

Cabinet – 13 December 2023

Walsall Youth Justice Annual Strategic Plan

Portfolio: Councillor Elson – Children’s Services.

Related portfolios: Councillor Perry – Deputy Leader & Resilient Communities
Councillor M. Statham – Education and Skills

Service: Walsall Youth Justice Service – Children’s Services

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

- 1.1 Youth Justice partnerships have a statutory duty to produce an annual youth justice plan for submission to the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales showing how youth justice services will be provided and funded.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The Youth Justice Plan is prepared on an annual basis in accordance with the guidance “Youth Justice Plans: YJB Practice Note for Youth Offending Partnerships” and specific conditions as set within the Youth Justice Board Effective Practice Grant. The youth justice plan sets out key achievements over the past 12 months, how Walsall Youth Justice Service is structured and funded and also identifies risks to service delivery and improvement.
- 2.2 The plan outlines the partnerships priorities for 2022 to 2025 and provides commentary on the three national performance indicators for youth justice services;
- Rate of first-time entrants to the youth justice system
 - The number and rate of custodial sentences
 - The proportion of young people re-offending

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Walsall’s Youth Justice annual strategic plan is recommended to Council for approval.
- 3.2 That Cabinet delegate authority to make any future minor amendments to the plan, if and when required, to the Executive Director of Children’s Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children’s services

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 Under section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 each Local Authority has a duty to produce a Youth Justice Plan setting out how Youth Justice Services in their area are provided, funded and composed. The plan is submitted to the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.
- 4.2 The plan identifies 5 main priorities as stated below:
- Improving the transition experience of children in the justice system.
Strategic Lead: Head of Probation
This priority is aligned to the Safer Walsall Partnership reducing re-offending priority and the regional Transition 2 Adulthood policy framework.
 - Reducing disproportionality and improving outcomes for overrepresented children.
Strategic Lead: Head of Service – Children’s Social Care.
This priority is linked to the Council’s Corporate Equality Group and objectives within the Council Plan 2022-25.
 - Reducing serious youth violence.
Strategic Lead: Superintendent Walsall Police.
This priority is aligned to the Safer Walsall Partnership and recognises the Serious Violence Duty (2021) and the delegated responsibilities on agencies and partnership.
 - Ensuring the voice of our children is clearly heard and impacts upon delivery.
Strategic Lead: YJS Strategic Lead
Following the findings of the HMIP assurance review in 2021, the partnership are committed to better evidencing that we hear and are responsive to the voices of our children both strategically and operationally.
 - Identifying and responding to unmet needs of children in the justice system.
Strategic Lead: Head of CAMHS commissioning
Our partnership recognises that there is a clear need to ‘level up’ health provision for Walsall children in line with the Black country and regional developments.
- 4.3 Walsall YJS Performance and Partnership Board are determined to improve its governance of the partnership in line with His Majesties Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) inspections standards and reviewed governance from the Youth Justice Board. As such we have reviewed the terms of reference for the Board and its members, and we have created a new infrastructure where full board meetings are focussed upon individual themed priorities. Underneath this model, the strategic leads identified above will chair sub-groups based upon the priorities to drive forward progress.
- 4.4 Summary of Key Achievements from the past 12 months, taken from the plan:

- *HMIP Thematic Inspection- Remand*; The YJS and its partners received a thematic inspection of remanded children. The partnership approached the inspection positively, was keen to learn and to promote effective practice. Practitioners used the time to reflect on their own practice and helped partners understand their part in supporting children in custody. The inspectors found effective practice here in Walsall and have helped us make improvements across the system.
- *Ministry of Justice- Turnaround*: Turnaround went live in December 2022 and provided funding to youth justice services to work with children on the periphery of the justice system. In Walsall we have used our funding to second an Early Help working into the YJS and to commission a local organisation to deliver sport coaching, positive activities and one to one mentoring.
- *Work to address Disproportionality*; building upon our progress the YJS established its Equality and Disproportionality Forum. In 2021 the Forum has provided practitioners with a safe space to discuss equality and the overrepresentation in the justice system. The Forum oversees progress and has set up a practice improvement sub-group. In 2022 we have worked closely with:
 - *Open Lens Media*- a local organisation who have worked with our boys with black and mixed ethnicity to deliver a coaching programme and to create a documentary based on their lived experiences they have faced growing up. We are working with Open Lens to develop a partnership strategy to address overrepresentation across Walsall.
 - *Resettlement Mentor*- through Safer Walsall Partnership funding we have commissioned a local mentor to work directly with black boys within the secure estate to help them navigate their time in custody and to help them plan and effectively resettle back in the community.

Council Plan priorities

- 4.5 Reducing the number of young people entering the youth justice system is a corporate measure and a key performance indicator for the Youth Justice Board.
- 4.6 The YJS plan will contribute to the Council's priorities as follows:
- People- the YJS Plan supports our families to integrate and make a positive contribution to their community whilst improving health and wellbeing.
 - Children- improving outcomes for the children in the justice system is at the heart of the work undertaken by the Youth Justice Service and intrinsic to each of the priorities within the plan.
 - Communities- working closely with the Safer Walsall Partnership, the YJS shares a priority to manage and reduce violence and to make our communities safer.

The strategic plan focusses on how partners in Walsall will ensure that Youth Justice Services are effectively delivered to reduce youth crime and re-offending, protect the public from harm and promote safeguarding.

Risk management

- 4.7 The strategic plan recognises a number of risk to future delivery, including the improvements needed surround the health pathways for children in the justice

system. The Youth Justice Performance and Partnership Board maintains oversight of risks to delivery and mitigating action on a quarterly basis through detailed performance and quality assurance reports. Partners, including West Midlands Police, National Probation Service, Community Safety, Public Health, Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS), Education, Employment and Skills, are required at each quarterly board meeting to confirm their resource allocation and are held accountable for the performance of their own organisation.

Financial implications

- 4.8 The strategic plan outlines the resource and funding arrangements for YJS including those from statutory partners, the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- 4.9 Adopting the strategy is not expected to incur any additional costs over and above the above budgeted costs detailed within the plan.

Legal implications

- 4.10 Under Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 it is the duty of each local authority, after consultation with the relevant persons and bodies, to formulate and implement a youth justice plan for each year setting out how youth justice services are to be provided and funded in their area; and how the youth offending team (Youth Justice Service) established by them are to be composed and funded, how they are to operate, and what functions they are to carry out. The youth justice plan is required to be submitted to the Youth Justice Board and be published in such manner and by such date as the Secretary of State may direct.

Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 4.11 None

Property implications

- 4.12 None

Health and wellbeing implications

- 4.13 The health and wellbeing of Walsall young people is a key within the content of the strategic plan. Improving outcomes for young people in the justice system increases the health and wellbeing of those who commit offences and associated victims.

Staffing implications

- 4.14 There are no staffing implications in the creation of the Strategic Plan 2022-25. The current establishment is fully funded and financial contributions have been confirmed.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.15 Inequality is inherent within the Criminal Justice System. The plan does not represent an adverse impact to young people at risk of offending and re-offending. Indeed, it identifies that addressing disproportionality (the overrepresentation of young people from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups) is a priority leading into 2022-25. Significant work has been undertaken over the past year and the youth justice partnership is in a stronger place to better understand this inequality through data and consultation with families and partners.

Consultation

- 4.16 Consultation has been carried out with young people involved in the criminal justice system and with Youth Justice Service Performance and Partnership Board members.

5. Decide

- 5.1 A 'do nothing' option is not seen as viable as it is a statutory requirement for the council to have a Youth Justice Plan
- 5.2 To recommend to Council:
1. That Walsall's Youth Justice Annual Strategic plan be approved.
 2. That the Executive Director Children's Services, in consultation with the portfolio holder be authorised to make any future minor amendments to the plan if and when required.

6. Respond

- 6.1 The Youth Justice Service will continue to fulfil its statutory functions and deliver services to young people in Walsall to work towards those key performance indicators. The plan details some of the actions that the YJS will take to reduce offending behaviour, manage risk of harm to the public and safeguard. The strategic plan set the vision and strategic direction of the service over the coming 12 months.

7. Review

- 7.1 There is an annual requirement to complete a YJS Strategic Plan and as such progress against priorities and a review of achievements will be completed in the planning schedule for 2024-2025.
- 7.2 The YJS Performance and Partnership Board meets on a quarterly basis and will monitor and review progress made against the priorities and the delivery plan.

Background papers

None

Author

Phil Rutherford
Strategic Lead – Youth Justice Service

☎ 650400

✉ Philip.Rutherford@walsall.gov.uk



Colleen Male
Executive Director Childrens and Customer



Councillor Elson
Portfolio Holder
Childrens Social Work