

Carmarthenshire Youth Support Service

Carmarthenshire Youth Support Service brings together youth work and youth justice statutory provision under a single management structure. The Service allows for the development of a holistic approach to the delivery of youth support services across Carmarthenshire.

Vision

A service that provides a robust range of support from open access to specialised support, enabling children, young people, and young adults (aged 8-25 years) to access *what* they need, *when* and *where* they need it so that they can reach their full personal, social, and educational potential.

Core Principles

Carmarthenshire Youth Support Service:

- Will promote Children's Rights and ensure that children and young people have a good, positive, and meaningful experience of participation
- Is innovative and creative in its service delivery
- Contributes to the Local Authority's delivery of early intervention, prevention, and support within the county
- Has well-trained staff and volunteers who can offer a range of services to children, young people and families in Welsh and English
- Uses restorative approaches in what we do
- Engages with families and carers for better outcomes

Service Priorities for 2021/23

- To ensure that the Service provides a high quality, responsive and accessible youth support provision for children, young people and young adults in Welsh and English
- To carry out a self-assessment against the National Participation Standards
- To support children and young people to access appropriate health and wellbeing services
- To support the process of curriculum development in schools and support educational attainment and attendance for children, young people, and young adults
- To become a Trauma Informed, Adverse Childhood Experiences Aware service
- To divert children and young people away from the criminal justice system
- To prevent offending and re-offending of children and young people
- To adopt holistic approaches in working with children, young people, and families

Youth Support Service - 4 Teams

Universal Support Team

Responsible for open access provision including:

- Leading on Participation and Children's Rights and supporting children and young people's participation in decisions that affect them
- Adventurous outdoor activities
- Term time and holiday programmes
- County Council youth clubs in Carmarthenshire
- Supporting the delivery of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (Gold; Silver; Bronze Awards)
- Programmes of accredited learning e.g., Open College Network; ASDAN; John Muir Award
- Delivery of activities to support community safety and to reduce anti-social behaviour
- Co-ordination of staff training and professional development
- Residential programmes for young people both in the UK and abroad

Targeted Youth Support Team (16-25 years)

Responsible for the delivery of a range support for children, young people and young adults aged 16-25 years and their families. The team works with individuals, families and groups who are be affected by a broad range of issues associated with:

- Family relationships
- Emotional and mental health issues
- Homelessness
- Not being engaged in in education, employment, or training

Targeted Youth Support (8-18 years)

The team includes school-based youth workers in all county secondary schools and Coleg Sir Gâr, as well as peripatetic School Engagement Project staff.

- Staff work with children in all secondary schools, as well as those aged 10-16 who are educated other than at school
- The team supports children and young people at key transition stages from primary school to secondary school, as well as in relation to further and higher education and employment
- A variety of approaches are offered with 1-1 support
- Staff offer groupwork which may include accredited opportunities such as ASDAN or John Muir award, as well as non-accredited formal groupwork programmes such as the STAR programme (Safety Trust and Respect) and less formal, issue-based group learning opportunities
- Parents and carers can also be offered support and advice

Youth Justice Team

The team works with children and young people aged from 8-17 years. Staff carry out assessments of children which help in making decisions for a range of Out of Court Disposals via Bureau, as well as providing information to courts for sentencing

purposes. Staff can also offer support to prevent children from getting into trouble with the Police. The team is responsible for supervising children subject to orders made by the Youth Court as well as custodial sentences. Restorative Justice is central to the work of the team and this underpins support for identified victims within the criminal justice system.

Youth Support Service Response during Covid-19 – Service delivery across all 4 Teams

During the last year, there has been a service-wide emphasis on the identification of vulnerable children and young people so that they can be offered appropriate guidance and support either from the service or via onward referral/signposting. Safeguarding has remained of paramount importance and there has been good partnership working with Social Services, Health and Education.

During the early part of lockdown, a staff skills survey was completed by the Youth Support Service, as well as a record of staff needs/issues that may impact on any service delivery.

Reporting of performance against funding streams has continued as usual, and staff have continued to receive a wide range of training and Continuous Professional Development opportunities to maintain and develop a skilled workforce.

The Service achieved the Youth Work Quality Mark Silver Award (awaiting ministerial sign off) and has signed up to the National Participation Charter which has required commencement of a self-assessment against the National Participation Standards. This represents a very real commitment to improving participation across all aspects of service delivery and will make a significant contribution to the quality of service delivery.

A Youth Justice Contingency Plan and a Youth Justice Recovery Plan were produced in line with Youth Justice Board requirements during 2020. Additionally, the YSS Principal Manager attended a meeting with Estyn Local Authority Link Inspectors to discuss youth work delivery during COVID-19.

The schedule of YSS meetings normally held throughout the year has continued virtually, for example, Management Meetings, team meetings, staff supervision. Managers have also held regular catch-up sessions with teams to offer support and to bolster morale.

Staff were issued with smart phones to be able to be responsive and to make best use of social media and digital platforms when engaging with children and young people.

The service also:

- Supported staffing of the school hubs during lockdowns.
- Offered support to families as and when appropriate.
- Deployed some staff on a part-time basis for food delivery duties across the county.
- Conducted door- step/garden visits for those deemed vulnerable.
- Adapted quickly- with the aid of social media and technology- communication was maintained with children and young people and support was offered remotely. Letters were sent to young people who could not be contacted by these methods.

- Had staff trained in the safe use of social media such as Facebook messenger and Zoom to engage with children and young people.
- Engaged in close working with Children's Services to support the most vulnerable pupils/children.
- Assisted the Education and Children's Services Department to identify young people requiring IT support.
- Committed to joint working between staff across teams and indeed with other partners during the period.

The YSS Principal Manager has participated in County Council, as well as multi-agency recovery groups at a local, regional, and national level.

Youth Work Team Responses (Universal; 10-18 Youth Support and 16-25 Youth Support)

Youth Work Delivery during COVID

- School Based Youth Workers are directly supporting some vulnerable children and schools; they are also working with Heads and pastoral leads to identify children requiring additional contacts.
- Universal Team staff are being used flexibly across the services and are used to bolster additional support as and when required.
- Virtual Education, Training and Employment meetings are held with colleagues across Education and Children Services, alongside Careers Wales, to identify early those young people needing additional support and identified in respect of transition routes to Post 16 Work Based Learning provision.
- During lockdown/recovery, schools were contacted to identify any Year 11 pupils in need of support during the transitional period, working alongside colleagues at Careers Wales, colleges and EOTAS. Identified pupils were referred to the Youth Support Service's Post 16 Team, to establish engagement opportunities.
- The Make Your Mark Ballot was conducted.
- The Period Poverty Project continued for its 3rd year in succession
- Youth Health Worker sessions were delivered virtually– anxiety, stress management, anger management
- Welfare checks and keeping in touch via youth work were conducted – nearly 2,000 children and young person contacts throughout summer 2020.
- As lockdown was eased, outdoor visits were conducted with children and families assessed as highly vulnerable, and in September 2021, all School Based Youth Workers returned to their respective schools for the start of the Autumn term.
- Social distancing and health education messages were re-enforced because of the detached work undertaken. Young people were signposted to YSS social media accounts for further advice and guidance via a QR code and a number were also signposted to specialist services such as housing, substance misuse, domestic abuse etc.

Comments from YSS Youth Health Worker:

'During lockdown, I have made efforts to go far beyond what people might expect of youth work. I have been able to support young people and their families with a list of relevant topics including budgeting/ financial support, housing, and health issues. The significant psychological impacts of social distancing and quarantine measures on young people has caused stress, anxiety, and loneliness. The young people have reported that the lack of direct contact with their friends, family and social connections has been hardest thing to cope with, and that this has been seriously affecting their mental health and wellbeing. In this context, my greatest concern about the impact of COVID-19 has been mental well-being, employment, income loss, disruptions to education, familial relations, and friendships, as well as a limitation to individual freedoms'

Participation Work

The Participation and Engagement Team, and the YSS Participation Worker continue to support initiatives of the Carmarthenshire Youth Council.

Youth Work Response and Co-operation

Youth Worker comments:

'It has been more important than ever to link with other professionals to safeguard the young people we support. Due to the voluntary relationships, we have with the young people and the trust we have built; I have been successful in keeping constant engagement with the young people when some other services have struggled. It has been vital to work very closely with partner organisations and we have kept in regular contact via online forums to share information on young people who are at risk as well as more formal meetings...It has been important for services for young people to come together seamlessly.'

- YSS staff contribution to Summer programme 2020 for vulnerable pupils in partnership with Children's Services.
- YSS paid for Dr Mz staff member to have 3-day virtual training in Trauma Recovery Model.
- YSS Youth Work Quality Mark Assessor provided support to Dr Mz in their preparation for their entry for the Bronze Quality Mark. YSS Manager took part on assessor interviews.
- Detached work was carried out on a partnership basis with colleagues from CHOICES/BAROD (substance misuse service), young adult carers and Dr Mz all undertaking work with the YSS.
- The partnership between the Youth Support Service and Carmarthenshire YFC continues to strengthen and a pilot project was launched in September 2020, where YFC members will undertake a Junior Leadership Level 2 qualification delivered by Youth Support Service staff. Other areas under development include: - safeguarding training for leaders, youth work qualifications & the accreditation of wider opportunities through the YFC calendar.

- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) sessions for Young Carers were delivered in the county over summer period.
- The young person's Grant Panel with CAVS was re-established with YSS support.
- YSS assisted with consultations with young people about the impact of COVID on schooling.
- YSS revised SLA's with Dr Mz and Urdd and continues to offer funding support to them.

Dealing with Youth Homelessness during COVID 19

- YSS staff attended Youth Accommodation Panel meetings alongside representatives from Housing, Children's Services, support providers and commissioner from housing support grant.
- YSS representatives attended multi agency meetings for young people.
- YSS staff attended planning meetings for training flats.
- YSS attend review meetings for Llamau provision.
- YSS reps assessed suitability of new Llamau supported lodgings providers.
- YSS supported more than 40 homeless young people directly and indirectly.
- YSS staff advised colleagues and other agencies supporting young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

New Approaches

- In collaboration with Post -16 colleagues a pilot project has been launched involving the creation and development of wellbeing activity packs. The packs were developed because of feedback from young people struggling with lockdown and the affects it had on their mental, emotional health and wellbeing. These packs have been distributed to young people currently accessing support and feedback is being sought to shape the next phase of the project.
- During the easing of lockdown, appointment only drop-in sessions were organised out of the 3 town centre youth centre sites. This is to be re-instated from 3/5/21.
- As a result of COVID, youth club provision was halted initially, before moving towards delivery of supporting young people online.

Social Media

- In the initial stages of the lockdown period, the service recognised the need to strengthen its social media interface, as a result, we developed our presence on Facebook and set up an Instagram page.
- We have a timetable offering themed days so that there is a consistent message via our social media. We reinforce the #ymaich #hereforyou on most posts.
- School Based Youth Worker contact details are pinned to the top of the page.
- We have mindfulness posts every Monday. To date, we have covered stress management, mental health awareness, suicide awareness, anger management, meditation, breast cancer awareness, learning Welsh week, healthy eating, LGBTQ+ posts, black history month, fearless, water safety, youth accommodation support, bullying, sexual health, back to school week, sports day, COVID-19 related posts (social distancing, handwashing etc), Funky Fridays/tik toks and weekday challenges – which are all about being active.
- We have also covered- Scroll free September, period poverty, plastic free July, national biscuit day, friend's day, National Youth Work Week, Pride month, sun safety, volunteering

week, deaf awareness, oral health, quarantine tips, Cam Nesa and Choices (substance misuse service) information.

- Other focus has included- GCSE and A level results support. Post 16 week – youth workers, careers, housing, and training providers all available for live chat.
- Social media has also been used to promote detached work, youth clubs, and competition. Halloween safety, firework safety, world kindness day, handwashing day, anti-bullying week, alcohol awareness week, eating disorders, no smoking day were also included.
- There was particular focus on water safety education and messages because of identified need linked to reports that there were large groups of young people jumping into sea/reservoirs/rivers/harbours etc.

Support offered:

- Support/Advice for schools in establishing LGBTQ+ groups
- LGBTQ – 2 groups running virtually
- Adaptation of Clwb Hwyl (after school club) to virtual delivery for pupils of Heol Goffa.

Training:

- Bespoke training delivered enabling staff to undertake adventurous activities with young people, as well as professional qualifications has taken place.
- Relevant staff have undertaken tutor training with Adult Learning Wales to ensure compliance with the recently updated qualifications.

Youth Engagement and Progression workstream:

- Vulnerability Assessment Profile Meetings under YEPF have been held remotely with Secondary Schools.
- Support into Employment Education and Training Meetings with stakeholders have been held virtually.
- Work based learning providers faced their own challenges as their centres had to close. This led to providers adapting their programmes and course delivery and offering support remotely for young people as well as by telephone. Some young people were offered IT equipment by providers so that they could participate remotely. Positive feedback was received from participants. During the recovery phase, centres have re-opened with appropriate measures in place to ensure the safety of staff and clients.

Youth Justice Team Response

The Youth Justice Team and the Youth Justice Management Board completed a self-assessment against the Youth Justice Board National Standards for Children in the Justice System in March 2020. The judgement of 'outstanding' against each of the 5 standards was ratified by the Youth Justice Board.

Pre-lockdown

Staff worked together to identify the risks and needs profile of the team's caseload to assist in prioritisation the type of contact/support each child needed.

Managers and staff completed a 'Red/ Amber/ Green' status on each Court and Out of Court case using a template which captured Risk of Serious Harm, Safety and Wellbeing concerns or any other need or required response.

The Youth Justice Team quickly adapted to guidance in relation to delivery of Appropriate Adult services at the police station and cooperated with HMCTS to deliver services at the Youth Court.

Bureau and Referral Order Panels have been conducted virtually/by phone. We are in the process of completing necessary arrangements for Bureau to be held on a face-to-face basis in May 2021.

Reparation work was successfully re-opened briefly via Gold Command (during the easing of rules); however, this was suspended in December 2020. To overcome the challenge of not being able to complete outdoor reparation activity, new projects have been developed, for example, the team worked in collaboration with Crimestoppers – Fearless project, to co-create a new resource, which can be used to discuss crime and related issues with children and young people in schools and youth organisations within the county. The resource created --a virtual/ actual playing card discussion pack-- will reflect local concerns that may affect children and young people in our area; generate discussion and promote positive engagement around safer communities, good citizenship, and children's rights. During the year a Reparation Project came runner up in the Hwb Doeth (Excellence Awards).

1:1 reparation work has been recommenced in April 2021

Sharing Insights

The Youth Justice Team, along with one other Welsh YOT was invited to contribute to a virtual seminar, 'Lockdown Lessons in Wales: a youth justice perspective' convened by the Welsh Centre for Crime and Criminal Justice and the University of South Wales.

In Conclusion

In the face of the many challenges encountered during this unprecedented episode, the response of the Youth Support Service has been significant. Managers and staff have shown strong commitment to being flexible and responsive to emerging need and have made a valuable contribution to service delivery in respect of children, young people, and families.

During the period, new and innovative approaches have developed which the service will adopt as standard practice. Currently, the service is working hard to identify key aspects of service delivery that can be safely re-started. Staff have expressed that they are very much looking forward to being able to revert a model of work incorporating elements of face-to-face delivery and direct work. It is recognised that whilst contact via virtual means has a place in modern-day service delivery, children, and young people by now, are experiencing a degree of 'virtual fatigue' and they would prefer blended approaches to meet their individual needs.

Current funding arrangements and various grant criteria require the Youth Support Service to provide a targeted youth support response across teams. This requires the development of different skill sets to effectively discharge a range of

responsibilities. It is significant to note that youth work is undergoing a period of significant change in line with the WG Youth Work Strategy which recommends the following:

- a national body to take responsibility for a programme of change with a regional partnership approach to inform and develop local delivery.
- the development of a new funding model
- an innovation and outcomes framework for youth work, and
- a new digital youth work offer to young people in Wales encompassing the establishment of a youth information service and youth entitlement card.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation have commenced their programme of Youth Offending Team inspections, and it is anticipated that the Youth Justice Team will be in line for inspection anytime within the next year or so. Therefore, work is being carried out to ensure that the Youth Justice Management Board and the Youth Justice Team self-assess against HMIP Inspection Standards in readiness.

The YSS Principal Manager is in the process of drawing up the YSS Business Plan which will include a focus upon the Youth Justice Plan for 2021/22, as well as an overview of the YSS during past year, as well as future planning.