



Children and Education Select Committee
26 March 2015

Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2015-2020

Purpose of the report: Policy Development and Review

The Committee is asked to review the refreshed Youth Justice Strategic Plan, which sets out how youth justice is delivered in Surrey. It is produced by Surrey Youth Support Service (YSS) on behalf of the Youth Justice Partnership Board (YJPB), which is comprised of Surrey County Council (covering Education and Social Care), Borough Council representation, the Probation Service, the National Health Service, the Magistracy and the Police Service.

Context:

1. The Committee is asked to review the refreshed Youth Justice Strategic Plan, prior to its approval by Cabinet on 24 April 2015.
2. This Plan will cover a 5 year period from 2015 – 2020 and has been co-produced with Youth Justice Partnership Board (YJPB) members and influenced by national research and evidence of effective practice. The emphatic partnership focus of the plan seeks to ensure that key services and agencies work together to deliver an effective youth justice system that enables improved outcomes and value for money for Surrey residents.
3. The Plan will be refreshed each year, reflecting any changes to the national and local youth justice landscape which impact on the strategic priorities and the way in which the whole youth justice partnership will deliver a range of services designed to reduce youth offending within Surrey.

Strategy Summary

4. The strategic priorities for the 2015-2020 Youth Justice Strategic Plan are:
 - Prevent Youth Crime
 - Reduce Re-offending
 - Safeguard young people from harm
 - Protect the public from harm

5. The plan sets out how a partnership approach led by Surrey YSS will deliver against the core priorities. This includes continuing to strive to use resources in the most effective way by preventing the costs of crime through early targeted intervention and promoting restorative justice processes to help a young person make amends for their behaviour. Wherever appropriate this will be done without requiring recourse to the formal criminal justice system. At the same time, the plan seeks to lead a transformational shift in how work is undertaken with the smaller group of young people whose circumstances mean they are more likely to have prolonged contact with the youth justice system. This will be achieved by better understanding and addressing the needs underpinning their offending, which often reflect safeguarding and vulnerability concerns, as the route to reducing youth crime, creating fewer victims and making communities safer.

Legislative Framework

6. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduced Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) as local authority led multi-agency teams whose primary purpose is to prevent offending by children and young people. The Act requires Local Authorities to have a Youth Justice Plan which is annually updated to set out how youth justice will be delivered locally within available resources.

Local arrangements

7. In Surrey the statutory functions of the YOT, in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, are undertaken by the Youth Support Service (YSS). This includes the provision of a wide range of services to courts, young people who offend and their families, carers and victims. The Youth Justice Partnership Board (YJPB) oversees the activities of a range of partners who support and complement the work of the YSS in preventing and reducing youth crime, safeguarding young people and protecting the public. Partnership arrangements are outlined in Appendix A of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan.
8. The youth offending responsibilities of the YSS are funded through contributions from the statutory partner agencies in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. These are the Local Authority, (covering Education and Social Care), the Probation Service, the National Health Service and the Police Service. Further funding is provided through an annual grant from the Youth Justice Board (YJB) for England and Wales. Funding arrangements are outlined in Appendix C of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan.
9. Surrey YSS comprises of local teams, one in each of the county's eleven boroughs and districts, that deliver services to young people who offend alongside services to other young people who are homeless, who are deemed children in need (s.17 CA 89), who are open to but not engaged with the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). Young people who offend also often fall into these other cohorts, and vice versa.

Therefore, an integrated service such as the YSS is of benefit to meeting a range of overlapping needs.

Youth Justice Interventions

10. The youth justice interventions and services provided through the YSS include:

a. Appropriate Adults

When young people are interviewed or otherwise processed at police stations a parent or other appropriate adult must be present. When parents are unwilling or unable to attend an appropriate adult is provided by the Surrey Appropriate Adult Volunteer Service (SAAVS).

b. Prevention

Targeted preventative work may be undertaken with young people at risk of offending where the young person's circumstances suggest that a casework approach is required. Referrals for this work come from a number of sources, including CIAG's, schools, the police, and social services. Engagement at this stage is voluntary.

c. Pre-court / diversionary responses to offending

YSS is committed to avoiding the unnecessary criminalisation of children and young people. Central to Surrey's response is to approach young people's offending in a risk led, restorative manner. Thus young people's behaviour may deal with informally by officers on the street or through the Youth Restorative Intervention (YRI) or Youth Cautions, with or without conditions. The latter two are delivered by the YSS in partnership with Police and all serve to appropriately divert young people from prosecution through the courts.

d. Victims and restorative work.

The use of restorative justice is a cornerstone of the approach to youth crime in Surrey. This has included the development of the Surrey's Youth Restorative Intervention (YRI), sponsored by the Local Criminal Justice Board, as, in effect, the disposal of first choice for young people admitting all but the most serious offences. The YRI brings the victim and the young person together at heart of the system's response to offending, ensuring wherever possible that both have their needs met and harm is repaired. Key to the development of this approach has been an ongoing partnership with Surrey Police, which includes joint decision making processes in relation to whether young people who have offended can be dealt with out of court through the YRI.

e. Court work

For those young people who do go to court, the YSS provides a service by attending each youth court sitting to offer advice, undertake assessments of young people and make recommendations about the most appropriate responses in order to prevent further offending. As the YSS has a statutory duty to manage court orders, it is also responsible for taking enforcement action when young people have consistently failed to comply with their order. This may mean that the young person is

required to return to court where the YSS will prosecute the young person for the breach offence.

f. Supervising Court Orders

The YSS has a statutory duty to supervise a range of orders that are made in the courts. Most commonly orders are “community orders”, that is they are delivered whilst the young person lives in the community, and these are most often Referral Orders or Youth Rehabilitation Orders. The operating of these orders is subject to a set of national standards and is inspected by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation. A wide range of interventions can be agreed, dependant on a young person’s individual needs and level of risk, but most will require regular meetings between the YSS and the young person in order to support them into a constructive law abiding lifestyle

g. Custodial Sentences

On the rare occasions when a young person goes to prison they normally serve the first half of their sentence in a secure/custodial setting and the second half in the community. The YSS maintains frequent contact with the young person and the prison and helps plan interventions both whilst in custody and in preparation for release. They then supervise the second half of the sentence in the community.

Performance

11. There are three key performance indicators that must be reported on nationally. These are first time entrants, use of custody and rate of proven re-offending. Surrey has the lowest rate of young people entering the criminal justice system for the first time in England and Wales. In addition, Surrey also has one of the lowest rates of young people receiving custodial sentences in England and Wales. As the number of young people entering the formal youth justice system reduces, this leaves a smaller, more complex group who remain and are more likely to re-offend. Current re-offending performance needs to be seen within that context as it is only the reoffending of those in the formal system that is reported on nationally. Performance is outlined in Appendix B of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan.

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to review the Plan and consider how it could monitor its impact and progress in the year ahead. The Committee may also wish to make recommendations to accompany the Cabinet report, in order to highlight areas for further consideration or future development within the scope of the delivery of youth justice services.

Next steps:

Cabinet will consider the Youth Justice Strategic Plan on 24 April 2015. The Committee is invited to consider when it wishes to receive an update on progress against the plan.

Appendix 1 – The Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2015-2020

Report contact: Ben Byrne, Head of Youth Support Services

Contact details: 01483 517000

Sources/background papers:

Children Act 1989

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

This page is intentionally left blank