

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 12 September 2024

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director of Children's Services

**PORTFOLIO:** Children and Young People

**SUBJECT:** Youth Justice Plan 2024-27

**WARD(S)** All

## 1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to submit an annual Youth Justice Plan relating to their provision of youth justice services (YJS). Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth justice 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 a youth justice plan, setting out how youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded, how they will operate and how they are performing against a range of national measures.
- 1.2 Halton have a shared service arrangement for Youth Justice with the other three Local Authorities in the sub-region and as such the Governance arrangements for Youth Justice are overseen by a pan Cheshire Management Board. The Youth Justice Service have drafted a three-year strategic plan 2024-27 in partnership with Cheshire Police and other statutory partners and it was approved by the Youth Justice Management Board on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June.
- 1.3 This report briefs the Executive Board on the content of the 2024-27 Youth Justice Plan for Cheshire and seeks formal sign off at full council on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024 in compliance with Youth Justice Board Guidance (Ministry of Justice) and Regulation 4 of the 'Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000'.
- 1.4 There is provision within the national guidance for the Chair of the Youth Justice Management Board to be given delegated authority to approve the Youth Justice Plan on behalf of the local authority and for formal sign-off to then be sought retrospectively from Full Council. Given the timelines and complexity of doing this across four areas this has been the approach agreed by all four Local Authorities previously, and is recommended for the annual refresh of the Youth Justice Plan again next year.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: That the Board

- 1) **recommends the 2024-27 Youth Justice Plan for approval by the next full council; and**
- 2) **gives delegates authority to the Director of Children Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Families, to approve and submit an annual refresh of the Youth Justice Plan in 2025 prior to formal approval by Council next year.**

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Cheshire sub-region is a large complex area and the Youth Justice partnership between and across the four local authorities provides a powerful base to meet the various complexities and challenges faced by the county's children, families, and victims.
- 3.2 Despite the scale, Cheshire Youth Justice Service is a comparatively small organisation comprising fewer than 75 WTE staff, including seconded workers plus approximately thirty active volunteers. The human resource arrangements for the entire workforce currently involve eleven different employing organisations including police, probation, three different NHS Trusts and two independent providers (of speech and language therapists and substance misuse specialists). In April 2024 Halton Council and the other three local authorities approved the transition to a simpler fully hosted model for the Youth Justice Service which will see Cheshire West Council acting as 'lead authority' on behalf of the pan Cheshire partnership with effect from April 2025. However, the statutory responsibility for provision of Youth Justice Service (at place) remains with each of the four local authorities. Therefore an annual refresh of the three-year Youth Justice Strategic Plan will still be presented formally for approval at Cabinet and then full council in 2025 and beyond.
- 3.3 The national body responsible for inspecting Youth Justice Services are His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMiP) with national oversight provided by the Youth Justice Board (YJB – a quasi-autonomous governing body within the Ministry of Justice). Both HMiP and the national YJB recognise Cheshire YJS as being of a high standard. The former rated Cheshire YJS as 'Good' in the most recent 2021 full joint inspection (Governance and leadership were rated as 'Outstanding') and the latter affording pathfinder status for Cheshire's successful youth diversion programme.

- 3.4 The Youth Justice Plan has been produced in accordance with national Youth Justice Board guidance and follows their prescribed template to include: foreword from the Chair of the Management Board, Vision and Strategy, Governance, Leadership and partnership arrangements, Board development, Progress on previous years, Resources and services, Performance against National key performance indicators, Priorities, information on Children from groups which are over-represented, Prevention, Diversion, Education, Restorative approaches and victims, Serious violence and exploitation, Detention in police custody, Remands, Use of custody, Standards for children in the justice system, Workforce Development, Evidence-based practice and innovation, Service Development, Challenges, risks and issues.
- 3.5 Performance figures show that Cheshire YJS continue to achieve good levels of performance against the three main performance indicators: First Time Entrants to the criminal justice system (FTEs), Custody rates and re-offending (all detailed within the YJ Plan).
- 3.6 In 2023-24 there were only twenty-three Halton first time entrants to the justice system and only two Halton children sentenced to custody. Rates of Serious Youth Violence in Cheshire in 2023-24 were well below the national average at 2.7 offences per 10,000 children compared to a regional average of 4.7 and national average of 5.5. There is a lot more data and information detailed within the YJ Plan.
- 3.7 The priorities for Youth Justice across the sub region are described fully in the YJ Plan but include; 1) Further developing participation and relationship based practice to facilitate a culture of collaboration where children, volunteers and community groups are enabled to promote pro-social identity and desistance from crime 2) Ensuring the YJS support offer to victims is compliant with the new duty to collaborate responsibilities outlined in the Victim and Prisoners Act and 3) Design of a new comprehensive performance reporting and quality assurance framework, ensuring the service is data driven and makes full use of the management information system to drive practice and improve outcomes for children, families, and victims.
- 3.8 The Youth Justice Service have consulted with children, young people, parents, carers, and wider stakeholders in the development of the plan.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no policy implications, production and publication of a

Youth Justice Plan is a statutory requirement on all councils.

## 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Halton is one of several statutory financial stakeholders of the Youth Justice service and delivering the service on a shared basis with three other local authorities achieves considerable economy of scale thereby spending significantly less on youth justice than most councils. Halton Councils exact cash contribution for 2024-25 will be confirmed following confirmation of the annual pay award for staff but would be £330,228 (assuming an annual pay award settlement of a 4% increase on last year). The national Youth Justice Board is the single largest financial contributor to Cheshire Youth Justice Service with an annual grant of just over £1.2m.

5.2 Cabinet provided approval in March 2024 for the Youth Justice Service to move to a fully hosted model with Cheshire West Council hosting the service on behalf of all four local authorities and this will take effect from April 2025.

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

6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence.** The Youth Justice Service works collaboratively with both the Integrated Care Board and health providers to support children to get the right help for what are often quite complex needs and avoid unnecessary criminalisation where possible. Children in the justice system are disproportionately impacted by health inequalities and the multi-disciplinary youth justice service includes access to mental health service and speech and language support.

6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy.** The service supports young people and encourages them to be part of the local economy, reach their full potential and get the best start in life which aligns with these council priorities.

6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families.** As above and the service supports children services and police to safeguard children from exploitation

6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need.** Children in and on the cusp of the justice system are among the most vulnerable in Halton. The Youth Justice Service is a multi-disciplinary service that works in a child first, trauma informed and relational way to support this marginalised cohort of children and support them to desist from crime and enjoy a safe transition into adulthood.

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future.** Not applicable

6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community.** The Youth Justice Service promotes community participation through restorative justice and reparation. Enabling children who have offended to contribute positively in their community while also ensuring any risk they present to vulnerable people in the community is assessed and managed.

## 7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 No risks identified. Publication of a Youth Justice Plan is required by legislation outlined above

## 8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The strategic plan outlines areas of disproportionality within the cohort of children who are drawn into the criminal justice system and planned activity to have a positive impact on addressing this.

## 9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 No specific or relevant implications.

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

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

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