

**Report of: The Director of Children & Families**

**Report to: Executive Board**

**Date: 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

**Subject: Inspection of Youth Justice Services in Leeds**



Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

- The Youth Justice Service works with young people aged 10 to 18-years old who have offended and/or are at risk of reoffending. This work is overseen by the Youth Justice Service Partnership, which is comprised of statutory (Local Authority, Police, Health, Probation) and non-statutory partners across the city.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) conducted a routine inspection of Leeds Youth Justice Service week commencing 24th June 2019. The inspection framework considers three aspects of Youth Justice Work: organisational delivery; court disposals; and out-of-court disposals. Whilst the text of the inspection was broadly positive, with a large number of favourable comments, the Youth Justice Service received an overall judgement of 'Requires Improvement' which was a result of the inspector's judgements around one area: Out of Court Disposals.
- The outcome of the inspection was challenged by the Youth Justice Partnership. This was particularly in relation to the methodology applied to Out-of-Court disposals work, as the service has received national recognition from the Youth Justice Board for the positive outcomes achieved for young people and communities across Leeds. HMIP has not agreed to amend the original judgement.

- Leeds has a very good track record of engaging young people ‘voluntarily’ through the Youth Panel, the inspection methodology did not take account of the fact that these engagements are voluntary and informal, or that the less formal approach of working restoratively *with* young people results in better outcomes. In Leeds, 82.5% of young people engaged in this ‘voluntary’ approach do not reoffend.
- The Youth Justice Service Partnership has reviewed and accepted the recommendations made by HMIP and acknowledges that there are areas for improvement. In response to the recommendations, a service improvement and action plan has been developed. Implementation is underway with progress being monitored and overseen by the Youth Justice Service Partnership.
- Leeds Youth Justice Service has been informed that HMIP will be undertaking a national review of the Out-of-Court disposals methodology within the next 12 months and Leeds has been asked to provide support to this review. It is anticipated that this will be to provide case examples as well as evidence of outcomes and effective engagement practices though the scope of the review is yet to be determined.

## **2. Best Council Plan Implications (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)**

1. The Youth Justice Partnership is responsible for setting and leading the city’s Youth Justice Plan ([Leeds Youth Justice Plan.pdf](#)), which is confirmed by the Partnership and delivers key functions aligned with Leeds Best Council Plan 2019-2021 (BCP) and Leeds Children and Young People’s Plan 2018 – 2023 (CYPP). The primary aims of the Youth Justice Plan is to set out the city’s strategy to prevent offending and reoffending by children and young people which contributes to:-
  - Leeds’ ambition to be a child friendly city (BCP)
  - Keeping people safe from harm and protecting the most vulnerable (BCP)
  - Improving achievement and attainment for children and young people (CYPP)
  - Promoting community respect and resilience (BCP)
  - Tackling crime and antisocial behaviour (BCP)
  - Helping young people transition into adulthood, develop life skills and be ready for work (BCP)
  - Children and young people are active citizens who feel they have a voice and influence (CYPP)
  - All children and young people are safe from harm (CYPP).

## **3. Resource Implications**

1. No matters arising for the purpose of this report

## **Recommendations**

1. To note the results of the Youth Justice Service inspection and the work that is underway to address areas for further development.
2. To endorse the intention for the Youth Justice Service in Leeds to work with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation to support the review of the methodology applied to inspecting Out-of-Court Disposal.
3. That Executive Board endorse the improvement and action plan (attached at Appendix 2)

## 1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 Leeds Youth Justice Service has been subject to an inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). This report outlines the outcome and response of the Service and seeks endorsement to work with the Inspectorate in a forthcoming review of the methodology applied to Out of Court Disposals.

## 2. Background information

- 2.1. Leeds Youth Justice Service is a strong statutory partnership that performs well against national targets and requirements. It is seen as an effective Youth Offending Service by the Ministry of Justice and Youth Justice Board for England and Wales as evidenced by requests for our support to national consultations and sector led improvement initiatives. The Youth Justice Service is a statutory partnership, established by virtue of section 39 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and includes Police, Probation, Health and the Local Authority as its statutory partners. The service is supported by the Local Authority, Central Government and statutory partners funding contributions, which contribute to the delivery of statutory Youth Justice Services across Leeds. The funding also supports a range of non-statutory youth crime prevention and early intervention services across the city. The service is overseen by a statutory partnership with membership from core statutory partners and other relevant contributors from Leeds.
- 2.2. The Youth Justice Service is required to ensure that its structures and processes are sufficient to meet its statutory responsibilities set out both in primary legislation and guidance to YOS Partnerships. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires local authorities to work in co-operation with the Police, Probation and Health Services in their areas to agree arrangements for the provision of Youth Justice Services. A statutory duty to co-operate is placed on each agency through the Act. There is a long established commitment to partnership working evident across Leeds city Council which is further exemplified in children's services through Child Friendly Leeds and our focus on 'corporate parenting' principle.
- 2.3. The Youth Justice Service in Leeds is supported by a multi-agency partnership chaired by the Director of Children and Families to ensure that the partnership operates effectively and that Children's Services and Criminal Justice priorities are congruent at a strategic level. There are no proposals to change the chairing arrangements for this statutory partnership which remain appropriately located within the responsibilities of the Director of Children and Families.
- 2.4. Youth Justice Practice is inspected by HMIP on a two to three year cycle.

## 3. Main issues

- 3.1. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) conducted a routine inspection of Leeds Youth Justice Service week commencing 24th June 2019. The inspection framework considers three aspects of Youth Justice Work: organisational delivery; court disposals; and out-of-court disposals. The Youth Justice Service received an overall judgement of 'Requires Improvement'. [An inspection of youth offending services in Leeds](#) (attached at Appendix 1).

- 3.2. HMIP indicated that *'Leeds Youth Justice Service has many elements in place to deliver an effective service. We found staff at all levels are committed to the children and young people they work with and are very good at engaging with them. Staff have a clear understanding of the factors that can help individuals to move away from further offending, and have come up with creative ways to deliver this work'*.
- 3.3. The key areas identified for improvement were around the quality of work to identify and manage risks for both court and out-of-court disposals.
- 3.4. The Inspectors also highlighted concerns in management oversight across both court and out-of-court work. While managers are supportive and approachable, inspectors found they could have paid closer attention to upholding the quality of work and recorded key decisions more consistently.
- 3.5. Inspectors found Leeds Youth Justice Service had developed high-quality partnerships across the city. Children and young people had timely access to support services for issues such as substance misuse, speech and language, and mental health.
- 3.6. Staff excelled at coming up with creative ways to help children and young people move towards more positive behaviours and crime-free lives. The Service has a well-established horticultural project, which is run by a committed volunteer. The Skill Mill, a partnership with a social enterprise, has resulted in six-month work placements for small groups of young people - some of whom have gone on to gain qualifications and secure employment.
- 3.7. The Youth Justice Service also received an 'Outstanding' rating for its diversionary work with the police to determine appropriate action for young people who had committed minor offences.
- 3.8. The Youth Justice Service accepts the recommendations that have been made in the inspection report and recognises that there are a number of areas where improvements can be made. Following the inspection the service set out an improvement and action plan which is being delivered to implement changes in line with the recommendations. This improvement action plan is overseen and monitored through the Youth Justice Service Partnership.
- 3.9. With regard to the work with young people subject to Out-of-Court disposals, Leeds Youth Justice Service found the methodology applied through the current inspection framework to be inconsistent with 'best practice' developed within the youth justice sector nationally. This included developments led by Leeds and acknowledged nationally by the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales and a significant number of other local authority youth justice services.
- 3.10. Following the outcome of the inspection, Leeds Youth Justice Service engaged in conversations with HMIP at a senior level to formally raise concerns around the methodology applied and the consequent judgement - specifically in relation to the out-of-court disposals work. It was felt that the methodology used did not accurately reflect the practice and excellent outcomes that are being achieved

for young people subject to out-of-court disposals. This formal challenge to HMIP did not result in any changes to the judgements made.

3.11. Leeds has a very good track record of engaging young people 'voluntarily', and only a very small number of young people decline to take up the offer of these interventions. The inspection methodology does not take account of the fact that these engagements are voluntary and informal, or that the less formal approach of working restoratively *with* young people results in better outcomes. In Leeds, 82.5% of young people engaged in this 'voluntary' approach do not reoffend.

3.12. HMIP made eight recommendations following the inspection:

- improve the quality of assessment and planning in out-of-court disposal work;
- ensure that management oversight and quality assurance of practice is more rigorous and effective;
- for court disposal work, assessment of risk of harm to others needs to be more analytical and draw key information together;
- make sure that planning and reviewing to address both safety and wellbeing and the risk of harm to others improve;
- address and act on barriers to delivering services, such as problems with the child or young person attending Education Training and Employment provision or being referred to social care, by escalating these to management;
- drive improvement through better operational and strategic use of performance and quality systems.

3.13. The Youth Justice Management Board should:

- ensure that robust quality assurance systems are in place to enable the Board to have a clear overview of practice;
- Prioritise attendance and ensure each partner agency is held to account within and between Youth Justice Service Partnership meetings.

## **4. Corporate considerations**

### **4.1. Consultation and engagement**

4.1.1. The proposal does not have any significant impact on communities living or working in any specific area; the Youth Justice Service delivers a citywide service.

### **4.2. Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

4.2.1. Youth Justice Service delivery should have a positive impact on young people who are frequently subject to multiple disadvantage, contribute to their ability to integrate positively within their communities and offer them the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

4.3. **Council policies and the Best Council Plan** The Youth Justice Partnership is responsible for setting and leading the city's Youth Justice Plan which delivers key functions aligned with Leeds Best Council Plan 2019-2021 (BCP) and Leeds Children and Young People's Plan 2018 – 2023 (CYPP). Specifically the Youth Justice Partnership contributes to:

- Leeds' ambition to be a child friendly city (BCP)
- Keeping people safe from harm and protecting the most vulnerable (BCP)
- Improving achievement and attainment for children and young people (CYPP)
- Promoting community respect and resilience (BCP)
- Tackling crime and antisocial behaviour (BCP)
- Helping young people transition into adulthood, develop life skills and be ready for work (BCP)
- Children and young people are active citizens who feel they have a voice and influence (CYPP)
- All children and young people are safe from harm (CYPP).

4.3.2. Climate Emergency

4.3.3. The inspection should not have any material impact on the climate emergency.

4.4. **Resources, procurement and value for money**

4.4.1. There are no specific issues relevant to resources, procurement and value for money arising out of this report,

4.4.2. However it is worth recognising that the budget of the Youth Justice Service has reduced by £3.3m since 2011 and whilst numbers of young people within the justice system has reduced as well this has had an impact on the service.

4.5. **Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

4.5.1. The report will be subject to call-in.

4.6. **Risk management**

4.6.1. Leeds Youth Justice Partnership has developed an improvement and action plan with the Service and is working to address the areas highlighted in the inspection as needing improvement. The action plan is subject to quarterly review and monitoring by the Youth Justice Partnership.

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1. Leeds Youth Justice Service have completed an improvement and action plan in response to the HMIP inspection and has already completed a number of the recommendations therein.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1. To note the results of the Youth Justice Service inspection and the work that is underway to address areas for further development.
- 6.2. To endorse the intention for the Youth Justice Service in Leeds to work with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation to support the review of the methodology applied to inspecting Out-of-Court Disposal.
- 6.3. That Executive Board endorse the improvement and action plan (attached at Appendix 2)

## **7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 None

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.