

LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

REPORT:	CABINET	
DATE OF DECISION	30th October 2024	
REPORT TITLE:	Youth Justice Plan 2024/25	
CORPORATE DIRECTOR	CORPORATE DIRECTOR Debbie Jones	
LEAD OFFICER:	DIRECTOR – Róisín Madden HEAD OF SERVICE: Leana Ebanks SERVICE MANAGER: Emma Carter	
LEAD MEMBER:	Maria Gatland, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People	
KEY DECISION?	No	This is not a key decision as does not meet Financial or Community Impact Criteria.
CONTAINS EXEMPT INFORMATION?	NO	N/A
WARDS AFFECTED:	<i>The Youth Justice Plan is relevant for all wards.</i>	

1 SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1** The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a statutory obligation upon each Local Authority to create a local Youth Justice Team, whose primary aim is to prevent and reduce the offending behaviour of children (aged 10–18-year-olds) alongside key partners. A further obligation is placed upon each local Team to create a yearly Youth Justice Plan setting out strategic and operational objectives for the forthcoming 12 months.
- 1.2** The Youth Justice Plan looks back at the achievements of 2023-24 noting a continued reduction in first time entrants and children in custody in addition to a reduction in re-offending rates. The creative use of preventative projects has enabled children to avoid formal sanctions permitting the service to focus on the safety of victims and vulnerability of children who commit the more serious harms. The report also details a

comprehensive application of partnership work. The plan details set objectives for 2024-25 focusing on continued areas for improvement – addressing disproportionately, continuing to evolve the education and employment offer, focus on Children Looked After within the cohort and jointly with partners completing targeted work for those with weapon related offence.

- 1.3 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires each plan to have Council approval and endorsement. Historically this endorsement has been sighted and governed through the local Youth Justice Crime Board. However the Ministry of Justice has reverted to the Act and has requested that given the public nature of this document such plans are approved at Council.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

For the reasons set out in the report and its appendix, Cabinet, is asked:

- 2.1 To endorse the Youth Justice Plan 2024/25 (attached as Appendix A) and recommend to Full Council for approval.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To comply with legal expectations as defined in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and in accordance with conditions of the Youth Justice Grant.

4 BACKGROUND AND DETAILS

- 4.1 The Youth Justice Grant, a funding stream issued to each Local Authority to help with the delivery of Services requires the Youth Justice Plan to be submitted to Council as part of the grant conditions.
- 4.2 The Youth Justice Plan has 25 sub-sections – the template devised by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) to ensure all aspects of the Youth Justice Service’s functions are fully considered and critiqued. The Plan is aimed at the previous year marking achievements and challenges whilst looking forward and setting a plan for the forthcoming year.
- 4.3 The plan begins by noting the Youth Justice Service’s vision – to ensure all children known to the Service are provided with the best possible opportunities through the offer of holistic services to desist from future contact with the Criminal Justice System. This principle is in line with a Child First Approach which is core to Youth Justice delivery and included within Section 4 of the plan. Subsequently, section 4 of the plan details ‘voice participation’ and ensures the plan considers the voice of those who access the Service(s).

- 4.4** The plan provides local context (pages 4-10) detailing the overall Youth Population within the borough and the number of children who access the Service. Gender, ethnicity, religion, social care status, locality and education are all reported on providing local context of the children known and providing data on protective characteristics.
- 4.5** The plan sets out the Governance arrangements for the Youth Justice Service including frequency of these arrangements (Pages 13-15) and details additional scrutiny arrangements to ensure the Service is meeting with both national and local expectations and Key Performance Indicators.
- 4.6** Pages 15-22 of the Plan looks back at the previous year 2023/24 looking at the objectives set, and progress made. The objectives for 2023/24 included: addressing the ongoing issue of disproportionately and the creation of a Disproportionality Action Plan detailing the Service's commitment in all practice areas to challenge and influence over-representation, the Service's contribution to reducing Serious Youth Violence with Partners, evolving the Service's Health Offer for Children known to the Service, Diverting Children away from the System using Prevention Projects and Interventions, The services contribution to safeguarding frameworks – specifically contextual safeguarding and county-lines, reducing re-offending, reducing NEET numbers, widening the resettlement offer for those being released from custody and ensuring the Service is victim centric.
- 4.7** The plan continues to outline resources and performance for 2023/24 as measured by key performance indicators. Further sections look at over-representation in finer detail confirming that boys from Black and mixed backgrounds are more represented than other groups but also confirming that there is an over-representation of children known to social care within the cohort particularly children with a looked after status, inclusive of children placed in the borough by other Local Authorities. The plan provides descriptive information and data on a number of areas: Prevention offer, Diversion, Education, Restorative Approaches, Custody (including information related to detention in Police Custody) and constructive use of resettlement.
- 4.8** The plan looks at Standards for the Youth Justice System and provides data and comparative data with other local areas, in addition to providing an analysis of workforce development and how practice is underpinned by evidence-based practice.
- 4.9** The report finishes with a reflection on the learnings from 2023/24 and integrates this into a new plan for the year 2024/25. The plan details the identified challenges and risks posed to achieve all priorities and objectives and efforts to overcome these.
- 4.10** Croydon Youth Justice Service is due to be inspected during the year 2024/25. The Youth Justice Plan identifies the Service's strengths and priorities for the forthcoming year to ensure practice standards are being met in accordance with Inspectorate Guidance.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 There are no other practical options as the outlined approach is required as part of grant funding and legislation.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Youth Justice Plan has had the input of all primary partners as defined by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 – Police, Social Care, Health, Probation and Education. The plan has also had input from Youth Justice Practitioners, Children known to the Service, Voluntary Community Sector, Community Safety.
- 6.2 The Youth Justice Plan was presented to the Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee on 16th July 2024.

The Sub-Committee recommended that the Youth Justice Plan 2025/26 include hypothetical case studies, which included community and intervention work, to make the information in the report more accessible.

The Sub-Committee recommended that the Youth Justice Plan 2025/26 include some information on how high-risk young people have been tracked through to where they have ended up now, including information on higher education and employment, by collaborating with the Probation Service where necessary.

As recommendations relate to the 2025/26 Youth Justice Plan, the executive response to the scrutiny recommendations is scheduled to be formally considered at November Cabinet 2024.

7. CONTRIBUTION TO EXECUTIVE MAYOR’S BUSINESS PLAN

- 7.1 The Youth Justice Plan is aligned with other strategies including the Community Safety Strategy and supports the delivery of the Executive Mayors Business Plan priority ‘Children and young in Croydon have the change to thrive, learn and fulfil their potential’.

8. IMPLICATIONS

8.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

	Current Year	Medium Term Financial Strategy – 3-year forecast
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	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
Revenue Budget Available				
Expenditure	£2,171	£2,171	£2,171	£2,171
Income	(£1,021)	(£1,021)	(£1,021)	(£1,021)
Net budget	£1,150	£1,150	£1,150	£1,150

8.1.1 The Youth Justice Team is a statutory service funded by Revenue base budget and various statutory partners, including the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC).

8.1.2 There are no financial implications to the Youth Justice Plan 2024/25.

Comments provided by Sandra Smith – Independent Financial Adviser, on behalf of the Head of Strategic Finance (CYPE) (Date 22/10/2024)

8.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.2.1 Under S.40 of the Crime & 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 each year setting out how youth justice services are to be provided and funded in their area, and how the youth offending team will be composed and funded.

Comments approved by Doutimi Aseh, Head of Social Care & Education Law on behalf of the Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer. (Date 05/09/24)

8.3 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.3.1 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010, decision makers must evidence consideration of any potential impacts of proposals on groups who share the protected characteristics, before decisions are taken. This includes any decisions relating to how authorities act as employers; how they develop, evaluate and review policies; how they design, deliver and evaluate services, and also how they commission and procure services from others.

8.3.2 Section 149 of the Act requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

8.3.3 The Youth Justice Plan specifically highlights ongoing overrepresentation of specific groups – children from Black and mixed heritage backgrounds predominately males. The Youth Justice Plan contains an Appendix 4 titled ‘Disproportionately Action Plan’ which details the Service(s) commitment in all areas of practice to ensure challenge is made to other parts of the Criminal Justice System and delivery of Service is culturally and gender sensitive. This challenge supports our aim outlined in the George Floyd Race Matters Pledge to work towards becoming an anti-racist organisation by embedding this in our strategies, actions and behaviours and by making a difference to the lived experience of our communities.

9. APPENDICES

9.1 A - Youth Justice Plan 2024/25

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

10.1 None