THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF YOS Managers Cymru

YOT Managers Cymru, will say as follows: -

INTRODUCTION

1. We, Christa Bonham-Griffiths, Bridgend Youth Justice and Trauma Service Manager, and Helen Williams, Principal Officer for Adolescents and Young People within Swansea Child and Family Services, make this statement in our capacity as Joint Chairs of YOS Managers Cymru ("YMC").

2. YMC is a professional forum comprising Youth Justice Managers from across Wales. It is not a separate legal entity and does not exercise statutory functions in its own right.

3. This statement is provided to assist the Inquiry and is informed by our experience as Joint Chairs of YMC, our professional experience within Youth Justice Services in Wales, and matters discussed amongst YMC members in the course of the group's work. We confirm that the request and questions posed by the inquiry was shared with all 17 managers that form the YMC group to obtain views to feed into this response statement. Responses to various sections of the request were provided by various managers and not all managers replied.

4. This statement should be read on that basis and is therefore not intended to represent a unanimous or definitive view of every individual YMC member or every Youth Justice Service in Wales. Rather, it seeks to reflect themes,

experiences and professional perspectives commonly identified through discussions within YMC and the collective operational experience of Youth Justice Managers working across Wales.

5. YOS Managers Cymru is a professional body that brings together Heads of Youth Justice Services in Wales. Its primary role is to:

- Promote a strategic overview of the needs of children and young people at risk of offending through local, regional and national engagement, and promote safer communities.
- Contribute to effective joint planning and policy-making between agencies involved in preventing offending, reoffending and anti-social behaviour by children and young people.
- Consider the implications for Youth Justice Services of new legislation, government guidance, regulations and related initiatives, and respond as appropriate.
- Commission reviews, evaluations, developmental work, consultancy, training and national workforce development.
- Advocate for the rights and entitlements of children and young people in and from Wales who come to the attention of Youth Justice Services, ensuring they are not disadvantaged by language or culture.
- Ensure that the needs of victims and communities affected by crime and anti-social behaviour are considered in service planning and delivery

6. This statement highlights where YMC's evidence is informed by Wales-specific legislation, policy, safeguarding arrangements, public services and the experience of children and young people in Wales. It also identifies recommendations, lessons and considerations relevant to the Welsh context.

BACKGROUND

7. Sir Adrian Fulford, the Chair of the Inquiry, made a request for YOS Managers Cymru to provide a witness statement pursuant to Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 (Rule 9). The request relates to Phase 2 of the Inquiry and (1) the adequacy of arrangements in England and Wales for managing the risk from violence fixated individuals (VFIs); and (2) the effectiveness of current laws and systems for identifying, monitoring and disrupting the activities of VFIs

online and reducing the harm caused by online spaces which promote extreme violence

WITNESS STATEMENT OF YOS MANAGERS CYMRU (YMC)

8. We, Christa Bonham-Griffiths, Bridgend Youth Justice and Trauma Service Manager, and Helen Williams, Principal Officer for Adolescents and Young People within Swansea Child and Family Services, make this statement on behalf of YOS Managers Cymru (YMC) in our capacity as Joint Chairs.

9. The contents of this statement reflect the collective position and experience of YMC and its members. Where the statement refers to the experience, view or position of YMC, it is intended to represent that collective professional perspective.

10. YOS Managers Cymru is a professional body that brings together all Heads of Youth Justice Services in Wales. Its primary role is to:
    - Promote a strategic overview of the needs of children and young people at risk of offending through local, regional and national engagement, and promote safer communities.
    - Contribute to effective joint planning and policy-making between agencies involved in preventing offending, reoffending and anti-social behaviour by children and young people.
    - Consider the implications for Youth Justice Services of new legislation, government guidance, regulations and related initiatives, and respond as appropriate.
    - Commission reviews, evaluations, developmental work, consultancy, training and national workforce development.
    - Advocate for the rights and entitlements of children and young people in and from Wales who come to the attention of Youth Justice Services, ensuring they are not disadvantaged by language or culture.
    - Ensure that the needs of victims and communities affected by crime and anti-social behaviour are considered in service planning and delivery.

11. This statement highlights where YMC's evidence is informed by Wales-specific legislation, policy, safeguarding arrangements, public services and the

experience of children and young people in Wales. It also identifies recommendations, lessons and considerations relevant to the Welsh context.

12. Youth Justice Services in Wales assess and manage risk in accordance with national youth justice policy. They use Youth Justice Board mandated assessments, including the Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool for out-of-court resolutions and AssetPlus for court orders and remand. Expectations for risk management are set out in Youth Justice Case Management Guidance. Additional relevant material includes Prevent guidance and Youth Justice Board community practice advice concerning extremism and terrorism-related offences. Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements may also be used where appropriate.

13. Welsh safeguarding guidance emphasises coordinated information sharing and joint intervention through the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

14. The Serious Violence Duty, which applies in Wales, requires police, local authorities, health boards, fire services, probation and Youth Justice Services to work together to understand and prevent serious violence through shared strategies and information-sharing arrangements.

15. For Youth Justice Services, this aligns with Child First practice. Children displaying concerning behaviour may be identified through school exclusion processes, youth justice involvement, safeguarding referrals, exploitation screening, and health services including mental health and substance services before they become involved in serious violence.

16. Wales operates within a developed framework of multi-agency safeguarding and public protection arrangements, including Safeguarding Boards, Youth Justice Services, local authorities, education, health and mental health services, police and probation.

17. YMC commends investment in prevention support and services across Wales. However, strategy, delivery and provision are broad and variable and do not always provide adequate awareness or understanding of children who are fixated on violence. Prevention support is delivered by a range of services,

resulting in variation in delivery, outcomes and key performance indicators. There is no common assessment tool for prevention support.

18. A variety of assessment tools are used by services supporting children in Wales. YMC does not consider that existing tools adequately assess the child's needs or the risk presented when violence fixation is displayed. This includes assessment of exploitation risk and the National Referral Mechanism process.

19. 12. YMC's member agree that Prevent thresholds and criteria may not sufficiently address children who show indicators of violence fixation where there is no clear associated ideology. MAPPA provides a statutory multi-agency framework but is limited to children who have committed an offence.

20. Where a child reaches the threshold for Prevent, MAPPA or safeguarding arrangements, multi-agency practice can be good. In the absence of an agreed pathway for violence-fixated individuals, effectiveness is too often dependent on the quality of local professional pathways.

21. The availability and effectiveness of health and mental health resources can affect access to assessment, support and intervention for factors that may be relevant to violence fixation, including neurodiversity, speech and language needs and mental health. A single pathway with clear criteria, multi-agency support and adequate resources would improve identification and management.

22. YMC's experience is that knowledge and application of the Mental Health Act are limited outside health-commissioned services, making informed engagement and professional challenge difficult. Health, mental health, neurodevelopmental, and speech and language input into Youth Justice Services also varies across Wales.

23. The Serious Violence Duty has enabled local partners to consider the commissioning and delivery of violence prevention interventions, including with reference to the Youth Endowment Fund Serious Violence Toolkit. Commissioning remains problematic because of year-to-year funding, and provision varies across Wales.

24. Where a child meets Prevent criteria, a Channel Panel can seek an appropriate provider. YMC has limited knowledge and experience from which

to assess the quality and availability of provision specifically for violence-fixated individuals.

25. Training and understanding regarding violence fixation are inconsistent across Welsh services and public bodies. YMC recommends increased awareness and training across the public sector, consistent identification, assessment and intervention frameworks, adequate multi-year funding, coordinated strategy and clear operational practice.

26. YMC members invest in workforce training, and implementation of the Serious Violence Duty has created opportunities to increase knowledge and expertise. However, content and outcomes vary between providers and regions. Youth Justice Services would benefit from consistent nationally supported training with common content and objectives, delivered across the multi-agency partnership so that policy, procedure and guidance are understood and applied collectively.

27. Youth Justice practitioners are not consistently or sufficiently resourced across Wales to identify, assess and respond to the full range of risks presented by violent or fixated individuals. Although Welsh services contain considerable professional experience, access to specialist training, consultation and intervention is inconsistent, particularly for serious youth violence, knife crime, weapons and extremism.

28. Serious violence funding and strategic coordination vary. Areas with funded violence prevention arrangements may have better access to specialist provision, while others have significantly less support. This unequal capacity can affect contingency planning and access to appropriate interventions.

29. Some programmes are insufficiently adapted for children whose cognitive, emotional or social development is below that expected for their chronological age. Developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed intervention is required rather than standardised programmes that may not meet the child's needs.

30. YMC considers that a consistent national framework should provide recurrent and equitable resourcing, specialist training on serious violence, weapons, fixation and extremism, access to clinical and neurodevelopmental consultation, developmentally appropriate interventions, clear referral pathways and national minimum expectations for every Youth Justice Service.

31. Current Youth Justice assessment tools support identification of violence-related risk, safety and wellbeing concerns. Their effectiveness nevertheless depends on practitioner and manager knowledge and skill. There is no standardised training for completion of the Prevention and Diversion Assessment or AssetPlus tools.

32. Existing tools contain no dedicated violence-fixation section and do not enable systematic consideration of risk in the way that the former Risk of Serious Harm Assessment may have done. YMC also recognises the difficulty of balancing children's needs and a Child First approach against a risk-factor paradigm.

33. Statutory partners, including police, probation, health, education and children's social services, generally provide information about children known to Youth Justice Services and engage in assessment. Practice varies according to the strength of multi-agency arrangements at Management Board and service level. High staff turnover, inadequate or limited recording, and separate case management systems create additional difficulties.

34. The absence of a unified system makes it difficult to identify information, patterns and trends where a child has come to the attention of different services, including referrals, attendance at accident and emergency departments or ongoing service engagement.

35. YMC would support a single central assessment used across the public sector, provided that it is evidence-based, Child First and trauma-informed, considers potential victims, and identifies positive outcomes and safety and wellbeing needs as well as informing risk management.

36. A central assessment must sit within a clear framework setting out ownership, roles, responsibilities, support pathways, application, review and quality assurance. It should be completed through the multi-agency partnership and supported by clear initial and refresher training to promote consistency and address workforce turnover.

37. The Serious Violence Duty provides a significant vehicle for multi-agency responses to violence. YMC would welcome a national strategy for identifying, managing and supporting violence-fixated individuals that expressly considers Welsh legislation, policy and delivery arrangements.

38. Violence fixation is not the responsibility of a single agency. A joined-up multi-agency response requires sufficient resources, knowledge and expertise. As responsibility currently sits across several forums, clearer pathways, accountability and escalation arrangements are essential. Prevention and early identification should remain priorities, supported by a clear training and support programme.

39. Youth Justice Services in Wales consider neurodevelopmental conditions, mental health concerns, trauma, communication needs and wider developmental factors when assessing children. AssetPlus and prevention and diversion assessments support identification of presenting behaviours, vulnerabilities, safety and wellbeing concerns and risk of harm to others.

40. Initial screening may lead to referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) or other specialist provision. In Channel cases, existing assessments and relevant health representation, including CAMHS, can contribute. Greater inconsistency arises where a child is not adopted into Channel, falls below established thresholds or has no ideological driver.

41. Specialist provision is not consistent across Wales. Some Youth Justice Services have embedded or established access to speech and language therapy, CAMHS and neurodevelopmental services; others do not. Waiting lists can delay diagnosis and specialist assessment, while high CAMHS thresholds may exclude children without a diagnosable mental health disorder.

42. Youth Justice Services do not rely solely on diagnosis. Assessment seeks to understand the child's behaviour, development, experience and individual needs. Practice should be Child First and trauma-informed, with intervention adapted to cognitive, emotional, social and communication needs whether or not a diagnosis has been secured.

43. Enhanced Case Management, supported through FACS (Forensic Adolescent Consultation Service with CAMHS) enables clinical psychological formulation for some children with complex trauma histories. This can improve understanding and support an individualised trauma-responsive plan. Capacity and waiting lists constrain access. Some services have expanded in-house trauma formulation through time-limited external funding, contributing to geographical variation.

44. Speech and language provision is a further gap. In some areas it depends on Youth Justice Grant funding rather than mainstream health funding, despite the prevalence and relevance of speech, language and communication needs among children in the youth justice system.

45. YMC's position is that all Youth Justice Services should have timely and equitable access to neurodevelopmental, mental health, speech and language and trauma-informed assessment and support. Provision should be needs-led, not diagnosis-dependent, consistently available across Wales and not dependent on local Youth Justice Grant decisions. Particular attention is required for children below Channel, CAMHS or statutory safeguarding thresholds.

46. Youth Justice Services are multi-agency partnerships and use established arrangements including the Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information, local protocols, safeguarding strategy meetings, safety and wellbeing meetings, risk management meetings, exploitation panels, Safeguarding Board arrangements, MAPPA, MARAC, Channel, Prevent and serious violence partnership structures. Learning from Child Practice Reviews has also supported improvement.

47. The multi-agency constitution of Youth Justice Services is a significant strength, enabling contributions from police, local authority, health, education and other partners. The existence of partnership arrangements does not, however, guarantee receipt of all relevant operational information or strategic data.

48. Youth Justice Services may not receive relevant concerns identified by education, police or other partners, particularly where a child is not already known to the service. More systematic multi-agency analysis is needed to establish scale and nature of need, identify gaps and understand patterns of risk.

49. Different agency systems do not readily communicate. Practitioners may lack direct access to police, children's services or education systems and depend on representatives retrieving information. ChildView is separate from principal local authority systems, limiting efficient exchange and analysis.

50. Improvement should include clearer national expectations for serious-risk cases, consistent agency representation and participation, improved interoperability or lawful transfer arrangements, timely sharing of intelligence about children not already known to Youth Justice Services, routine multi-agency analysis and strengthened escalation where information is not provided.

51. Clear national guidance and consistent training are required in relation to when AssetPlus or relevant risk information should be shared. Guidance should explain the legal and safeguarding basis, addressing necessity, proportionality, consent, confidentiality and the circumstances in which safeguarding permits or requires sharing.

52. Current case management guidance does not provide sufficiently specific Youth Justice guidance on safeguarding and information sharing. A Youth Justice-specific document should include practical decision criteria, clarity about full assessments and extracts, case-based training, management oversight, recording expectations and escalation routes where agencies disagree.

53. Withdrawal or withholding of parental consent is particularly challenging in voluntary or preventative intervention and may affect Channel admission or engagement with Youth Justice prevention. The position differs for statutory Youth Justice involvement.

54. A gap arises where concerns remain serious but do not meet safeguarding or Channel thresholds. Without consent, a full assessment or voluntary support may not be possible. Relational work with the child and family is important but is not a substitute for a clear national framework.

55. Where there is a clear safeguarding risk to the child or wider community, decisions should be considered within the safeguarding framework rather than solely as matters of consent. Pending national guidance, services can record the position and outstanding concerns, consult partners, convene safety and wellbeing or risk management meetings, consider cumulative information against statutory thresholds, use prevention partnerships and seek police leadership where there is significant risk to others or the community.

56. YMC recommends national guidance to prevent children falling between voluntary, safeguarding, Prevent and statutory Youth Justice arrangements when consent is absent but credible concerns remain.

57. Youth Justice Services have a central role in identifying, assessing and managing harm-related behaviour involving children. They may receive direct partner referrals, undertake specialist assessments, identify risk to the child, victims and the community, develop risk management and contingency plans, provide interventions, share analysis, coordinate activity where they lead, and escalate concerns.

58. Practitioners contribute to or convene safety and wellbeing meetings, risk management meetings, safeguarding strategy discussions, MAPPA, Channel and other arrangements. Managers may take leadership roles within Channel and contribute to serious violence boards and strategic partnerships.

59. Multi-agency arrangements can be effective where referral routes are clear, information is timely, ownership is agreed and partners participate actively. MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) or local front-door arrangements can support discussion, but not every Welsh area operates a MASH model. In some areas, Youth Justice staff are located within front-door arrangements.

60. Effectiveness reduces where safeguarding thresholds are not met, cases close without reliable onward referral, or alleged patterns of harmful behaviour have not resulted in prosecution. Some children may not be referred to Youth Justice despite continuing concerns about violence, fixation, exploitation or other harmful behaviour.

61. Relevant arrangements include MASH or local front doors, MAPPA, Prevent and Channel, MARAC, prevention partnerships, serious organised crime structures, serious violence boards, Safeguarding Boards and associated subgroups. Availability and operation are not consistent across Wales.

62. Youth Justice Management Boards provide strategic oversight by holding agencies to account, seeking assurance, scrutinising performance and analytical data, understanding children's profiles and complex needs, identifying partnership and resource requirements, escalating service and financial gaps, considering national guidance and legislation, and overseeing improvement plans.

63. Principal barriers include incomplete or delayed information sharing, different thresholds and interpretations of risk, inconsistent referral and step-down pathways, unclear ownership, limited specialist health and trauma provision, waiting lists, insufficient capacity, incompatible systems, consent barriers and geographical variation.

64. Violence fixation without a primary ideological basis should not simply be incorporated into Prevent or Channel. Widening their defined ideological remit without additional capacity could dilute purpose and increase pressure. MASH and front-door services are important for identification and referral but may not be best placed for ongoing specialist assessment and management.

65. For children, an effective model could provide direct referral to the Youth Justice Service followed by a structured multi-agency safety and wellbeing or risk management meeting. Youth Justice could provide specialist assessment and, where appropriate, coordination. The lead agency should nevertheless be determined by the child's circumstances, statutory involvement and the agency with the most relevant relationship and authority.

66. A national model requires a clear definition and criteria, an identified lead agency or duty holder, mandatory timely information sharing, involvement from police, health, education, children's services and Youth Justice, agreed assessment, planning, review and escalation arrangements, national consistency with local flexibility, workforce training and dedicated additional resources.

67. Demand and workforce implications should be assessed before implementation. Youth Justice Services cannot reliably estimate capacity implications until partners identify the likely number and profile of children within scope.

68. Agency roles and case ownership are not always sufficiently clear. Fragmentation can lead to missed information, different thresholds, uncertainty about coordination, unclear planning and ineffective intervention.

69. YMC supports a nominated duty holder responsible for gathering and sharing information, coordinating assessment, allocating responsibilities, recording and reviewing the plan, following up actions, recognising changes in risk and escalating unresolved matters.

70. The duty holder should not automatically be Youth Justice. An allocated social worker may be better placed where statutory safeguarding arrangements exist. Youth Justice should be represented where significant harm-related behaviour requires specialist contribution.

71. Where Youth Justice is the appropriate lead, the function could be undertaken by an experienced case manager, social worker or senior practitioner, supported by operational management and service-manager escalation. The duty holder requires competence, supervision, authority and access to partner decision-makers. Responsibility must remain multi-agency and must not be transferred to one individual or service.

72. A culture of shared ownership requires consistent understanding, clear accountability and confidence that agencies will be supported. Joint training should address current presentation and historical patterns. Training alone is insufficient: partnerships must establish shared accountability while clearly allocating agency actions.

73. This culture should be supported by lead-agency and duty-holder arrangements, agreed thresholds, explicit actions and review, constructive professional challenge, management escalation, governance through Management Boards and safeguarding partnerships, learning from reviews and effective practice, and sufficient provision to deliver agreed actions.

74. The approach must remain Child First and trauma-informed, understanding development, experience and complex need while maintaining a defensible focus on safety and risks to the child and others.

75. Youth Justice Services may have a substantial role before thresholds for custody, MAPPA or mental health detention are met. Children may receive prevention or diversion support or be subject to a community statutory order.

76. The Youth Justice role can include prevention, diversion or AssetPlus assessment; assessment of safety, wellbeing and harm; identification of patterns; risk and contingency planning; information sharing; convening meetings; intervention; victim safety; specialist referral; and escalation.

77. Failure to meet custody, MAPPA or detention thresholds does not mean there is no significant risk. A coordinated community response may be required.

Youth Justice contributes specialist knowledge, but management depends on police, children's services, health, education and other partners. Consent can remain a barrier where involvement is preventative and voluntary, reinforcing the need for national guidance on pathways, ownership and information sharing.

78. Enhanced Case Management and FACS CAMHS supported psychological formulation can help practitioners understand complex trauma and identify effective interventions. Wider access would strengthen individualised assessment and planning, subject to addressing capacity and waiting lists.

79. Welsh Youth Justice Services have extensive experience of trauma-informed practice, including trauma recovery models. This supports understanding behaviour in the context of experience and development rather than relying solely on the presenting offence or concern.

80. Youth Justice led safety and wellbeing meetings provide a structured forum addressing likelihood of reoffending, risk of serious harm, the child's safety and wellbeing and victim concerns. Supporting assessments and plans provide an evidence base for decisions, actions and review.

81. Contextual safeguarding approaches and exploitation panels are established in some Welsh areas and developing in others. They recognise risks beyond the family home and support consideration of peer, community and environmental contexts.

82. Serious violence partnerships and scrutiny arrangements enable shared analysis, coordinated planning and senior oversight. Their maturity varies and wider adoption requires national expectations and sustainable resources.

83. Child First principles should underpin every model. Responses should recognise the individual as a child, understand development and lived experience, build strengths and provide developmentally appropriate support while safeguarding the child and others.

84. Welsh approaches suitable for wider consideration include clinically supported Enhanced Case Management and trauma formulation, trauma-informed and developmentally informed assessment, structured safety and wellbeing meetings, contextual safeguarding, Child First multi-agency practice, and governance through Management Boards and serious violence partnerships.

Wider application requires standards, evaluation, recurrent funding, workforce development and consistent geographical access.

85. The rapid development of the internet, social media and artificial intelligence presents a significant challenge. There are gaps in how Youth Justice Services identify and assess online behaviour, work with partners on risk management, inform children, parents, carers and victims, and provide interventions to address harmful online influence.

86. YMC and the wider sector have limited knowledge of the legislation and mechanisms available to disrupt or monitor online activity. Members are increasingly aware of online radicalisation, violence-focused interests, extremist content, harmful social influences, grooming, incel-related content and digital planning or encouragement of violence. Safeguarding, Prevent, trauma-informed and exploitation training assists, but capability varies and specialist digital behaviour expertise is inconsistent.

87. Technological change, encrypted platforms, AI-generated material and evolving online cultures create significant challenges. Services can often recognise indicators and refer concerns, but need specialist training, national guidance and access to digital-risk expertise.

88. Barriers include encrypted and private platforms, VPNs, anonymous accounts, multiple devices, rapid movement between platforms, inconsistent interpretation of information-sharing thresholds, insufficient specialist capacity outside policing, difficulty distinguishing curiosity, fantasy, fascination and intent, workforce training gaps, resource pressure and delays obtaining information from technology companies. Practitioners often rely on indirect indicators.

89. YMC supports consideration of stronger age-related safeguards for technologies used to bypass safety controls where evidence demonstrates access to harmful content. A blanket VPN prohibition is unlikely to be practical and could affect legitimate privacy and security uses. A proportionate approach would use age assurance, parental controls, risk-based restrictions, provider obligations under the Online Safety Act 2023 and enhanced monitoring of platforms facilitating harmful content. The focus should be harm reduction rather than criminalising technology use by children.

90. Internet restrictions or monitoring may sometimes be required within a safeguarding or risk-management plan, including high-risk fixation, active planning, repeated extremist-content access, significant exploitation or court-directed intervention. Restrictions should be proportionate, time-limited, reviewed, Child First, rights-compliant and part of a multi-agency plan.

91. Youth Justice should not ordinarily hold sole responsibility for monitoring restrictions. A multi-agency framework should involve parents or carers, children's services, police, education, health and Youth Justice, using demonstrable safeguarding risk rather than offending behaviour alone as the threshold.

92. Current powers and systems provide partial support. The Online Safety Act 2023 strengthens regulation and provider responsibilities; Prevent and Serious Violence Duty arrangements support information sharing and early intervention. Gaps remain in encrypted communications, recognition of violence fixation, VFI-specific guidance, powers below criminal thresholds and early intervention where behaviour is escalating.

93. Further development is required in national guidance, specialist assessment frameworks, consistent digital-risk training, psychology and forensic consultation, lawful information sharing, online intelligence, preventative and pre-criminal intervention, and links between safeguarding, Prevent, Youth Justice and mental health services. Wales has no single national pathway for violence-fixated children comparable to some counter-terrorism arrangements.

94. Youth Justice frequently becomes involved after an offence, meaning prevention opportunities may have been missed, risk may be entrenched and earlier information may not have been shared. Earlier access, clearer referral pathways and specialist support before criminal thresholds are required.

95. Potential interventions for children include statutory Youth Justice supervision, child protection, Prevent and Channel, MAPPA where relevant, education intervention, CAMHS and neurodevelopmental assessment, psychological intervention, family support, contextual safeguarding, mentoring and diversion, police disruption and Serious Violence Duty responses.

96. YMC considers the most effective responses to include early identification, multi-agency working, trauma-informed approaches, psychological formulation,

family-based intervention, intensive individual support, and positive social engagement and inclusion.

97. Delivery barriers include lack of specialist provision, unclear or delayed referral pathways, mental health waiting times, information-sharing concerns, resource pressure, workforce confidence and the absence of nationally agreed VFI pathways.

98. Potential criminal or civil measures include Criminal Behaviour Orders, Knife Crime Prevention Orders, Sexual Harm Prevention Orders where relevant, Stalking Protection Orders, Serious Crime Prevention Orders in limited circumstances, injunctions, Youth Rehabilitation Orders with requirements, bail conditions and prevention-focused safeguarding arrangements.

99. Use varies considerably across Wales. Practitioners generally understand criminal justice powers, but knowledge of some preventative civil orders is less consistent. Clear national guidance and training would improve multi-agency understanding.

100. Where criminal thresholds are not met, available mechanisms include Prevent and Channel, child protection, Children in Need arrangements, multi-agency safeguarding, school and education safeguarding powers, mental health support, community safety action, Serious Violence Duty arrangements, voluntary programmes and family interventions.

101. These mechanisms can be effective where risk is identified early and agencies work together, but effectiveness depends on intelligence, confidence, sharing and specialist provision. Many violence-fixated children do not fit terrorism, exploitation or traditional offending categories, leaving a gap between safeguarding concern and criminal justice intervention.

102. Knowledge within Youth Justice Services concerning regulation and sale of offensive weapons is generally limited to age restrictions. Concerns about sale or possession would be referred to police and Trading Standards and incorporated into individual or place-based assessment and risk management.

103. Intelligence and inter-agency information sharing are inconsistent across Wales and often limited to case-specific information rather than broader local trends or enforcement activity.

104. The legal framework for knives and bladed articles is relatively stronger because of age restrictions, offensive weapons legislation and police powers. Children nevertheless obtain knives through online retailers, proxy purchasing and domestic access.

105. Crossbow regulation is less robust, and the threshold for lawful acquisition is a concern given potential harm. Archery bows are generally legitimate sporting equipment, but controls may be insufficient where escalating violence fixation is known.

106. The greatest concern relates to dangerous but lawful items. Individually lawful purchases may become highly concerning collectively. Systems tend to focus on single items rather than behavioural patterns, although risk may arise from accumulation of lawful items.

107. YMC supports improved retailer-law enforcement information sharing, identification of high-risk purchasing behaviour, safeguarding pathways for concerning purchasing patterns and mechanisms that respond to cumulative risk. Current powers provide safeguards but do not fully address children acquiring multiple lawful items associated with preparation for serious violence.

108. YMC members work with the Youth Justice Board, Ministry of Justice, Home Office, Welsh Government, police and Offices of Police and Crime Commissioners, children's social care and safeguarding partners, education, Local Criminal Justice Boards, health and mental health services, Prevent and Channel, probation and MAPPA, and the Youth Custody Service.

109. YMC has not produced policies or guidance specifically concerning non-ideological violence fixation, harmful online content enabling violent attacks, or risk from knives, bladed articles, crossbows and archery bows. Services refer to local or national policy and guidance.

110. YMC has not undertaken statistical or data-driven work specifically concerning children and young people with a fixation on violence.

111. YMC did not recognise or use the term "Violence Fixated Individual" before publication of the Southport Inquiry Phase One Report. The term is now increasingly recognised and understood. YMC also recognises the limitations of safeguarding and public protection arrangements for fixation on violence outside terrorism and radicalisation.

112. Established national and regional Youth Justice structures in Wales provide a foundation for a consistent workforce-development programme on serious violence risk. YMC supports national training and reflective practice informed by the Inquiry, focused on recognising emerging indicators, assessing risk and working effectively with children presenting a high risk of harm.

113. Clearer national guidance and pathways are required for significant violence-focused behaviour below Prevent thresholds. Stronger links between Youth Justice, safeguarding partnerships, violence prevention, education, health and policing would support consistency. Existing Youth Justice participation in Channel and safeguarding structures provides a foundation.

114. As children entering Youth Justice Services present increasingly complex needs and vulnerabilities, specialist knowledge, consultation and nationally consistent guidance are essential.

115. YMC particularly highlights the challenge of assessing online conduct. Assessment often depends on self-disclosure, parents or partner intelligence, while access to specialist tools and expertise varies. A national framework for online behaviour associated with fixation, serious violence and pre-attack conduct would strengthen safeguarding and public protection.

116. Specialist training should address violence fixation and obsessional interests, pre-attack behaviours and behavioural challenges, online indicators and digital harms, cumulative and escalating risk, trauma-informed, developmentally informed and neurodiversity-informed practice, information sharing, professional challenge and multi-agency decision-making.

117. Practitioners must remain alert to threats while avoiding assumptions that stigmatise neurodivergent children or children experiencing mental health difficulties.

118. YMC also highlights the relationship between vulnerability, entry into the criminal justice system and exploitation in community and online contexts. Exploitation screening and assessment are crucial to prevent escalation and address trauma arising from exploitation.

119. Greater consistency in training, guidance, specialist consultation and multi-agency response would improve identification and management while

remaining consistent with Child First principles and children's rights-based practice in Wales.

Statement of Truth

We believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed: SIGNATURE Date: 11.09.2026

Christa Bonham-Griffiths
Joint Chair, YOS Managers Cymru

SIGNATURE

Signed: Date: 11.09.2026

Helen Williams
Joint Chair, YOS Managers Cymru

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings many brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.