

**County Council**

**25 September 2024**

**County Durham Youth Justice Service,  
Youth Justice Plan 2024 - 2025**



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## **Report of Corporate Management Team**

**John Pearce, Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services**

**Councillor Ted Henderson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children & Young People's Services**

### **Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 This report presents the Youth Justice Plan 2024/25 and highlights some achievements and issues during 2023/24, along with areas for improvement which the service will focus on during the next year.

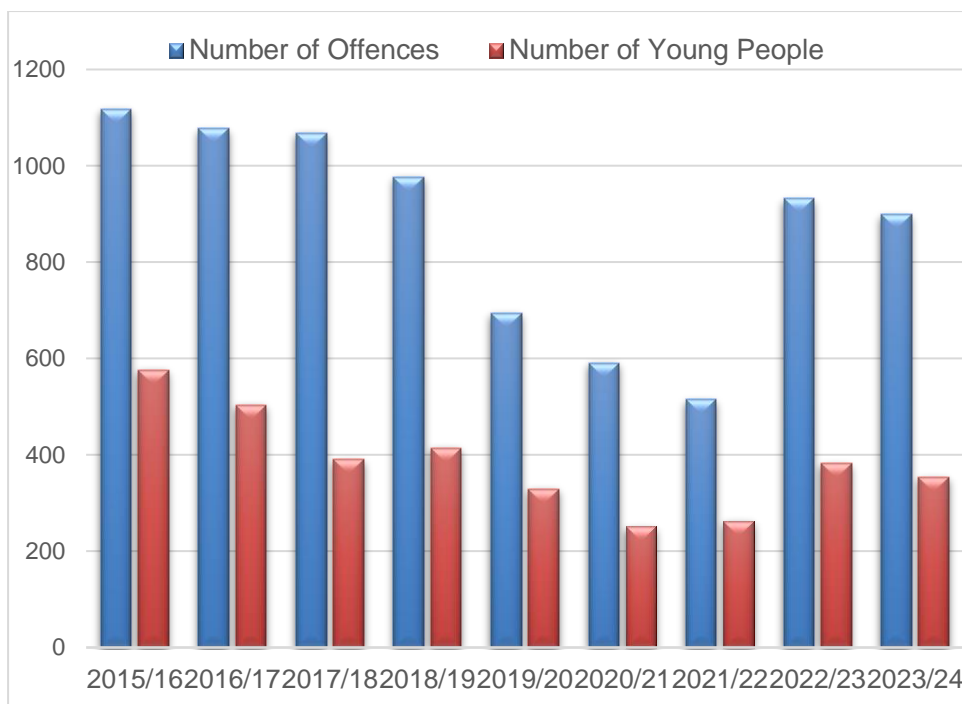
### **Executive summary**

- 2 Production of a Youth Justice Plan is a statutory requirement of the local authority under the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 and is one of the requirements of the Youth Justice Board (YJB) grant we receive. The plan was required to be submitted to the YJB by 30 June 2024 and is currently undergoing an approval process (with feedback) before finally being distributed to relevant bodies. The YJB has provided detailed guidance on the headings within the plan and the areas to be covered within each heading.
- 3 The service is currently developing plans to combat the increase in First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice (YJ) system and the increase in custodial sentences compared to the previous year and these actions will be added to the overall Service Improvement Plan for 2024-2025.

## Performance 2023/24

### 4 Performance against National Outcome Measures 2023/24:

- (a) **First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System (FTEs)**  
Between April 2023 and March 2024, the rate of FTEs per 100,000 10-17 years population in County Durham was **261** (119 young people). This is a 39.8% increase on the previous year and the rate is higher than both the 'Family Group' (201) and Northeast (178) averages.
- (b) **Re-offending**  
Ministry of Justice (MoJ) data (July 2021 – June 2022) shows a re-offending rate of **43.8%** which is a 7.2% increase on the previous year. However, it still represents a reduction on the 2017/18 levels (51.9%). This rate is higher than the North-East average rate of 35.2% and the 'Family Group' average rate of 35%.
- (c) **Use of Custody**  
The number of custodial sentences has increased significantly this year (280%), compared to previous year, with a rate **0.4** per 1,000 10-17 year olds (18 young people; 19 sentences) during April 2023 – March 2024. This is higher than the North East average rate of 0.16 and the 'Family Group' average rate of 0.13. On each occasion a young person is sentenced to custody, the work of CDYJS is reviewed to ensure all appropriate work was undertaken.
- (d) **Remand Bed Nights: 464**  
As would be expected, given the increase in custodial sentences, this is an increase on the previous year (293 nights) and relates to 10 young people and 11 periods of remand.
- (e) **Total Offending/Offences**  
During 2023-2024, despite the outcomes detailed above, there has been a slight decrease in both the total number of young people offending and the total number of offences committed when compared to the previous year. The table below provides more detail:



- (f) **Work with Victims, including Young Victims**  
 Our work with victims of youth crime in 2023/24 has engaged a further 157 victims (both adults and young people) in restorative approaches. Our work with young people who are the victims of youth crime has provided dedicated support and an opportunity to re-build and restore confidence. The support group for young victims of all crime ('With Youth in Mind') has continued to develop and is now working with an average of around 35 young people at any one time throughout the year. Young people who offend have also engaged in 2,125 hours of unpaid work in and across communities in County Durham as a means of reparation.
- (g) **Targeting those young people committing the most offences**  
 The service has continued to prioritise our work with young people who are persistently offending. The Service operates an enhanced, intensive, case management model for this cohort of young people. Each case is reviewed monthly by a panel chaired by the Youth Justice Service Manager. Monitoring of this work has continued to show that whilst significant reductions in offending are sometimes difficult to achieve, it is possible to have a meaningful impact in reducing both the frequency and seriousness of offending.

## Recommendation(s)

- 5 Council is requested to:
- (a) note the contents of this report;

(b) receive the Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025;

## **Background**

- 6 Youth Offending Teams (referred to, in County Durham as 'Youth Justice Service') are statutory partnerships, established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, with the principal aim of preventing offending by children and young people. Local Authorities are responsible for establishing a Youth Offending Team. Police, Probation Service (PS) and Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) are statutorily required to assist in their funding and operation.
- 7 Local authorities continue to have a statutory duty to submit an annual youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services. Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth offending partnership's responsibilities in producing this plan. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, after consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out:
  - (a) How youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded;
  - (b) How the YJS will be composed and funded, how it will operate, and what functions it will carry out.
- 8 This current plan covers performance for the period 2023/24 and provides service budgets, operational and strategic developments within the service and partnership, service structure and the Service Improvement Plan for 2024 – 2025.
- 9 In accordance with statutory requirements, the plan was approved by CDYJS Management Board.
- 10 The Youth Justice Plan must be submitted to the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) and published in accordance with the directions of the Secretary of State. The deadline for submission this year was 30 June 2024. After submission to the YJB, Youth Justice Plans are sent to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP - lead for YJS inspections) and are placed in the House of Commons library.

## **Youth Justice Plan 2024 - 2025**

- 11 A copy of the updated Youth Justice Plan is attached as Appendix 2.
- 12 The Plan outlines how CDYJS will:
  - (a) Reduce First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System;
  - (b) Reduce re-offending by young people;

- (c) Reduce the use of custody for both sentenced and remanded young people.
- 13 In order to do this we will:
- (a) Review and develop new out-of-court processes, including Early Help services.
  - (b) In conjunction with partners, develop specific improvement plans in respect of 'First time Entrants to the YJ system' and 'Use of Custody'.
  - (c) Ensure service is well-placed to meet the challenges of serious violence, both in respect of working with children and in respect of staff safety.
  - (d) Review/audit service against new Inspection Framework (when available) and prepare service for inspection and embed the Quality Assurance Framework developed for the Service.
  - (e) Improve operational processes with Courts and Court representation on the Management Board.
  - (f) Implement a 'Child First' ethos and practice throughout CDYJS.
  - (g) Review and enhance health provision within CDYJS following on from HNA of young people who offend.
  - (h) Identify support needs for the service and ensure needs are met through partnerships with other DCC services.
  - (i) Audit our work in respect of transitions to Probation Service to provide assurance on practice.
- 14 During 2023, HMI Probation undertook a review of their inspection framework and developed a new framework more in-line with 'Child First' principles. At present the intention is for the new inspection process to commence in early 2025. During 2024, the service will undertake a self-assessment against the (currently draft) framework and develop improvement plans based on that audit of practice.

### **Background papers**

- Youth Justice Plan 2024 – 2025 (Appendix 2).

**Author(s)**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Youth Justice Plan ensures Durham County Council and statutory partners meet their legal implications to the partnership. Statutory requirements placed on the YOS and the Management Board include: Complying with the statutory requirements laid out in s.38 to 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and other relevant sections of the Act; Complying with National Standards (NS) for Youth Justice (including returning the annual National Standards audit); Submitting required data to the YJB in adherence with the relevant YJB data recording guidance; Approving the annual Youth Justice Plan.

### **Finance**

The Youth Justice Plan contains CDYJS partnership pooled budget and staff secondment/deployment arrangements for 2024/25. CDYJS budget comprises partnership funding, YJB funding and specific grant funding. The budget allocation is reviewed annually by CDYJS Management Board and all partners (Police, Probation, Health (ICB) and Local Authority) agree funding contributions for the following year. Under the terms of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998; DCC, Durham Constabulary, Probation Service and ICB are required to both contribute staff and provide funding for a pooled budget for operating costs. The total budget for CDYJS for 2024/25 is £3,630,802. The total budget for CDYJS includes the cost of staff seconded to CDYJS from partners.

### **Consultation**

CDYJS Management Board, partners, staff, young people, parents/carers have been consulted in updating the Youth Justice Plan. The portfolio holder for CYPS is being briefed on it and the related inspection requirements for this service area.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

CDYJS is committed to meeting the needs of the young people, families and victims with whom we work. All staff have undertaken specialist diversity training for youth offending, speech language and communication needs training and, in addition, case managers have undertaken specialist diversity training for assessments. Diversity issues are a specific category on the checklist used by managers to countersign assessments and intervention



plans. Over representation of any groups within the youth justice system is specifically covered in the plan.

## **Human Rights**

Not Applicable.

## **Crime and Disorder**

The statutory function of CDYJS partnership is the prevention of offending by children and young people (Crime and Disorder Act 1998). The Youth Justice Plan provides detail on how the partnership will undertake those functions.

## **Staffing**

Staff establishment is included in the plan, in line with YJB requirements.

## **Accommodation**

All managers and staff in CDYJS have their main base in DCC, Crook.

## **Risk**

Risks to future delivery have been considered by CDYJS Management Board and are included in the plan.

## **Procurement**

Not applicable.

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## **Appendix 2: Youth Justice Plan 2024 – 2025**

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Attached separately.