

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



Report subject	Youth Justice Service - Annual Youth Justice Plan
Meeting date	7 June 2022
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	To present the Youth Justice Plan for 2022/23. 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 2022/23, with a copy of the Plan appended. The Youth Justice Plan needs to be approved by the full Council.
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that: Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorse the Youth Justice Plan so that Cabinet can recommend its approval to the Full Council
Reason for recommendations	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 Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, as well as from Dorset Council.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Mike White, Portfolio Holder Children's Services
Corporate Director	Cathi Hadley, Corporate Director, Children's Services
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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Recommendation

Background

1. Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Youth Offending Teams (now more widely known as Youth Justice Services) are required to publish an annual youth justice plan. The Youth Justice Board provides guidance about what must be included in the plan. This year the Youth Justice Board guidance is more detailed and prescriptive and includes a template that must be used 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.

Summary of Contents of the Youth Justice Plan 2022/23

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 2022/23 and sets out our priorities for this year.
3. 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. Local performance in this area had declined in the period 2016-2018 but has been improving in the last four years. 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 reduction in the number of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole children entering the justice system from 108 in 2018/19 to 74 in 2021/22. The Youth Justice Plan provides more detail about work to divert children from the youth justice system.
4. 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, 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.

5. Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service has low rates of custodial sentences, below the national average. Young people who are sentenced to custody have often experienced significant trauma in their earlier life, affecting their current behaviour. In 2020 the Youth Justice Service implemented a plan to become a trauma informed service, using the Youth Justice Board's 'Enhanced Case Management' model. More work has been undertaken in the past year to embed this approach and further development is planned for 2022/23.
6. The Youth Justice Service Partnership priorities for 2022/23 align with the strategic priorities of other services and partnerships, including the 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; further work will be undertaken to reduce the over-representation of specific groups of children in the youth justice system; additional action is needed to improve the timeliness and effectiveness of our local youth justice system. The Youth Justice Plan also includes priorities for practice development within the Youth Justice Service to enhance the work done with individual children and their carers.

Options Appraisal

7. Councillors are asked to endorse the Youth Justice Plan for 2022/23 before it is considered by Cabinet. Cabinet will then decide whether to recommend approval of the Youth Justice Plan to the full Council.

Summary of financial implications

8. The Youth Justice Plan reports on the resourcing of the Youth Justice Service (YJS). Local authority and other partner contributions remained static from 2014/15 to 2018/19 when a cost of living increase to local authority contributions was agreed, along with a redistribution of the funding proportions to reflect Local Government Reorganisation. There have been no further cost of living increase in the local authority contributions. The annual Youth Justice Grant reduced from £790,000 in 2014/15 to £607,968 in 2020/2, increasing to £659,239 in 2021/22. At the time of writing this report, in early May, the Youth Justice Grant for 2022/23 has not been announced.
9. 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 2022.

Summary of legal implications

10. Local authorities are legally required to form a youth offending team with the statutory partners named in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Act also stipulates that youth offending partnerships must submit an annual youth justice plan setting out how youth justice services in their area will be provided and funded; and how the youth offending team will be composed and funded, how it will operate and what functions it will carry out. The Youth Justice Plan for 2022/23 meets these legal obligations.

Summary of human resources implications

11. Local Authority YJS staff members who were previously employed by Poole and Dorset transferred to become employees of Bournemouth Borough Council in 2015.

Local Government Reorganisation in April 2019 led to a further TUPE transfer of local authority employees to the new Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole council. 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.

12. 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.

Summary of sustainability impact

13. 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. As the balance moves back towards face-to-face work team members will continue to contain their travel requirements and to undertake some tasks remotely.

Summary of public health implications

14. 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. The Youth Justice Plan includes information about the health needs of young people in the justice system and about the work undertaken by the Youth Justice Service health team.

Summary of equality implications

15. 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 particularly 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, show that some of these issues of over-representation also apply locally. Actions have been identified in the Youth Justice Plan to address these issues.

Summary of risk assessment

16. The Youth Justice Plan sets out local priorities and actions to prevent and reduce offending by young people. These priorities and actions have been developed in response to identified risks and concerns. The recommendation for councillors to endorse the Youth Justice Plan is intended to support the Youth Justice Service to reduce the risks associated with youth offending. No specific risks have been identified as arising from this recommendation.

Background papers

None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service Youth Justice Plan 2022/23.