

	Council 18 September 2023
	Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People
	Lead Cabinet Member – Schools. Children & Young People (Councillor Grahl)
Brent Youth Justice Plan 2023-24	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	One Appendix 1: Brent Youth Justice Plan 2023/24
Background Papers:	Youth justice plans: guidance for youth justice services updated 17 March 2023: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-justice-plans-guidance-for-youth-justice-services/youth-justice-plans-guidance-for-youth-justice-services
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to submit, to the Youth Justice Board (YJB), an annual youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services. Updated guidance to youth justice services, published in March 2023, confirmed that plans must be signed off by the full council in accordance with Regulation 4 of the 'Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000'.
- 1.2 This report explains the rationale for creating the Brent Youth Justice Plan 2023/24 which includes an overview of local youth justice progress and priorities and arrangements for monitoring performance. In line with agreed

regulations the plan was submitted to the YJB in July 2023, with the approval of the Board Chair, with confirmation of full sign off to be submitted at a later date. The 'sign off' by the Chair indicates that the wider management board have approved the submitted plan and all sections outlined in the Youth Justice Plan Structure have been covered.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 Subject to any comments submitted following consideration by Cabinet on 11 September 2023 Council is asked to approve formal sign off and adoption of the Brent Youth Justice Plan 2023/24 (see Appendix: Brent Youth Justice Plan 2023/24).

3.0 Detail

3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword

3.1.1 I am pleased to share the Youth Justice Plan 2023/24 and celebrate the commitment and achievements of our Youth Justice Service (YJS) within CYP and the wider partnership to support children and young people who are risk of or have entered the youth justice system. Performance remains strong overall, particularly in respect of the reduction in young people entering the criminal justice system for the first time and very low numbers of young people in custody. This is due to the strong focus on prevention and engagement with children and young people so that their views are heard and interventions personalised to their needs and environment to get the best out of them. The Covid-19 pandemic has increased risks in some areas such as serious youth violence, drug related offences, and children and young people involved in criminal exploitation/gang activity. Work on reducing the disproportionate number of young people in the criminal justice system from Black backgrounds continues with rigour and pace.

3.1.2 I am heartened by the feedback of the voice of the young people through surveys and individual engagement and wish to highlight these areas:

- Most children and young people (96%) surveyed felt that the YJS had supported them to prevent further offending / re-offending, which is an increase of 7% from the last survey of 89%.
- 100% of parents / carers stated that they felt that they were listened to by their child's case manager and could speak to them about any issues and concerns.
- There were high scores over the previous both years: 95% in 2021, 98% in 2020, regarding contact between children and young people and case managers. This means that at the agreed date and time set for their appointments children and practitioners did what they said that they would do.

3.1.3 A YJS Youth Panel was formed, supported by a YJS Participation Officer, where young people communicated their views to members of the YJS

Management Board via a range of multi-media platforms including podcasts and short films.

3.1.4 I would like to thank all the staff working for our Youth Justice Service for their hard work, diligence and innovation supporting young people, in what has been a challenging time for all.

3.2 Background

3.2.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to submit an annual youth justice plan under Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. These plans set out how youth justice services are funded, operate, and function. They provide an opportunity to review performance and developments over a single year period and plan for the next year. This allows services to be able to respond to any changes that have taken place in the previous year, including new legislation, demographic changes, delivery of key performance indicators and developments in service delivery.

3.2.2 Content in the Brent Youth Justice Plan 2023/24 is presented in line with Youth Justice Board (YJB) guidance. This information is analysed by the YJB to ensure compliance with statutory and financial requirements. Youth Justice Plans also serve to identify good practice capable of being replicated regionally and nationally.

3.2.3 This year's plan contains statistical information about children in Brent, with a specific focus on those children within, or at risk of entering, the youth justice system. It also outlines progress and forward planning in relation to key priorities. These include:

- Promoting evidence-based child-focused approaches as the best means of reducing impact on victims, promoting public protection, keeping communities safe and supporting children towards positive outcomes.
- Continuing to build a YJS partnership culture that encourages diversity in its workforce and in its thinking; is inclusive and supportive, encourages personal responsibility and is delivery focused.
- Embedding ten new additional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) introduced by the YJB.
- Supporting the Police and Violence Reduction Unit in their oversight of the new Serious Violence Duty to establish a strategic needs assessment that identifies the drivers of serious violence and those people most at risk or most affected by serious violence.
- Ensuring that the Brent Youth Justice Service (YJS) is prepared for the next round of HMIP Inspections scheduled to commence in 2024.
- Refreshing the Brent YJS Disproportionality Action Plan.
- Overseeing and managing the Turnaround project introduced in 2022.

3.2.4 The CYP Director of Integration and Improved Outcomes chairs the YJS Management Board. The Board meets quarterly and has representation across the partnership at senior levels.

- 3.2.5 The YJS Management Board provides strategic direction and support for the YJS. This includes monitoring progress to ensure the effective delivery of effective youth justice services that aim to reduce re-offending and safeguard children and young people.
- 3.2.6 The Brent Youth Justice Service is a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency service that works with children and young people aged 10-17 years and their families. Brent YJS provides support in relation to out of court disposals, court work, bail and remand, the assessment of children and young people who offend, the provision of court reports, the planning and delivery of community interventions, and custody and resettlement. The YJS sits within the Children and Young People's Department and is managed by the Head of Early Help.
- 3.2.7 A summary of the achievements and ambitions detailed within the Brent Youth Justice Plan 2023/24 is provided by the Management Board Chair (Appendix, page 2, *Vision: View from the Chair of the YJS Management Board – 'Our continuous drive to be the best we can be'*)
- 3.2.8 Specific areas of strong performance during 2022/23 were noted as follows:

- **Reoffending**

The rate of reoffending is currently 15% for the eligible cohort (January – March 2021). This compares favourably to the previous period (January – March 2020) when it was 39.6%.

- **Custody**

Two young people are currently serving custodial sentences. This is an historical low which is linked to work on disproportionality, the implementation of a constructive resettlement approach, and multi-agency 'At Risk of Custody' meetings.

- **First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System**

Whilst this has increased slightly, numbers are low overall and reflect the good interventions offered by the Out of Court Disposal team.

- **Out Of Court Disposal Scheme**

Procedures and processes have been strengthened to highlight the voice of the victim, enhance a restorative justice focus and develop a more holistic and inclusive service.

- **Disproportionality**

A Disproportionality Action Plan is central to the work undertaken and is regularly monitored at the YJS Management Board.

- **Violence and Gangs**

The Brent YJS is committed to safeguarding young people affected by gangs and violence by understanding their challenges through a trauma informed lens. Safety mapping is undertaken to better understand the nature of exploitation some children and young people are subject to, and preventative support is offered by a commissioned voluntary sector

provider (St. Giles Trust).

- **Restorative Justice**
A clear focus on supporting victims through direct and indirect mediation, underpinned by an effective Restorative Justice Policy.
- **Participation**
The voices of children and their families are used to develop and shape service provision. Funding from MOPAC has enabled the service to participate with increasing creativity. This includes the use of short films and podcasts.
- **Partnership and joint working**
The growing proportion of high-risk children and young people on caseloads has resulted in a growing reliance on good partnership work and close collaboration with wider Council and other local services.

3.2.9 Areas of focus for 2023/24 are set out within the plan and are described in paragraph 3.2.3 above.

3.2.10 Approving the Brent Youth Justice Plan will enable the Council to fully comply with new guidance and will ensure that there is no delay or uncertainty in receiving the annual funding from the YJB.

4.0 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities and Strategic Context

4.1 The Youth Justice Plan 2023/24 is closely aligned to three priorities within the Borough Plan 2023-27:

4.1.1 Thriving Communities

Brent Youth Justice Service is working closely with community partners to make Brent safer. This includes delivering preventative work in partnership with the local voluntary sector and establishing positive recreational activities for young people within the youth justice system at Family Wellbeing Centres.

4.1.2 The Best Start in Life

Young people within the Brent Youth Justice system are seen and heard. A trauma informed approach to supporting children is embedded within the Youth Justice Service. In 2022 the Youth Justice service revised its methodology for youth participation. MOPAC funding was obtained to develop more interactive and creative approaches to including children in decision making and planning. Supported by a YJS Participation Officer, children aim to communicate with members of the YJS Management Board via a range of multi-media platforms including podcasts and short films.

4.1.3 A Healthier Brent

Young people known to criminal justice services often have poor access to mental health provision. A National Health Service funded Youth Liaison and Diversion Officer, based within the Youth Justice Service offers mental health screening to children who attend police custody. A newly appointed CAMHS Mental Health Practitioner offers a range of support to children known to the Youth Justice Service and refers those with more complex needs for specialist CAMHS support. Children with substance misuse needs are supported by the Westminster Drug Project and EACH Counselling Services.

5.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

5.1 Members of the Youth Justice Service Management Board were involved in the drafting of the Youth Justice Plan 2023/24. During the Board's meeting on the 20 July 2023, a final draft was agreed by the Board ready for submission to Full Council.

6.0 Financial Considerations

6.1 The YJB Partnership budget for 2023/24 is a total of £1.729m of which the Council contributes £0.723m from the general fund, the YJB provides a grant of £0.571m, Brent schools contribute £0.114m via the Dedicated Schools Grant and MOPAC and the National Probation service contribute £50k. There are also some contributions which are in-kind from other partners such as the Police, Health and National Probation service which amounts to £0.27m.

6.2 In 2023/24 the YJB introduced a new funding condition, requiring Youth Justice Plans to receive Full Council sign off. Prior to this Youth Justice Plans only required sign off by a Youth Justice Service Management Board.

7.0 Legal Considerations

7.1 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduced a requirement that all local authorities must establish a Youth Offending Team (YOT) comprising members from the police, social services, probation, health and education. Most local authorities, including Brent, have renamed YOT provision as Youth Justice Services.

7.2 The Act also created the Youth Justice Board to oversee and monitor youth justice services in England and Wales. One of the YJB's key functions is to provide local authorities with funding to enable YOTs to deliver statutory services.

7.3 Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a statutory duty on local authorities to submit an annual youth justice plan.

8.0 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

8.1 The Youth Justice Plan 2023/24 monitors inequalities within the Brent Youth Justice System. It outlines work undertaken to reduce the overrepresentation of children from black heritage groups.

9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 9.1 The Brent Youth Justice Plan details efforts to encourage young people within the youth justice system to share their views and opinions on issues of most relevance to them.
- 9.2 Youth participation and coproduction is an evolving initiative within the Youth Justice Service. This work is aligned to the Brent Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-2030, aimed to equip children and young people with the skills and opportunities needed to take action to protect the environment and tackle climate change.

10.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

None applicable

11.0 Communication Considerations

- 11.1 The Brent Youth Justice Plan will be shared with all services and organisations represented on the Youth Justice Service Management Board.

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director; Children and Young People