

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 July 2021

Warwickshire Youth Justice Plan 2021/22

Recommendation

That the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve and Support the 2021/22 Youth Justice Plan. Associated actions will be tracked and monitored by the Youth Justice Chief Officer Board in line with the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the 2021/22 Youth Justice Plan and ensure that Overview and Scrutiny Panel are aware of the continuous improvement actions within the Warwickshire Youth Justice Service.

2.0 Executive Summary

- 2.1 Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, there is a requirement for the production of an Annual Youth Justice Plan.
- 2.2 An exceptional decision was made by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) to exempt local partnerships from this requirements for 2020/21 in the context of the circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead the YJB required that an action plan was developed to sustain services during the pandemic, alongside required improvements in accordance with national 'Standards for Youth Justice' guidance. This action plan has been overseen and progressed monitored by the multiagency Chief Officer Board for the Youth Justice Service with successful outcomes that are referred to in the attached plan.
- 2.3 The 2021/22 plan is prepared in accordance with the requirements prescribed by the Youth Justice Board with a particular emphasis on a 'Child First' approach to young offenders.
- 2.4 Whilst this Youth Justice Plan is prepared in accordance with the YJB requirements and is shared by the whole partnership, this document is well aligned with the Warwickshire County Council Plan 2020-2025. The main goal of the Youth Justice Service is to prevent offending and reoffending and is in accordance with the County Council priority outcome to support our communities to stay safe and independent. An increasing area of Youth Justice delivery involves targeting young people at an early stage to stop

them progressing into the Youth Justice system. The key Council priority relating to job readiness and training is a key priority outlined in this plan and YJS resources are being realigned to ensure that we work to improve our young offender engagement in schools and training. Our work to refresh our contacts with victims as we emerge from the lockdown of the pandemic is also a key target moving forward. As outlined in the plan we are seeking opportunities to train and develop our workforce in respect of trauma informed practice, disproportionality and to refresh our longstanding commitment to relationship based practice, utilising the power and strength of family through the application of Restorative Practice. As our Council Plan states: 'we will ensure that young people understand and take responsibility for their behaviour. We will identify and manage risk in the community and ensure the voices of victims are heard and responded to'.

- 2.5 The report highlights our continued strong performance in the key areas of Youth Justice Performance measures. Warwickshire reoffending rates for young people remain in line with statistical comparators although the frequency of offending by those who do reoffend is higher than some. It is believed that this reflects the complexity of some of the Warwickshire young people who do offend, and also is a reflection of their involvement in Criminal Exploitation. The increase in youth violence and weapon related crime is a national trend that is reflected locally. Warwickshire Youth Justice Service is actively involved in the development of the local 'Preventing Youth Violence Strategy' and targeted efforts to address issues of serious and organised crime.
- 2.6 Through the pandemic our level of First Time Entrants into the Youth Justice system has increased to become more akin to the levels of our statistical comparators. Many of these First Time Entrants remain outside the Court system being made the subject of an 'Out of Court Disposal'. This local trend of a statistical increase in lower level crime is also noted in the recent thematic (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation) report at a national level.
- 2.7 The Warwickshire Youth Justice Plan outlines our response to the COVID-19 pandemic where the Service was well supported by efforts and resources put in place by Warwickshire County Council including new technology, Personal and Protective Equipment and agile working arrangements. In line with all Public Services, Warwickshire Youth Justice will learn from the experience of working during the pandemic and ensure that we carry forward the best parts of new practice whilst restoring some features that were not part of our COVID Secure approach. An example of this would be that we have found that many young people respond very positively to exchange and challenge through virtual media, but the learning is that this needs to be supported by regular in person contact to ensure the best safeguarding and risk management approach.
- 2.8 A key area of concern as we move out of the pandemic is the under engagement of Youth Justice Service users in Education, Training and Employment which is one of the most significant protective factors in the prevention of crime. Consistent and relevant education/training provision

provides structure, occupation, peer group relationships and personal discipline for young people. Within Youth Justice we are realigning staffing to ensure that we target this area of performance moving forward and this is highlighted in the Youth Justice Plan.

- 2.9 The 'Black Lives Matter' movement has provided momentum for the Youth Justice Service to work with 'EQUIP' to look at areas of inequality in our services and an action plan is being developed moving forward to ensure we work to address any existing areas of disproportionality in our system.
- 2.10 Services to victims of youth crime are being refreshed as we emerge from the pandemic, and the use of our Referral Order Panel volunteers in the delivery of Community Justice.

3.0 Conclusions

- 3.1 The Warwickshire Youth Justice Plan provides an outline of our response to the pandemic and key areas of development moving forward.

4.0 Analysis

- 4.1 Warwickshire is a high performing Youth Justice Service which has successfully sustained service delivery during the pandemic. There are clear plans for improvement as we emerge from the restrictions of the pandemic which also incorporate learning and practice developed during the lockdown period.
- 4.2 There are ongoing challenges in relation to emerging Youth Violence, disproportionality, and a need to continue to track performance against statistical comparators particularly in relation to First Time Entrants into the system.

5.0 Environmental Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct environmental implications in the Youth Justice Plan

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The overall WCC balanced budget for 2021/22 for the Youth Justice Service is £1,372,146.00. This is supplemented by two Youth Justice Board grants totalling £562,897.00

7.0 Supporting Documents

- 7.1 Appendix A - Youth Justice Plan 2021/2022

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): none

Other members: none