

Public

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd

Democratic Services
Gwasanaethau Democrataidd

Chief Executive: K.Jones

Date: Monday, 5 June 2023

Dear Member,

SOCIAL SERVICES, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY CABINET
BOARD - THURSDAY, 8TH JUNE, 2023

Please find attached the following reports for consideration at the next meeting of the **Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Cabinet Board - Thursday, 8th June, 2023.**

Item

- a) Neath Port Talbot Youth Justice and Early Intervention Draft Youth Justice Plan 2022-2023 (Pages 1 - 50)
(This amended report replaces the one contained within the original document pack)
- b) Unpaid Carers (Pages 51 - 82)
(This is an urgent report for members consideration)

Yours sincerely

p.p Chief Executive

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NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL
Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Cabinet
Board

8th June 2023

Report of the Director of Social Services, Health & Housing –
Andrew Jarrett

Matter for Information

Wards Affected All

NEATH PORT TALBOT YOUTH JUSTICE AND EARLY INTERVENTION
DRAFT YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2022-2023

Purpose of the Report

- Last year, for the first time, the YJB made the decision to grade all submitted Youth Justice Plans, which form the basis of the allocation of grant received into service from the YJB.
- The YJB presented us with a new template in which to complete the plan NPT Committee ratified our Youth Justice (EIP) plan last September, (2022) which was then sent to the YJB and the Youth justice board for further scrutiny.
- This report presents the YJB's finding, analysis and summary of the grade allocated.
- The overall grade for last year's plan was Good.
- This report is for information, so that members can be made aware of the areas that will be addressed in the pending Neath Port Talbot Youth Justice and Early Intervention annual Youth Justice Plan 2023/2024

Background

Local authorities have a statutory duty to submit an Annual Youth Justice (YJ) Plan relating to their provision of youth justice services. Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth Justice Partnership's

responsibilities in producing a plan. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, after consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out the following areas of consideration:

1. Introduction, Vision and Strategy

1 (a) The expectations of the YJB

2. Our Vision.

3. Strategy

4. Local Context

5. Child First

6. The child's voice

7 . Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements

8. Resources and Services

8. (a) Interventions

9. Education, Employment and Training: 2021/2022

10. Restorative justice:

11. Progress against the last Youth Justice plan

12. Performance and priorities.

13 . National Standards

14. Service improvement plan

15 . Challenges, risks and issues

16. Evidence based practice.

17. Looking forward.

18. Priorities going forward

19. Conclusion and sign off

* Last year's plan is attached for reference in the appendix.

Youth Justice Board Feedback, analysis and grading of the 2022/2023 plan

Service Name	Neath Port Talbot Youth Justice Service
Region	South Wales
Was the template used?	Yes
Location of service	Local Authority Children's Services
Organisation of board chair	Local Authority
Head of service reporting arrangements	Head of other including YJS
Level of board chair	Director of Children's Services
Local context discussed	Fully Complete
<i>Example</i>	The service has a clear vision, which links to those of the wider local authority and other partnerships. NPT have done a lot of work to understand the needs of their cohort and local trends since they split from Western Bay.
Child First generally discussed	Fully Complete
<i>Practice example</i>	NPT include a full section on how they plan to be a child first service along with several other examples in other areas of the plan. This includes seeking the views of children in all stages of their interaction with the service and a focus on building positive relationships and empowering children to fulfil their potential
Seeing children as children discussed and work is child focused and developmentally informed	Fully Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	It is clear from the plan that this is the intention of the service. TRM.
Helping children develop a pro social identity	Fully Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	Use of TRM which is embedded in the work of the service
Voice of the child discussed	Fully Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	Participation group and feedback from children heard at the YJ Board.

Governance, leadership & partnership arrangements discussed	Fully Complete
<i>Example</i>	Lots of work done on improving governance arrangements and engagement of board. Outstanding rating in HMIP inspection.
Resources - what the grant will be used for is discussed	Partially Complete
<i>Example</i>	The plan outlines priorities of the service and needs of the cohort and also links to innovative practice and the new intervention centre. Although it is clear from the plan that the grant is funding YJ activity there is not a clear breakdown on what staff/elements of the service is specifically funded by the YJ grant money.
Progress on previous plan discussed	Fully Complete
<i>Example</i>	This plan references the previous plan which was mainly based on the HMIP improvement plan. The service has made good progress having been rated as green during their re-inspection.
FTE discussed	Partially Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	The service has identified a slight increase in FTEs although they are below their family average. There is good data on numbers of children involved in Bureau process but not a clear analysis for why the increase or any plans to address (if its needed).
Reoffending discussed	Partially Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	The K9 project, which focuses on exploitation, knife crime and county lines. This is run jointly by South Wales Police and the YJS and happens over three days. It involves police school liaison workers delivering a session on knife crime, sessions on drug awareness and basic first aid, and input from a victim of a knife crime attack.
Education discussed	Fully Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	Two were NEET
Over-representation with cohort discussed	Fully Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	The service developed a Disproportionality Task Force Subgroup (formed out of the Youth Crime Prevention Executive Board) that is aimed at addressing the overrepresentation of Black/Mixed-

	Heritage and Asian ethnic groups in the youth criminal justice system. Ongoing discussions about anti-racist practice and the impact of structural racism on young people and families is a standing agenda item at the Youth Crime Prevention Executive Board and Subgroup meetings. Board members regularly discuss disproportionality, possible factors which might be causing or affecting disproportionality and what could be done differently across the partnership to address this.
Prevention discussed	Partially Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	The service has an established prevention service, which is part of the YJS and has links to CS. There is limited analysis of prevention data and outcomes. I am aware this data goes to board and WG for funding but is limited in this plan.
Diversion discussed	Fully Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	Lots of OoCD data but limited analysis on how this will be used or inform actions over the next 12 months. Bureau model which is in place across all 17 YJS.
Serious violence & exploitation discussed	Fully Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	K9 project discussed earlier.
Constructive resettlement discussed	Incomplete
<i>Practice Example</i>	I know the service developed a resettlement policy for their last inspection but limited reference to it in this plan.
Use of custody discussed	Fully Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	Very small numbers of custody in NPT.
Restorative justice & victims discussed	Partially Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	Victim worker based in education 2 days a week and developing new interventions and programmes for children and victims. Limited practice examples.
National Standards	Fully Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	Full review of NS audit and action plan. NS 5 major focus of next 12 months
Challenges, risks & issues discussed	Fully Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	Linked to inspection recommendations and Covid recovery plan.
Service improvement key improvements discussed	Fully Complete

<i>Practice Example</i>	Clear improvement plan linked to previous and recent inspection recommendations.
Workforce development needs discussed	Partially Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	Is referenced but only one small section and discusses supervision and JICPA comments. Limited information about training needs linked to service themes or emerging trends.
Partnership improvements discussed	Fully Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	Board improvement noted in inspection outcomes and rated outstanding. Good buy in from the board.
Evidence-based practice & innovation discussed	Partially Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	There is some discussion around ECM, K9 project and the new intervention centre but no links to Hwb Doeth or regional groups made.
Evaluation discussed	Fully Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	Several projects referenced as ongoing or starting evaluation but limited details.
Looking forward development plans discussed	Partially Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	Improvement plan going forward provided
Looking forward emerging concerns discussed	Partially Complete
<i>Practice Example</i>	Some identified mainly focused on resources and risks of reduced funding
Signed off by chair	Fully Complete
Date of receipt	15/07/2022
Plan rating	Good
Comment on rating	Most areas covered although lacking some detail in examples
No of pages	41
No of words	11,815
Plan Years	1
Period	2022-23
Format	Other

- As Members can see, there was only one area that was deemed incomplete. Those areas marked with Green or Yellow, were deemed acceptable or good.
- As stated this was the first time that these plans have been analysed or graded and as Principal Officer, I did not know what to expect

guidance was limited and we did not know that grades would be allocated per plan across Wales.

- Now that the format and criteria for the grades have been set out and clarified hopefully, I can do even better in this year's plan.
- I would like to reassure committee today that even on some of the areas marked partially complete; it was the lack of reference in the plan that was questioned, not that the work or the resource was not present.
- As we have had the first feedback, I feel I am now more able to provide the narrative around the evidence required, which will ensure that our domains for scrutiny should read fully complete in this year's plan and this will be more straightforward going forward.
- Saying this, I was delighted that the plan received a good grade overall.
- Since then I have been made vice chair of HWB Doeth, (the academic arm of the YJB) and have presented at the national YJB conference.

Dr Ali Davies

Dr Alison Davies (DSW)

Principle Officer: Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service, Leaving Care and Pathways Plus.

Financial Impact

There was no financial impact on the local authority resulting from last year's plan.

Integrated Impact Assessment

A first stage impact assessment (Appendix 2) was undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage impact assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required.

Valleys Communities Impacts

No impact.

Workforce Impacts

There are no workforce impacts associated with this report.

Legal Impacts

There are no legal impacts associated with this report. The production of a youth justice plan is a statutory duty of the local authority under Part 3, Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Risk Management

There are no risk management issues associated with this report.

Recommendations (No Decision Required)

Members are requested to be sighted on the YJB grading report, Justice Plan 2023-24 and to note that all Youth Justice plans will be graded and analysed using this new template in future.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Youth Justice Plan 2022-23.

List of Background Papers

None.

Officer Contact

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Table of Abbreviations used in the Report and in the world of Youth Justice.

CSE = Child sexual exploitation

SERAF = Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework

LA = Local authority

SBUHB = Swansea Bay University Health Board

SWP = South Wales Police

SCB = Children Safeguarding Board

GDPR = General Data Protection Regulation

CAMHS = Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

PPU = Public protection unit

LAC = Looked after children

HSB = Harmful sexual behaviour

NPT= Neath Port Talbot

YOS = The Youth Offending Service

YJS = The Youth Justice Service

YJB = The Youth Justice Board.

HMIP Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation.

JICPA- Joint Inspection of Child protection arrangements.

TRM=Trauma Recovery Model

[Appendix 1](#)

For information only Previously Scrutinised.

NPT Youth Justice Service (Early Intervention and Prevention) Annual plan 2022-2023

Service	NPT Youth Justice Service Early Intervention and Prevention
Service Manager/ Lead	Ali Davies
Chair of YJS Board	Andrew Jarrett

Foreword by Andrew Jarrett:

I write as chair NPT YJS management board. I am pleased to ratify the 2022/23 Youth Justice plan and present it to the YJB as the road map for the service out of the pandemic and for the next year. You will be aware that the NPT YJS disaggregated from the Western Bay Youth Justice service in 2019. Since then we have been in the throes of a two year global pandemic and have been following a post inspection action plan (2018).

A new multi-agency management board has been re-convened and oversees the governance of the YJS. A new resource centre has been funded and refurbished and the YJS are very proud to have a community resource for young people called BASE 15. The YJS has demonstrated resilience, consistent and continued improvement, high quality interventions, excellent organisational delivery, good quality out of court disposal work and outstanding governance and leadership. This of course means improved outcomes for children and young people, the communities of NPT and the victims of crime.

As a result of the dedicated work of our young people, the management board, senior managers, the team and our multi-agency partners, two inspectorates: HMIP and the JICPA have recognised that significant progress has been made to

move Neath Port Talbot YJS from the lowest rating in its last inspection to the good rating where it sits now.

In effect, the service has moved through two of the inspectorate's ratings boundaries in a short space of time (and through a pandemic) and that is to be commended. It is clear the YJS have taken the findings from the last inspection seriously and have prioritised setting up a new and child focused Youth Justice Service (Early Intervention and Prevention). Thus, securing the relevant resources required for children known to the service, and have developed robust performance management and quality assurance systems. This has been achieved with the engagement of staff and young people, and is testament to the effective governance and leadership arrangements that are in place for the YJS, which were recognised and graded as 'outstanding' by the inspectorate.

COVID 19 proved challenging for everyone The YJS has worked closely with Education and Children Services, professionals from South Wales Police, Probation and Health, to ensure that children and their families continue to be supported during the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond. As chair of the management board, and director of social services, I am very proud of the improvements made and sustained, and look forward to building on the identified strengths, which will further enhance our NPT YJS.



Andrew Jarrett

15th July 2022

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1. Introduction, Vision and Strategy

Local authorities have a statutory duty to submit an annual youth justice (YJ) plan relating to their provision of youth justice services. Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth offending partnership's responsibilities in producing a plan. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, after consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan. A Youth Justice Strategic Plan is required under the provisions of the Crime & Disorder act 1998. Standard requirements are outlined annually and the Plan should be approved locally by the Youth Justice Management Board prior to submission to the Youth Justice Board. The new Youth Justice Strategic Plan will run from 2021-2024 and will be refreshed annually. It links with and contributes to the principles and priorities of the strategic Service plans of key partner agencies.

The principle aim of the Youth Justice Service is to prevent offending and re-offending by Children and young people who are under 18 years of age. Section 39 (1) and Section 38 (1,2) of the Crime and Disorder Act requires that statutory partners which includes the Local Authority, Police, National Probation Service and Health co-operate to provide multi-agency Youth offending services to prevent offending by children and young people.

1 (a) The expectations of the YJB

This Youth Justice Plan will equally address the functions assigned to the NPT youth justice service, including how services will prevent offending behaviour and reduce reoffending. It will reflect on how our service takes a strength based approach towards delivering a Child First justice system.

It is positive to note that the Youth Justice Board (YJB) recognises the remarkable response of the sector to the effects of the pandemic on delivery and the support that has been provided to children and young people. The YJB advocates that the importance of partners working together to put plans in place to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic are more crucial than ever.

These annual youth justice plans provide an opportunity to review performance and developments over a single year period and plan for the next year. This allows services to be able to respond to any changes that have taken place in the previous year, including new legislation, demographic changes, delivery of key perfor-

mance indicators, and developments in service delivery. The planning and production of a youth justice plan is beneficial to partnership working and service delivery to ensure the best outcomes for children.

2) Our Vision.

Our aim at NPT YJS (EIP) Youth Justice Service is to support young people and their families who are involved in, or on the fringe of, offending or anti-social behaviour. Integral to this is their safety and well-being, ensuring they remain protected from harm and exploitation, whilst balancing their risks with the impact on victims of crime and their communities. It is our objective to improve outcomes for our young people in all areas of their lives in order to achieve their potential and to make a successful transition to adulthood.

3) Strategy

The strategies used to make our vision a reality include:

- A commitment to providing a multi-agency and fully integrated services
- To complete holistic and timely assessments which are child focused and view the young person as child first and a child or young person involved in offending behaviour second.
- To make children and young people central to everything we do and ensure that their voice is heard. The child first approach will also consider the rights under the UN convention, and their agency in decision making processes and meetings about them.
- The Youth Justice Service (EIP) are well placed to identify and work with young people who are exploited or at risk of exploitation including our multi-agency staff; YJS (Youth Justice Service) police officer, substance misuse worker, probation, and education worker. This year we have extra support via a regional CAMHS nurse, stronger links with the third sector, and housing re youth homelessness. There are also more intervention workers and sessional support staff. This ensures close working relationships with their respective agencies, professional and constructive challenge and creates a healthy learning environment.
- The fully embedded safeguarding work stream in the NPT YJS acknowledges that our young people often engage in behaviours that involve taking risk, and that they are sometimes best placed to manage those risks alongside

us. Therefore, we promote a culture of risk awareness, risk assessment management, balancing risk versus danger, and using language with and about young people that is non-blaming or judgemental.

- Thematic internal audits on topics, which we feel need scrutiny in the service are, and will continue to be embedded into our service. To date we have completed a CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation) and girls and boys audits. Completion of assets within timescales are audited weekly as our visits to our young people.
- We form part of, are included in the audit cycle across children services, and are well sighted on any audits that we need to be involved in or contribute to.
- Criminal exploitation, contextualised risk, triangulation meetings with children services will be developed further to manage risk of extra familial harm in the community, focusing on the behaviours and risks presented by perpetrators and not the socially constructed behaviours of children and young people. These work streams and interventions are being developed further including maintaining the consultation clinics with Better Futures, further training and Community risk profiling and mapping. We have very close links with the safeguarding lead for NPT and are fully integrated in all safeguarding work streams across the council
- We are embracing and developing the learning culture of child and adult practice reviews and internal learning reviews following scrutiny of cases. There are three trained practice reviewers within the Youth Justice Service and some of the youth Justice cases are now presented to the Safeguarding board for scrutiny and constructive review. This process celebrates positive practice and highlights areas that need development.
- We have now completed the development of a fully functional Young people's resource centre in NPT. This has been integral to moving out of the pandemic, developing safe spaces for young people and creating and applying interventions which support our service delivery to ensure the best outcomes for children and to prevent offending and re-offending by Children and young people who are under 18 years of age (Section 39 (1) and Section 38 (1,2) of the Crime and Disorder Act)

- We are a person centred service and therefore the views and participation of our young people are integral to everything we do. Participation is encouraged and young people and their families' voice choice and control is included as a primary consideration. There is a participation officer who works very closely with the Youth Justice Service and a named participation lead in the YJS. This will be discussed further later in the report

4) Local Context

In Neath Port Talbot, the Youth Justice Service (Early Intervention and Prevention) are incorporated within the Children's Services directorate of the council.

Our Youth Justice Service is a statutory multidisciplinary partnership, equipped to deal with the needs of the whole child. Youth Justice Work is governed and shaped by a range of legislation and guidance specific to the youth justice sector (such as the National Standards for Youth Justice) or else applicable across the criminal justice sector (for example, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements guidance MAPPA). The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) provides some funding to YOTs. It also monitors our performance and issues guidance regarding how things are to be done.

Neath Port Talbot is geographically situated in South Wales and includes two towns: Port Talbot, which is on the coast and industrialised, and Neath, which is inland and a Welsh valleys community. The population consists of approximately 140,300 people. Those who identify as white equate to 138,500 people and those who identify as black, Asian and minority ethnic equate to 1,600, which is 1.1 per cent of the population. The proportion of people who can speak Welsh is 22 per cent, according to the 2021 annual population survey. The most recent published figure shows that the number of first-time entrants in Neath Port Talbot reduced during 2019. The service has calculated this for the 12-month period covering 2020/2021 and it shows that the number of first-time entrants was consistent with previous years. This means that Neath Port Talbot is below the average for Wales. Although the percentage of the YJS cohort who reoffend has remained steady since 2019, it is still above the Welsh average for the same time period. During 2020/2021 Neath Port Talbot had three custodial sentences, which due to the small number of cases nationally was above the average for Wales. The performance reports presented to the management board have led to specific requests for themed

audits. These have included child sexual exploitation, gender data regarding boys and girls, violence against the person, accommodation and homelessness.

Our early intervention and prevention model deployed within Children Services means that support can now be delivered at the earliest prevention stages, or equally, sustained beyond the young person's Court Order, with the overarching aim to support young people to achieve their potential and to prepare them to make a successful transition to adult and working life.

Neath Port Talbot Youth Justice Service is further required to meet the statutory requirements for Youth Justice including National Standards and National inspection regimes, overseen by the Youth Justice Board and Ministry of Justice. It must continually seek to balance the risks and vulnerabilities of young people with the risk that this poses to the public and wider communities, while managing the overall ambition of improving outcomes for young offenders, their families, victims of crime and communities.

5) Child First

The Youth Justice Board's (YJB) vision is of a Child First youth justice system, is to prioritise the best interests of children, recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. The YJB is actively working with other organisations across the sector to develop a shared understanding of the benefits of the Child First approach. However, there is much that can be done within the existing system within our local NPT arrangements and this plan reflects our activity in working to achieve this

Therefore:

- NPT YJS will ensure that all work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.
- NPT YJS will promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims.
- NPT YJS will ensure that all work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.

- We encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion via collaboration with parents' carers and multiagency partners.
- We are part of Children services prioritising outcome focused interventions giving children and their families agency in the key decision made with them.
- This outcomes focused approach involves a process of 'doing with, not doing to' young people, hearing their voices, and giving them voice, choice, and control of areas of their lives alongside structure and support within the realms of the Youth Justice Service.
- This service will always view the child as a child/ young person first and a young person involved in offending behaviour second.

6) The child's voice.

In Youth Justice and indeed in social work generally, the challenge of establishing the 'voice of the child or young person' is often present when considering multi-agency working because of competing organisational agendas and priorities. Thematic evidence regarding young people's voices (Smeaton, 2013, Gilligan, 2016, and Hallett, 2017) advocated that when hearing the voice of young people and acknowledging their agentic position, communication with young people should be pivotal to multi-agency or multi-disciplinary practitioners. In NPT, young people's voices are integral to everything we do and set out to achieve.

This is achieved and will be further developed further by:

- Our local authority participation officer has regular access to the resource centre (Base 15) and works alongside the YJS lead for participation.
- Children/young people attend or make representation at every management board meeting, and they were involved in a consultation exercise with the engagement and participation officer to rename the resource centre.
- YJS children are involved in the majority of participation programmes and a participation presentation has been given to the management board.

- As part of the HMIP recent inspection process, children were invited to participate in a text survey, and offered the opportunity to speak to a HMIP inspector to give their feedback.
- Four children returned the text survey, with three rating the YJS as eight or more out of 10 (with 10 being 'fantastic').
- Inspectors spoke to seven children and one parent.
- They all felt that their workers had the right skills to do the work and had been able to access the right services and support to help them stay out of trouble.
- When asked what was one thing that they liked best about the YJS, one young person said:

"Their kindness and they try to get you involved in things."

Another young person said:

"It's helped having someone to talk to and they have helped me stay out of trouble. I have listened to the advice they have given me."

Participation for NPT YJS means involving and engaging our young person as a partner in the youth justice and Safeguarding process, thereby reducing the risk of further offending behaviours, promoting young people being removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system. It is fair to say that, young people often feel that professionals cannot always balance their need for protection and guidance with their right to a voice and make agentic choices about their live, and there will be variance and potential tension between hearing young people and previous risk-based approaches. Talking to our young people, the following themes have emerged over the last 12 months via case work, our participation officer's work, meetings, the inspection survey and simply walking and talking with them through the pandemic.

- Our young people do not want to be talked at or about; they want to be seen, heard, believed, and respected.

- When blamed, held responsible, criminalised, or judged negatively by their behaviours, their relationships with multi-agency professionals are jeopardised evoking mistrust, and creating barriers to being heard.
- Conversely, when young people feel that that they have some agency in decision-making and participated in decisions about their lives, they considered this as essential to a successful safeguarding or risk management plan as multi-agency collaboration.

Trauma informed Practice.

Attempting to address children's offending behaviour without understanding the context of trauma can result in unsuccessful and sometimes detrimental interventions. We know that adversity affects children's brain development and that experiencing trauma in a child's early years or in utero is linked to antisocial behaviour and offending. Additionally, the impairment of neuro-cognitive development may make it difficult for these children to understand and comply with criminal justice interventions and to comprehend the consequences of breach for example. Failure to take account of experiences of trauma and its impact upon child development and emotional well-being will limit the potential benefits of the Youth Justice Service's intervention (Beyond Youth Custody, 2016).

Neath Port Talbot YJS is committed to the development of a Trauma Informed Approach across the service and investment in training is key to supporting this. Over the last few years, the service has taken forward Relationship Based Practice that is underpinned by the Trauma Recovery Model, which assists practitioners to guide young people through change. The workforce has undertaken the three day Trauma Recovery Model training and embedded the principles of this model within our everyday practice, ensuring that assessments put young people's behaviour in context identifying and recognising the impact of trauma and ACEs as well as stress reactions. Successful intervention planning hinges on understanding the underlying reasons why the young person offended in order to consider how best to support the development of a range of skills, bolster or establish protective factors and address their needs and risks; such planning considers how to increase safety and how to avoid reinforcing trauma. The way we work is sequenced and structured and this is central to trauma-informed approaches as is the young person's active participation and acceptance of support; ensuring the support offered is not beyond their skills

and developmental capacity and that the right person(s) are involved in supporting the young person. Ensuring the workforce have access to support systems and management oversight to minimise the risks and effects of vicarious trauma is also central in our work to support young people.

In supporting trauma-informed practice, NPT YJS has signed up to the Enhanced Case Management Approach (ECM), which is a psychology led, multi-agency approach for young people with complex needs and risks, enabling effective tailoring and sequencing of interventions, recognising the trauma and adverse events children have experienced. In order to support this, NPT YJS have identified a number of trauma champions in the team that will support the facilitation of the case management formulations. Over the last 6 months, they have been attending YJB workshops that will support them in ensuring that moving forward over the next year, that as a service we continue to respond and develop by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practice.

7) Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements

Overview:

The YJS (EIP) is an integral part of children services and as such is accountable to the head of Children Services Keri Warren and the Director of Social Services and Housing Andrew Jarrett. It is also accountable to the YJB and the NPT YJS Management board also chaired by Andrew Jarrett.

- NPT YJS has an effective local vision and strategy for the delivery of a high quality, personalised and responsive service for all children as set out earlier in the plan.
- Our NPT Youth Justice Service has effectively moved through two of the HMIP inspectorate's ratings boundaries within a short space of time and in a pandemic, this has been recognised and commended.
- This evidenced that the chair of the management board, the wider directorate and our multiagency partners have taken the findings from the last inspection seriously and prioritised setting up a new Neath Port Talbot Youth justice service, securing the relevant resources required for children known to the service, and have developed effective and sustainable performance management systems.

- This has been achieved with the engagement of staff and is testament to the effective governance and leadership arrangements that are now in place for the YJS. Neath Port Talbot Youth Justice Service
- The management board is chaired by the Neath Port Talbot Director of Social Services, Health and Housing, Andrew Jarrett who has been the chair since its inception in April 2019.
- Representatives with the right level of seniority attend the board and board members are fully immersed in the work of the YJS.
- The management board includes all statutory partners, as well as some non-statutory partners, such as the cabinet member for children's services and a representative from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- A representative from court is a board member but due to court commitments, it is difficult for them to attend board meetings. Therefore, the YJS principal officer and the operational manager meet with court representatives on a regular basis and a service level agreement is in place.
- New board members receive an induction into their role from the principal officer along with an induction pack, which includes an outline of the function of the board and an explanation of the data sets used.
- The YJB National Practice Guidance for England and Wales, (published December 2021) contains the government pathway written by the operational manager for NPT. This notes that the service's management board governance pathway and its induction pack are good practice guides, which are accessed by all Youth Justice Services across the UK.
- There has been a focus on developing the board so that all members understand their role and responsibilities. This has included several board development days, which have helped to establish working links with the staff team and supported board
- This has increased the board members knowledge of the work of the YJS. As the board has developed, the development days now focus on scrutinising specific areas of practice.

- There will be a focus on tackling disproportionality and promoting diversity in all of the work we do in 22/23 and beyond, and on a wider directorate and multi-agency basis.
- The principal officer provides and will continue to provide a management board briefing paper at each board meeting. This includes updates on service and action plans and service area updates, for example; staffing, courts, Covid-19 responses and actions arising from the last board.
- A safeguarding report is produced for the board on a quarterly basis and includes information on a range of safeguarding data, including referrals to social services, information regarding contextual risk and triangulation meetings, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences, Prevent (Channel), and complaints and compliments.
- Performance reports are presented at board meetings at different points throughout the year, including six-monthly reports, a yearly profile of the YJS cohort and year-on-year comparisons.
- The number of looked after children on an out-of-court disposal or a court order is in line with the number of looked after children generally in the Neath Port Talbot area. Work is ongoing nationally to reduce the criminalisation of young people in the looked after system.
- As you are no doubt aware, in March 2022, WG published an All Wales Protocol on reducing the criminalisation of care experienced children and young adults. The Protocol sets out best practice for avoiding criminalisation of this over-represented group whenever possible and is intended to provide a common framework for all professionals working with and supporting care experienced children and young adults (up to the age of 25 years).
- In order to support the implementation of the Protocol, the Welsh Government's Steering Group for Reducing the Criminalisation of Care Experienced Children and Young Adults has commissioned a team to develop a practical multi-agency Toolkit and Training Pack for practitioners. In NPT and with our Swansea Colleagues in YJS we are also working alongside Dr Helen Hodges of Cardiff University who is undertaking research to further understand this area of work.

- There are a number of residential homes locally and the service does regularly manage children from other local authorities who have been placed in the area. This has an impact on local resources and is and will continue to be continuously monitored.
- The looked after children protocol has recently been reviewed and the YJS is promoting it to ensure that the arrangements with children's homes and the police do not result in children being unnecessarily criminalised.
- Their management board continues to promote constructive professional challenge and in the last 12 months achieved positive improvements and resulted in an improved offer of provision for CAMHS Probation services for the YJS.
- The Chair has also escalated to members of the judiciary the board's concerns about the delays in court procedures for children, highlighting the impact delays can have on the child's emotional and mental health and wellbeing.
- There are robust processes in place for the board to hear the views of children. This has been achieved via multi-modal means including through the children attending board meetings or through video recordings, and WhatsApp messages, which are shared at board meetings.
- There has been a children's rep at the board meetings previously, but he has now moved through our service so further reps need to be identified.
- Wider issues that impact on offending behaviour and young people on the periphery of offending are prominent on the wider agendas of other key strategic groups within Neath Port Talbot. The Youth Justice profile has been raised across the directorate, and throughout the strategic partnership boards.
- These include the Children and Adult regional Safeguarding Boards, The Corporate Safeguarding board, The Community safety partnership, Channel Panel Better Futures Partnership, and the Integrated Offender Management group. The YJS principal officer has held various senior management roles within Neath Port Talbot, and Welsh Government and over 20 years of

senior management and leadership experience and led the disaggregation of the YJS in April 2019. The operational manager has worked for the YJS since 2008 as a social worker and then as a senior practitioner before becoming the Operational Manager.

- There is a leadership team within the YJS comprising the Principal Officer , Operational manager, Senior practitioners, Consultant social worker, Information manager, and Business manager. The leadership team are all knowledgeable about youth justice and work well together to support the team.
- The principal officer and the operational manager attend the management board, and other staff members attend to present on specific pieces of work. There is a two-way relationship between the board and the YJS staff.
- Communication from the board is shared at management and team meetings and board members attend team Inspection of youth offending services: Neath Port Talbot YJS meetings.
- The operational manager also writes a very successful and acclaimed newsletter for the board so that members are kept updated on YJS issues. There is also a junior newsletter aimed at, and contributed to by young people who use the service.
- It important that the staff are updated about the strategic intent of the board and that the board is updated about the operational matters in Youth Justice. Work is ongoing to facilitate this.
- Leadership and Governance was rated as outstanding in the recent HMIP inspection and we will strive to maintain and build on this excellent standard.

8) Resources and Services

The Covid-19 pandemic has meant that the YJS has now entered the phase of hybrid working between home and office working. There is now extensive face to face working at the centre and in the community. All staff have been offered the Covid-19 vaccine, and lateral flow testing is a regular occurrence for most staff. Assessments, interventions and visits to children have been completed creatively and all vulnerable children continue to be monitored in collaboration with education and children's services.

The resource centre, repurposed and refurbished in 2021 is an excellent facility. It has now been renamed following consultation with our young people and participation officer as Base 15. It is purposely designed for our young people, and has facilities that we have never had in NPT before including, outside gym equipment, a hairdressing salon, (with vocational course being run) and a new bike maintenance container. There is enough room to develop an allotment, flower and vegetable beds and a working shed. There is a kitchen, laundry, and shower room facilities. Alongside these facilities, there is a well-equipped IT suite, a well-being room, conference facilities, training and sessional and intervention room, administration facilities, and a train carriage (an actual train carriage) to be renovated for reparation projects, for which monies have been approved and allocated. Young people in the participation groups have undertaken graffiti projects, and a music studio for recording and mixing is being developed following funding from SWP. This is very much a centre for young people involving young people. It is also used by young people and officers in the wider directorate and as such has become a collective resource for NPT.

We have purchased other resources to support interventions including I- pads for remote working with young people, and we will be restarting female focused offending behaviour programmes to continue supporting young females involved in or on the cusp of offending or antisocial behaviours. The K9 project which focusses on exploitation continues to go from strength to strength and is accredited and includes sessions on knife crime, county lines and basic first aid. We are still collaborating with Dr Helen Hodges and CASCADE at Cardiff University where we are partners in developing a digital emotional well-being tool/ game which supports exploration of the impact of lifestyle choices and options.

8. a. Interventions

On setting up the new Youth Justice Service, the partnership completed a gap analysis to review the resources. As a result, partners developed a better understanding of local youth justice issues and the specific needs of the children known to the service. This included developing exploitation clinics with Better Futures, who provide consultation to practitioners for cases involving exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour.

The YJS has a strong partnership with children's services, and there are three trained child practice reviewers within the service. A YJS multi-agency risk review

meeting is convened if a child is assessed as high risk for safety and wellbeing and/or risk of harm to others. The meeting is chaired by a senior practitioner and all staff involved with the case will attend, including any partner agencies working with the child.

There is also a strategic contextual risk panel and an operational multi-agency mapping and community risk profiling meeting. These focus on mapping children in communities and looking at potential areas where exploitation may be happening, the type of exploitation and how it can be disrupted. In addition, the YJS has set up monthly exploitation clinics with Better Futures (a project run by Barnardo's), which provides individual consultation slots for practitioners with any of their cases involving child exploitation, child sexual exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour and child sexual abuse. More recently we have been approached by Professor Carlene Firmin university of Bedfordshire to be one of the pilots in the UK to evaluate how the contextualised risk approach is being adapted by Youth Justice Services.

NPT YJS has access to a wide range of group work and one-to-one programmes to meet the diverse needs of young people accessing our service. Over the last two years, (like everyone) we have had to modify our approach and responses because of COVID 19. We are currently working in a risk assessed COVID compliant environment, but as restrictions are lifted it is wonderful to see staff and young people accessing and utilising the centre and our interventions on a daily basis. We will build on this as we progress through the year.

Over the next year, the continuing analysis of the needs of young people accessing NPT YJS alongside the recording of unmet need within the Pathways and planning section of Asset Plus, will support the service in ensuring we have access to the right interventions to support young people to make better choices and behavioural changes. We are now running or developing the following interventions.

1. The K9 project (South Wales Police)
2. Beats not Blades project (Music programme)
3. Hairdressing and Barbering (vocational qualification)
4. Bike maintenance
5. Independent living skills
6. Cookery

7. *English and Maths tuition and a full education strategy is being developed for young people who are NEET (**Not in Education Employment or Training**) or young people excluded from their current provision (Hillside Secure Unit, Cefn Saeson and the YJS, Neath College and Ysgol Hendrefelin and the Youth service.)*
8. The YJS Principal Officer is also leading on Youth homelessness and going forward we are linking in with housing and adult services and our homelessness provision in NPT to find sustainable solutions to homelessness for some of our most vulnerable YJS young people.
9. To support sustainable solutions going forward, we have applied and had monies agreed for a life skills pod to be situated in the grounds of the resource centre to begin specific programmes regarding independent living, budgeting and transitioning into adulthood. This will be a project aimed at Care leavers and YJS young people to also focus on the national agenda of reducing the criminalisation of care leavers.
10. NPT YJS have commissioned Vibe (3 programmes) to address issues related to serious violence and associated vulnerabilities through the delivery of support services for our vulnerable young people. This will be valued and consideration given to more programmes.
11. Vibe workshops create safe spaces to provide emotional wellbeing support, this support will identify and explore emotional responses and give young people the confidence and resilience in order to make positive informed decisions and divert away from negative activities.
12. Vibe is directed at young people young people who are on the cusp of criminal justice involvement. It is relevant to young people who reside in communities in which there are high levels of deprivation which can lead to negative choices being made and young people who exhibit low confidence, resilience, self-worth and support with improvement so positive decision making can take place.

Alongside this, we can access St Giles Trust for County Lines intervention and Fearless (run group work around county-lines, knife crime, consequences etc.) St Giles Trust has its own staff trained to deliver the Non-Violent Resistance programme.

13. The NPT YJS have also commissioned and trained our own equine assisted trainer for equine assisted learning. This is a specific area of interest for our senior practitioner who has developed this service within the YJS.
14. This is a first for any YJS in Wales and we are tremendously excited about this resource. This programme has seen fantastic results and was highlighted alongside K9 as excellent examples of innovative practice by the HMIP inspectorate.
15. This provision began in July 2021, and consists of 3x8 week programmes where young people will work with horses and trainers to address issues like trust, emotional response and emotional intelligence.
16. **Equine Assisted Learning (EAL)** is a form of experiential learning that includes horses and a facilitator working together with a person to create positive change. EAL often includes a number of beneficial equine activities such as observing, handling, grooming, groundwork, and structured challenging exercises focused on the young person's needs and goals. EFL provides unique non-verbal opportunities for young people to enhance self-awareness recognize maladaptive behaviours and identify negative feelings.
17. Published Research including Stock (2016) and Wilson (2020) highlight that this approach has had positive results for people with social difficulties and mental health needs that can result in significant changes in cognition, mood, judgment, insight, perception, social skills, communication, behaviour, and learning

9) Education, Employment and Training: 2022/23

There is need to point out that the YJS recognises that there is work to be done to drive our education work forward, reduce exclusions and to build on the existing links that we have with schools colleges and further education. Unfortunately being hampered by both the pandemic and staff shortage in 2020 and 2021, this has been identified as the deficit that needs urgent remedial action.

In NPT we have one Youth Justice ETE post which is aimed to provide ongoing support for these young people. The principal Officer will be linking in with NAASH (Neath and Afan Secondary Heads), the local College and Swansea University. Our ETE (**Education Training and Employment**) practitioner will engage with the Engagement and Progression Co-ordinator, the NEETS Multi Agency Group and the

Engagement Provider Support group, ASD (**Autistic Spectrum Disorder**) Steering Group. The operational manager attends the Youth Engagement Strategy Group and has had to pick up all of the ETE work in the absence of a practitioner for the past two years alongside all the roles of the operational manager. Hopefully we will be able to remedy this deficit soon, but the YJS recognise and share the concerns raised by the inspectorate. This has been escalated to our Chair of the management board, Head of Children services, and HR. They acknowledge the concerns and are seeking a resolution. The ops manager meet with Pupil Parent support and the Senior Wellbeing Manager every two months to discuss individual cases.

We recognise that there is work to be done to drive our education work forward, reduce exclusions and to build on the existing links that we have with schools colleges and further education. Unfortunately being hampered by both the pandemic and staff shortage in 2020 and 2021, this has been identified as the deficit that needs urgent remedial action.

The YJS has strong links with Hillside Secure Children's Home and Cefn Saeson to try and develop an education resource facility as part of the planned resource centre. This will mean programmes of education with accreditation can be offered as an alternative to exclusion for specific periods of time, alongside educational staff for our young people as we move out of the pandemic.

10) Restorative justice:

Restorative justice approaches and opportunities for victims of youth crime will continue to be a focus in 2018/19. Our victim worker is now placed within an educational team for two days per week developing and delivering the Restorative Justice programme and training, this is a relatively new and innovative development and enhances our links with the well-being and education teams. This has been agreed with both the director and assistant director of education with whom we have very good links

All victims of youth crime are invited to participate in the criminal justice process in accordance with the Victim Code. This includes:

- 1) A letter of apology or explanation from the young person

- 2) Attending a Referral Order Panel Meeting where the victim can meet the young person and explain the impact their offending has had on them
- 3) A Restorative Justice Conference where the victim can meet the young person and explain the impact their offending has had on them
- 4) The victim of the offence having a say in what type of reparation they would like the young person to complete and can be indirect to benefit the local community and/or direct to the victim of the offence

There are enhanced entitlements as sent out in the Victims Code of Practice for victims in the following categories because they are more likely to require enhanced support and services through the criminal justice process. In the Neath Port Talbot YJS, the victim liaison officer will continue to liaise with the Youth Justice Service Police Officer to ascertain whether a victim should be considered under one of the following categories and has established links locally to fulfil these duties.

- 1) Victims of the most serious crime
- 2) Persistently targeted victims
- 3) Vulnerable or intimidated victims

NPT has a portfolio of reparation projects that are developed locally with partner agencies including housing providers, parks, schools, the environmental department, charities and local churches.

NPT has one Youth Justice Victim Liaison officer who facilitates restorative meetings and conferences and ensures the impact on victims is considered in young people's offending behaviour programmes. All victims of crime are consulted in relation to restorative options; however, engagement is voluntary and not all victims chose to engage in this process following initial consultation. The service has good links with Victim Support including signposting and liaising with provision for supporting young victims.

Restorative principles are applied in Referral Order Panels. Referral Order Panel volunteers are recruited from local communities and receive restorative justice training as part of the programme.

NPT offers all young people engaging in restorative justice the opportunity to complete an Agored Cymru unit called Restorative Justice (EC61CY002) Level 1 (credit value 1).

11) Progress against the last Youth Justice plan

The HMIPP inspection report was published on 12 May 2022, it followed the JICPA inspection report September 2022 and the Governance Pathway for good practice in the YJB national guidance December 2021.

These three publications are testament to the progress NPT YJS has made in relation to their Youth Justice plan and within the disaggregated service generally.

We have worked to a post inspection action plan since the last 2018 inspection and this will now be replaced with the post inspection action plan 2022.

All actions and objectives were completed in the previous action plan and any rolling actions will be carried over into the new action plan for 2022.



NPT YJEIS Action and Improvement Plan up



NPT YJS Action Plan May 2022 - Draft.doc

The Chief Inspector of Probation Justin Russell commented on the progress of NPT YJS at the conclusion of the inspection.

'NPT Youth Justice Service have obtained an overall rating of good. It takes considerable effort to make such significant progress over the past few years. Especially through the pandemic, but Neath Port Talbot YJS has achieved it. In real terms this means reducing the likelihood of a child returning to crime, and better the lives of children under their supervision are working.'

The inspectorate concluded that:

'We have inspected and rated Neath Port Talbot Youth Justice Service (YJS) across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. Overall, Neath Port Talbot YJS was rated as 'Good'.

The inspection recognises that significant progress has been made to move Neath Port Talbot YJS from the lowest rating in its last inspection to where it is now. In effect the service has moved through two of the inspectorate's ratings boundaries in a short space of time and that is to be

commended. It is clear the council and its partners have taken the findings from the last inspection seriously and have prioritised setting up a new youth justice service, securing the relevant resources required for children known to the service, and developed performance management systems. This has been achieved with the engagement of staff and is testament to the effective governance and leadership arrangements that are in place for the YJS.'

The inspection found an effective service, with strengths apparent across assessment and service delivery for court orders. Assessing and planning for desistance and safety and wellbeing in out-of-court disposals were also strong areas of practice. The YJS's arrangements for governance and leadership are rated 'Outstanding' and its staffing, partnerships, and information and facilities are 'Good'.

12) Performance and priorities.

1. 21/22 Young People Offending

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
40	35	20

2. During the last financial year the number of young people receiving a substantive outcome for offending reduced and continued the trend over the last few years.

3. Offences

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
76	88	82

4. Although the number of individual young people offending has seen a large reduction the number of offences has remained relatively stable. 1 young person was responsible for 18 offences.

5. First Time Entrants

6. The YOT Data Summary now includes figures for Neath Port Talbot. In previous years the figures were only available for Western Bay.

Oct 18–Sept 19	Oct 19–Sept 20	Oct 20–Sept 21

18	13	18
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7. The most recent published figure shows Neath Port Talbot FTE figure increasing following a reduction in the previous 12 month period. A local calculation has been done for the 12 month period covering 21/22 and shows the number of FTE as being 13. This confirms the fairly consistent figure of FTE's that has been reported for Neath Port Talbot as the number for several 12 month rolling time periods all report less than 20.
8. The latest published figure puts Neath Port Talbot above the average rate per 100,000 for Wales. However, the YJEIS is lower when compared with the YJB YOT family rate for the same time period.

9. **Custody**

	2019	2020	2021
Number	1	4	0
Rate per 1000 NPT	0.08	0.32	0
Rate per 1000 Wales	0.18	0.08	0.07

10. During 2021 there were no young people from Neath Port Talbot receiving a custodial sentence.

11. **Referral Orders**

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
22	14	9

12. The number of Referral Orders saw a 36% decrease when compared with the previous year. This follows on from the same percentage decrease noted in the previous year.

13. **Youth Rehabilitation Orders**

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
1	5	4

14. Following an increase during the previous 12 months, there was a reduction this year in Youth Rehabilitation Orders.
15. The court outcomes during 2021/22 saw a reduction in both community penalties and custody.

16. **Reoffending**

17. As with First Time Entrants, Neath Port Talbot now has our own figures published on the YDS.

April 17-March 18					
Cohort	Reoffenders	Reoffences	Reoffences/Reoffender	Reoffences/Offender	%Reoffending
29	15	82	5.47	2.83	51.7%

April 18-March 19					
Cohort	Reoffenders	Reoffences	Reoffences/Reoffender	Reoffences/Offender	%Reoffending
45	23	107	4.65	2.38	51.1%

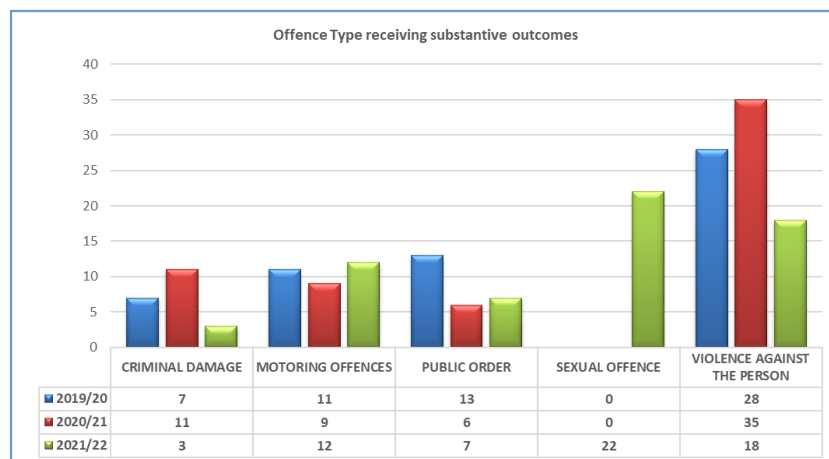
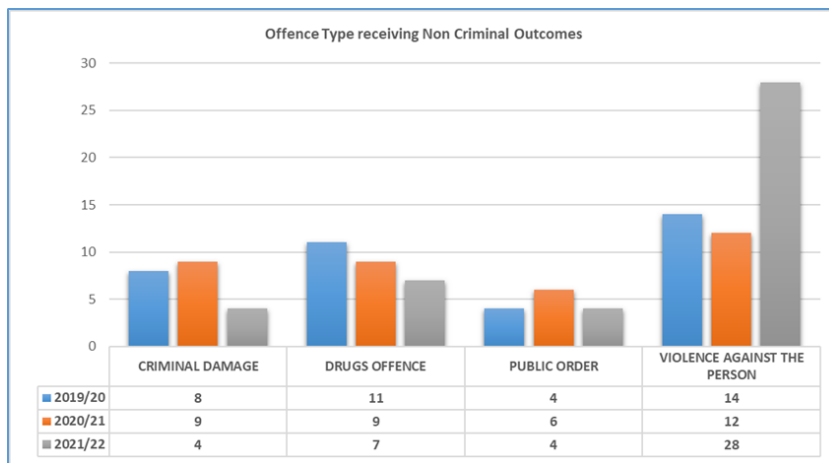
April 19-March 20					
Cohort	Reoffenders	Reoffences	Reoffences/Reoffender	Reoffences/Offender	%Reoffending
48	26	94	3.62	1.96	54.2%

18. Both the number in the cohort and the percentage of the cohort reoffending has increased in the latest reported 12 month period.

19. The percentage of reoffending at around 54% was the highest in Wales and the highest of the YOT family.

Out of Court Disposal data for YJS

We have been asked to scrutinise the Out of Court Disposal data and process as part of the Inspection feedback in May 22. This will form part of our post improvement action plan. Therefore to take this forward the next section highlights our initial findings to date. We will build on the suite of data going forward, and drill down for the action plan and for performance for the service going forward, this will include a breakdown and analysis of the profile of young people within our service.



Violence against the person has consistently been highest offence type over the last 3 years. This is the case regardless of whether a young person receives a non-criminal disposal via Bureau (YRD) or whether they receive a substantive outcome (YC & YCC at Bureau or a Court outcome). Reduction in number of young people receiving a substantive outcome and increase in those receiving a non-substantive outcome.

The through put of Bureau referrals from the police has remained stable when drawing comparisons of the same 12 month period over the last few years. However, the outcomes given at the Bureau have fluctuated, with more young people receiving a non-criminal disposal as opposed to a formal outcome. This can be seen in the following breakdown of disposals between 1st April and 31st March across the last three years:

- 2019/20 - 26 Out of Court Disposals delivered (**33YRD & 11 YC/YCC = 44OCDs**)

- 2020/21 – 27 Out of Court Disposals delivered (**41YRD & 9 YC/YCC = 50 OOCDS**)
- 2021/22 – 23 Out of Court Disposals delivered (**38YRD & 7 YC/YCC =45 OCCDS**)

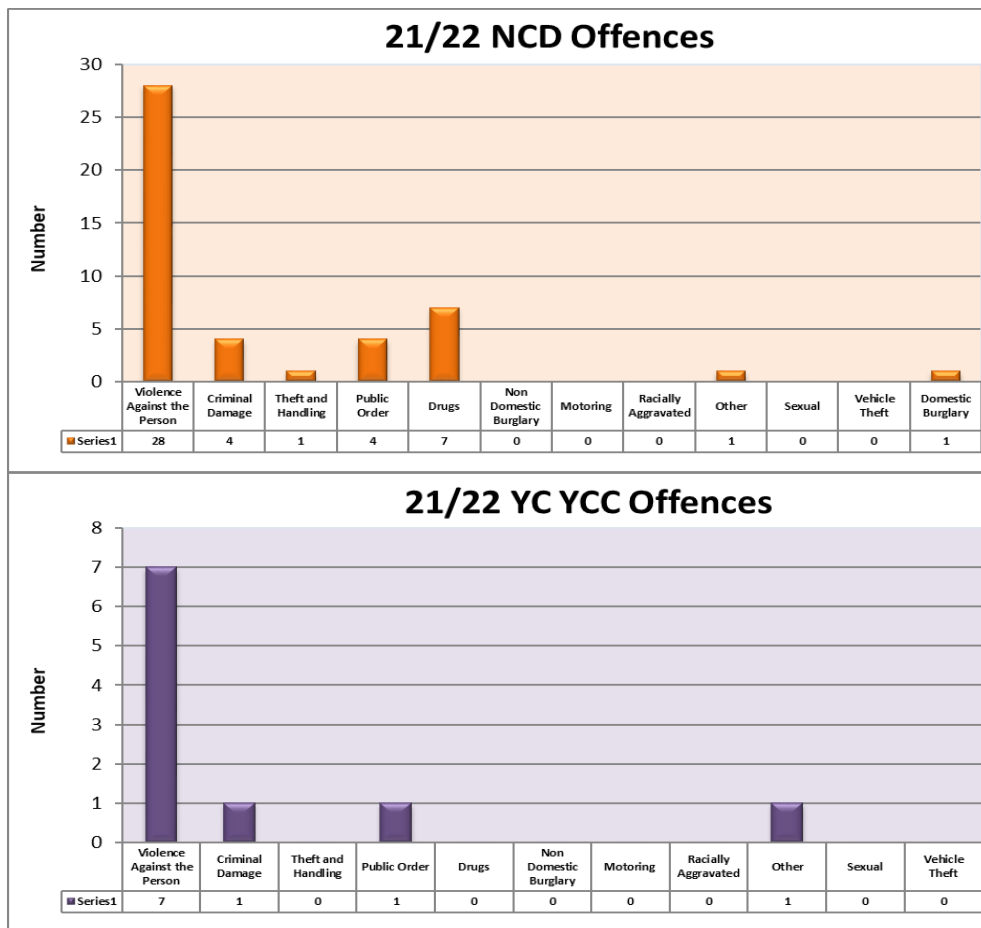


Number of young people engaged via Bureau in the last 12 months:

Over the last 12 months, there have been 45 young people that have attended and received an outcome via the Bureau process. The following table provides a breakdown of the disposals received:-

Disposal Type:	Number:
Youth Restorative Disposal (non-criminal)	17 (Quarter 2) + 21 (Quarter 4) = 38
Youth Caution	5 (Quarter 2) + 1 (Quarter 4) = 6
Youth Conditional Caution	1 (Quarter 2) + 0 (Quarter 4) = 1

These 45 young people are responsible for 56 offences and the nature of these offences



During the last 12 months, a total of 69 children and young people have continued to be engaged via interventions that have been borne out of a Bureau disposal; broken down this is made up of the 45 Bureau outcomes in this 12month period as well as 24 interventions that were ongoing having received a Bureau outcome in the previous period.

13) National Standards

Standards for Children in the Youth Justice System – self assessment of baseline year

In 2021, we submitted our self-assessment of Standards for Children in the Youth Justice

System. Because of the Covid situation it was recognised by the YJB that this was a complex task at that time.

The self-assessments provided to the Youth Justice Board (YJB) support them in monitoring our adherence to national standards in line with our statutory responsibilities. The Standards, are set by the Secretary of State for Justice, and aim to:

- Provide a framework for youth justice practice and ensure that quality is maintained
- Encourage and support innovation and good practice to improve outcomes for children who commit crime
- Ensure that every child lives a safe and crime-free life, and makes a positive contribution to society
- Align with the YJB's child first principle
- Assist the YJB and inspectorates when they assess whether youth justice services are meeting their statutory requirements.
- The YJB concluded the moderation of all the self-assessment submissions received from the sector.
- This exercise was undertaken using a team of internal and external senior managers.
- Our NPT moderation results concluded that our self-assessment of our national standards offers an evidenced reflection of the judgements against service standards. Therefore the YJB did not carry out a validation visit to NPT.

As the year progressed we monitored our progress against our standards, this will continue through this year and will be reflected in our QA work when auditing against the standards going forward.

14) Service improvement plan



Service Recovery
plan 2022-25.docx

15) Challenges, risks and issues

- Continued increase in work demands not accompanied by increased revenue, leading to non-delivery of performance, reduced staff morale, lack of confidence by stakeholders.
- Lack of continued funding to renew temporary intervention worker posts within the team past the end of the financial year.
- Lack of career progression opportunities within the team and potential for staff turnover.
- Increased austerity could place greater demand on the need for a Youth Justice response.
- Covid-19, cost of living crisis, other world or environmental events that impacts on offending rates and requires a youth justice response.
- Lack of permanency across the intervention worker staff group.
- A requirement to provide a number of Intensive Supervision and Surveillance packages at any one time as this will divert resources from elsewhere in the service and potentially impact on service delivery.
- Greater demand and duties not being accompanied by additional funding placing further strain on existing staff and services they provide.
- Inconsistencies with bespoke IT system to support effective practice; YJS uses a standalone database that does not link up with the systems used by children's services.
- Workloads and demands are increasing but resources are diminishing.
- Education provision for young people could be improved to prevent exclusions and support reintegration back into mainstream provisions - School is a protective factor for young people in terms of preventing offending/re-offending and permanent exclusion has been identified as a critical event that can lead to young people becoming vulnerable to criminal exploitation.
- Victim engagement feedback could be improved to ensure that it effective informs and drives improvement in service delivery
- YJS is not able to consistently reducing re-offending rates amongst a small cohort of young people.

- Continued increase in work demands not accompanied by increased revenue, leading to non-delivery of performance, reduced staff morale, lack of confidence by stakeholders.
- Lack of continued funding to renew temporary intervention worker posts within the team past the end of the financial year.
- Lack of career progression opportunities within the team and potential for staff turnover.
- Increased austerity could place greater demand on the need for a Youth Justice response.
- Covid-19, cost of living crisis, and other world or environmental events that impacts on offending rates and requires a youth justice response.
- Lack of permanency across the intervention worker staff group.
- The service could offer more to volunteers to support the youth justice service, and help them integrate into the team. Thus, further training should be considered so that they remain up to date with youth justice developments and practice.

16) Evidence based practice.

- NPT YJS has a clear understanding of implementing evidence-based programmes, embedding best practice, and successfully introducing multi-agency programmes within our public services.
- The principal officer sits on HWB DOETH, which is the academic arm of the YJB bringing research and practice together.
- Empirically tested evidence-based interventions and evidence base practice are central to positive outcomes for young people. NPT is an outcomes- focused children's service which means that empirical evidence is core to all social work practice with children and young people.
- Evidence based interventions are being used consistently within our services and will be built on going forward.
- These were recognised and commented on in the JICPA and HMIP INSPECTIONS

- The Operational manager has contributed to the national YJB good practice guidance re governance pathways published dec 2021.
- NPT YJS are aware of the merits of testing and verifying empirical evidence via academia and practitioners, within this, we employ a consultant social worker whose focus is to develop research-based initiatives in the team and as part of the wider service directorate.
- It is important to remember that every team member has an area of expertise and positive ability, whatever their rank or role. The YJS is a multi-disciplinary service, subsequently the role of the Principal Officer and operational manager is to elicit those strengths. Those on the ground will often be far more valuable to our children and families than the high-level strategic players, so we adopt a 'what works approach' (Anastas, 2014). Evidence base interventions in the YJS include speech and Language provision, and the support services provide by our substance misuse workers, and the work undertaken by our CAMHS nurse, who utilise evidence base programmed. Within this we have developed two exceptional and creative interventions which are in the process of being empirically evaluated.

These are:

The K9 project, which focuses on exploitation, knife crime and county lines. This is run jointly by South Wales Police and the YJS and happens over three days. It involves police school liaison workers delivering a session on knife crime, sessions on drug awareness and basic first aid, and input from a victim of a knife crime attack. It ends with a visit to the dog and horses unit at Police Headquarters and a presentation, which can lead to a stage one qualification in communication skills. The programme is subject to ongoing evaluation; however, early indications show a reduction in reoffending by those who have completed the course. Feedback has shown that children are building trust with professionals, and especially the police, and feeling safe in the environment away from peer pressures.

The second 'inspiring and unique intervention' (HMIP 2022) was devised and developed by a YJS staff member based on their love of horses, and is the Equine Facilitated Learning programme. This is a form of experiential learning that involves horses and a facilitator working together with a child to create positive change. It includes equine activities such as observing,

handling, grooming and groundwork, and structured exercises focused on the child's needs and goals. The evaluation is ongoing and includes capturing the outcomes for children using a tool that reviews their confidence and relaxation and the way they relate to others, as well as other areas of their emotional wellbeing. The YJS is currently working in partnership with local pony clubs, farriers and a 'racing for schools' charity to offer children opportunities to find out more about employment and training in the equine industry, which will form part of their exit plan.

The NPT YJS is also involved in the 'Snakes and Ladders' collaboration with Cardiff University, where they are developing a digital emotional wellbeing tool/game that supports children in exploring the impact of lifestyle choices and options. This too will be evaluated and hopefully produced as an aide for Youth Justice Services across Wales.

17) Looking forward.

We have had an exceptional year in the NPT Youth Justice Service , navigating through the second year of the pandemic and all that entailed, developing and opening our Base fifteen resource centre, and delivering two rigorous inspection's to multiagency inspectorates (the JICPA and HMIP).

Our results speak for themselves and is testament to the commitment of all the staff involved but more specifically to the resilience and commitment of our young people who want better outcomes and who are often the ones best placed to tell us as professionals what will help them the most, within this is also hearing the voice of the victims of crime and the voices of our multi- agency partners.

Therefore giving young people agency and a voice in this plan and in all of our work going forward will be integral to our practice. Saying that, we have achieved a great deal, but now is not the time to rest on our laurels but to build on the recommendations made by the inspectorates and capitalise on the identified strengths, yet simultaneously ensure that we improve the areas identified as needing development.

18) Priorities going forward

18a Vulnerability management safeguarding and wellbeing.

As with risk management, safeguarding relies on robust and accurate assessment and listening to what the child or young person is saying. This is a priority area that alongside risk management is a primary focus of the service. The service needs to address the gap in evidencing wellbeing outcomes. This work will be enhanced this year by the appointment of a regional CAMHS nurse, and more intervention staff. Hopefully the joint work with CASCASDE and Cardiff university will also ensure our workstream around emotional well-being, will develop further.

18b Strategic safeguarding

The Chair of the NPT YJS Management Board Service is the Chair of the **West Glamorgan Safeguarding Children Board (WGSCB)** giving a robust strategic link to the safeguarding needs of children and young people known to the service.

Safety and wellbeing cannot be seen in isolation of the services we provide to victims and their need to feel safe. We are very much part of NPT children services and regularly attend all identified safeguarding meetings professional strategy meetings and so on. As a previous safeguarding lead for three Welsh authorities, the PO is chair and vice chair of many of the safeguarding board and LA subgroups including Barnardos, Better Futures and Channel panel. We have also provided contributed to the West Glamorgan Safeguarding board annual plan with a specific report regarding safeguarding in NPT Youth Justice and early intervention service, which strategically links the plans of the safeguarding board and the Youth Justice board. The principal officer has also completed two child practice reviews and adult practice reviews as review this year both in the process of being published. The operational manager has also been a panel member on a child practice review involving a child from Youth justice, which means that our cohort of children are given consideration within this strategic arena.

18 (c) Workforce development

In addition to areas of training and management oversight already covered the drive this year is to ensure everyone has a clear role, good supervision and quality appraisals. The JICPA recently identified good quality supervision and training in their inspection. We consistently achieve 95 % or more supervision rates. Everyone has supervision in line with the NPT supervision policy and appraisals will form a part of that process going forward. We also are committed to the health and well-being of our staff, and this is covered in our development days and will form part of everyone's appraisal. Staff well-being will be kept a priority. The building of staff morale

has been essential to maintain staff commitment reduce sickness and maintain staff continuity.

18 (d) Participation

Engaging young people in decision making and accepting responsibilities for their actions and future is critical to developing skills as constructive members of their community; Article 12 of the UNCRC (**United Nations Convention for the rights of the Child**) establishes the right of young people to participate where decisions are being made that affect their future. Young people attend or make representation at every management board. The LA participation officer has very strong links with the YJS, and brings most of his groups from the LA to access the facilities at the resource centre. The participation officer includes the YJS cohort in the invitations for activities and participation events, independent living skills and our young people are involved in the majority of participation programmes. Eventually we will want our young people (with the help of the participation officer and YJS participation lead) to represent the whole area of service delivery .i.e. Pre-court, post court and exit planning.

As with previous years year victim feedback gathered by volunteers over the phone evidenced an overall satisfaction with the service and a growing positive view of restorative approaches however the numbers giving feedback in the new NPT team have not been measured as yet, We will be collating these going forward as the service and our communities re- open. We would like to be able to develop feedback by use of a phone app which we are looking into.

Parenting groups have been re- established in NPT. There was hugely positive feedback about the NVR parenting course when we were a regional service so we will be revisiting this going forward. There is also a lot of work being done with the parent advocacy network, and this is something which we would like to see developed in the Youth Justice cohort of parents. The previous key messages were around the need for consistency of messages given by the parenting worker, case manager, childcare social workers and schools. One of the aims of the parenting group for NPT YJS is to reduce the mixed messages that the parents can receive from professionals and improve consistency per se. There are four workers at NPT YJS trained in providing the NVR course.

Staff retention in NPT YJS is not problematic, we are a long standing and established service with experienced and committed practitioners. Therefore the levels of distribution of youth justice expertise across the service and the close collaboration with

Children services are a firm base on which to develop the NPT YJS service. Long standing temporary appointments have been made permanent and we have now got a consultant social worker in the team commensurate with the rest of Children services. The staffing structure meets the needs of the service with additional business support and administration providing crucial support for the service. Sickness has been problematic over the last year but this too is now being resolved.

Probation, Education South Wales Police and our intervention workers, including Speech and Language therapist, substance misuse workers Bail support, volunteer coordinator victim support and reparation and transition officers are all key players in the multi-agency team approach and we will keep developing these services to meet the complex needs of our young people. A CAMHS regional nurse is joining shortly and we will focus on emotional health and wellbeing of our young people going forward.

Training, monitoring and support are provided by the senior management team and in local authority training department to ensure required standards are met. A training plan has been developed for the service.

18 (e) Staff recruitment and retention in NPT YJS

Retention of qualified social work staff in NPT YJEIS and the impact of this for maintaining effective Youth Justice Practice do not appear to be a risk to delivery at this juncture, although it is important to recognise that resources must be allocated to meet the additional training and necessary management support needs of new and/or inexperienced staff within NPT YJS.


The NPT HR and the senior management team are fully engaged with supporting the teams including delivering induction and training and development days, guidance, gatekeeping, alongside quality assurance and management reports to track progress. The strategic lead is full engaged with the LSCB, CSP and sub-groups to ensure that the YJS are fully represented in all external and partnership arenas.

19) In conclusion

This plan has been developed alongside board members and partners, who attended a development day and produced the gap analysis in 2021. It will also be shared with children's services CSMG and social service scrutiny committee. Once ratified it will then be placed before the YJB as per statutory requirement, and to receive YJB funding for the service. It will be refreshed and resubmitted annually.

The principal officer intends to produce a young person easy read version collaboration with the Participation lead in social services, and this will also be placed before the YJB

Sign off, submission and approval

Signature Chair of Board : Andrew Jarrett	
Date	15 th July 2022

Report Appendices. Appendix 1



Appendix 2



Information officer: Carl Matthews c.a.matthews@npt.gov.uk

Ethnicity	Managers Strategic		Managers Operational		Practitioners		Administrative		Sessional		Student		Referral Order Panel		Other Volunteer		Total		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Asian	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Black	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mixed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
White	0	1	0	1	6	11	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	11	1	0	0	10	26
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not known	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	1	0	1	6	13	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	11	1	0	10	28	
Welsh Speakers	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	3	

Type of Contract	Strategic Manager (PT)	Strategic Manager (FT)	Operational Manager (PT)	Operational Manager (FT)	Practitioners (PT)	Practitioners (FT)	Administration (PT)	Administration (FT)	Sessional	Students/ trainees	Referral Order Panel Volunteer	Other Volunteer	Total
Disabled (self-classified)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Common youth justice terms, please add any locally used terminology

ACE	Adverse childhood experience. Events in the child's life that can have negative, long lasting impact on the child's health, and life choices
AIM 2 and 3	Assessment, intervention and moving on, an assessment tool and framework for children who have instigated harmful sexual behaviour
ASB	Antisocial behaviour
AssetPlus	Assessment tool to be used for children who have been involved in offending behaviour
CAMHS	Child and adolescent mental health services
CCE	Child Criminal exploitation, where a child is forced, through threats of violence, or manipulated to take part in criminal activity
Children	We define a child as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and civil legislation in England and Wales. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection.
Child First	A system wide approach to working with children in the youth justice system. There are four tenants to this approach, it should be: developmentally informed, strength based, promote participation, and encourage diversion
Child looked-after	Child looked-after, where a child is looked after by the local authority
CMET	Criminal, Missing , Exploitation , Trafficking.
Constructive resettlement	The principle of encouraging and supporting a child's positive identity development from pro-offending to pro-social
Contextual safeguarding	An approach to safeguarding children which considers the wider community and peer influences on a child's safety
Community resolution	Community resolution, an informal disposal, administered by the police, for low level offending where there has been an admission of guilt

EHCP	Education and health care plan, a plan outlining the education, health and social care needs of a child with additional needs
ETE	Education, training or employment
EHE	Electively home educated, children who are formally recorded as being educated at home and do not attend school
EOTAS	Education other than at school, children who receive their education away from a mainstream school setting
FTE	First Time Entrant. A child who receives a statutory criminal justice outcome for the first time (youth caution, youth conditional caution, or court disposal)
HMIP	Her Majesty Inspectorate of Probation. An independent arms-length body who inspect Youth Justice services and probation services
HSB	Harmful sexual behaviour, developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour by children, which is harmful to another child or adult, or themselves
JAC	Junior Attendance Centre
MAPPA	Multi agency public protection arrangements
MFH	Missing from Home
NRM	National Referral Mechanism. The national framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery in order to gain help to support and protect them
OOCD	Out-of-court disposal. All recorded disposals where a crime is recorded, an outcome delivered but the matter is not sent to court
Outcome 22/21	An informal disposal, available where the child does not admit the offence, but they undertake intervention to build strengths to minimise the possibility of further offending
Over-represented children	Appearing in higher numbers than the local or national average
RHI	Return home Interviews. These are interviews completed after a child has been reported missing
SLCN	Speech, Language and communication needs
STC	Secure training centre
SCH	Secure children's home

Young adult	We define a young adult as someone who is 18 or over. For example, when a young adult is transferring to the adult probation service.
YJS	Youth justice service. This is now the preferred title for services working with children in the youth justice system. This reflects the move to a Child First approach
YOI	Young offender institution

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
Social Services, Housing & Community Safety Cabinet Board

8th June 2023

Report of the Head of Adult Services (Angela Thomas)

Matter for information

Wards Affected: All

Report Title: Unpaid Carers

Purpose of the Report:

1. The purpose of this report is twofold; it is to provide Members with the findings of an initial review into support for adult unpaid carers and to inform Members of the Ombudsman's own initiative investigation proposal into the undertaking of Adult Carers Needs Assessments.

Executive Summary:

2. A desktop evaluation of support provided to adult unpaid carers highlighted several areas for improvement, including the provision of information, advice and assistance, completion of carers assessment/care plans and streamlining of support.

Background:

3. Under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, the local authority has a legal duty to support unpaid carers through the provision of preventative services, information, advice and assistance, carer needs assessments and where eligible, a dedicated care and support plan.

Neath Port Talbot (NPT) local authority area has the highest proportion of people who provide any amount unpaid care. It also has the highest proportion of people who provide 50 or more hours of care a week, as well as having the joint highest proportion of disabled people in Wales. Furthermore, it has a high proportion of

localities classified as the most deprived in Wales, and data shows a high correlation between higher percentage of people providing unpaid care in the most deprived areas.

Over the next 7 years, the adult population of Neath Port Talbot is expected to grow, with an 18% increase in residents aged 65 and over and a significant 42% increase in residents aged 85 and over (i.e., those requiring more care). This will lead to a growth in older adults providing care and whilst also managing their own health conditions. Most people will experience needing care or become an unpaid carer during their lifetime.

The pandemic has had a notable impact on unpaid carers with many reporting significant increased feelings of loneliness and isolation and worsening mental health. The pressures of caring for others, has also increased, as community services have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels and traditional 'face to face health care, has been replaced by more online or telephone consultations. As such, the opportunities to identify and support carers has reduced.

The existing availability of formal care and mounting pressure on the NHS to release patients from the hospital may also cause carers to provide longer-term care and care for patients with more complicated needs, adding to the pressure already placed on unpaid carers.

The care that unpaid carers provide is essential in the delivery and sustainability of adult social care services. There would be significant costs if a carer were unable to carry on their caring role and therefore supporting carers to remain resilient should help to avoid any breakdown in caring. Research undertaken by Sheffield University and Carers UK, shows that in Neath Port Talbot the cost of replacement care is £618 million.

(<https://www.carersuk.org/media/2d5le03c/valuing-carers-report.pdf>)

4. Ombudsman own initiative investigation

Ombudsman Wales has proposed an Own Initiative Investigation into the undertaking of Adult Carers Needs Assessments in Neath Port Talbot citing a low proportion of adult carers' needs assessments led to a support plan at 2% between 2018-19. The

Ombudsman also proposes to examine how Neath Port Talbot Councils use of a third sector organisation works in practice, as this model is unique in Wales.

Service delivery:

5. The Council, commission the provision of unpaid carers support to a third sector provider (NPT Carers Services) who provide services for carers aged 18 and over. For people aged under 18, support is delivered by the Council's Youth Services with funding provided from Think Family Partnership. Support for 'Parent Carers' is managed by Children's Services and is outsourced to NPT Carers Service, via a separate contract.

Carer's needs assessments can be undertaken by the Carers Service or Social Worker. The majority of assessment however are completed by the Carers Service and where an eligible need is identified a referral is made back to Social Care for further action.

The Review:

6. In 2022, a new Principal Officer post was created within adult services, with the remit of community support services, prevention and early intervention. This includes oversight of the provision of unpaid carers support.

A desktop evaluation of support provided to adult unpaid carers started in November 2022 and comprised of the following elements:

- Data analysis over a 4-year period (2019-2023) relating to demographics and completion of carers needs assessments
- Process mapping of each stage of the carers needs assessment
- Spoke to adult services teams about existing processes
- Gathered evidence of good practice (in NPT and across Wales).

Key Findings:

7. The review highlighted the following:
 - Multiple opportunities for the identification of unpaid carers throughout the system.

- Increase in the number of referrals to Neath Port Talbot Carers Service (NPTCS) from the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) 2022/23 for a carers needs assessment, although only a quarter were identified as requiring further action through formal support.
- Significant number of outcomes captured at the Carers Service, instead of on Oracle.
- Care and support plans are developed in the name of the cared for
- Disconnect between services for Adult Carers, Young Carers and Parent Carers.
- The feedback loop between the Carers Service and Social Care needs to be strengthened.
- Limited triage of Carers needs with an increased focus on the completion of a full carers needs assessment. This can result in a delay in carers receiving IAA.

Key Challenges:

8. ***Separation of commissioning and delivery***, - makes it difficult to get a 'whole system' view of the carers journey, especially the transition from young carers becoming adult carers.

Information Transfer – separate data system between social care and NPT Carers Service has resulted in data variance and hard to track outcomes.

Access to support – high waiting lists for carers assessment, with carers needs often escalated as a driver to seek support (reactive). Same waiting lists for eligible statutory need and non-statutory support.

Carer involvement – No formal structure for carer representation and low involvement from NPT carers at a regional level (Carers Liaison Forum)

Next steps:

- Review of SLA with NPT Carers Service
- Development of a project to support Cluster Network

identification and triage of Carers needs

- Carer engagement – to be supported by Swansea University
- Establish Unpaid Carers steering group
- Establishment of working group to support the ombudsmen investigation
- Expand initial review to include young carers and parent carers.

Financial Impacts:

No implications

Integrated Impact Assessment:

There is no requirement to undertake an integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for information purposes.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No implications.

Workforce Impacts:

No implications.

Legal Impacts:

No implications.

Risk Management Impacts:

No implications.

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Appendix 1 -

Ombudsman Own Initiative Investigation Proposal

Officer Contact:

Mrs. Sarah Waite, Principal Officer, Community Support, Prevention and Early Intervention, Adult Services, s.waite@npt.gov.uk



**Ombwdsmon
Ombudsman**
Cymru · Wales

Consultation



Proposal: Own Initiative Investigation on carers' needs assessments

Closing date: 11 May 2023

ombudsman.wales

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

About us

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- We drive systemic improvement of public services and standards of conduct in local government in Wales.

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Tel: 0300 790 0203

Email: communications@ombudsman.wales

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Overview

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has powers to undertake 'Own Initiative' investigations where evidence suggests that there may be systemic service failure or maladministration.

Following consultation on the principle of undertaking an investigation into the ease of access for carers to, and the effectiveness of carers' needs assessments and health and local authority complaint processes, the Ombudsman has now considered the responses received.

A range of responses were received, predominantly from carers and local authorities. Responses were also received from advice, advocacy and support organisations, and from independent social care consultants.

After careful consideration of all comments received, the Ombudsman has prepared a specific proposal for the investigation. The proposal is for a focussed and proportionate investigation, involving those local authorities which meet the criteria for Own Initiative investigation, relating to carers' needs assessments only. It is hoped that any learning points identified from this investigation will also be of benefit to other local authorities across Wales.

Comments and responses on this specific proposal are invited.

How to Respond

Please respond to the proposal:

By post to: Own Initiative Lead Officer
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Old Field Road
Pencoed
CF35 5LJ

Or by e-mail to: OwnInitiative@ombudsman.wales

Closing Date & Time: 11:59pm on 11 May 2023.

For any enquiries, please contact us by email or post to the address above.

Foreword

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (“the SSWB Act”) came into force on 6 April 2016 and created a legislative framework to bring together and modernise the law governing social care in Wales. The aim of the SSWB Act was to improve wellbeing outcomes for people who need care and support, and for carers who need support, through better co-ordination and enhanced collaboration between public bodies, including local authorities and the NHS.

The SSWB Act defines a carer as someone who provides, or intends to provide, unpaid care for an adult or disabled child. The cared for person may be a family member or a friend who, due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, cannot cope without their support.

A key aspect of the SSWB Act is that a carer does not have to specifically request a carers’ needs assessment or self-identify as a carer to be offered an assessment. If carers have needs that are eligible for support, the local authority has a statutory duty to plan for and meet those needs by providing a ‘Carer’s Support Plan.’

Where it appears that a carer may have needs for support, Part 3 of the SSWB Act places a duty on local authorities to undertake proportionate assessments to establish whether a carer has needs for support (or are likely to have needs in the future) and, if the carer has such needs, what those are (or are likely to be in the future). The matters which must be considered as part of the assessment process include whether the carer is able, and will continue to be able, to provide care for the person; the outcomes the carer is seeking and to what extent the provision of support, preventative services, information, advice, assistance, or other matters could achieve these outcomes or meet the carer’s needs.

The 2021 Census found that there are 310,751 carers in Wales, representing 10% of the population.¹ Whilst this figure was lower than in 2011, the Census found that the remaining carers were providing more hours of care; it found that 107,000 people in Wales provided 50 or more hours of unpaid care a week. The local authority with the highest proportion of people who provided any amount of unpaid care in Wales was Neath Port Talbot (12.3%), which also reported the joint highest proportion of disabled people. Neath Port Talbot also had the highest proportion of people who provided 50 or more hours of unpaid care a week (4.5%) and people who provided 20 to 49 hours of unpaid care a week (2.9%).

In 2021, in Wales, the age range of the highest percentage of unpaid carers was individuals aged between 55 and 59 years for females and between 55 and 64 years for males. The older age groups provided the highest number of hours of unpaid care.

According to the 2011 Census, there were 9,076 Black, Asian or minority ethnic carers in Wales. This represented 2.5% of all carers in Wales.² There were also approximately 320 unpaid carers who were from 'Gypsy or Irish Traveller' communities. This represented 0.09% of the unpaid carer population. There is no data to identify the number of carers whose language of choice is Welsh.

It is recognised that carers have a pivotal role in supporting health and social care in Wales. Many carers are vulnerable because of their age, both young and old, due to their own physical or mental health difficulties, and due to social-economic disadvantage.

Local authority data suggests that many carers are not having their needs assessed or receiving the support needed. Of those that are invited for an assessment, just under 50% refuse that assessment.³

¹ [Unpaid care, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk)

² [Strategy for Unpaid Carers EIA - Welsh Government](#)

³ [Adults assessed by local authority and measure \(gov.wales\)](#)

Carers Wales, an organisation representing carers in Wales, published its 'Track the Act Briefing 5'⁴ in 2020, as part of its annual programme monitoring the implementation of the SSWB Act. It found that 85% of 620 respondents from across all 22 local authorities had not had a carer's needs assessment in the year before March 2020; 41% had not heard of a carer's needs assessment before completing their survey and only 10% of carers had received information or advice services from local authorities.

The Caring National Survey for Wales, published by Welsh Government in March 2021,⁵ found that people between the ages of 45 and 74 were the age group most likely to be carers. It also found that people living in social housing were more likely to be carers than owner-occupiers and people living in the most deprived 20% of areas were more likely to be carers than those living in the 20% least deprived areas. In contrast to the data collected by StatsWales, in which it was found that as many as 50% of carers turn down assessments, only 8 % of carers in this survey turned down an assessment, with many of those responding stating that they did so as they did not see the value of it.

In March 2021, Welsh Government launched its Strategy for unpaid carers⁶. The strategy outlined what Welsh Government will do to improve the recognition of and support of carers. It recognised that early intervention and prevention was critical and that there was a need to embed the preventative aspects of the SSWB Act more effectively in public services and move key providers of services, including the third sector, towards an improved model of support for unpaid carers. It said that, if it failed to address those key issues, more unpaid carers and the people they care for, would reach crisis point before accessing vital support. It said that this, in turn, would increase the pressure on NHS and social services. The strategy identified 4 priorities: to identify and value unpaid carers,

[4 Carers Wales Track the Act Briefing 5 – Monitoring the 4th year of implementation of the Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014 \(2000\)](#)

⁵ [Caring \(National Survey for Wales\): April 2019 to March 2020 | GOV.WALES](#)

⁶ [Strategy for unpaid carers | GOV.WALES](#)

to provide information, advice and assistance, to support life alongside caring, and to support carers in education and the workplace.

A report published by the Social Care Institute for Excellence for Social Care Wales in June 2021 identified barriers and enablers to accessing carers' needs assessments in Wales.⁷ These included a lack of information, delays in accessing assessments, no definitive prescribed timescale to complete the assessment process. It also identified that some groups were more at risk of not accessing information, for example, those caring for children with additional support needs, young carers and carers of people living with dementia, those with language barriers, sensory impairments and limited internet access. The report also identified that carers in rural areas may have specific problems with social isolation, poverty, lack of transport and inaccessibility making it more difficult to identify and support people who may need help with their caring roles.

A report published by the Carers Trust in November 2022⁸ found that in a UK-wide survey, 46% of unpaid carers said that they had not had an assessment of their needs as an unpaid carer in the last year. Of those who had not had an assessment in the last year, 68% said they had not been offered one. 71% of the respondents who lived in Wales and had not had an assessment in the last year, said that they had not been offered one. Carers Trust told us that access to assessments had improved since its previous survey, which took place during the COVID-19 lockdown. However, it said that there was still a concern that not enough unpaid carers were having their needs assessed as local authorities are over stretched.

The Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 ("the 2019 Act") empowers the Ombudsman to undertake 'Own Initiative' investigations,¹ which do not need to be prompted by an individual complainant. The Ombudsman now proposes to investigate the ease of access for carers to, and the

⁷ [Review of evidence relating to unpaid carers' needs assessments in Wales | SCIE](#)

⁸ [I feel like I've disappeared - Carers Trust](#)

effectiveness of, carers' needs assessments. Specifically, this would consider whether local authorities are administering carers' needs assessments properly, fairly and openly, and whether they are making people aware of their right to a carer's needs assessment.

The proposed investigation

It is proposed that the Ombudsman will consider the following:

- Whether the local authorities being investigated are meeting their statutory duties under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and its Code of Practice, and The Care and Support (Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2015.
- Whether those entitled to a carer's needs assessment are made aware and understand their right to request a carer's needs assessment.
- Where carers' needs assessments are commissioned, whether those assessment services are being delivered appropriately and whether local authorities appropriately monitor the contracting arrangements.
- Whether carers' needs assessments, including those completed by commissioned service providers, are undertaken in accordance with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The reason for the investigation

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of carers to health and social care in Wales. Despite the SSWB Act being in place since 2016, the evidence indicates that carers are not aware of their rights and that it is likely that many individuals who provide care to their family and friends are unaware of the support available to them.

Therefore, the investigation will consider whether the local authorities investigated have done enough to ensure that carers are aware of their rights, whether they provide appropriate and timely information, advice and assistance to carers and that carers' needs assessments are completed in a timely manner to ensure that they are accessible and effective.

An open consultation inviting comments on conducting a wider Own Initiative investigation relating to the ease of access to, and effectiveness of, carers' needs assessments received 76 responses. Almost half of the responses were from carers. Responses were also received from local authorities, health boards, advice, advocacy and support organisation and independent social work consultants providing a wide cross-section of views. Comments made by carers during a focus group held in conjunction with Carers Wales further informed this investigation proposal.

Evidence provided by carers suggested that they were not aware of their right to a carer's needs assessment and that they had to request them rather than being proactively offered one by local authorities. The responses also indicated that carers' needs assessments were not explained to carers, with carers not being given any information to prepare for an assessment or informed of their right to advocacy; carers told us that sometimes they were not even aware that they were being assessed. The evidence gathered also indicated that the carers' needs assessments completed did not always accurately reflect their needs, or what was discussed, and carers were not provided with a written copy of the assessment. In addition, the evidence indicated that there was a failure to recognise communication needs to enable carers to effectively engage in carers' needs assessments. There was further evidence that carers were experiencing delays in receiving a carer's needs assessment and experiencing further delays between the assessment being undertaken and a support plan being agreed.

Evidence received from local authorities provided a mixed picture in terms of barriers to receiving a carer's needs assessment; some indicated that there were no barriers to carers receiving needs assessments, while some identified difficulties due to backlogs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the social care crisis. It was apparent that several local authorities commission third sector organisations e.g. North East Wales Carers Information Service (NEWCIS), to deliver carers' needs assessments. Local authorities that responded to the

consultation said that information and advice for carers was available on their websites. Information received in relation to one local authority indicated that carers' needs assessments tended to be covered in the 'integrated assessment' rather than as a stand-alone carers assessment. It was also said that, in a fair number of cases in this local authority, following consideration by its Management Reference Group, the services provided to the carer did not reflect the assessed outcomes/needs. Conversely, in other local authority areas, it was indicated that both joint and individual assessments were offered in line with statutory requirements.

An investigation would provide an opportunity to consider whether those local authorities investigated are administering carers' needs assessments in an effective and timely manner, providing an opportunity to identify any barriers or obstacles, and enable any good practice identified to be shared.

Evidence from both carers and local authorities indicated that, in many local authority areas, carers' needs assessments are outsourced to third sector organisations. Many carers reported delays after the needs assessments completed by third sector organisations were provided to the local authority for consideration. An investigation would provide an opportunity to explore how commissioned assessment services are delivered on behalf of local authorities' to meet their statutory duties and to examine how local authorities monitor compliance with contractual arrangements.

Our investigations would also provide an opportunity to take a holistic approach to reviewing the effectiveness and ease of access to carers' needs assessments. It would allow those benefiting from and those administering carers' needs assessments to share their experiences and suggestions, supporting improvements in service delivery.

Does the proposal meet the Ombudsman's published criteria?

The Ombudsman has published criteria for Own Initiative Investigations:

- **Public interest**

Public interest is generally accepted to be “something which is of serious concern and benefit to the public”. We consider it to be something that impacts upon the public, rather than a matter the public finds of interest, or a matter that impacts upon an individual (even though it can affect an individual more directly than the wider public). ‘Public’ in this context can refer to a distinct section of the public or the entire population of Wales.

10% of the Welsh population identify themselves as carers. It is also likely that many more do not realise that they provide care for a family member or friend. It is reasonable to consider that carers, and those being cared for, are more reliant on public services than those who are not, due to their own needs as carers or their needs as someone being cared for. Issues relating to the accessibility and effectiveness of carers' needs assessments are capable of affecting a wide group of individuals across Wales and have the potential to impact upon wider public services and communities.

Although the number of carers in Wales has fallen in recent years, the number of carers providing 50 or more hours of unpaid care a week has increased. It is reasonable to state that this subject is far reaching and affects many; not only those providing care, but also those being cared for.

- **Reasonable suspicion of systemic maladministration**

The evidence considered indicates that many carers are not having their needs assessed or receiving the support needed. There is evidence that carers are not being provided with timely information, advice and assistance and are

experiencing delays in being addressed. There is also evidence that carers are sometimes not aware that they are being assessed and are not provided with a written record of their assessment. In addition, there is evidence that some local authorities conduct joint needs assessments alongside those being cared for, despite a carer's right to an individual carer's needs assessment. The evidence therefore suggests that there may be systemic maladministration in the administration of carers' needs assessments.

Additionally, there is some concern about the outsourcing of needs assessments to third sector organisations in terms of how local authorities monitor their contracted obligations.

- **The matter impacts upon a wide group of citizens, to such an extent that they appear likely to sustain injustice or hardship in consequence of the matter being considered for investigation**

There are 310,751 carers in Wales. A review of our case records shows a low number of complaints from carers about needs assessments. The level of complaints received from carers falls below the number that may be reasonably expected, given that 10% of the Welsh population identify themselves as carers. The absence of such complaints suggests that carers and those being cared for do not understand or may not be aware of their right to a carer's needs assessment and the avenues available to them raise concerns, or they may have more pressing priorities.

Many carers are vulnerable because of their age, both young and old, and their own physical or mental health difficulties. An Own Initiative investigation of those local authorities which meet the criteria for Own Initiative investigation by the Ombudsman could lead to wider lessons being learned across Wales and the Ombudsman is therefore well placed to conduct this investigation.

- **The weight of evidence**

There is considerable evidence relating to the proposal and the specific issues identified. Whilst evidence gathered during the open consultation was informative, the focus group with Carers Wales and the Ombudsman's complaint information together with evidence from numerous other sources was also considered. These included:

- Welsh Government legislation and statutory guidance
- Welsh Government Strategy for unpaid carers, its delivery plan and annual report
- Welsh Government Caring (National Survey for Wales)
- Other relevant research and guidance documentation from Carers Wales, Social Care Wales, Audit Wales and third sector organisations, such as Carers Wales
- Information published by [StatsWales](#) and the Office of National Statistics
- Media Reports.

- **The persuasiveness of the evidence**

As the evidence we received was predominately from individual carers who outlined their recent personal experiences, those who support them and individuals who work in the sector, it is, in our view, credible, reliable and suggestive of potential systemic maladministration in the administration of carers' needs assessments by the local authorities which meet our criteria for Own Initiative investigation.

In the light of this analysis, we consider that all these criteria are met.

Which bodies will be included in the investigation?

All 22 local authorities in Wales have a duty to offer carers' needs assessments. Even if all local authorities met our Criteria for Own Initiative, investigation, it would not be reasonable or proportionate to investigate all 22 organisations. In view of this, we have identified those local authorities which meet the threshold for an Own Initiative investigation having given careful consideration of both the qualitative and quantitative evidence available.

Together with the evidence provided during our open consultation, we have had regard to evidence arising from our casework and: :

- The proportion of carers in each local authority.
- The number of assessments of need for support for carers undertaken, and of those, the number that led to a support plan.

The most recent data available in the table below shows the 5 local authorities with the largest proportion of carers⁹:

Local authority	Proportion of population
Neath Port Talbot	12.3%
Caerphilly	11.4%
Torfaen	11.4%
Blaenau Gwent	11.3%
Merthyr Tydfil	11.3%

In relation to the number of hours of unpaid care provided in a typical week, the largest proportion of people providing 19 hours or less of unpaid care a week lived in Monmouthshire and Ceredigion – both at 5.3% of the population. A larger proportion of people in Neath Port Talbot, 2.9% provided 20 to 49 hours unpaid

⁹ [Unpaid care, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

care a week compared to all other Welsh local authorities. Neath Port Talbot was also the local authority with the largest proportion of people providing 50 or more hours of unpaid care a week, at 4.5%.

The table below shows the number of adult carers' needs assessments completed by local authorities during 2018-2019¹⁰ and, of those, the number that led to a support plan:

Local Authority	Number of assessments of need for support for carers	Of those, the number that led to a support plan	% of assessments that led to a support plan
Flintshire	498	478	96%
Swansea	700	516	74%
Pembrokeshire	277	185	67%
Carmarthenshire	1256	765	61%
Conwy	350	199	57%
Wrexham	108	52	48%
Rhondda Cynon Taf	246	84	34%
Isle of Anglesey	563	186	33%
Newport	71	22	31%
Monmouthshire	152	41	27%
Merthyr Tydfil	92	19	21%
Powys	271	55	20%
Vale of Glamorgan	227	42	19%
Denbighshire	234	35	15%
Gwynedd	25	3	12%
Ceredigion	213	24	11%
Torfaen	133	11	8%
Bridgend	387	19	5%
Caerphilly	176	4	2%
Neath Port Talbot	287	6	2%
Cardiff	843	2	0.2%
Blaenau Gwent	152	0	0%
TOTAL	7261	2748	

¹⁰ [Adults assessed by local authority and measure \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/adults-assessed-by-local-authority-and-measure)

The table below shows the number of young carers' needs assessments completed by local authorities during 2018-2019¹¹ and, of those, the number that led to a support plan:

Local Authority	Number of assessments of need for support for Young Carers	Of those, the number that led to a support plan	% of assessments that led to a support plan
Denbighshire	27	27	100%
Gwynedd	38	38	100%
Isle of Anglesey	34	34	100%
Merthyr Tydfil	24	24	100%
Swansea	6	6	100%
Bridgend	57	53	93%
Wrexham	79	73	92%
Carmarthenshire	59	53	90%
Caerphilly	67	58	87%
Conwy	92	77	84%
Blaenau Gwent	5	4	80%
Newport	43	34	79%
Torfaen	39	29	74%
Flintshire	83	54	65%
Rhondda Cynon Taf	71	43	61%
Pembrokeshire	11	6	55%
Neath Port Talbot	63	32	51%
Monmouthshire	40	8	20%
Ceredigion	13	2	15%
Vale of Glamorgan	16	2	13%
Powys	26	2	8%
Cardiff	2	0	0%
TOTAL	895	659	

¹¹ [Assessments by local authority and measure \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales)

When considering the evidence available we have had regard to the practices in local authorities across Wales: the north, south and west Wales regions as well as considering the contrasting demographics in terms of urban and rural communities. Notwithstanding the Ombudsman's remit on systemic maladministration and injustice, our aim is also to identify any good practice we find during our investigations. Some of our consultation responses suggested that we should focus on local authorities which have outsourced its arrangements for carers assessments and we have had regard to a local authority with a high proportion of carers' needs assessments leading to a support plan, with the intention of establishing whether this is the result of good practice and, if so, how that might be shared.

In accordance with the Welsh Language Standards we have also take into account opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and the need for the Ombudsman and all public services in Wales to avoid treating the Welsh language less favourably than the English language. Factors such as the prevalence of the Welsh language and socio-economic issues in each local authority were taken into account. The information we have considered supports the inclusion of the 4 local authorities selected in the investigation to enable the investigation to take account of the Welsh Language Standards duties in areas with differing levels of Welsh speakers.

Qualitative information in the form of personal/reported experiences was also considered. We have been mindful of the fact that some of the quantitative data available is relatively outdated and we have therefore placed greater weight on the qualitative data arising from our open consultation which was based on the recent experiences and practices.

Consequently, the 4 local authorities which meet the Criteria and which we propose to investigate are:

Caerphilly County Borough Council

- Caerphilly County Borough Council is the local authority with the second highest proportion of people who provided carers in Wales.
- Caerphilly County Borough Council also has a high proportion of disabled people and a high proportion of localities classified as most deprived in Wales, making it one of the most deprived areas in Wales. It is appropriate to consider how the demographic influences the provision of carers' needs assessments in this local authority.
- Evidence gathered during the consultation indicated that carers' needs assessments tended to be included in the integrated assessment rather than a stand-alone carer's needs assessment.
- Evidence gathered during the consultation indicated that in a fair number of cases the services provided do not reflect the assessed outcomes/needs.
- Evidence received from carers in response to the consultation indicated a distrust in the local authority and a fear that services would be removed, and that carers' needs assessments were not being routinely offered to carers.
- Only 2% of adult carers' needs assessments led to a support plan, however, 87% of young carers' needs assessments led to a support plan. It is appropriate to examine this disparity.
- In the light of the information above and the published criteria, it is proposed that Caerphilly County Borough Council is one of the local authorities included in the investigation.

Ceredigion County Council

- Ceredigion County Council is one of the local authorities with the largest proportion of people providing 19 hours or less of unpaid care a week at 5.3% of the population.
- A relatively low proportion of adult and young carers' needs assessments led to a support plan at 11% and 15 % respectively.
- Ceredigion County Council works in partnership with Porth Gofal, a partnership between Ceredigion County Council, Hywel Dda University Health Board, and third sector organisations, to undertake adult carers' needs assessments and with Gofalwyr Ceredigion Carers for young carers' needs assessments. It is appropriate to examine how the use of a third sector organisation works in practice, given general concerns raised by carers about commissioned carers' needs assessments during the consultation.
- Ceredigion County Council is a largely rural authority situated in west Wales. More than half of its population are Welsh speakers (57%).¹²
- Examining how the rural nature and use of the Welsh language may impact upon the support available to carers will be an issue we propose to consider.
- In the light of the information above and the published criteria, it is proposed that Ceredigion County Council is one of the local authorities included in the investigation.

¹² [Annual Population Survey - Ability to speak Welsh by local authority and year \(gov.wales\)](#)

Flintshire County Council

- Flintshire County Council has been identified as the local authority with the highest percentage of adult carers' needs assessments leading to a support plan.
- Examining how this has occurred, whether best practice is exemplified at this local authority and whether any lessons could be learned to share with other bodies, is worthy of further consideration.
- In contrast, evidence gathered from carers who lived in this local authority area indicated that the support plans offered did not meet their assessed outcomes/needs and that there was a limited range of support options offered.
- In addition, evidence indicated that carers' communication needs were not recognised to enable effective engagement in carers' needs assessments.
- Carers' needs assessments are commissioned to North East Wales Carers Information Service at Flintshire County Council. It is appropriate to examine how the use of a third sector organisation works in practice, given general concerns raised by carers about commissioned carers' needs assessments during the consultation.
- In responding to the Consultation, Flintshire County Council said that it did not consider that it had a systemic service failure or maladministration issue. However, it has recently voluntarily agreed to settle a complaint made to the Ombudsman's office relating to carers' needs assessments. It had failed to provide a copy of the carers' needs assessments and subsequently agreed to provide this. It also agreed that it had not offered carers' needs assessments to the complainants in their own right.

- In the light of the information above and the published criteria, it is proposed that Flintshire County Council is one of the local authorities included in the investigation.

Neath Port Talbot Council

- Neath Port Talbot Council is the local authority with the highest proportion of people who provide any amount of unpaid care. Neath Port Talbot Council also has the highest proportion of people who provide 50 or more hours of unpaid care a week at 4.5% and people who provide 20-49 hours of unpaid care a week at 2.9%.
- Neath Port Talbot Council also has the joint highest proportion of disabled people and has a high proportion of localities classified as most deprived in Wales.
- Neath Port Talbot Council works in partnership with Neath Port Talbot Carers Service to undertake carers' needs assessments, with this service also providing some support services and others that are not offered by Neath Port Talbot Carers Service being forwarded to relevant social services teams. It is appropriate to examine how the use of a third sector organisation works in practice, given general concerns raised by carers about commissioned carers' needs assessments during the consultation.
- A relatively low proportion of adult carers' needs assessments led to a support plan at 2%.
- The high number of carers in this local authority compared with the low proportion of adult carers' needs assessments leading to a support plan is worthy of further investigation.
- Evidence presented in response to the consultation indicated that carers' needs assessments took a considerable effort to arrange, that it was routinely recorded that the carer declined an assessment, and there

was a lack of awareness amongst staff regarding the statutory right to a carer's needs assessment.

- In the light of the information above and the published criteria, it is proposed that Neath Port Talbot Council is one of the local authorities included in the investigation.

The investigation process

An outline of the general process to be undertaken during this investigation:

Stage 1 – Investigation start and evidence gathering

- a) Local authorities selected for inclusion in the investigation will be notified that an investigation is being started. Those local authorities will be asked to provide relevant information; this may include relevant policies and procedures, relevant documentary evidence (e.g. examples of completed assessments), relevant statistical data as well information and comments from relevant members of local authority staff and staff of commissioned services. Evidence may also be requested from relevant members of local authority staff and staff of commissioned services.
- b) Calls for evidence – evidence could be gathered from other bodies, stakeholders and service users in the form of witness evidence and lived experience evidence. Interviews may be held with third parties and service users.
- c) Relevant legislation and national guidance, and Welsh Government documentation, including policies, guidance and it strategy for unpaid carers will be reviewed.
- d) Review of media articles relating to carers' needs assessments.

Stage 2 – Investigation start and fact finding

- a) Analysis and review of the information gathered.
- b) Identification of themes and/or trends including any evidence of maladministration and/or service failure and any good practice identified.

Stage 3 – Investigation report

- a) Share draft report with investigated authorities to allow them an opportunity to comment on the investigations findings and any proposed recommendations and timescales for implementation.
- b) Share draft report with and invite comments from any other relevant parties for which the Ombudsman may make suggestions to improve provision of public services relating to carer needs assessments.
- c) Issue report.

Stage 4 – Post investigation monitoring

- a) Monitor compliance of investigated authorities with the agreed recommendation within the agreed timescales.
- b) Monitor response of other relevant parties with any suggestions made within the investigation report.
- c) Monitor the longer-term impact of the investigation and its findings.

The proposed timescale for investigation

It is proposed that the investigation is commenced in **May** and should be completed within **36 weeks** of the investigation start date.