

Cabinet

12 November 2020

Warwickshire Youth Justice Service Report 2020/21

Recommendation

That the Warwickshire COVID 19 Recovery Plan, which for this year only replaces the more regular Youth Justice Plan, is approved by Cabinet.

1.0 Key Issues

- 1.1 The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) requires the submission of an annual Youth Justice Plan and this is a condition of the government grant Warwickshire receives towards the provision of Youth Justice Services. However, for the period 2020/21, the YJB has recognised the pressures faced by Youth Offending Services during the COVID 19 pandemic. In response to this pressure, the annual requirement to prepare a full Youth Justice Plan was changed to the expectation that a full COVID recovery plan was prepared. This is attached to this report as an appendix and was submitted alongside the overarching Directorate Risk Assessment previously approved by WCC Corporate Board.
- 1.2 This Recovery Plan outlines approaches to managing service delivery during the pandemic. This Plan was prepared and shared for approval with the multi-agency Youth Justice Chief Officer Board before it was submitted to the YJB.
- 1.3 The Youth Justice Chief Officer Board is a multi-agency group chaired by the Warwickshire County Council Strategic Director for People, Nigel Minns. Within statute this Board is responsible to the YJB for the overview and implementation of the relevant plan, progress re performance and financial reports. The Youth Justice Service work is also aligned with other strategic bodies including the Warwickshire Safeguarding Board and the Local Criminal Justice Board.
- 1.4 An Equality Impact Assessment is being undertaken in respect of our COVID Recovery Plan, and of course the concerns and issues arising from the Black Lives Matter have featured as part of our ongoing planning and responses. As part of the response within Children and Families Directorate, the Youth Justice Service is working with EQUIP to review any local disproportionality in the Youth Justice System.

- 1.5 The current statutory Youth Justice workload has been impacted by major delays in the processing of work through local Youth and Crown Courts. Warwickshire Youth Justice Service has worked hard with Her Majesty's Courts Service to plan for their business reinstatement and aligning resources to appropriately respond to an expected increase in work as efforts are made to resume normal services and the consequent increase in work. In terms of pre-court work, the volume of Warwickshire Out of Court Disposals has remained comparable to the previous year and does not appear impacted in quantity by the pandemic. Out of Court Disposals provide significant opportunities to work with children upstream of their involvement with the Courts and work to divert them from future Criminal Justice involvement.
- 1.6 In terms of the three key performance areas that are monitored nationally, First Time Entrants, Reoffending and Use of Custody, those figures that are derived from the National Police Computer are currently unavailable as it is understood that it has not been possible to maintain this on a timely basis during the pandemic. Given this circumstance, figures on recent Reoffending Rates are not currently available. The Warwickshire rate of First Time Entrants continues to be favourable against statistical comparators, as this figure is provided by the Youth Justice Board. Recently several Warwickshire young people have been sentenced to custody on very serious and impactful offences, but this was preceded by a long period when no local young people were serving prisoners. An internal Service review is routinely undertaken on all custodial sentences imposed to ensure that best efforts were made to provide relevant child centred options to the Courts
- 1.7 Local Youth Justice practice has long been embedded in principles of Restorative Practice and also an understanding of youth offending behaviour within a trauma-based approach. Both these approaches to working with young people are now a fundamental way of working within the wider Children and Families Directorate.

2.0 Financial Implications

- 2.1 At the end of the Recovery plan there is the outline of the Warwickshire Youth Justice Budget for 2020/21. The YJS gross budget is £2,477,329. It can be seen that, all statutory partners within the Youth Justice partnership are sustaining a contribution, albeit there has been a reduction in contribution from the National Probation Service this year, in accordance with their national decision making.
- 2.2 The level of Youth Justice Board grant of £492,704 for 2020/21 and this represents a small increase on that of last year.

3.0 Environmental Implications

None

4.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 4.1 The objectives outlined in the Recovery Plan will be formally reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Youth Justice Chief Officer Board. The COVID Recovery Plan is being moderated by the National Youth Justice Board and whilst this process is yet to formally occur, tentative indications to the Chief Officer Board indicates the plan far exceeds minimum requirements.
- 4.2 This report is being presented to Cabinet in November 2020.

5.0 Background papers

None

6.0 Appendix

Warwickshire Youth Justice COVID Recover Plan 2020/21

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

Local Member(s): Councillor Morgan and Councillor Crump