

Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Jeanette Richards, Interim Director of Children's Services
Date of Meeting:	22 April 2021

YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN – CHILDREN IN SECURE ACCOMMODATION

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the progress of the Blackpool Youth Justice Service Improvement Plan theme area of Children In Secure Accommodation.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 For the Scrutiny Committee to have oversight of progress made on the theme of Children In Secure Accommodation in order to provide scrutiny, challenge and support.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To fulfil the Committee's scrutiny role in seeking assurance.

- 3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

- 3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

- 4.1 No other alternative options to be considered.

5.0 Council priority:

- 5.1 The relevant Council priority is: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

6.0 Background information

- 6.1 The Youth Justice Board (YJB) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Prison and Probation undertook an unannounced inspection of Blackpool Youth Justice Service in October 2018.

- 6.2 The findings of the inspection resulted in Blackpool Youth Justice Service receiving an inadequate rating. Prior to the inspection it had been recognised that improvements were needed both in the strategic partnership and the operational teams and a comprehensive Improvement Plan was put in place. The outcome of the inspection reinforced the need for pace and focused resource to support

the change that was needed to improve the service and ensure that children are well supported across the partnership to achieve good outcomes.

- 6.3 The Improvement Plan focuses on five themes (in line with the Youth Justice Board's National Standards for Youth Justice) and each of the themes has a lead person from the partnership;
- Out of Court (Led by the Head of Criminal Justice, Lancashire Constabulary),
 - In Court (Led by Legal Team Manager, Blackpool Magistrates Court),
 - In the Community (Led by Independent Reviewing Officer, Blackpool Council),
 - In Secure (Led by Business Development Manager, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Children Safeguarding Assurance Partnership).
 - On Transitions and Resettlement (Led by Education Inclusion lead, Blackpool Council).

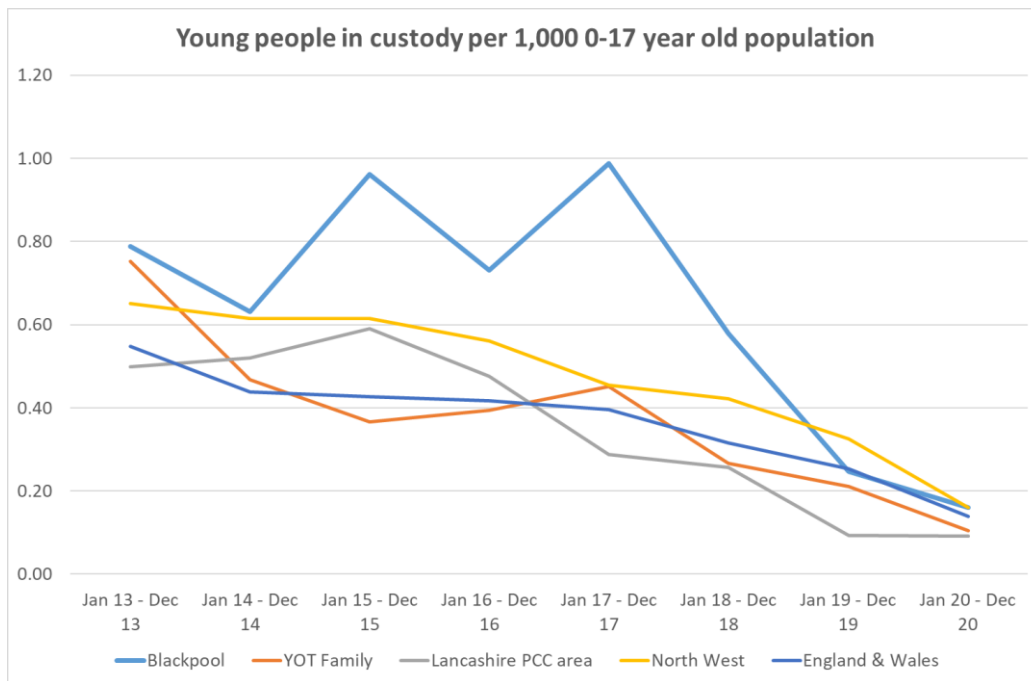
The Improvement Plan has been drawn up by the partnership and is monitored through the governance of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) Executive Board.

- 6.4 Early in 2020, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) requested that all YOTs completed a self-assessment based on the updated Standards for Children in Youth Justice Services (2019). Five self-assessments were completed, one of which focused on 'in secure' settings. To inform the self-assessment, the YOT Service Manager and Team Managers completed a number of audits which identified improvements to practice already made and further work to be undertaken by the Young Justice team. These key areas for development have fed into the 'In Secure' themed action plan and the working group meet on a regular basis to drive practice improvements. The progress against the action plan is shared and reviewed by the YOT Executive Board on a bi-monthly basis.

- 6.5 The self-assessment completed in early 2020 and subsequent audits have found that:
- Communication and information exchange between YOT and the secure establishments, is in line with the Youth Custody Service (YCS) requirements. Children's YOT assessments, pre-sentence reports and post court reports are being completed in a timely manner and shared with the YCS to ensure relevant child information is available to the secure estate to support admission.
 - Work is ongoing to ensure that children within the secure estate receive appropriate assessments within the establishment. Where these have been completed these need to be recorded on the YOT case management system and used to inform AssetPlus assessments and plans for resettlement. When relevant assessments are not completed by the secure estate the YOT will challenge this.
 - The YOT is working with secure units to ensure sentence planning meetings are held on a regular basis and are informed by the views of the child as well as professionals involved.
 - In terms of safeguarding children within the secure estate, regular communication between the YOT and establishment takes place, with formal sentence planning meetings involving the child, parent/carer, YOT and secure unit. Safeguarding concerns are shared by the secure estate with the YOT and safety planning put in place. There have been some concerns over recent months regarding children at one particulate Secure Training Centre, which Ofsted visited. However the service has been assured by the YCS that intervention is being provided to this unit to ensure service provision for our children is in line with national requirements.
 - Whilst custody numbers are low, further developments are required around resettlement, resettlement is an essential part of practice to ensure that when released the child can be re-integrated back into the community as smoothly as possible. Resettlement planning needs to involve partners from across a variety of services to ensure the child's needs can be met on release. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) has recently shared that it intends on

developing its inspection framework with an additional focus specifically on resettlement.

- 6.6 Since April 2019 custody panels have taken place in Blackpool to review all children who are placed within the secure estate on either a remand to youth detention accommodation or sentenced. These are chaired by the In Secure theme lead and attended by representatives from the YOT, Children's services and the National Probation Service. The panel assesses whether all available actions were undertaken to mitigate the risk of a custodial sentence or remand to youth detention accommodation and whether the custodial period has been managed in accordance with expected standards. These panels have now started to review the resettlement plans for children and will focus on their release period.
- 6.7 Blackpool's 'children first' approach means that the use of custody must be a last resort and the Youth Justice Team works proactively to divert children away from custody. The Youth Justice partnership has been working to reduce unnecessary court appearances by children aged under 18 years old. Preventing children from having to attend court is key to building successful lives and something all partners are committed to achieving. It is a priority for the YOT Executive Board to prevent children from entering the criminal justice system by early take up of Out of Court Disposals. The service has strengthened its Out of Court Disposal approach to include a swift turnaround, a multi-agency youth disposal panel that considers the full range of out of court disposals available for a child and a greater range of community interventions to be undertaken with the child.
- 6.8 The graph below shows that Blackpool's custody rate has decreased to a rate of 0.16.



- 6.9 The reduction in the use of custody is also due to an increase in confidence in the service by Blackpool courts therefore granting court bail/remand to care of the Local Authority rather than custody. The Council's Youth Justice court officers are better prepared in advance of a child's hearing, ensuring that assessments have been completed and discussions with the child, their parent/carer and solicitors have taken place to ensure an appropriate bail package can be put in place for the child.

6.10 The YJB planned to undertake moderation and validation visits to authorities where needed. In January 2021, Blackpool Youth Justice Service was notified that the YJB assessment team felt that Blackpool had given an honest National Standards assessment of Blackpool's improvement journey. The YJB acknowledged that Blackpool is now at the stage of implementing/adopting tools, systems and processes therefore no further action from the YJB is needed.

6.11 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 None.

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 The YOT partnership will fund the service in 2020/2021 through the budget outlined below:

AGENCY	STAFFING COSTS (£)	PAYMENTS IN KIND – REVENUE (£)	OTHER DELEGATED FUNDS (£)	TOTAL (£)
LOCAL AUTHORITY	129,051	-	-	129,051
POLICE SERVICE	43,674	-	41,941	85,615
NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE	40,000	-	5,000	45,000
CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP	39,974	-	15,444	55,418
POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER	-	-	-	-
YJB GOOD PRACTICE GRANT	327,141	-	4,499	331,640
OTHER	-	-	294, 535	294,535
TOTAL				941,259

There are no current budget pressures.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 There are no legal implications to consider.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 There are no issues of concern, appropriate governance arrangements are in place.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 In Blackpool young people from a White ethnic background accounted for 96% of all young people receiving a youth caution or court conviction. Those from a Black ethnic background accounted for 1%, those from an Asian ethnic background for 0% and those from a mixed ethnic background for 3% (data from Executive Board September 2020). 28.5% of the children open to the youth justice team in Q3 20/21 are Our Children. Work is underway to address this disproportionality.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 There are no sustainability, climate change or environmental factors to consider.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 The work in developing the In Secure setting theme relies on working closely with internal and external colleagues. There is a regular multi-agency meeting in place, where partners will be consulted and involved in service developments.
The service continues to strengthen its consultation and co-production approach with Blackpool's young people and victims to support improved service delivery.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None