



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday 16 October 2024

REPORT TITLE:	YOUTH JUSTICE ANNUAL PLAN
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 (YJS) Strategic Plan 2024-2025.

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) 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.

The Wirral Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2024-25 links to the Wirral Plan against priorities and delivery of the following:

- To deliver high quality efficient universal services to all residents
- To prioritise those with the greatest needs
- To deliver council services within the means of the council budget
- To be prepared to innovate and face the future
- To work across communities with community, voluntary and faith organisations and partners to improve all residents' life chances

This matter affects residents across the borough.

This report relates to a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is requested to recommend to Council that the Wirral Youth Justice Service's Strategic Plan 2024-25 be approved.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 Wirral Youth Justice Service (YJS) is a statutory partnership between Police, Probation, the Council and Health partners in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- 1.2 The Youth Justice Service is overseen by the Wirral Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB). The management board should be formed to provide strategic direction with the aim of preventing offending by children and young people.
- 1.3 As a statutory partner under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council has key role to play in delivering Youth Justice. Endorsement by the Council will support the delivery of this Strategic Plan and therefore the linked aspects of the Wirral Plan.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Not supporting the Wirral Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2024-25 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 Wirral's Youth Justice Service was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) in July 2021, receiving an overall rating of 'Good'. All developing actions arising from this inspection are now complete, subject to ongoing oversight from Wirral's Youth Justice Management Board. The new Inspection Framework from the now His Majesty Inspectorate of Probation are due to be released in October 2024. The Youth Justice Service is making preparations for the HMIP Inspection's start from Spring 2025. Following on from the overall judgment of "Good" with several outstanding elements and a couple of Requires Improvements efforts are being made with a view the Service moving from "Good" to "Outstanding".
- 3.2 The national governing body, the Youth Justice Board (YJB), have set out National areas of key performance for all YOTs. Since 2023 there have been addition key performance indicators from three to thirteen. These national indicators are:
 - The amount and rate of First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System (FTEs);
 - The use of custody (Use of youth custody as opposed to managing young people in the community);
 - The rate of Re-offending;
 - Suitable accommodation;
 - Education, training, and employment;
 - Special educational needs and disabilities/Additional learning needs;
 - Mental health care and emotional well-being;

- Substance misuse;
- Out of court disposals;
- Links to wider services;
- Management board attendance;
- Serious violence; and
- Victims / Harm Person data.

- 3.3 Reporting on the additional key indicators has only just commenced in August 2023. National upgrades to the case management system have been completed and to enable reporting and monitoring of the new wider set of key indicators. Although this is still a working progress with the Youth Justice Board Nationally to iron out a few glitches in the system updates on data retrieval. All KPIs will be present quarterly to the Youth Justice Management Board chaired by the Director of Children, Families and Education and attended by partners.
- 3.4 First time entrants' (FTE) rate between January 2023 and December 2023 was 125 per 100,000 children (36 children) compared to 118 (33 children) the previous year. That is a slight increase on last years that equates to three young people. As a collective the Merseyside footprint (Liverpool, Sefton, Knowsley, St Helens and Wirral) has increased by 14.5%.
- 3.5 Wirral YJS has maintained the custodial rate of 0.10. This equates, for the second year, to 3 young people receiving custodial sentences. The local population mid-year for 2022 is 31,150 an increase of 609 children aged 10 to 17 years. This year's data remains the same as last year data on numbers of children.
- 3.6 Wirral's Binary re-offending rate between July 21 and June 2022 was 35.9% which is a 5.3% reduction in the reoffending rates compared to the previous year.
- 3.7 Although Wirral YJS have been reporting to the Youth Justice Board since 2023 on 10 extra Key Performance Indicators, we will not receive the official data regarding these 10 performances until April 2025.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Wirral YJS Strategic Plan sets out the budget for 2024-25. This is drawn from local authority and statutory partners contributions through direct payment or the commitment of resources as 'in kind' payments. (See Appendix 4 of the Strategic Plan).
- 4.2 The cost of remanding young people into custody is an area of unpredictable expenditure. Demand on this area of the budget is highly volatile, driven by serious crimes, which are low in volume and infrequent. Remand costs are such that small numbers can impact significantly on the YJS budget. Grant awards to cover remand expenditure are based on a 3-year cycle, which can sometimes lead to a shortfall, depending on previous years remand. In view of this, Wirral YJS have retained some contingency funds to cover shortfall in this area.
- 4.3 The current financial pressures are noted as a relevant risk within section 7 of this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Section 39 (1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (the 1998 Act) requires the co-operation of the named statutory partners to form a Youth Offending Team, or YOT (Now known as the 'Youth Justice Service', or 'YJS' in Wirral and in most Local Authority areas nationally). 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 Council;
- Police;
- Probation service; and
- Health.

Additional partners may also be recruited to the joint strategic effort to prevent offending by children and young people.

5.2 The primary duty to ensure a Youth Justice Service is in place rests with the Council. Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a statutory duty on local authorities to submit an annual youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services and sets out the youth justice partnership's responsibilities in producing a plan. It is the duty of each Council, after consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out how youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded, how they will operate, and what functions will be carried out. The plan should also address the functions assigned to a youth justice service, including how services will prevent offending behaviour and reduce reoffending.

5.3 Youth Justice Plans are required to be approved by the full Council in accordance with Regulation 4 of the 'Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000'.

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, considering 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. Strategic and operational risk will additionally be monitored through the National Youth Justice Board through the quarterly returns that are a legal

requirement of the Youth Justice Board Grant, as well as checks on progress from the regional lead from the Youth Justice Board for the Northwest. Additionally any changes in government policy and funding from the Ministry of Justice for Youth Offending Services could have an adverse effect on the delivery of Youth Justice Service dependent on negative changes.

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.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 Feedback has been gathered through the partnership's participation and engagement network, this included direct feedback from young people involved with Youth Justice.

8.2 Members of the Youth Justice Management Board and Community Safety Partnership have been consulted with during the development of the Strategic Plan.

8.3 Section 3 (Page 11) of the Strategic Plan highlights the ongoing commitment to the voice of children and harmed people. This is delivered through participation and engagement across young people and engagement with victims and carers linked to the work of Wirral's Youth Justice Service.

8.4 Appendix 6 of the Strategic Plan contains the Wirral YJS Participation and Engagement Strategy, 2023.

8.5 The Strategic Plan has also been reviewed externally by the Youth Justice Board (YJB), who have provided the following feedback:

- The Plan demonstrates a strength in the Service's approach to the use of data and analysis to inform practice, supplemented by audits and feedback;
- The narrative is comprehensive in terms of describing Service delivery and the successful partnership approaches;
- The Service's attention to the equality and diversity needs of the children and young people the Service works with comes out strongly in the Plan;
- The Plan evidences a very strong approach to workforce development;
- Strong evidence of practice including reference to Operation Inclusion, as well as the national award received from the Howard League for Penal Reform. Operation Inclusion is also receiving national interest in other areas as the choice for deferred prosecution;
- Additionally, the commencement of a no comment pathway for young people to have the opportunity for a deferred prosecution scheme to support them and ensure that they receive support to stop re offending; and
- Positive endorsement of the education programme 'In the Zone' being worthy of recognition having reached over 6000 secondary school pupils both in mainstream and alternative provisions. This programme was evaluated through the Violent reduction Partnership and Liverpool John Moore's University with some positive results as well as some learning.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and reviewed for the Wirral Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan. The EIA 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.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The work being done to reduce vulnerability to exploitation supports the development of resilient local communities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Wirral Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2024-25

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Youth Justice Board: Youth Justice Plan guidance 2024-25

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in accordance with section a of its Terms of Reference:

(a) exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education or health, with the exception of any powers reserved to full Council.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children and Young People Department	October 2023

