

Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Sara McCartan, Head of Adolescent Service
Meeting	22 September 2022

YOUTH JUSTICE TEAM: UPDATE

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider an update regarding Blackpool's Youth Justice Service.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 For the Scrutiny Committee to have oversight of the service to provide scrutiny, challenge and support to aid service development and ensure positive outcomes for children are achieved.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To provide the Committee an overview of the work of the Youth Justice Service.

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

3.2 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

- "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience"

6.0 Background information

6.1 Over the past year the Blackpool's Youth Justice Service (YJS) has continued to develop as we uphold our endeavour for continuous improvement. Blackpool YJS remains committed and

motivated to working with some of the most complex children and young people in our community. The service provides children with interventions that support their needs and addresses their offending behaviour, maintaining a “child first” approach and always seeks to work in partnership with children, young people and their families. Blackpool’s YJS was inspected by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) in Summer 2021 and the service was rated ‘Good’ and in 3 aspects ‘Outstanding’. The Inspectorate worked jointly with partner inspectors from policing, health, social care and education to undertake this inspection. Three broad areas were examined: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court work (such as community sentences).

6.2 Six recommendations were made by HMIP following the inspection to further improve the service:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions to ensure they are meeting children’s needs and reducing re-offending.
- Provide thorough and effective initial assessment of children’s health and educational needs, including communication skills and dyslexia.
- Reduce the unacceptably high NEET (not in education, training or employment) rates for the over-16 caseload by getting more children into further education provision and vocational training, including access to services where children can gain the personal, life, and social skills they need to work towards employment.
- Ensure that, in all children’s records, there is a plan to keep other people safe and contingency planning if issues in the child’s life increase the likelihood of harmful behaviour.
- Where risk to the child’s safety or wellbeing is identified, put in place clear contingency planning for circumstances where the risk may increase.
- Where risk to other people is identified, put in place clear contingency planning for circumstances where the risk may increase.

6.3 Actions taken since the inspection include:

- The implementation of an audit cycle to regularly review practice and share learning. This quarter the audit theme was Education Training and Employment (ETE) and Health. The audits focused specifically on assessment, planning, the delivery of intervention and outcomes for children and young people. Findings included the education section of Assetplus is routinely assigned to and completed by the specialist ETE practitioner. Evidence of liaison with the child’s education provider and good engagement and practical support to child. Learning from audits are shared with the team and improvements implemented such as ensuring that the voice of the child is

routinely captured in contacts and interventions, not just assessments, ensuring that plans reflect ETE identified issues and closure reports focus on achievements rather than just deficits. Audit actions are monitored by our YJS Team Managers during reflective supervisions.

- Raising Blackpool's profile and sharing good practice on a National footprint. This has included attending a HMIP Development Day where we were asked to share with inspectors our Youth Justice journey to date and the impact of inspection. It has also included support to other Local Authorities regarding inspection preparation and a visit by Minister Victoria Atkins, Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab and the Chair of the Youth Justice Board (YJB) Keith Fraser.
- Further learning and development for practitioners including training on Adolescent Trauma via Research in Practice and in-house learning circles regarding contingency planning. Seeking good practice from other areas including Blackburn's multi-agency sexually harmful behaviour team to review their suite of effective interventions. Further development by our multidisciplinary YJS Executive Board and Shadow Boards including our Development day at the start of the year focusing on the 'Organisational delivery' element of the HMIP Inspection Framework with a specifically on the 'Partnerships and Services' as this is an area in which required improvement. Partners came together to problem solve key issues which include contextual safeguarding, the effectiveness of interventions, effective communication, holistic assessments and access to services to develop our young peoples' social and life skills. Output from the day has fed into the YJS Development Plan.
- The creation of a Employment and Skills Strategic Partnership Board to drive the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) priority within our 10 Year Education Strategy. The Board serves as a mechanism to coordinate key strategic partners and work streams, plus an opportunity for key partners to discuss latest data available and also hear from the lived experience of our Youth Advisers,
- A bespoke package of intervention to support Children who are not yet ready to engage with Education, Employment and Training (ETE) has been developed by the YJS ETE practitioner. The interventions aim to support personal, life and social skills in order to develop Children's self-esteem, confidence and motivation. The impact of the intervention is currently being monitored and will be enhanced by the recent commission of a speech and language therapist.

6.4 Performance Headlines:

- *Use of Custody:* Remands to custody and custodial sentences have continued to decrease and remain well below comparators. This is against a backdrop of a smaller cohort of children and young people, but a more concentrated population of complex

and vulnerable young people. The continued low number is positive and points to our improved partnership working with Police, Courts and other partners. However, what this does mean is that the YJS is working with an increasingly complex cohort of children and young people in the post Court arena. This requires a fundamental shift in how interventions are delivered with a focus on evidence based and trauma informed approaches to support desistance to enable children and young people to serve their sentence whilst remaining in the community.

- *Reducing First Time Entrants:* First time entrants are reducing in Blackpool however remain significantly higher when compared locally and nationally. In the autumn the Youth Justice Service expects to receive additional funding via the Home Office to deliver a new early intervention scheme over the next 3 years. The *Turnaround scheme* aims to connect children and young people to targeted, wraparound support at an earlier stage to prevent them going down a path of criminality. We believe that this reflects national recognition that youth justice services need to return to undertaking more preventative work and we welcome this approach.
- *Reducing Re-offending:* Blackpool YJS continue to reduce our numbers of re-offenders and remains in line with the local and national figures (based on current available data).
- *Increasing the proportion of young people in education, training and employment (ETE):* While this remains a key area of focus for the service, local performance is substantially better than the national, regional or similar area average for the proportion of young offenders in full time ETE at the end of their intervention; and the proportion in any ETE. This is true for both young people of school age and those who are older than 16 years of age.

6.5 The continuing actions to address the HMIP recommendations and advance the service further form part of our Youth Justice Plan. This plan outline Service development for the year ahead (Appendix 1). The youth justice system in England and Wales is overseen by the Youth Justice Board (YJB), a non-departmental public body operating at arms-length from ministers. Its primary function is to monitor the operation of the youth justice system and the provision of youth justice services. In August 2022 the YJB fed back that that overall Blackpool's Youth Justice Plan is a very good plan, and based on YJB criteria it has been rated 'outstanding'.

6.6 The Youth Justice Plan along with performance and resource data is monitored quarterly via the Blackpool's Youth Justice Executive Board providing a multidisciplinary strategic focus on the impact of service delivery on children's outcomes. The Blackpool Youth Justice Executive Management Board is committed to working effectively and collaboratively with all relevant partners and agencies to reduce the numbers of children and young people entering the criminal justice system and to reduce re-offending. The service continues to strive to

11.1 The young people supported by the Blackpool youth justice service in 21/22 were mainly White ethnic background (87%), 7% of young people were mixed heritage and the remainder were a very small number of Eastern European and Vietnamese young people (data from Executive Board May 2022).

11.2 A pan Lancashire protocol to reduce the number of our children has been disseminated via partners to practitioners in order to embed into practice the 'Reducing Criminalisation of our children and young people Strategy' within organisations.

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 service continues to strengthen our consultation and co-production approach with our young people and victims to support improved service delivery. Please see Appendix 2 of YJS plan 'Voice of the Child' for recent feedback from Children we serve.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None