

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

5 SEPTEMBER 2017

REPORT OF THE INTERIM CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2017-2018

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The report presents the background and summary of the content of the Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service (WBYJEIS) draft Annual Youth Justice Plan 2017-2018 (Appendix 1).

2. Connection to corporate improvement objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report relates to all three Corporate Improvement Plan priorities:

- Supporting a successful economy
- Helping people to become more self-reliant
- Smarter use of resources

3. Background

- 3.1 Youth offending services/teams (YOS/Ts) are statutory multi-agency partnerships that have a legal duty to co-operate in order to secure youth justice services appropriate to their area funded from a variety of sources including UK Government, Welsh Government (WG) and the statutory partners (ie the local authority, police, the national probation service and health).

- 3.2 The production of a youth justice plan is a statutory duty of the local authority under Part 3, section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

The plan sets out:

- how youth justice services are to be provided and funded;
- how the youth offending service established by the local authority is to be composed and funded;
- how it will operate; and
- what function it is to carry out.

- 3.3 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, section 39(1) placed a duty on each local authority, acting with its statutory partners (ie police, probation and health) to establish youth offending teams in their local area to deliver youth justice services. Section 38(3) of the Act grants a power to the local authority and its statutory partners to make payment towards the expenditure incurred in providing youth justice services. The purpose of the WBYJEIS is to ensure that youth justice services are available across the Western Bay area (ie Bridgend, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot).

3.4 Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Youth Offending Teams have been a merged service since 29 May 2014 when the first WBYJEIS Management Board was held and all local management boards ceased to exist. The Management Board is chaired by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council's Director of Social Services, Health and Housing and has a membership in line with the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act including Cabinet Members from all three local authorities.

3.5 The youth justice plan contains information relating to:

- a summary of achievements;
- structure and governance;
- resources and value for money;
- partnership arrangements; and
- risks to future delivery against the youth justice outcome measures.

4. Current situation/proposal

Summary of achievements

4.1 Efforts have been concentrated on bringing consistent good practice across the region from early intervention and prevention work through to resettlement and reintegration. This has not been without difficulty; it has taken staff time to move from one established way of working to another especially during a time of local and national uncertainty. However, Youth Justice Board (YJB) key performance indicators continue to show a reduction in first-time entrants and a reduction in the use of custody. Re-offending rates remain high but the actual number of young people re-offending continues to fall.

4.2 During 2015-2016, the service saw 108 children and young people enter the youth justice system for the first time (recorded as first-time entrants by the YJB). In the Western Bay region there are 46,307 children aged 10-17. Of those, only 68 children and young people entered the youth justice system during 2016-2017 (this number does not include those already within the system from previous years). In addition to this, over 400 children and young people were diverted away from having any criminal record through early intervention by the service and diversion through the bureau.

4.3 The use of custody has reduced from 15 young people receiving custodial sentences in 2014-2015 to 13 custodial sentences in 2015-2016 and 12 custodial sentences being given in 2016-2017.

4.4 The re-offending cohort being reported for 2016-2017 is taken from 2014-2015 to allow the potential offending behavior to be tracked. Western Bay has 217 children and young people in the cohort compared to 269 the year before. 99 children and young people (45.6%) re-offended during the tracked period compared to 110 (40.9%) the year before.

4.5 If the bureau (pre-court diversion scheme) young people are included in the calculation of reoffending, the figure is reduced to a rate of approximately 26% compared to 28% the year before.

- 4.6 There have been a variety of developments over the past year which evidences the benefits of regional working such as an increasing number of staff working across the region. This is allowing effective vacancy management as well as the sharing of skills. There has been no 'big bang' effect of the regional working; progress continues to be a pragmatic approach to adapting to change.

Structure and governance

- 4.7 The primary purpose of the WBYBEIS is to ensure that youth justice services are available across the Western Bay area. A YOS is the main vehicle through which youth justice services are coordinated and delivered working to reduce anti-social behavior, offending and reoffending amongst children and young people.
- 4.8 The activity of the YOS across the Western Bay region is overseen and monitored by a management board. As indicated, this is chaired by a Director from Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and is made up of senior representatives from each of the statutory partners who closely monitor and challenge the operation of the service including the functions it undertakes and the funding arrangements. There is a Cabinet Member from each local authority on this governance board.

Resources and value for money

- 4.9 The development of regional working came at a time of significant financial challenge for all partners. The service has managed to continue to deliver services and sustain performance with a reduced budget of £659,367 when comparing the budget for all three services at the start of the regional working with that of the budget now - £267,567 relating to YJB grant reductions and £391,800 in Medium-Term Financial Strategy savings. The service has been flexible and able to work differently with less staff to achieve these savings, partnership arrangements being particularly important to sustaining delivery. No compulsory redundancies have been made to date.

Risks to future delivery against the youth justice outcome measures

- 4.10 The desired outcomes contained in the plan contribute directly to meeting local authority priorities held within corporate plans across the three local authorities. The priorities and outcomes mirror those of the YJB and WG joint strategy "Children and Young People First" (July 2014). These are:
- a reduction in first time entrants through early intervention, prevention and diversion;
 - a reduction in youth reoffending through appropriate interventions of the right level at the right time;
 - a reduction in the use of youth custody confident that custody is a last resort and for crimes so serious no community sentence is an appropriate response;
 - access to devolved services for children and young people at risk of entering or having entered the youth justice system;
 - effective safeguarding through recognising vulnerability and improving the safety and wellbeing needs of children and young people;
 - effective public protection through risk recognition, assessment and management;
 - ensuring the voice of the victim is heard;

- successful reintegration and resettlement at the end of an intervention;
- a well-supported professional workforce; and
- true participation by all involved.

- 4.11 Access to education, training and employment continues to be a challenge as does reducing reoffending rates however the plan contains actions to improve performance. An example of how the service aims to improve performance is the detailed examination of re-offending completed in partnership with the YJB using the most recent re-offending data which is providing the service with a comprehensive understanding of those children who re-offend and allowing us to plan appropriate steps to address this more effectively. In partnership with YJB and the Police and Crime Commissioner, the service is piloting adverse childhood experience informed practice through trauma recovery based interventions including using an “enhanced case management” approach which involves child psychologist oversight.
- 4.12 The management board is currently focused on outcomes for children and young people subject to reduced educational timetables to help address the problems being experienced by them. Research informs us that accessing education and having the opportunity to reach their potential have a direct impact on addressing re-offending.
- 4.13 While the plan contains realistic and achievable actions and targets for service delivery over the next twelve months, the risks that come with grant-funded posts are always present. The pre-court work relies heavily on WG grant funding.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 A YOS is a statutory multi-agency partnership with a legal duty to co-operate in order to secure youth justice services appropriate to their area.
- 5.2 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, section 39(1) placed a duty on each local authority, acting with its statutory partners to establish a YOS in their local area to deliver youth justice services. Section 38(3) of the Act grants a power to the local authority and its statutory partners to make payment towards the expenditure incurred in providing youth justice services

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 The youth justice plan should have a positive impact on wider services provided by the Council by bringing down the number of children and young people in trouble with the police. This will in turn reduce the need for other services involvement as a result of their behaviors escalating.
- 6.2 Acknowledging children and young people as a priority group in their own right, the service focuses on diverting children and young people away from the youth justice system as much as possible. In line with the YJB and WG Youth Offending Strategy, the children and young people we engage with are seen as children and young people first and offenders second. Service delivery prioritises helping children and young people avoid criminal records that can hinder them reaching their potential in future years.

- 6.3 Consultation on the plan with children and young people has taken place. Each of the three locality offices (ie Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea) have asked children, young people, parents and carers and victims one very important question - "What do we do badly ie what does not work?".
- 6.4 The answers have been and continue to be gathered to inform service delivery and service improvement. The regional manager has met with focus groups of young people in order to involve them in the planning process. The plan itself is shared with key partners for feedback prior to completion and the management board signs off the plan (as per the statutory guidance).

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The regional service has realised financial savings across the region. Bridgend County Borough Council realised £77k in savings in the 2014-2015 Medium-Term Financial Strategy and £95k in savings in 2016-2017 as a result of the Youth Service Collaboration. Bridgend County Borough Council has also seen a reduction to its YJB grant allocation of £64,132 since 2015-2016.
- 7.2 The service has managed to adjust practice and work creatively to meet reductions in resources. Possible grant reductions remain a risk to the service.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 Members are requested to note the contents of the Youth Justice Plan 2017-2018.

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Background documents

Draft Western Bay Youth Justice and Early Intervention Service Plan 2017-2018