

**Cardiff Youth Justice Service
Report to Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee
November 2023**

Independent Chair Update on YJS Management Board progress – Dr Sue Thomas

Sue Thomas took over as the Independent Chair of the YJS Management Board in July 2023. Since then, Sue has chaired one board meeting, which included discussion of a response from Cardiff to the Ministry of Justice's consultation on the future of the remand grant and subsequently prepared a response with the Operational Manager. Four substantive options are under consideration.

Sue also worked with the YJS to prepare its response to a National Standards self-audit of court work (requested by YJB Cymru). The evidence was presented to a focus group of Board and sub-committee members for consideration and several positive amendments were made following their recommendation.

Sue and Angharad also worked together to prepare additional information for Cardiff's Sustainability Action Plan to support its application to be a Child Friendly City. Sue has met with the Youth Justice staff team on several occasions and attended a team managers meeting. She is also liaising with various board members regarding induction and attendance.

Operational Manager Update on Youth Justice Service progress – Angharad Thomas

1) Staffing

The team has been depleted over recent months due to staff sickness and vacancies, but management and staff have worked together to maintain business as usual in respect of YJS work. Vacancy management still continues to be an issue within the team – particularly around social worker recruitment however the YJS OM has been in discussions with the YJB, HR and Trade Unions around a possible solution expanding the qualification criteria for report writers in line with the Sentencing Act 2020 and will soon be moving to a staff consultation process.

One manager – Interventions and Planning - has returned from Maternity leave and commenced full time duties, however the Prevention and Partnerships Senior Officer will be leaving in December. We have a number of excellent candidates that have applied for this post and shortlisting is currently taking place.

We have short-term arrangements in to allow for specific posts to be covered through agency workers and the YJS team have shown great resilience and flexibility in supporting each other through case management and report writing tasks.

We also have a new Probation secondee starting in December to support with transition work.

2) Project Updates.

a) Activity programme

Over the summer and October half term, Cardiff YJS ran a successful summer programme of activities to provide our young people with the opportunity to take part in constructive pursuits and group interventions. There were a range of options for young people to choose from, from sporting activities to sessions with animals and offence focused workshops. (presentation included with this report)

The most popular activities throughout the summer which were regularly attended included weekly go karting sessions, fishing and a trip to Cefn Mably farm. Comments from young people who attended included *'I've liked doing things I wouldn't normally get to do in the summer'* and *'it was fun having staff do the activities and give everything a go even when they were scared!'*. For those who enjoyed creative activities, we held an Art project at our office to help design and decorate one of our rooms, to ensure we have an appropriate space for our young people to learn and relax in.

b) Interventions

This year, we introduced 3 group interventions to support our young people- peer influence, substance misuse and weapons awareness. When asked for feedback, one young person said *'the intervention was better than I thought and I learnt a lot'*. Another said, *'I liked being able to give my opinion in the workshop and have someone listen to it'*.

In addition to this, at the beginning of summer we introduced Girls Group, as one of our current focuses is to expand upon how we are working with girls involved in the Youth Justice Service. Initially, we only had one girl attend but by the end of summer, 5 girls had attended sessions, taking part in activities such as cooking, hair design and jewellery making.

Staff feedback from the summer programme included *'It has been nice to provide new experiences and opportunities for our young people. The Alpaca walking was like a well-being session, and it was lovely to see the young people smiling the whole time'*. Another staff member said *'it was refreshing to see the young people having positive interactions with the general public, challenging the negative perception we often see in the press'*.

Further feedback was- *'The weapons workshops were positive and are something that can now continue with our young people. The football was also excellent- it was great to see the young people enjoying themselves, especially when receiving their certificates and football shirts'*. Overall, staff felt that it was very rewarding to be able to see young people enjoying being carefree and just enjoying being children and young people.

We have also started a photography project – My World where young people can showcase Cardiff through their eyes.

3) Performance and KPIs

Staff Supervision:

The target is 1 supervision per month (LA staff) and every other month for partnership staff **88%** of planned supervisions have been undertaken over the past quarter. An increase from 72% during last quarter.

The average caseload for the service has moved to over 150 from approximately 135 last year – this is deemed to be as a result of the introduction of Crossroads and an increase in referrals to the project following it's 're-branding' and widening of eligibility criteria to include those young people on Police bail.

Within all of this, first time entrants to the Youth Justice System along with reoffending rates continue to decrease.

We are about to submit our Q1 and Q2 data to the Youth Justice Board (YJB) relating to the new KPI's. This has had to be completed manually due to us awaiting a system upgrade.

We submitted our Youth Justice Plan to the YJB in the Summer. Last year Cardiff received an 'Outstanding' rating. This year plans are not being rated, however Cardiff did receive very positive feedback on the plan in October – a summary is below:

'A well-written plan. Easy to navigate, understand and analyse. Examples of good practice and partnership working. A comprehensive breakdown of performance, priorities, and budgets.'

Reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The service's commitment to meet 7 UNICEF child-rights based approach principles is discussed in the Building Safer Futures Together (22-24) strategy (embedded in plan). A high quality YJ Plan that was easy to navigate. The structure was followed. Examples of practice that could be considered for the Resource Hub. Strong examples of partnership working.

An absolute pleasure to read.'

4) Response to questions regarding Education and exclusion data within the Chair's Letter June 2023

We recruited into the vacant Education Officer post in the Summer following the departure of the previous post holder and the maternity leave starting of our YJS officer within Education. We were fortunate to be able to offer a secondment to a colleague within the Education directorate. Due to unforeseen and unexpected circumstances, the new officer has had to take some time off work so we have been unable to provide education data as requested during this update. She will be returning to work in the near future so however we will endeavour to ensure it is provided in our next update.