

People and Health Overview Committee

03 May 2022

Youth Justice Plan 2022/23

For Recommendation to Cabinet

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

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

That the People and Health Overview Committee endorse the Youth Justice Plan so that Cabinet can recommend its approval 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 Justice Service is a partnership between Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, along with Dorset Police, NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group and The 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 Justice 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 Justice Service. Local authority and other partner budget contributions have remained static since 2014/15, apart from a one-off cost of living increase to local authority contributions in 2019/20, along with a redistribution of the funding proportions to reflect Local Government Reorganisation. The annual Youth Justice Grant reduced from £790,000 in 2014/15 to £607,968 in 2020/21, rising to £659,239 for 2021/22. At the time of writing, the grant award for 2022/23 has not been announced.

The creation of the pan-Dorset Youth Justice 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 in the years to 2022.

3. Well-being and Health 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 Justice Service includes seconded health workers who work directly with young people and who facilitate their engagement with community health services. A summary of their work is included in the Youth Justice Plan.

4. Climate implications

No adverse environmental impact has been identified. The Covid-19 restrictions led to changes in some of the Youth Justice Service's working practices. These changes include reductions in staff travel, both to and from work and to visit service users, with more activities now being carried out remotely.

5. Other Implications

The Youth Justice Plan sets out the measures being taken to prevent and reduce offending and anti-social behaviour by young people. The Youth Justice Service contributes actively to the work of the Community Safety Partnership.

Children who are in contact with the Youth Justice 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 Justice Service to safeguard children, working in conjunction with other local services in the Dorset Council area. The Youth Justice Service is working closely with colleagues in other Dorset Children's Services, including the Harbour Project, in order to align with new service developments.

6. Risk Assessment

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

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

7. 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 with diverse heritage, 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 YJS may experience learning difficulties or disabilities, including in respect of speech, language and communication needs. Information from Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service records, summarised in the Youth Justice Plan, shows that these issues of over-representation also apply in our area. Actions have been identified in the Youth Justice Plan to address these issues.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Youth Justice Plan 2022/23.

Appendix 1 will be published as a supplement to the agenda.

9. Background Papers

9.1 The Youth Justice Plan provides information on the resourcing, structure, governance, partnership arrangements and performance of the Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service. The Plan also describes the national and local youth justice context for 2022/23 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 period 2016-2018 but has been improving since then. The latest national data, relating to the 12 months to September 2021, shows a combined pan-Dorset rate of 183 per 100,000 under 18-year-olds entering the justice system for the first time. This compares with a figure of 288 per 100,000 under 18-year-olds in the year to December 2018. Local data enables us to monitor numbers of first-time entrants in each local authority area. This local data shows a continuing fall in the number of Dorset children entering the justice system. Dorset Council's emphasis on early intervention and prevention work for children aligns with the Youth Justice Service priority to reduce children entering the justice system for the first time.

- 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. The latest national data, reported in the Youth Justice Plan, shows that the performance of Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service exceeds the regional and national averages.
- 9.4 Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service has low rates of custodial sentences. This is particularly the case for young people from the Dorset Council area. No Dorset children were sentenced to custody in the year April 2021 to March 2022. The Youth Justice Service works closely with other Dorset children's services to meet the needs and manage the risks of the small number of young people whose offending is serious enough to place them at risk of custody.

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.