

**Safer & Stronger Communities
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

13 December 2024



**County Durham Youth Justice Service –
Overview, Performance, Service
Developments and Improvement Plan
2024/25**

**Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director, Children & 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 an overview of County Durham Youth Justice Service, including the latest Service/Partnership performance. It highlights key achievements during the previous year, along with areas for improvement and development which the service will be focussed upon during the next year.

Executive Summary

- 2 Youth Offending Services (referred to as Youth Justice Service in Durham) 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'. The Local Authority, Police, Probation Service (PS) and Integrated Care Boards (ICB) are statutorily required to assist in their funding and operation (through the secondment of staff). In Durham, additional, non-statutory, funding/support is provided by the Police & Crime Commissioner and Public Health.

- 3 The Youth Justice Service supervises those young people, and their families, whom the police have decided to deal with 'formally', either by means of an out-of-court disposal or by charging the young person to court. In addition, the service works with all victims of youth crime and young victims of all crime. During 2024-25 the service expanded the types of referrals received and has appointed seven staff to work exclusively with young people referred to the service for Anti-Social Behaviour and with the victims of this behaviour.
- 4 The role of the Youth Justice Service is to:
 - (a) Assess the suitability of, and provide relevant interventions for, young people receiving an 'Out-of-Court Disposal' (Pre-Caution Disposal, Youth Caution & Conditional Caution)
 - (b) Case-manage young people remanded on bail and in custody whilst awaiting court hearings
 - (c) Advise the court on sentencing
 - (d) Assess all young people sentenced by the court, manage the sentence and provide relevant interventions to prevent offending.
 - (e) Provide support to the families of young people who offend
 - (f) Support all victims (young and adult) of youth crime and support young victims of all crime.
- 5 Key points about our current performance show that there were increases in the rate of reoffending by young people dealt with formally within the criminal justice system (those who reoffend within 12 months of their last caution/sentence); increases in custodial sentences and increases in the rate of young people entering the criminal justice system for the first time (FTEs). Whilst these increases are common across all areas of the country, they have been more pronounced in Durham.
- 6 As well as the performance covered above, during 2023/24 key achievements were:
 - (a) Working with 157 victims in restorative approaches
 - (b) Young people who offend undertaking 2,125 hours of unpaid work in communities
 - (c) Supporting 58 young victims of crime
 - (d) Supporting 43 parents/carers of young people who offend

- (e) Working with over 70 community volunteers to provide support and mentoring for young people and families.
- 7 Service improvement priorities for 2024/2025 are:
- (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.
- 8 The Service Improvement Plan has been developed in conjunction with colleagues from the Youth Justice Board as well the Service Management Board. Governance of the improvement plan is through the Management Board and progress is also monitored by the Youth Justice Board.
- 9 Going forward, a key risk for the service is uncertainty in respect of national funding streams/intentions. Currently, the service receives Ministry of Justice funding from the Immediate Justice Fund, Turnaround Fund, Serious Violence Prevention Fund, Remand Grant and Youth Justice Grant. All these funds/grants are currently due to expire on 31 March 2025.

Recommendation(s)

- 10 The Safer & Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to:
 - (i) Note and comment on the contents of this report and the work of the service

Background

- 11 County Durham Youth Justice Service (CDYJS), a statutory multi-agency partnership, is part of Children and Young People's Services, Durham County Council, and is managed by them on behalf of the partnership. Active links are maintained at both strategic and operational level to Criminal Justice, Community Safety and Children, Young People and Families arenas.
- 12 CDYJS is accountable to a multi-agency Management Board, chaired by the Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children, Durham County Council. The membership and terms of reference of the Management Board are reviewed annually. Membership is at appropriate Senior Officer level.
- 13 CDYJS is line-managed, on behalf of the partnership, by Durham County Council. The Service is part of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children Service (EHIVCS).
- 14 48 staff are employed by Durham County Council on behalf of the partnership and 12 full time equivalent staff are seconded/deployed from partners (Durham Constabulary, National Probation Service, North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT), Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT), Tees Esk and Wear Valleys Mental Health Trust (TEWV) and Humankind. In addition, there are over 70 community volunteers working with the service.

Current Performance Report (as at 30.09.24):

- 15 Performance against National Outcome Measures
 - **First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System (FTEs):**

The latest reported rate of FTEs per 100,000 10-17 years population in County Durham is **250**, an 11% increase on the previous year.

This increase has been experienced by other areas both regionally and nationally though is greater in Durham. The increase has meant a return to the levels experienced pre Covid lockdown.
 - **Re-offending**

Latest Ministry of Justice (MoJ) data shows a re-offending rate of **44%**. This is an increase of 20% from the previous year performance. Similarly to the description above, the increase

has been experienced by all other areas nationally though has been greater in Durham.

- **Use of Custody**

Custodial Sentences:

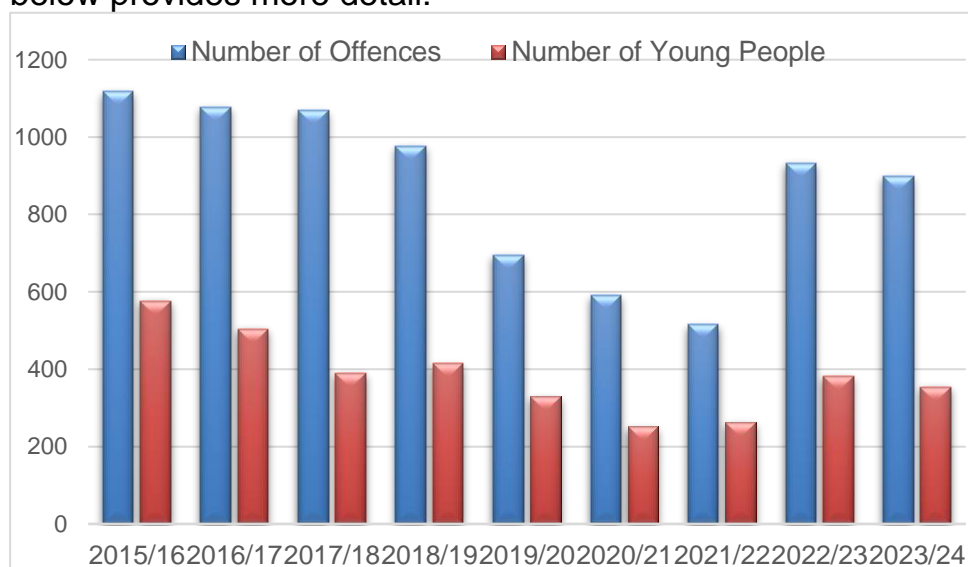
The rate of young people receiving a custodial sentence, per 1,000 10-17 years is **0.42**. This is higher than both national and regional rates. On each occasion a young person is sentenced to custody, the work of CDYJS is reviewed to ensure all appropriate work was undertaken.

Remand Bed Nights (2023-2024): 464 nights

Remand bed nights refers to the total number of nights young people were held 'on remand' in secure settings whilst awaiting trial and/or sentence. This is a significant increase on the previous year (224 nights), though it should be noted that this is made up of 10 young people.

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 (354) and the total number of offences committed (899) when compared to the previous year. The table below provides more detail:



- **Work with Victims, including Young Victims:**

During 2023/24, our work with the victims of youth crime has engaged **157** victims 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 **35** young people at any one time throughout the year (annual total of **58** young people). 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. Items made by young people as part of reparation has benefitted a number of charities, including the Royal British Legion, Autism Awareness and local care homes.

The Voice of Young People, Families, Victims & Communities

- 16 CDYJS ensures that the views of young people, families, victims and communities continue to shape the things we do by:
- (a) A structured process of feedback, for all groups, on the services we deliver.
 - (b) A Service consultation group of young people who are victims of crime.
 - (c) Structured feedback and support for community volunteers.
 - (d) Community volunteer oversight of the work of the Service.
 - (e) Elected Member discussions with the portfolio holder and presentation of reports to full County Council and Scrutiny.
- 17 As a result of this work (and evidence that consultation has led to changes in the way we work), the Service has achieved national awards for our work with parents and our work with young victims. We have also been awarded 'quality marks', again this year, for 'Investing in Children' and 'Investing in Volunteers'.

Author(s)

Dave Summers

Tel: 03000 265999

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications:

Statutory requirements placed on CDYJS 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 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 and approving the annual Youth Justice Plan.

Finance

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, the Probation Service and ICB are required to both contribute staff and provide funding for a pooled budget for operating costs.

Consultation and Engagement

CDYJS Management Board, partners, staff, young people, parents/carers, victims and communities are regularly consulted.

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.

Climate Change

None.

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).

Staffing

None

Accommodation

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

Risk

None

Procurement

Not applicable.