

Justice

Adult Prisons and Young Offender Institutions (YOI)

Number: 5 adult prisons and 1 YOI

Provision

All prisons and YOIs in Wales are for adult or juvenile male offenders. At many prisons in Wales, education is delivered by staff directly employed by the prison itself. Novus Cambria delivers education and training provision at HMP Berwyn, while Novus Gower provides these services at HMP Parc.

Inspections

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons leads inspections of prisons and young offender institutes across England and Wales. Estyn worked with partners this year to inspect HMYOI Parc and HMP Cardiff. HMI Prisons' published inspection reports can be found here: [His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons](#)

Youth Justice Services (YJS)

Number: 17

Provision

Youth justice services work with young people who get into trouble with the law and try to support them in staying away from crime. Education, training and employment support is one aspect of the work of YJS provided in partnership with other services.

Inspections

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation oversees inspections of youth justice services (YJS) in England and Wales. Most inspections are single inspections conducted by HMI Probation. HMI Probation carried out six single inspections of the YJS of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Flintshire and Newport. Where the size of the service and other factors warrant, Estyn participates in joint inspections of YJS in Wales. This year, there was one joint inspection in Wales of the combined YJS of Conwy and Denbighshire. HMI Probation's published inspection reports can be found here: [His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation](#)

Secure Children's Homes

Number: 1

Provision

Secure children's homes provide secure placements for young people aged between 10 and 17 and include full residential care, educational facilities and healthcare provision.

Inspections

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) leads inspections of the secure children's home in Wales. Estyn teams carried out one joint inspection of a secure children's home this year with CIW.

Summary

These summary findings are taken from the findings of Estyn inspectors during the inspections of HMYOI Parc, HMP Cardiff and the joint inspection of Conwy and Denbighshire YJS. The summary also reflects national issues from the annual report for 2023-2024 of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Where teaching is strong, many learners develop valuable skills and make secure progress. However, the quality of teaching is inconsistent across the sector. Where it is weak, it does not meet learners' needs or contribute well enough to their prospects of success on release. Rates of attendance have improved since the pandemic. However, the support for learners with additional learning needs to overcome barriers to learning is inconsistent. Leaders work well together to ensure that most learners have sufficient time out of cell to pursue a range of activities. However, where the curriculum offer is weak, there are insufficient opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful and appropriate learning or training.

Teaching and learning

Where teaching was well planned, and teachers used effective teaching approaches, many learners were engaged in their learning, made strong progress towards qualification aims and developed worthwhile skills and knowledge. At HMP Cardiff, a few learners demonstrated advanced skills in art and construction. Literacy and numeracy skills were often integrated meaningfully and effectively in cross-curricular areas. This supported prisoners to develop their writing and basic numeracy skills well in context. Overall, the majority of prisoners and children did not develop their digital skills well enough.

Staff shortages and weaknesses in teaching practice negatively impacted learners' progress in both establishments, although these issues were significantly more pronounced at Parc YOI. Here, shortcomings in the provision for and teaching of literacy and numeracy led to a minority of learners not making sufficient or timely progress in developing these critical skills. This echoed the picture in YOIs nationally as reported by HMCI of Prisons, who found that overall, "the standard of teaching was not good enough in all YOIs, particularly in English and maths" (HMIP, 2024, p. 46). In Parc YOI, there was too much variability in learners' progress across the curriculum and the curriculum offer did not provide learners with enough access to meaningful education pathways that secured progression and supported their aspirations.

The education, training and employment (ETE) manager and case workers at the Conwy &

Denbighshire YJS worked well with partners to share information and provide support to secure children's engagement in education. However, part-time timetables were over-used, and children did not receive an appropriate range of good quality, personalised services. There were no systematic, planned education pathways or strategy for addressing children's literacy and numeracy weaknesses to support successful progress in education, training and employment.

Care, support and guidance and their impact on learners' well-being

Overall, learners had good attendance at education and skills sessions at the YOI and the adult prison. At HMP Cardiff, most learners worked productively independently and with their peers and showed positive behaviour and engagement during sessions.

Both establishments supported prisoners to recognise and reduce reoffending behaviours. At Cardiff, the men discussed the challenges of addiction and building positive relationship habits in dedicated sessions. Some prisoners at Cardiff developed resilience well when persevering with complex tasks, and their confidence and pro-social behaviours improved when they took on positions of responsibility as peer mentors. At Parc, the wide range of enrichment activities had a significantly beneficial impact on most learners' well-being and engagement.

There was too much variation in how well learners' individual needs were identified, communicated to staff and acted on to address barriers to learning. At Cardiff, learners' needs were generally identified appropriately, and some staff used this information well to support these learners in making good progress. At Parc, information on learners' additional learning needs was not shared well enough with staff, and the monitoring of the progress of these learners was underdeveloped.

At Cardiff, learners received helpful advice and guidance on courses, training and qualification options, and they were supported in a wide range of ways to be successful on release.

Conwy and Denbighshire's YJS provided good opportunities for children to establish their Welsh identity and culture in service delivery. However, there were long waiting lists for support with neurodiversity. YJS children's additional learning needs were not sufficiently assessed or known. There was a lack of capacity and access to specialist support.

Leadership and improvement

Leaders and staff at the YOI and the adult male prison visited in the academic year 2023-2024 worked hard to provide sufficient activity spaces despite staffing or resourcing issues. This ensured that most prisoners and children had an appropriate amount of time out of their cells. This was better than the picture across the UK overall.

Although there were some gaps in provision, leaders at HMP Cardiff had successfully developed a curriculum that met many prisoners' educational, employability and personal development needs. At Parc, education leaders had little influence on learning pathways, which were primarily constructed to manage behaviour. This was similar to the picture in YOIs nationally, where an overreliance on keeping children apart impacted the meaningfulness of curriculum arrangements. Weaknesses in the new partnership between the prison and the new education provider further compounded the issue, and any potential benefits of working in partnership with a local college had not translated into the curriculum offer, staffing arrangements or the quality of teaching at the time of the visit.

Both prisons had developed reading strategies, but these had not been implemented at the time of the visits, so inspectors could not comment on their impact. There were weaknesses in the provision for the Welsh language for Welsh speakers and learners.

Leaders and staff benefited from a range of professional development networks regionally and nationally to share practice and enhance provision. Leaders used the findings from self-evaluation activities to identify broad strengths and areas for development. This information informed the curriculum offer and staff professional learning needs well at Cardiff and helped leaders at Parc to identify key priorities for improvement suitably.

While data was used well to monitor performance against key performance indicators or track attendance, it was not used as well to identify precise areas for development to inform improvement planning.

A new leadership team within Conwy & Denbighshire's YJS had improved communication within the service and strengthened the management board's understanding of its cohort and responsibilities. However, the board was not providing enough strategic direction or challenge to the work of the service, nor were members of the board using their position well enough to secure timely and well-coordinated support from all partners for children overseen by the YJS. Similar to the findings in prisons, the management board did not have a clear enough understanding of its cohort and was not analysing the information and data available to it well enough to establish its needs.

Overall, developing the precision of self-evaluation approaches remains a priority for the sector's work.

A short analysis of recommendations

There were common themes in the recommendations identified during the inspections of education, skills and work activities at HMYOI Parc and HMP Cardiff, although the weight of the areas for improvement differed across the two establishments:

- Improve the precision of self-evaluation processes to inform improvement actions better
- Improve the quality of teaching
- Improve the curriculum offer to meet learners' needs

At Parc, the recommendation on leadership focused on strengthening partnership arrangements. At Cardiff, the priority was to improve reporting and accountability arrangements between middle and senior leaders.

Overview of recommendations

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References

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (2024) *Annual Report 2023-24*. UK: HMIP. [Online]. Available from: [HM Chief Inspector of Prisons annual report: 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1244447/hmip-annual-report-2023-24.pdf) (Accessed 4th October 2024)