiple children or other areas of very high concern following exploitation meetings, strategic Complex Exploitation Meetings have been introduced. These are chaired by an Operational Manager and are designed to coordinate a robust multi-agency response.

Practitioners are supported by resources including the exploitation toolkit used to screen for signs of exploitation. This screening tool informs requests for exploitation meetings and the submission of safeguarding referrals. There has also been a focus upon strengthening safety plans which the YJESS and Lead exploitation Officer have led on.

The Local Authority and YJESS Service Manager engage regionally with a police-led task force on Serious and Organised Crime.

YJESS staff are well-trained in identifying exploitation, and this awareness is embedded within the service's operational oversight. Practitioners consistently use the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for children identified as exploited and make referrals to CYPS, advocating for strategy meetings in line with the All-Wales Procedures.

All identified or at-risk children are referred internally to KESP meetings to ensure coordinated multi-agency planning. The YJESS also maintains strong partnerships with the St. Giles Trust and Barnardo's, facilitating specialist support, advocacy, and consultation for affected children. These services are often accessed alongside NRM referrals.

The YJESS has made a considerable number of NRM referrals—often jointly with CYPS and police—which have led to positive Reasonable Grounds and Conclusive Grounds decisions. These outcomes have informed court proceedings, with some children successfully raising Section 45 defences under the Modern Slavery Act. However, a continuing challenge remains the prolonged timeframe for achieving Conclusive Grounds decisions, which frequently exceed expected guidelines. These delays impact case outcomes and can result in extended periods under police bail or Released Under Investigation (RUI).

At a strategic level, YJESS is represented by a service manager on the local Channel Panel, which reviews referrals related to concerns about radicalisation or extremism and the PREVENT Board. Channel Panel participation enables access to specialist interventions and allows YJESS to suggest referrals—such as to prevention services—for children not previously known to the service.

Detention in Police Custody and Remands

Remands

We have seen two children being remanded into custody during the reporting period (co-defendants). Despite robust consideration of alternatives, given that the seriousness of the charges and subsequent conviction of murder there was a degree of inevitability underpinning a custodial remand. Both children were sentenced to 16- and 18-year periods of custody.

The service consistently provides the Courts with advice and opportunities for bail support to reduce the avoidable reliance on remands to custody (and this includes working with our partners in Children's Services where remand to the care of the local authority is viable, necessary and proportionate).

During the reporting period, the Vale YJESS successfully negotiated Bail Support packages for two other Children who were on the cusp of being remanded to custody. Neither of these Children has since been sentenced to custody; an indication that the bail

support package was successful and offered a reliable basis for avoiding the use of custody.

Use of Custody and Constructive Resettlement

During the reporting period we had a total of 4 Children serving custodial sentences. Two of these relate to the above co-defendants in relation to an offence of Murder. The other 2 Children were co-defendants of an offence of S.18 Wounding with Intent. All matters were of a high level of seriousness and custodial sentences were deemed inevitable and have been discussed in detail in previous sections of this plan.

WORKING WITH FAMILIES

The Vale of Glamorgan Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) remain committed to ensuring that all children are safeguarded and that their wellbeing is actively promoted.

The launch of the Vale Family Compass in Autumn 2025 established a single point of access for families seeking support. Through this model, families can access the Family Information Service, Early Help Services (including all Early Help teams and the Family First Advice Line (FFAL)), and the Intake Team, ensuring that they receive the right support at the right time.

Further developments have strengthened this approach through the creation of a direct pathway into Youth Justice and Early Support Services (YJESS) prevention services. This ensures that children receive the most appropriate intervention from the team best placed to respond to their presenting or emerging needs.

A single point of access enables effective internal triage processes, allowing CYPS to identify and coordinate the most suitable support for children and families. This reduces duplication of referrals, minimises the need for families to repeatedly share their history, and helps ensure that support is provided in a timely and coordinated manner.

Early intervention and timely support are key objectives in preventing difficulties from escalating into harm. The Vale Parenting Service and Team Around the Family (TAF) teams have developed an additional support pathway for parents whose own experiences of trauma create barriers to engagement with services.

The Relationship and Resilience Pilot brings together the expertise of both TAF and Vale Parenting Service practitioners. The pilot provides families with a single, consistent practitioner who delivers intensive, home-based support, ensuring a more streamlined experience for families. This support is delivered within a structured framework, with a planned transition into community-based services to promote sustained resilience and long-term positive outcomes.

The Intervention hub has been operational for approximately a year at the time of writing. The Interventions Hub is the Vale of Glamorgan's service for families with statutory involvement, designed to prevent children from entering the care and to maintain stability for those who are already looked after. It brings together a collaborative network of Local Authority and third sector agencies, all working in close partnership under a shared set of strengths-based values and principles. At the heart of the Intervention Hub is a commitment to a relationship-based model, where meaningful intervention is delivered through the presence of a trusted adult who can build rapport and offer consistent, compassionate support. Support available includes Baby and Beyond, Support workers, IFST. Family group conferencing, Action for Children Family Aides. Action for children,

Adolescent resource centre (ARC) and is reached by a referral from the child's allocated social worker.

Monthly Team Manager Development Sessions, attended by all managers across the Early Help and Prevention Service, provide a valuable forum for shared learning, strategic planning, and service development. These sessions promote a holistic view of the wider service landscape, ensuring that developments are considered within the context of the broader Early Help offer and that opportunities for collaboration are identified and maximised.

The sessions facilitate the sharing of good practice, the resolution of operational challenges, and the development of innovative approaches to meeting the needs of children, Children, and families. They also strengthen working relationships between teams, fostering a culture of collective responsibility and partnership working. A recent example of this collaborative approach is the inclusion of the Parenting Worker within YJESS in sessions delivered by the Vale Parenting Service, enabling the sharing of expertise, consistency of practice, and stronger pathways of support for families.

To support strategic objectives and service improvement, individual team plans have been developed for each service area. These plans align with the priorities and ambitions set out within Vale 2030 and provide clear direction for service delivery, workforce development, and performance improvement. Team plans are routinely shared and discussed within the manager development forum, ensuring that priorities are understood across service boundaries and that opportunities for joint working are identified at an early stage.

This approach has strengthened transition arrangements between services, enabling children, Children, and families to experience a more seamless journey through support pathways. By improving communication, enhancing understanding of each team's role and offer, and aligning priorities across services, the Early Help and Prevention Service is better positioned to deliver coordinated, responsive, and person-centred support that meets needs at the earliest opportunity.

FINAL STATEMENT

This Youth Justice Plan represents a comprehensive, evidence-based submission. It demonstrates strong alignment with national expectations, clear understanding of local needs, and a robust plan to improve outcomes for children and communities.

SIGN OFF

Chair of Vale of Glamorgan YJESS Board

Name	Lance Carver
Signature	
Date	21.07.26

Appendix 1



Vale of Glamorgan
YJESS Improvement P