



Communities Select Committee  
21<sup>st</sup> March 2013

## Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2013/14

**Purpose of the report:** Policy Development and Review

The Youth Justice Strategic Plan is produced annually to meet the council's obligations under the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 and is submitted to Cabinet for approval.

### Introduction:

1. Youth Justice relates to that area of the council's responsibilities for the management of young people who have committed criminal offences. These responsibilities are discharged in partnership with the Surrey Police, Surrey & Sussex Probation and NHS Surrey.
2. The council has a duty under the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 to formulate a Youth Justice Plan setting out:
  - 2.1 How youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded; and
  - 2.2 How the youth offending team or teams established are to be composed and funded, how they are to operate and what functions they are to carry out.
3. In Surrey, the delivery of youth justice services is now embedded within the integrated Youth Support Service, following the transformation of Services for Young People that commenced 1 January 2012.
4. The local response to youth offending in Surrey takes wherever possible a *restorative* approach, placing victims at the heart of the process and offering young people the opportunity to make amends for the harm that their offending behaviour has caused.
5. Local arrangements in Surrey, jointly undertaken with the Police, see many young people who have admitted minor offences being dealt with by means of a *Youth Restorative Intervention*. This offers the opportunity to swiftly resolve offending behaviour to the satisfaction of victims without the formality and cost of a court hearing. This also means that minor mistakes made during adolescence do not carry the stigma of a criminal record that can constrain opportunities for employment in adult life.

## The Youth Justice Strategic Plan

6. The Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2013-14 (draft plan attached as an annex) follows a template recommended by the Youth Justice Board for England & Wales and includes the following sections:
  - 6.1 Introduction
  - 6.2 Strategy – outlines the service’s high level strategy for the three years ahead
  - 6.3 Outcomes from 2011/12 – a review of service performance over previous 12 months
  - 6.4 Resourcing & value for money – detailing how resources are deployed to deliver effective youth justice services to prevent offending and re-offending
  - 6.5 Structure & Governance – defines the governance arrangements which support integrated strategic planning and performance oversight
  - 6.6 Partnership Arrangements – sets out the wider partnership arrangements showing the connectivity of youth justice services with the childcare and criminal justice system in the county.
  - 6.7 Risks to Future Delivery this section considers the risks that may undermine capacity to deliver effective youth justice services for the year ahead.
  
7. The review of service performance detailed in the Youth Justice Strategic Plan shows continuing strong performance with Surrey having the lowest number in England & Wales of first time entrants to the youth justice system; ranked 7<sup>th</sup> nationally in the number of young people sentenced to custody; and ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in terms of re-offending by young people.

## The Youth Support Service

8. Following the transformation of Services for Young People in January 2012, youth justice services are now delivered within the integrated Youth Support Service which combines in a single service, functions which were previously carried out by the Youth Development Service, Connexions and the Youth Justice Service.
  
9. The key strategic focus of the Youth Support Service is to increase participation in education, training and employment and central to this strategy is the removal of barriers to participation. Involvement in offending behaviour can be a major barrier to participation, hence there is a good strategic fit between reducing offending and increasing participation.
  
10. The Youth Support Service provides a single source of support for vulnerable young people aged 13 – 18 years, offering a wrap around service to tackle a range of barriers to participation that also feature as risk factors linked to offending. This includes access to: support for reducing substance misuse; support for children in need aged 15+, improving mental health; and prevention of youth homelessness.

11. In relation to preventing youth homelessness, agreement was reached during 2012 between the county and borough and district councils for the Youth Support Service to be the single point of referral for all young people presenting as homelessness and to coordinate a range of supported housing resources.

#### **Conclusions:**

12. The Council's arrangements for the provision of youth justice services are continuing to flourish within the new integrated Youth Support Service.

#### **Financial and value for money implications**

13. Effective Youth Justice arrangements that support a reduction in offending by young people contribute to savings to the public purse through reductions in the use of custody and youth detention accommodation (on remand). Furthermore, supporting vulnerable young people to make a successful transition to adulthood reduces the likelihood that young people will require long term support from public funds.

#### **Equalities Implications**

14. Youth Justice services support vulnerable young people to prevent further offending and to enable young people to make a successful transition to adulthood. The service is acutely aware of the over representation of some minority groups within the criminal justice system and works actively to mitigate the impact on young people.

#### **15. Risk Management Implications**

None identified

#### **16. Implications for the Council's Priorities**

Improving outcomes for vulnerable children is a council priority.

#### **Recommendations:**

17. The Committee is asked to scrutinise activity in this area and make recommendations to Officers and Cabinet as appropriate.

#### **Next steps:**

The Youth Justice Strategic Plan will be submitted for approval to:

- (i) Surrey Youth Justice Partnership Board
- (ii) Cabinet

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**Sources/background papers:**

Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2013/14