

Report to the Schools, Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 13th December 2017

TITLE OF REPORT: Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2017/18

Purpose of the Report

To brief the Committee on the contents of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2017/18, taking into account the financial implications and the priority actions identified

Recommendation

That Members note the information contained in this report

The plan was approved by Cabinet on 24th October 2017

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Background

The Birmingham Youth Justice Strategic Plan reviews the performance of the Service and its partners in 2016/17 and outlines the priorities for the next 12 months.

Birmingham Youth Offending Service is the largest metropolitan Youth Offending Service in the country and is identified as the most complex by the Youth Justice Board, given its urban context. Overall, Birmingham is maintaining good performance against two of the three national youth justice indicators: reducing re-offending and reducing the use of the Secure Estate. The number of Birmingham young people who entered the youth justice system for the first time increased in 2016/17 following a reduction in 2015/16.

Nationally, whilst the overall number of young people coming to the attention of the youth justice system has fallen, the proportion of those with complex needs and high risk behaviours remains high.

The plan outlines the resource and funding arrangements for the Youth Offending Service, including those from its statutory partners, the Youth Justice Board and the Community Safety, Police and Crime Board. The City Council's contribution (£4.36m) is funded from the Early Help and Social Care approved budget. The plan identifies the agreed funding for 2017/18, the pressures within these budgets and how the service will manage these resources. The Head of Service continues to work with the senior management team and partners to implement a strategy to address the challenges to funding and to meet the savings the Service is required to make, which includes an ongoing review of the Youth Offending service operating model.

Cabinet approval was given in January 2017 to create a voluntary Birmingham Children's Trust. A shadow period (from April 2017 to March 2018) has been put in place to test the governance arrangements between the Council and the Trust prior to full transition in April 2018. The Youth Offending Service will be part of this arrangement and therefore its resources and BCC staffing will be TUPE'd into the Children's Trust

Key Issues

In the period April 2016 to March 2017, the Service worked with 1601 young people on court ordered and preventative programmes, 728 (45.47%) of these were existing clients. This compared with 1369 young people of whom 666 (48.65%) were existing clients in the same period the previous year. This represented an increase of 16.9% from 2015/16. In addition, the Service worked with approximately 3500 parents and siblings under its 'Think Family' responsibilities.

The majority of young people worked with during 2016/17 were male (1364, 85.20%). Females accounted for 237 clients (14.80%). 17 year olds were the most prevalent age in the Service's caseload. None of the above is significantly different from the previous year.

The number of first time entrant's rate rose between April 2016 and March 2017 to 604 young people, 512 per 100,000. This compared with 555 young people, 475 per 100,000 in 2015/16. This rise of 13.7% is indicative of performance that is worse than the national average and core city comparators. The most prevalent offence type was Violence against the Person followed by Theft and Handling Stolen Goods and drug related offences. 313 young people received Out of Court Disposals, 43 received fines and discharges, 238 received community sentences and 10 received a custodial sentence.

Birmingham continues to sustain its good performance in relation to re-offending by achieving one of the lowest frequency rates (1.12) of all core cities for the 12 month cohort July 2014 – June 2015 (latest Ministry of Justice figures) and is below the national average of 1.27. Within this cohort were 921 young people, the largest across the Core Cities, with 35.8% re-offending, which compared with 38% nationally.

Birmingham has a higher rate of custodial sentences than the national average, although within the range comparable with other core cities. The number of custodial sentences in Birmingham has fallen in the 2016/17 period to 96. This compares to 110 custodial sentences in 2015/16. The offence categories most likely to lead to custody were Robbery (32, 33.3%); Violence Against the Person (19, 19.8%); and Domestic Burglary (14, 14.6%), which together accounted for 67.7% of custodial sentences during the period.

The engagement of young offenders into positive education, training and employment is an integral protective factor to reduce re-offending and is a priority objective for the Service. The Service continues to use the support of dedicated ETE engagement mentors who are focused on raising young people's aspirations, building confidence and supporting them to engage in ETE. Overall, the Service continues to perform well against the national average and other Core Cities and work with schools and education providers continues to reap rewards with 90.4% of school age young people whose order closed during 2016/17, being in education by the end of their court order.

Children in care (CIC)

Children in care are an especially vulnerable group and their prevalence in the youth justice system is regularly monitored and reported on. The latest Local Authority returns identified that 45 (5.14%) of the 875 children aged 10 or older who had been looked after for more than 12 months had a conviction or were made subject to a final warning or reprimand during the period 1st April 2016 - 31st March 2017, a small increase from 40 (4.6%) in 2015/16. This compares with the national average of 4.95%.

Of the 45 young people 29 were male (64.4%) and 16 Female (35.5%). 19 (42.2%) were aged 17. The peak age for the number of offenders was 17 for males (37.7% of the total) and 16 for females (15.5%).

Young people with a history of being looked after were less likely to be in full time ETE at the end of their order (64.5%) than those who had never been looked after (76.9%). Of the 45 young people 25 (55.5%) had some form of statement for Special Educational needs. 19 young people (42.2%) were identified as having Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties, 6 (13.3%) Moderate Learning Difficulties and 1 (2.2%) Speech, Language and Communication Needs.

The YOS continues to work collaboratively with Birmingham SENAR to support the Priorities of the SEND Strategy. The YOS participated in the recent review of SEND Services, particularly around the SEMH cohort, which has informed the work of the Inclusion Commission.

Recent research by the YOS has evidenced a higher concentration of multiple complex needs for those that are disengaged with mainstream schools, and a correlation with higher levels of recidivism. In response to this, the Service continue to second their Senior Education Social Worker to lead on a SEMH Pathfinder project to offer sustained support to young people and families with multiple complex needs; through the release of specially trained school based staff.

During 2016/17 young people with a history of being looked after were more likely to be sentenced to custody, with custodial sentences comprising 17.9% (19 young people) of all CIC sentencing, compared to 7.55% of those who had never been looked after. The most prevalent offence types for Children in care was Violence Against the Person (40%, 18 young people) with Robbery, Theft and Handling and Breach of Statutory Order (5 young people respectively) as the second most prevalent. Despite the high proportion being sentenced to custody, young people with a history of being looked after only constituted 5.2% of First Time Entrants during the period.

Of the young people remanded to the secure estate during the period, 10 (17.8%) were looked after at the time of remand. These young people accounted for 23.6% (661) of the 3187 remand bed nights during the period.

Black or Black British young people

Black or Black British young people remain over-represented in the Criminal Justice System in relation to the general 10 - 17 population. The proportion of offenders from Black or Black British background increased slightly from 21.2% in 2015/16 to 21.8% in 2016/17.

The Youth Justice Plan identifies the barriers for these cohorts, highlights progress made, and identifies on-going actions to address performance across partner agencies including education and training providers.

Integrated Offender Management

The management of young offenders subject to court orders is a key responsibility of the Youth Offending Service. The Plan provides updated information on multi-agency arrangements including Integrated Offender Management. The YOS chairs a monthly pan-Birmingham Youth Shared Priority Forum (now referred to as ODOC "One Day, One Conversation"). This multi-agency panel ensures that there are robust risk management arrangements in place for those young people assessed as 'Persistent or Priority Offenders' and that concerns are addressed early for those young people in the 'Deter' cohort. Police Offender Managers and Youth Crime Officers play a critical role with the YOT officer in ensuring that robust arrangements are in place.

Vulnerabilities

Within the Youth Offending Service all young people are screened for issues of safety and well-being. Between 01 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, 1601 young people were assessed for safety and well-being compared with 1369 young people in the previous year. 370 (23.1%) young people were identified as at a greater than 'Low' risk, requiring an increased response to mitigate that risk compared with 34.5% in the previous year. Responses include referrals to Children's Safeguarding Services, Child and Adolescent Mental Health and substance misuse and alcohol treatment services.

Conclusions

Overall Birmingham is maintaining good performance against the national youth justice priorities: reducing re-offending, the use of custody and young people engaged in full time education, training and employment at the end of YOS engagement.

Following a consistent year on year decrease in first time entrants since 2013/14, the Service saw a rise to 604 young people in 2016/17 from 555 young people in 2015/16 although the final last quarter of that period there was a fall in FTE. Work with Police partners to understand the reasons for this increase is ongoing and the outcome of this will inform strategies to once again point this trajectory downwards.

The Youth Offending Service Management Board has set strategic priorities for the Youth Offending Service partnership for 2017/18 and these are outlined within the Plan. They include maintaining and improving performance against the Youth Justice outcomes especially for those cohorts identified with poorer outcomes, and prioritising the safeguarding of vulnerable children and young people. These priorities have also been informed by feedback from 370 self- assessment surveys completed during 2016/17 by young people, analysing and reviewing performance data and an understanding of 'what works' in achieving outcomes. The Plan is monitored by the YOS Management Board on a quarterly basis.

List of Appendices

Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2017/18