

# Cabinet

## 20 June 2023

### Youth Justice Plan 2023/24

## For Recommendation to Council

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr B Quayle, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

**Local Councillor(s):**

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

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**Report Status:** Public

**Brief Summary:**

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. This report summarises the Youth Justice Plan for 2023/24, with a copy of the Plan appended. The Youth Justice Plan needs to be approved by the full Council.

**Recommendation:**

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

**Reason for Recommendation:**

Youth Justice Services are required to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan which should be approved by the Local Authority for that Youth Justice Service. Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service works across both Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council and Dorset Council. Approval is therefore sought from both Dorset Council and from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council.

## 1. **Report**

- 1.1 The Crime and Disorder Act (1998) requires Youth Offending Teams (now more widely known as Youth Justice Services) to publish an annual youth justice plan. The Youth Justice Board provides detailed and prescriptive guidance about what must be included in 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.
- 1.2 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 2023/24 and sets out our priorities for this year.
- 1.3 Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service was inspected under HMI Probation's 'Joint Inspection' framework in September and October 2022. This was a rigorous and detailed inspection, scrutinising work with 62 children across both local authorities and reviewing the service's management and leadership, partnership arrangements and use of information. The inspection report was published in January 2023, rating the service as 'Good'.
- 1.4 The Youth Justice Board continue 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. The latest national data, relating to the 12 months to September 2022, shows a combined pan-Dorset rate of 239 per 100,000 under 18-year-olds entering the justice system for the first time. This compares with a figure of 183 per 100,000 under 18-year-olds in the previous year. For context, the rate for the year 2019/20, before the pandemic, was 309 per 100,000 under 18-year-olds. The combined pan-Dorset rate does not reflect progress made in the Dorset Council area, described in the following paragraph.
- 1.5 Local data enables us to monitor numbers of first-time entrants in each local authority area. This local data shows the number of Dorset children entering the justice system reduced from 79 in 2019/20, and 50 in 2021/22, to 40 in 2022/23, reflecting good progress in partnership early intervention work in Dorset. The Youth Justice Plan provides more detail about the children who enter the justice system and about work to divert children from the youth justice system.

- 1.6 The other two national indicators relate to reducing reoffending and minimising the use of custodial sentences. 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, to have experienced traumatic events that have impaired the child's cognitive and emotional development 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.
- 1.7 Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service has low rates of custodial sentences, below the national average. Work to avoid custodial sentences has been particularly successful in the Dorset Council area. For the third consecutive year, no Dorset Council children received a custodial sentence during 2022/23.
- 1.8 The Youth Justice Service Partnership priorities for 2023/24 align with the strategic priorities of other services and partnerships, including the Dorset Community Safety Partnership and the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership. More work is planned to divert children from the justice system and to ensure their needs are identified and met, using the Ministry of Justice 'Turnaround' programme; further work will be undertaken to improve the education outcomes of children in the youth justice system; additional action is needed to improve the timeliness and effectiveness of our local responses to weapon offences and serious violence. The Youth Justice Plan also outlines priorities for practice development within the Youth Justice Service, including implementation of the 'Identity Lens' model to build children's positive, pro-social identities.

## 2. **Financial Implications**

The Youth Justice Plan reports on the resourcing of the Youth Justice Service (YJS). After years of static or reducing Youth Justice Grant allocations, and static local authority and other partner contributions, there was an increase in the Youth Justice Grant in 2022/23, taking it to £794,915. To put this in context, the Youth Justice Grant allocation in 2014/15 was £790,000. At the time of writing this report, in mid-May, the Youth Justice Grant for 2023/24 has not been announced.

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 in the years to 2023.

### 3. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**

No adverse environmental impact has been identified. The Covid-19 pandemic led to changes in the working arrangements of the Youth Justice Service. These changes included significant reductions in staff travel, both to and from work and to visit service users, with more activities being carried out remotely. Although staff travel has increased, with the return to more face-to-face work, team members continue to undertake some tasks remotely and travel has not returned to pre-Covid levels.

### 4. **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.

### 5. **Other Implications**

No Human Resources implications have been identified. Local Authority YJS staff members are employees of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole council, including those team members who work in the Dorset Council area. The YJS also includes employees of the partner agencies who have been seconded to work in the team and who remain employed by the partner agency. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 also contains statutory requirements for the staffing composition of youth offending services. The Youth Justice Plan shows how Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service meets these requirements.

### 6. **Risk Assessment**

6.1 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 One: Youth Justice Plan 2023/24

9. **Background Papers**

None.