

**REPORT TO:** Children, Young People & Families Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Tracey Coffey, Operational Director and Chair of the Cheshire Youth Justice Board

**PORTFOLIO:** Children & Young People

**SUBJECT:** HMI Inspectorate of Probation Report of Cheshire Youth Justice Service

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

## 1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 Cheshire Youth Justice Service (CYJS) provides the statutory services for children and young people who are at risk of offending or have committed offences. CYJS is a partnership of Halton, Warrington, Cheshire East and Cheshire West local authorities, together with Cheshire Police, Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, the respective clinical commissioning groups in each LA area, Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) and the National Probation Service.
- 1.2 CYJS was subject to a joint inspection, led by Her Majesty's Probation Inspectorate, supported by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Services Inspectorate in 2 blocks in July 2021, and the report was published in December 2021.
- 1.3 This report is to share the findings of the inspection; the overall judgement was that CYJS is Good, with three outstanding areas and one are for improvement. The report states that Cheshire YJS has the highest overall rating score nationally to date for a joint inspection.
- 1.4 An action plan to address the 4 recommendations will be approved by the Youth Justice Management Board in December 2021, who will monitor its progress.

## 2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

- i) **the report be noted; and**
- ii) **The Board thank the staff, partners, children and young people and their families and volunteers for their contribution.**

### 3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The inspection considers 12 rating standards across three domain areas: organisational delivery, court disposal and out of court disposals. It involved reviewing case records, interviews with a range of agency representatives and frontline staff, volunteers and young people and their families.
- 3.2 Outstanding ratings were given to standards for governance and leadership, and for implementation, delivery and joint working on out of court disposals. One standard was rated requiring improvement for planning in court disposals and the remaining 8 standards were rated as good.
- 3.3 The report notes that the service has a clear ambition for children, sustained and effective partnership and generally sound operational delivery. The Board has been highly effective in setting out priorities for the service, which managers and staff have been able to translate into the services delivered and available for children. Board members took appropriate steps to understand the needs of children.
- 3.4 Several strengths were noted, including the effective partnerships that had been developed and sustained about 4 local authority areas in a complex partnership, and the response to ensuring services were maintained during Covid-19. There is a strong shared culture of co-operation and learning, with excellent access to health services and education.
- 3.5 Importantly, the service develops good relationships with children, understanding the factors that had led them to offend and inspectors were pleased to find the needs of children and their victims were both given priority.
- 3.6 Inspectors have made a number of recommendations to support the service and its development. For CYJS there are 3 recommendations:
- To work with the police to make sure there is police representation at all risk management meetings and the role of the police is consistently considered in all appropriate cases, to ensure risks are managed
  - To work with the management board to ensure funding for Divert is part of the mainstream YJS budget, to enable its success to be sustained
  - To provide effective management oversight that improves the planning to manage the risk of harm to others, especially in medium risk cases
- 3.7 There are two recommendations for Cheshire Constabulary:

- To clarify the roles and tasking priorities of police officers to ensure they support the work of the YJS in line with national guidance, including decision making for out of court disposals
- To ensure all seconded police officers are skilled, knowledgeable and trained, particularly with regards to safeguarding and child exploitation, to increase their effectiveness in their role with the YJS

3.8 There is one recommendation for the chair of the management board:

- To provide staff with safe, confidential and accessible places to work with children

3.9 The police officer roles and contribution work effectively but are not fully in line with the mandated national guidance on embedding full time dedicated police officers in the YJS, leading to some lack of clarity about roles and deployment and their availability and contribution to meetings and decision-making.

3.10 Divert is a scheme that assesses the risk and needs of children arrested for lower level offences and intervenes to provide multi-agency support without criminalising children unnecessarily. Cheshire's Divert scheme has been recognised as a national pathfinder scheme but it has been funded largely by the PCC through an annual grant (£198k) that has not increased for several years. This scheme is not statutory and PCCs are not mandated to fund local Youth Justice Services, but Divert has had a demonstrably positive impact in maintaining lower than average numbers of first time entrants to the criminal justice system (which is a kpi for local authorities).

3.11 There is an expectation within national standards that each YJS is funded to deliver pre-court diversionary activity but how this is done and how it is funded is not prescribed. The joint inspection recommended the Youth Justice Partnership Board ensure the sustained success of Divert by mainstreaming it and committing to recurrent funding. This will be a challenge given the financial constraints for all partners.

3.12 Each local authority has a range of places to see children, but the accessibility and suitability varies across each area. Again, the cost of identifying, hiring, providing, altering provision will provide a challenge in the context of reducing budgets and the need to identify savings.

3.13 An action plan will be developed and agreed by partners at the YJS Board meeting in December 2021.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 As highlighted above, some of the recommendations have significant

cost implications for all partners and their contribution to CYJS. The Board will strive to deliver as far a possible within the existing budget and any request for increased funding is supported by a business case that has explored all options, including the use of existing resources.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None identified.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

Children who have offended or are at risk of offending may suffer poorer outcomes for their health, well-being, education and employment and potential to be active and committed citizens of Halton without specialised support. It is also a legal requirement for each local authority to provide a youth justice service.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

As above.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

As above.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

CYJS supports and protects the victims of crime in Halton by working with children and partners to prevent and reduce the impact of offending

### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 An increase in the risk of children re-offending with a reduced service from the CYJS would mean a significant increase in harm to members of the community but also to children whose outcomes would be severely reduced and lead to increased cost in terms of their education, care and health.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Children from a black or minority ethnic background can be over-represented in the profile of children who offend, and all partners must undertake their duties in a non-discriminatory way and be alert to

factors which may lead to over-representation as a consequence of their actions.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.