

Cabinet

28 July 2020

Approval of Youth Justice Plan 2020-21

For Recommendation to Council

Portfolio Holder: Cllr A Parry, Children, Education and Early Help

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: Theresa Leavy, executive Director for Education and Early Help

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

For the Cabinet to recommend approval of the Youth Justice Plan to Full Council

Reason for Recommendation:

Local authorities are required to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan, setting out how the statutory requirements for a multi-agency youth offending team are fulfilled locally. Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service is a partnership between Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, along with Dorset Police, NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group and the National Probation Service Dorset. Approval for the Youth Justice Plan is also being sought from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council. The Youth Justice Plan needs to be approved by the full Council.

1. Executive Summary

Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 there is a statutory requirement to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan which must provide specified information about the local provision of youth justice services. The Youth Justice Board provides guidance about what must be included in the plan and recommends a structure for the plan. The draft Youth Justice Plan for the Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service is attached at Appendix One. A brief summary of the Youth Justice Plan is provided in this report.

2. Financial Implications

The Youth Justice Plan reports on the resourcing of the Youth Offending Service. Local authority and other partner budget contributions remained static from 2014/15 to 2018/19. In 2019/20 a cost of living increase to local authority contributions was applied, along with a redistribution of the funding proportions to reflect Local Government Reorganisation. There was no cost of living increase in the local authority contributions for 2020/21. The annual Youth Justice Grant has reduced from £790,000 in 2014/15 to £600,482 in 2020/21.

The creation of the pan-Dorset Youth Offending Service in 2015 increased the service's resilience and ability to adapt to reduced funding and increased costs. The management of vacancies, and the deletion of some posts, has enabled a balanced budget to be achieved. It is recognised that the local authority is now facing additional financial pressures which may affect funding available for the Youth Offending Service.

3. Climate implications

No adverse environmental impact has been identified. The Youth Justice Plan notes that the Covid-19 lockdown has led to changes in the working arrangements of the Youth Offending Service. These changes include significant reductions in staff travel, both to and from work and to visit service users, with more activities being carried out remotely.

4. Other Implications

Young people in contact with youth justice services are known to be more likely than other young people to have unmet or unidentified health needs. The Youth Offending Service includes seconded health workers who work directly with young people and who facilitate their engagement with community health services.

The Youth Justice Plan sets out the measures being taken to prevent and reduce offending and anti-social behaviour by young people. The Youth Offending

Service contributes actively to the work of the Community Safety Partnership. The Youth Offending Service Manager chairs the pan-Dorset Reducing Reoffending Strategy Group which reports to the Dorset Criminal Justice Board and to the Community Safety Partnership.

Children who are in contact with the Youth Offending Service often experience risks to their safety and well-being, including risks at home, risks in the community such as child exploitation and detriment to their education prospects. The Youth Justice Plan refers to the work of the Youth Offending Service to safeguard children, working in conjunction with other local services in the Dorset Council area. The Youth Offending Service is working closely with colleagues in other Dorset Children's Services in order to align with the new services and structures.

5. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

The Youth Justice Plan does not relate to a new strategy, policy or function so an Equalities Impact Assessment has not been undertaken. Some information about equalities issues is included in the report. No adverse equalities impacts have been identified.

It is recognised nationally that young people from minority ethnic groups, and young people in the care of the local authority, are over-represented in the youth justice system and in the youth custodial population. It is also recognised that young people known to the YOS may experience learning difficulties or disabilities, including in respect of speech, language and communication needs. Information from Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service records, summarised in the Youth Justice Plan, shows that these issues of over-representation also apply in the pan-Dorset area. Actions have been identified in the Youth Justice Plan to address these issues.

7. Appendices

Appendix One: Youth Justice Plan 2020/21.

8. Background Papers

None

9. Summary of Youth Justice Plan contents

- 9.1 The Youth Justice Plan provides information on the resourcing, structure, governance, partnership arrangements and performance of the Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service. The Plan also describes the national and local youth justice context for 2020/21 and sets out our priorities for this year.
- 9.2 The Youth Justice Board continues to monitor three 'key performance indicators' for youth justice. The first indicator relates to the rate of young people entering the justice system for the first time. Local performance in this area had declined in the previous two years but improved during 2019/20. The latest data, relating to the 12 months to September 2019, shows a rate of 269 per 100,000 10-17 year olds entering the justice system for the first time. This compares with a figure of 357 per 100,000 10-17 year olds in the year to September 2018. The improvement is welcome and further steps are planned for 2020/21.
- 9.3 The other two national indicators relate to reducing reoffending and minimising the use of custodial sentences. The reoffending rate fluctuates, partly because of the current counting rules for this measure. Our local reoffending rate has for the most part remained below the national rate. Local analysis shows that young people who are more likely to reoffend are also more likely to have more complex speech, language and communication needs and to find it hard to access education or training. The Youth Justice Plan sets out some of the actions that have been taken and future plans to address these issues.
- 9.4 Dorset Combined Youth Offending Service has low rates of custodial sentences, below the regional and national averages. This is particularly the case for young people from the Dorset Council area. Young people who are sentenced to custody have often experienced significant trauma in their earlier life, affecting their current behaviour. The Youth Offending Service is currently implementing a plan to become a trauma informed service, using the Youth Justice Board's 'Enhanced Case Management' model.

Footnote: Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.