



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday, 13 September 2021

REPORT TITLE:	WIRRAL YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-22
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an introduction to the Wirral Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2021-22.

The Wirral Youth Justice Service's Strategic Plan 2021-22 is Wirral's 'Annual Plan' in Youth Justice Board (YJB) context. The Youth Justice Board is a non-departmental public body for overseeing the youth justice system in England and Wales. The preparation and submission of an 'Annual Plan' is linked to the terms and conditions of the Youth Justice Board grant award, this award contributes to the funding of youth offending teams and services across England and Wales.

A refreshed five-year Wirral Plan has been developed, setting out the Council's priorities and how we will transform the way services are provided between 2021 and 2026. The Wirral Plan's vision of 'Equity for People and Place', seeks to secure the best future for our residents, defined by the community prosperity we create and supported by our excellent people and services.

The Wirral Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2021-22 links to the Wirral 2021-2026 Plan against delivery of the following:

- Brighter futures for all regardless of their background.
- Safe and pleasant communities that our residents are proud of.
- Active and healthy lives for all, with the right care, at the right time to enable residents to live longer and healthier lives.

This matter affects residents across the borough.

This report relates to a key decision

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to:

1. Endorse the Wirral Youth Justice Service's Strategic Plan 2021-22, and recommend to council for approval
2. Note the approach and ongoing development work within the Youth Justice Service and across the Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB).

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

1.1 Wirral Youth Justice Service is a statutory partnership between Police, Probation, the Local Authority and Health partners in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The aim of the partnership is to prevent offending and re-offending by children and to tackle it effectively through a range of measures when it does occur.

1.2 Section 39 (1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the co-operation of the named statutory partners to form a YOT (Known as the 'Youth Justice Service' – 'YJS' in Wirral). Section 38 identifies the statutory partners and places upon them a duty to co-operate to secure youth justice services appropriate to their area. These statutory partners are:

- The Local Authority.
- Police.
- Probation service.
- Health.

To support the YOT (YJS), additional partners may also be recruited to the joint strategic effort to prevent offending by children and young people.

1.3 Local authorities have a statutory duty to submit an annual youth justice (YJ) plan relating to their provision of youth justice services. Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth offending partnership's responsibilities in producing a plan. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, after consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan. The Wirral Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2021-22 is the annual plan for 2021-22 for the purposes of the legislation.

1.4 The Youth Justice Service is overseen by the Wirral Youth Justice Management Board. The management board should be formed to provide strategic direction with the aim of preventing offending by children and young people.

1.5 The primary duty to ensure a YOT (YJS) is in place rests with the local authority.

1.6 As a statutory partner under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Wirral Local Authority has key role to play in delivering Youth Justice. The endorsement of the Children, Young People and Education Committee will support the delivery of this Strategic Plan and therefore the linked aspects of The Wirral Plan 2021-26.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 Not supporting the Wirral Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2021-22 may result in less clearly aligned and coordinated multi agency activity to prevent offending and re-offending. The lack of an 'Annual Plan' would be contrary to Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) is the primary inspectorate for Youth Offending Teams (The Youth Justice Service in Wirral). The HMIPs Annual Report 2019/20 included the below reference, which helps to set the challenges for YOTs in context as to their wider partnership and professional relationships.

“YOTs must successfully straddle the criminal justice system and children's and wider youth services to meet the multiple needs of children, whilst protecting the public and recognising the needs and wishes of victims”.

- 3.2 In July 2020, the Youth Justice Service moved from the Council's Neighbourhood Directorate into Children's Services. Prior to this, YJS was part of the Police-led, Safer Wirral Hub, community safety initiative. Following consideration by the Council's Senior Leadership Team, the Director of Children's Services secured agreement for the service to be moved into the Children, Young People and Education Directorate. This move has supported the vision for a Child First approach to youth justice, generating closer working relationships across children's services as part of the Contextual Safeguarding service area, and working within the scope of the safeguarding partnership's Safer Adolescence Strategy 2021-2023.
- 3.3 The move to Children's Services presented an opportunity to refresh the Youth Justice Management Board. The board now benefits from several new members, who have worked through board development and self-assessment sessions, alongside considering core business and performance, to build their knowledge base and understanding of the youth justice arena. Youth Justice can be a complex area of business to navigate. The board are well supported in their development journey by an experienced Youth Justice Service Manager and business manager, youth justice managers and staff have contributed to the board development and agenda items by means of reports, updates and case studies

The role of the Management Board is to:

- Determine how the YOT(s) (YJS) is to be composed and funded, how it is to operate and what functions it is to carry out.
- Oversee the formulation each year of a draft youth justice plan.
- Oversee the appointment or designation of a YOT (YJS) manager.
- As part of the youth justice plan, agree objectives and key performance indicators.

- 3.4 The Wirral Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2021-22 is the Youth Justice Management Board's first cycle of planning as a new board and post covid. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) ordinarily set a target date at the end of September to complete the Annual Plan, however this year the target date for submission to the Youth Justice Board was the 30th of June 2021.
- 3.5 The Strategic Plan aims to contribute to the wider Corporate and Directorate objectives by providing an efficient service that prevents and diverts young people away from criminal justice, intervenes effectively to prevent re-offending and reduces the use of custody for young people. Effective and committed partnership working

will ensure local delivery effectively meets targets and achieves positive outcomes for the young people, families, victims, and the wider community in Wirral.

3.6 In setting the direction for Youth Justice in Wirral, the Youth Justice Management Board has developed the following strategic vision.

- For our young people involved, or on the cusp of, the Criminal Justice System are seen as “Children First, Offenders Second”.
- For our young people to be treated fairly by the youth justice system; and receive help that recognises their individual needs and builds on their strengths, through statutory work or preventative support.
- To bring about change for our young people and their families, so they can contribute fully to society and live a brighter future, in safe and pleasant communities.

3.7 Priorities

The Youth Justice Board sets out 3 National areas of key performance for all YOTs. This affords the Youth Justice Board and Youth Justice Management Boards the opportunity to benchmark across Merseyside, North West, England and statistical neighbours. These national indicators are:

- The amount and rate of First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System (FTEs).
- The rate Re-offending.
- The use of custody (Use of youth custody as opposed to managing young people in the community).

3.8 Wirral performance in respect of the 3 national indicators is set out at section 5 of the Strategic Plan. This is accompanied by a more detailed explanation as to how the statistics are produced and tracked over time. Appendix 7 within the Strategic Plan reflects a positive direction of travel for Wirral against the 3 national indicators, for the year ending March 2021. Comparison across Merseyside is also favourable. The rate of first time entrants and use of custody for Wirral is higher than that of the YOT ‘family’ average, as presented by the Youth Justice Board. The YOT family is grouped together by virtue of the Department for Education’s Children’s Services Statistical Neighbour Benchmarking model. There are 11 YOT (YJS) within the benchmarking family. For 2020-21:

- First time entrants’ rate was 219 per 100,000 children compared to 155 per 100,000 YOT family average. Two YOT’s within the family had higher rates than Wirral.
- Use of custody was 0.07 per 1000 children, compared to 0.04 per 1000 YOT family average. Of the 4 other YOTs presenting use of custody rates, 3 had higher rates than Wirral.

3.9 Section 5 of the Strategic Plan includes an overview of the cohort of young people known to youth justice over the last year. This, along with scanning national developments and themes from the youth justice sector, considering data and

feedback from children's services, health and police, informs the priorities the Youth Justice Management Board have set for 2021-22. The following paragraphs set out local areas of priority focus for Wirral, in addition to the national indicators.

- 3.10 **Child to Adult Violence (CAV):**
Wirral has identified the development of the service offered to parents whose children are violent towards them, to extend the offer by working with colleagues from outside the Youth Justice Service using the "who's in charge" model of support. With the end goal the development of a parenting support group that is ran and managed by parents who have been through the programme. CAV was a feature within the HMIP annual Report 2020 as a feature of lockdown periods, where children were spending more time at home.
- 3.11 **Harmful Sexual Behaviour**
The Youth Justice Service will continue to deliver workshops for front line staff on Harmful Sexual Behaviour through the Safeguarding Partnership's training programme. This will ensure that front line staff are 'risk aware' when working with young people who display sexualised behaviour. Professionals will be given the knowledge and strategies to work with young people with such behaviours. Pathways and referral processes are in place for those young people that do need additional specialist support and risk management. This area has been highlighted by the recent 'Everyone's Invited' campaign and the Ofsted rapid review into sexual abuse in schools and colleges 2021.
- 3.12 **Trauma Informed Practice and Enhanced Case Management.**
The Youth Justice Service are in the process of delivering a programme of training for case managers and associated professionals, to ensure that staff can recognise and understand Trauma and behaviours. This will equip staff with the tools and knowledge to engage and work with young people who may have been affected by trauma. The Youth Justice Service will identify young people to work with in the Enhanced Case Management (ECM) framework, ensuring that they are supported throughout the intervention. This includes those agencies and professionals involved with the young person. This priority reflects the smaller cohorts with increased complexity across the youth justice landscape nationally.
- 3.13 **Serious Youth Violence and Exploitation**
The Youth Justice Service and management board will work alongside Community Safety Partners and Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership to maintain a focus on violence and exploitation within the context of the YJS. Making best use of problem solving, contextual safeguarding and public health approaches. This was a theme highlighted within the HMIP Annual Report 2020; and the focus of recent learning and development engagement by the Department for Education, linking violence reduction partnership, community safety and safeguarding partnership activity. Wirral's Community Safety Strategy, developed in 2021, includes a 'Youth Interest Group' which will assist in aligning child focused community safety activity and priorities across the Wirral.
- 3.14 **Education, Employment and Training**
This priority area seeks to ensure young people open to the Youth Justice Service who are aged 16 and above have the opportunity of Employment, Education and

Training (EET). Engagement in this context reduces vulnerability and helps build capacity within young people, reducing the likelihood of offending or re-offending.

3.15 Education

This priority seeks to ensure there is a focus for those of school age within the cohort to have access to education. This priority has been drawn from data analysis by the YJMB and is a feature within the HMIP Annual Report 2020. As with those who are no longer of compulsory school age, engagement with education reduces vulnerability and help build capacity in our young people.

3.16 Participation and Engagement

The Youth Justice Service and management board want to increase young people's involvement and participation to ensure the service provision meets their needs. This area was highlighted in self-assessment undertaken by Wirral's YJMB in 2021. The service has appointed a participation and engagement lead who will link to the wider Children's Service's network of participation and engagement.

3.17 Mental Health Support

The provision of specialist mental health consultation support for young people open to the service will remain a priority for 2021-22. Youth Justice case managers identifying any concerns with regards to the young person's mental health and wellbeing have access to consultation with the aligned Youth Justice CAMH's worker.

3.18 Prevention support for vulnerable cohorts

This priority area seeks to increase prevention activity/support for our looked after and vulnerable children. This priority is drawn from data analysis by Wirral on the amount of prevention referrals received for looked after children and links to the overarching Safer Adolescence Strategy in terms of adopting a more proactive approach to protecting older children.

3.19 Section 7 of the Strategic Plan sets out the areas for improvement and development over the period of the plan. Improvement areas include how the Youth Justice Management Board will continue to develop, the introduction of Equality Objectives and an Equality Statement covering the work of Youth Justice to ensure fairness and a personal approach; and how the service will continue to work to the 'standards for children in the justice system' set out by the Youth Justice Board.

3.20 The improvement plan also includes the Wirral response to peer feedback around high risk 'resettlement' cases, where young people went on to re-offend. The peer feedback was sought from a neighbouring YOT to gain objective and independent youth justice input and maximise learning for Wirral. A specific action plan was presented to the Youth Justice Management Board in July 2021, including the review of linked local policies and a multi-agency task and finish group being approved to develop wider partnership practice in this area.

3.21 The Youth Justice Service have an operational plan supporting the 2021-22 Strategic Plan. The service has also developed an accompanying Performance Framework linked to priority areas. This will in turn inform the performance reporting into the Youth Justice management Board across the period of the Strategic Plan.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Wirral YJS Strategic Plan sets out the budget for 2021-22. This is drawn from local authority and statutory partners contributions through direct payment or the commitment of resources as 'in kind' payments. (See Appendix 1 of the Strategic Plan). The Local Authority contribution remains the same as the last financial year. Vacancies within the Youth Justice Service during the Covid affected period, aligned with a hold on non-essential recruitment resulted in an underspend for the end of 2020-21. A recent recruitment exercise for a team manager vacancy has been approved and undertaken, with the candidate joining from a neighbouring YOT in Quarter 3 2021-22. Vacancies in respect of two case manager roles have yet to be directly recruited into as the service has savings targets of £25k in both 21/22 and 22/23 and £50k in 23/24. Wirral's Youth Justice Management Board are seeking to evaluate the impact of Covid on young people's needs; and consider options for a service model that supports changing national trends around cohort complexity and a general national youth justice move towards evidence-based trauma informed models of support.
- 4.2 The Youth Justice Service receives a remand grant award from the Ministry of Justice. This award for 2020-21 did not meet all of the remand costs during that period, with the remainder falling to the Local Authority. This cost to the Local Authority, however, was less than in previous years due to an uplift in remand grant during 2020-21. This is due to the award being adjusted according to analysis of local demand over a period of time. The award has been confirmed for 2021-22, remaining at the higher level set within 2020-21. Costs incurred from remand are listed within the risks section of the Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan (Section 9), with ongoing monitoring through management governance and the Youth Justice Management Board.
- 4.3 The Youth Justice Board grant has been increased for 2021-22. This additional award is to support YOTs nationally with responding to Covid impact. Wirral has undertaken additional training in respect of trauma and child to adult violence, to assist in managing young people with complex needs; and is targeting the development of the facilities for young people within Solar Campus to support more effective engagement in 2021-22 and beyond.
- 4.4 The current financial pressures are noted as a relevant risk within section 7 of this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As per section 1, above, there is a statutory duty under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to form a Youth Justice Service and Youth Justice Management Board and submit an annual plan.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The Strategic Plan references a broad range of activity delivered in the context of youth justice in Wirral. As part of the Youth Justice Management Board arrangements, the board will retain an overview of any changes to partnership structures, assets and activities that may impact on service delivery around those activities and services highlighted within the plan.
- 6.2 Changes to the structure of the YJS in Wirral will only be undertaken through report and approval to the Youth Justice Management Board, taking into account local need, cost benefit and considering other options.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Failing to deliver the Strategic Plan will be mitigated through management oversight and Youth Justice Management Board arrangements for monitoring performance and delivery.
- 7.2 The current financial pressures facing the Council and its partners represents a risk. Considerations on changes to any future funding arrangements will include cost-benefit analysis, including invest to save considerations.
- 7.3 Risks in the context of service delivery, and accompanying mitigation, are set out in Section 9 of the Strategic Plan.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Consultation has taken place with young people in Wirral, to help understand their experiences of youth justice. Section 6 of the Strategic Plan includes direct quotes from our young people.
- 8.2 Feedback in developing the 'Children First' version of the Strategic Plan has been gathered through the partnership's participation and engagement network, this included direct feedback from young people involved with Youth Justice.
- 8.3 Members of the Youth Justice Management Board and Community Safety Partnership have been consulted with during the development of the Strategic Plan.
- 8.4 The priorities as set out in Section 3 of this report, and Section 5 of the Strategic Plan highlight the ongoing commitment to participation and engagement across young people, victims and carers linked to the work of Wirral's Youth Justice Service.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the Wirral Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2021-22 and can be found via the following link:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental and climate implications arising from this report. It is anticipated that the Strategic Plan will have no impact on the emission of greenhouse gases.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Wirral Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2021-22

Appendix 2 – Wirral Youth Justice Service ‘Children First’ Plan 2021-22

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Covid Recovery Plan 2020-21.

Youth Justice Management Board Terms of Reference April 2021.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Not applicable	Not applicable