

# **2023-2025 Workforce Development Strategy for the Youth Justice system**

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## Introduction

This Workforce Development Strategy has been developed by the Workforce Development Council whose members are representatives from the Youth Justice system. Our role is to support the sector and offer strategic advice to the Youth Justice Board. This Strategy exists for those engaged with children in the youth justice system including those employed or volunteers in secure and community teams as well as partners from the voluntary sector and volunteers.

## Comments from Co-Chairs of the Workforce Development Council

As co-chairs of the Workforce Development Council we commend this strategy which builds on the strategy 20-22 . This has been developed by colleagues working in both community and secure estate. We would like to recognise and commend those across the system who, despite the extraordinary challenges of the COVID and post COVID period, have maintained momentum for change and achieved some key points of progress for the youth justice workforce . We would specifically highlight :

In community services

- The Elevate programme to support middle managers from ethnic backgrounds achieve higher level of responsibility strategic posts
- Further embedding Child first principles into YJ service's culture
- Professionalisation of staff through qualification and introducing reflective practice

In secure settings

The YCS has introduced additional training and qualification for prison officer staff, after which they would move to a new youth justice specialist role. As of August 2022, around two-thirds of eligible staff for which YCS is directly responsible were either qualified or in the process of qualifying through this process. Furthermore, in recognition of the important and challenging work staff do across the system reflective practice sessions are now in place across all YOI sites as part of the SECURE STAIRS framework of care. Similar systems of support are in place across other sectors of the secure estate.

The Strategy 23-25

In developing the next phase of our strategy colleagues in the consultation workshops highlighted several key themes which provide important direction for future ambition:

- a) The COVID and post COVID period has highlighted the complexity of the lives and needs of children and families. Staff working across youth justice settings need further support in responding to the interplay of poverty, trauma, and exploitation with effective and resilient ways of working. Those children and families with whom the system interacts are complex and diverse, and as such our staff must be equipped with the necessary skills and support to respond accordingly.
- b) The daily pressures on staff can be immense and so our commitment has to be not only to effective recruitment but to a supportive and safe workplace culture so that staff feel enabled to do this valuable and essential work and, when appropriate, can access relevant and supported progression ladders
- c) Strong and capable leadership is critical in such a complex system. Helping them navigate available support and resources will be critical in supporting their staff in a way which works at local level. Management Boards, Governors and service heads may value a range of ways of working for example peer sharing, examples of good practice on YJ Resources Hub. Building networks of support and sharing best practice should be a core ambition of future work. Such networks should enhance and build capability by creating links across partners and sectors. .

The local and national social and financial pressures in 23-25 are likely to be very challenging for individuals and services. This both presents challenge but also amplifies the need for this work and strong connections across the system. We will not be able to do all we might wish for, so this strategy identifies the actions which we see as having the greatest priority and will offer the greatest benefit to the system. We must also be able to answer the question of 'so what' and how we can show impact and offer value to the system.

**Graham Robb, Independent Chair, Cardiff Youth Justice Board**

**Giles McCathie, Deputy Director Strategy and Commissioning, Youth Custody Service.**

## **Vision statement**

Enable the YJ workforce – paid and volunteers- to be resilient as they provide opportunities for children to develop their pro-social identities and make a positive contribution to society.

## **Objectives**

### **Enable the workforce support children develop their pro-social identities through active participation**

- Identify the skills, knowledge and behaviour required to support children's pro-social identities
- Share examples of services which have a clear embedded culture of hearing the voice of the child and meaningful, active participation
- Encourage and collaborate with multi-agency work and family conferencing so strong relationships are built around the child
- Develop resources to enable services further develop their participation strategies and culture
- Review and share relevant materials on neuro diversity, speech and language, brain injury, brain development, foetal alcohol spectrum disorders which can inhibit clear communication with children.
- Support engagement with children that is customised, co-created, consistent, constructive and collaborative

### **Support the resilience and well-being of the workforce**

- Provide resources to support the resilience of the YJ workforce
- Encourage services develop a culture of well-being which reflects the value of professionals working in a complex and challenging environment.
- Ensure that services are aware of the impact of vicarious trauma
- Review ways in which services provide ongoing care and support for the workforce (clinical supervision, peer support groups, coaching and mentoring, a culture where support systems are embedded and normalised)

### **Provide resources which allow a greater level of consistency across the youth justice system**

- Highlight resources for Management Boards learning and development and share examples of Management Boards working effectively
- Support Management Boards as they hold others to account with KPIs and other comparator data
- Refresh the YJ Skills Matrix to support national role descriptions and competences
- Ensure that services understand the opportunities available to grow and diversify their workforce (e.g., the YJ Apprenticeship)

## **Business as usual**

The WDC will continue to innovate and respond to the needs of the YJ workforce and support the development and delivery of:

- Cohort 2 of the Elevate programme
- The Youth Justice Apprenticeship and positive action support programme
- Diversity monitoring of learning and development registrations
- The Youth Justice National Professional Framework
- Workforce Development materials on the Resource Hub ensuring they are up to date
- Receiving feedback from Developing Practice forums and the wider workforce
- Supporting services by providing examples and templates of good workforce Development (identified by HMIP and YJ plans)
- Refresh the YJ Skills Matrix to ensure alignment with Child First

## Principles of the Strategy

The Youth Justice Board supports the sector led Workforce Development Council and the Youth Justice Workforce Development Strategy which is based on the principles below

### The YJB's strategic approach and central guiding principles 2021 - 2024

#### Child First

1. Prioritise the best interests of children and recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.
2. Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
3. Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
4. Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

Priority 1 - Drive system improvements that treat children as children

Priority 2 - Promote a holistic approach to address challenges facing children in contact with the youth justice system

Priority 3 - Maximise opportunities for improvements for children

Priority 4 - Promote sector-led practice development and strengthen ways to disseminate what is known about working with children across the youth justice sector and beyond

The YJB's new sense of purpose works to influence, inform and improve by

- Investing attention and resources upstream in the system
- Moving from a risk focus to a benefits focus
- Influencing delivery by others

#### Constructive Resettlement

[https://yjresourcehub.uk/images/YJB/How\\_to\\_Make\\_Resettlement\\_Constructive\\_YJB\\_2018.pdf](https://yjresourcehub.uk/images/YJB/How_to_Make_Resettlement_Constructive_YJB_2018.pdf)

- Constructive
- Co-created
- Co-ordinated
- Consistent

#### HMIP annual report on workforce in YJS 2022

"Across our YOS inspections, we consider staffing and workload levels, the skills of YOS staff, and the focus upon their learning and development. In the period covered by this report, we have rated staffing 'Outstanding' in seven of the services inspected, and 17 were rated 'Good'. The remainder were rated 'Requires improvement', with no 'Inadequate' ratings for this standard. This is an improvement on the 16 YOS inspected the previous year when just one was rated 'Outstanding' on staffing, 10 'Good', four 'Requires improvement' and one 'Inadequate'."

#### Children in custody January 2023

"In YOIs the reduction in the population and smaller social groups had given staff more time to build relationships with children. They were now more likely to report feeling cared for and treated with respect than before the pandemic. These improved relationships are particularly positive given that children in custody rely on staff for every aspect of their daily life. It is also notable that children's perceptions of safety are the best they have been since we introduced the survey in 2001. This progress is welcome but there is still some way to go to make sure every child feels safe and cared for during their time in custody."

## Professionalising the Youth Justice workforce

The Youth Justice workforce is multi-disciplinary and it is vital that professionals from all backgrounds have access to high quality learning materials and continual professional development opportunities. The Youth Justice secure and community workforce should reflect the diversity of the children with whom we work. See below for the YJ National Professional Framework.

## The Youth Justice Professional Framework

