

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



Report subject	<b>Update on Youth Justice Plan – First-Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System</b>
Meeting date	25 January 2022
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	This report summarises the latest local information on rates of young people entering the youth justice system. The reduction that had been seen in the previous year has continued and further steps are being taken to divert young people from the justice system.
Recommendations	<p><b>It is RECOMMENDED that:</b></p> <p><b>The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the progress being made to reduce the rate of first-time entrants into the youth justice system.</b></p>
Reason for recommendations	To ensure that committee members remain informed about the rate of local young people entering the youth justice system
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Mike White, Portfolio Holder Children's Services
Corporate Director	Elaine Redding, Interim Corporate Director Children's Services
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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Information

## **Background**

1. The annual Youth Justice Plan 2021/22 was presented to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8th June 2021. It was noted that the rate of first-time entrants to the youth justice system was higher locally than the regional and national averages. The Committee therefore requested an interim progress report at the end of 2021 to give an update on work to reduce the rate of first-time entrants.
2. The appended report provides information from both national and local performance reporting systems.
3. National data is usually published quarterly by the Youth Justice Board, on behalf of the Ministry of Justice. National data enables comparisons to be made between youth offending teams.
4. Covid-19 lockdown and its aftermath interrupted the publication of the national data. The Ministry of Justice prioritised other data gathering and reporting activity. National data has been published only once since the start of the pandemic. The most recently published data covered the 12 months to December 2020. Although our local data, detailed in the appended report, demonstrates a clear reduction in first-time entrants, the national data reported an increase which we did not recognise.
5. Although the next publication of national first-time entrants data has been delayed, summary information has been released for the year to June 2021. This shows a 19% reduction in BCP children entering the justice system, compared to the year ending June 2020.
6. Local data on first-time entrant rates is also available. Although this does not allow comparisons with other youth offending teams it does enable us to have more confidence about the accuracy of the information.
7. The appended report provides information on the BCP children who are entering the youth justice system. Analysis is undertaken by age, gender, ethnicity and by the type of youth justice disposal.
8. The report shows a reduction from 107 children entering the justice system in 2019/20 to 76 first-time entrants in 2020/21. That reduction has been maintained in the current year, with a projected year-end figure of 74 first-time entrants in 2021/22.
9. Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service and Dorset Police work together to seek opportunities to divert children from the justice system. The reduction in children entering the justice system reflects that partnership works. Further actions are in place locally and nationally to continue to reduce the criminalisation of children.

## **Options Appraisal**

10. This report is provided for information.

## **Summary of financial implications**

11. There are no immediate financial implications for the committee to consider.

### **Summary of legal implications**

12. Local authorities are required to maintain a multi-agency youth offending service under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998). That Act also established the Youth Justice Board and provided it with duties to oversee the effectiveness of youth justice services. The rate of first-time entrants to the youth justice system is one of the national key performance indicators monitored by the Youth Justice Board.

### **Summary of human resources implications**

13. No human resource implications have been identified in this report.

### **Summary of sustainability impact**

14. This report is provided for information, rather than for decision-making, so no new sustainability implications have been identified.

### **Summary of public health implications**

15. It is recognised that contact with the youth justice system can have a detrimental effect on young people's well-being. Success in reducing the rate of young people entering the justice system will therefore have a beneficial impact on young people's health.

### **Summary of equality implications**

16. Children in Care and children from black and mixed heritage backgrounds are known to be over-represented in the youth justice system, particularly in the youth custodial estate. The local rate of black and mixed heritage children entering the justice system is not disproportionate to the local population. Attention is also being given to the progress of young people from these groups through the justice system to reduce the numbers receiving custodial or other more restrictive sentences.

### **Summary of risk assessment**

17. This report is for information and therefore does not include recommendations for new practices that would require a further risk assessment.

### **Background papers**

None.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Update FTE to Youth Justice System.