

Committee: Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Date: 13 January 2015

Agenda item: 7

Subject: Merton Youth Justice Service

Lead officer: Paul Angeli, Head of Children's Social Care

Lead member: Councillor Maxi Martin

Contact officer: Curtis Ashton, Service Manager – Family and Adolescent Services

Recommendations:

To update the Panel on developments in relation to the Merton Youth Justice Service for the 2013 -14 period.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The objective of this report is to provide an update on the performance data of the Merton Youth Justice Service for the 13 -14 period, making comparisons with data since 09/10 and providing a response to the 13 -14 Youth Crime Prevention Action Plan.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1 The Merton Youth Justice Service (YJS) is situated within the Children, Schools and Families Department of the council and in particular within the Family & Adolescent Services stream of the Social Care & Youth Inclusion Division.
- 2.2 From the previous Government's 198 National Indicators for the Council the YOT Partnership has 6 key Indicators:
 - 1) **First Time Entrants** (FTEs) to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17;
 - 2) Rate of **proven re-offending** by young people in the youth justice system;
 - 3) Young people within the Youth Justice System receiving a conviction in court who are sentenced to **custody**;
 - 4) **Ethnic composition of offenders** on Youth Justice System disposals;
 - 5) Young offenders' engagement in suitable **education, training and employment**;
 - 6) Young Offenders' access to **suitable accommodation**.
- 2.3 These 6 key targets were reduced by the current Coalition Government to 3 targets (Numbers 1-3). It was agreed by the Youth Crime Prevention Executive Board (chaired by the Director of Children, Schools and Families Department) to maintain these other targets to monitor developments and progress in areas that impact upon offending.

2.4 Performance & commentary

2.5 The YJS performance since 09/10 across the 6 key targets is recorded in the table (Appendix 1). The graphs / bar charts (Appendix 2) provide a visual presentation.

2.6 Performance across the 3 key targets this year has been strong especially if compared to regional and national comparators.

2.7 Key points:

- **Custody figures** have shown a downward trajectory since 2004.
- Merton has the 2nd lowest custody figure in London with 5 young people during the 13-14 period.
- **First Time Entrants** to the Criminal Justice System have shown significant reductions exceeding national & London comparators. The figures have fallen year on year from 188 YP in 9 /10 to 56 in 13/14.
- **Reoffending figures** have shown improvements despite some fluctuations and demonstrate progress within the binary & frequency data. The *frequency trend* (relating to the rate of reoffending amongst the cohort) has been downwards from a rate of offending at 1.2 (Oct 10 – Sept 11 rolling cohort) to 0.88 (June 11 – May12) in recent years. Similarly the *binary figure* (relating to the % of those YP who have reoffended) has fallen from 41.5% to 38.7%.

2.8 There is not a simple explanation for these improvements within the principal 3 targets dependent upon numerous variables and factors. The range and variety of activity across the Borough through the partnership will have assisted this significant impact and the nature and scope of police priorities / actions will also have played an important part.

2.9 Specific to the Youth Justice Service has been the following activity:

- Robust alternatives to custody
- Continued use of intensive fostering and intensive supervision and surveillance
- Reoffending audits to consider lessons to be learnt
- Improved gate-keeping of court reports and related documents.
- Building trust / relationships with the bench at Wimbledon Magistrates Court by having a dedicated court officer.
- Wider partnership and multi-agency working especially with looked after young people.

2.10 Youth Crime Prevention Action Plan

2.11 Appendix 3 provides a RAG rating and commentary across the key action areas that drive the YJS' response to the 3 principal government targets. The main focus during this period was the preparation and subsequent Action Plan for the HMIP Short Quality Screening Inspection in September 2013. The results were generally positive and the HMIP SQS report stated that 'Merton YJS had made

important changes to practice since our inspection in 2011. These had led to the delivery of improved services. Case practitioners used a thoughtful, investigative approach, working well with specialist colleagues and other agencies'

- 2.12 Highlights within the Action Plan centre upon our response to HMIP Thematic Inspections / wider prevention and partnership activity and ensuring a well-resourced and trained staff group with a robust focus upon QA / staff learning and development.

3 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Appendix 1: YJS performance since 09/10 across the 6 key targets
- Appendix 2: Graphs / bar charts showing YJS performance.
- Appendix 3: RAG rating and commentary across the key action areas

4 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 4.1. None

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