

EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 1 st February 2024
Report Subject	Flintshire Youth Justice Service Peer Review
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Flintshire Youth Justice Service (YJS) is a multiagency statutory partnership established in April 2000, further to the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

The chief aim of the Flintshire YJS is to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people aged 10-17 years in Flintshire. The Youth Justice Service has a statutory obligation under Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to develop an annual Youth Justice Plan which outlines its priorities for the forthcoming year in addition to reporting on governance, resources accountability and performance.

As part of the service's commitment to continuous improvement, the Youth Justice Executive Management Board requested a Peer Review from the Youth Justice Sector Improvement Partnership (YJSIP) to review our current approach to leadership and governance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That members note the recommendations from the Peer Review.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	THE YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE
1.01	The Flintshire Youth Justice Service (YJS) is a multiagency statutory partnership established in April 2000, further to the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The chief aim of the Flintshire YJS is to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people aged 10-17 years in Flintshire.
1.02	Governance and strategic oversight of the Youth Justice Service is provided by a multi-agency Executive Management Board which is chaired currently by the Local Authority Chief Executive. Representation includes Chief Officers (Education and Youth, Housing and Communities, Social Services), Elected Members (Education and Youth, Social Services) Senior Managers (Social Services for Children, Integrated Youth Provision, Community Safety) Senior Managers from external partners (North Wales Police, National Probation Service, Action for Children, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Coleg Cambria) and representatives from HM Courts and Tribunal Service and Head Teachers Federation. The Board considers the strategic and operational elements of the Youth Justice Service, monitors key themes which impact on the multi-agency service e.g. funding, recruitment, workload and is also focused on improving practice and reviewing performance.
1.03	As part of our commitment to continuous improvement we requested a Peer Review from the Youth Justice Sector Improvement Partnership (YJSIP). The YJSIP is a partnership between the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and Association of YOT Managers (AYM) which trains Peer Reviewers from other Youth Justice Services across England and Wales to undertake this work.
1.04	<p>The Flintshire YJS Executive Management Board scoped out the Peer Review and the following key lines of enquiry (KLOE's) were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strength of strategic board representation – are the right people at the table? • The extent to which partners are able to respond to the evolving youth justice strategic landscape and key performance indicator (KPI) developments. • The effectiveness with which board members advocate youth justice within their own services and with partners. <p>Additional 'golden threads' are also included as standard as part of any Peer Review and include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice of the Child. • Anti-Discriminatory Practice, Diversity & Disproportionality
1.05	The Peer Review took place between 16 th – 19 th October and involved the peer review team interviewing Board Members, partner agencies, including

	practitioners and managers and several direct observations of YJS activities.
1.06	<p>The findings identified a number of key strengths within the service (refer to appendix 1 for a copy of the final report). At a strategic level, services and agencies were appropriately represented at the Management Board and were supported to undertake their role. They had a good understanding of the Youth Justice landscape. Another positive feature was that YJS practitioners are also included in strategic discussions and kept up to date on the work of the Board. It was noted that having the Chief Executive of the Council as Board Chair was a significant strength which provided appropriate ownership and leadership of Youth Justice issues. The Peer Review Team identified that there was good advocacy of YJS issues including linked to recruitment and retention.</p> <p>However, the Peer Review Team have suggested that the Board review the levels of seniority of other Board members to ensure that partners provide better connection to other regional and national forums, in addition to promoting advocacy within their own services to advance issues within youth justice.</p>
1.07	<p>The information produced and submitted by the YJS to the Board was identified as detailed and of good quality and that the YJS is making progress on its priorities and plans.</p> <p>However, it was assessed that external partners need to take additional ownership of strategic issues and become more involved in agenda, priority setting and performance monitoring.</p>
1.08	<p>We were particularly encouraged that the Peer Review Team identified that our commitment to Child First and Trauma Informed approaches was evidenced across the workforce and wider partnership, which was also supported in a number of observations undertaken by the Peer Review team. The team also identified that there was a collective ownership of our cohort by the partnership and a desire for positive outcomes. Board Members also had a good understanding of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) linked to Youth Justice, but it was identified but that the partnership should review collective responsibilities in how these are delivered and achieved and consider resource implications. Of particular note was how the Board and Service would prioritise work around supporting victims.</p>
1.09	<p>Progress against our annual Youth Justice Plan is currently overseen by our Delivery Group which reports into our Management Board. However, it was identified by the Peer Review Team that there was an over-reliance on the YJS and local authority to drive actions. Improvements were suggested by the Peer Review Team to strengthen how the Delivery Group approaches aspects of our plan.</p>
1.10	<p>The Peer Review Team have also suggested that the Management Board specifically consider a few thematic areas linked to youth justice provision including, health needs – specifically speech language and communication resource, implementation of Outcome 22 and remand reduction.</p>

1.11	The Peer Review Team observed “exceptional” child focus, trauma awareness and professional curiosity about child/parents’ lived experience when they observed one of the scrutiny panels. Case studies are brought to the Board, and these are valued by members. Case studies also help the Board with the development of Youth Justice priorities and meeting agendas to ensure a continuous focus on improving outcomes for justice-involved children. Practitioners were also commended for their creative ways of engaging with children and young people. The YJS was noted for its proactive approach in reviewing disproportionality within the justice system and creating opportunities to gain an understanding of disproportionate groups.
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The Peer Review Team have made a number of recommendations linked to their findings. All Management Board Members have received a copy of the report and the Board has a series of sessions planned to develop actions to the recommendations.
2.02	The Board is currently reviewing partnership representation and seeking to review our forward work plan to prioritise key strategic and operational areas. Work is also underway to ensure that Board Members are tasked to lead on specific thematic areas within our Youth Justice Plan and increase advocacy and promotion of these priorities within their services.
2.03	<p>The YJS has made progress with North Wales Police to agree the use and implementation of Outcome 22 where an Out of Court Disposal can be applied which allows no further action to be recorded against a lower-level offence where the child or young person has voluntarily engaged in intervention with the YJS.</p> <p>The YJS Delivery Group has been re-tasked and re-focused to consider a number of critical thematic areas linked to reducing the use of remand, responses to children looked after and decriminalisation opportunities and management of complex cases.</p> <p>In light of a recent report commissioned by the Senedd linked to Speech and Language within YJS (see Accessible Documents), which recommends the Welsh Government should work with local authorities to develop plans for embedding speech and language therapists within every Youth Offending Team in Wales, discussions continue to take place between Speech and Language Services, Youth Justice Services, Youth Justice Board and Welsh Government.</p>
2.04	We have given additional prominence to the voice of victims and are exploring opportunities to expand resourcing in this area which will help us develop mechanisms to promote diversion via the use of restorative justice and ensure that we provide support to victims. However, it should be noted that analysis of recent feedback from victims is positive towards this area of the service. We have committed to undertaking further engagement with victims in 2024-25 to develop a longer-term victims and restorative justice strategy.

2.05	Given the current financial climate within the Local Authority and partnership, aspects to enhance or develop services may be curtailed. We continue to explore and maximise the use of additional grants and funding streams.
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3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	YJS Board Members have been appraised of the Peer Review Report and are actively engaged in helping the service to implement the recommendations. The YJS Team have also been informed of the findings and have been commended for their support and contribution.
3.02	All Youth Justice Services are inspected by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). The Service was last inspected in 2016 and will be due a further inspection prior to October 2024. The Inspectorate will review the following areas: Leadership and Governance, Court Disposals, Out of Court Disposals and Resettlement.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Ongoing risks linked to partnership financial and 'in-kind' contributions due to budget pressures which can impact on service development, resources and innovation linked to Key Performance Indicators

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - YJSIP (2023) Flintshire Youth Justice Service Peer Review – Final Report.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Senedd (2023) 60% - Giving them a voice Speech, language and communication needs in the youth justice system https://senedd.wales/media/excbag12/cr-ld15786-e.pdf</p> <p>Key Performance Indicators for Youth Justice (2023) https://www.gov.uk/guidance/key-performance-indicators-for-youth-justice-services</p> <p>Contact Officer: James Warr, Senior Manager, Flintshire Youth Justice Service & Flintshire Sorted Telephone: 01352 701125 E-mail: james.warr@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>ACE's- Adverse Childhood Experiences are traumatic events that affect children while growing up, such as suffering child maltreatment or living in a household affected by domestic violence, substance misuse or mental illness.</p> <p>AYM – Association of YOT Managers, a body that represents Youth Justice Managers in England.</p> <p>Bureau - Framework for diverting young people out of formal Youth Justice processes by tackling underlying causes of youth crime through mechanisms that promote pro-social behaviours, children’s rights, youth and parent/carer participation and delivered by universal services.</p> <p>FTE - First time entrants to the service.</p> <p>HMIP- His Majesty’s Inspectorate Probation.</p> <p>KPI – Key Performance Indicators – Statutory indicators required by the Youth Justice Board.</p> <p>Outcome 22 – Police Out of Court disposal which allows a no further action to be recorded against a lower level offence where the child or young person has voluntarily engaged in intervention with the YJS.</p> <p>YJSIP – Youth Justice Sector Improvement Partnership – Sector Professional Body in collaboration with Youth Justice Board and Association of YOT Managers.</p>