

Committee/Date:	<b>Council</b> 14 <sup>th</sup> December 2023
Report Title:	Waltham Forest Youth Justice Plan 2023/24
Directorate:	Strategic People
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Wards affected:	All
Public Access	Open
Appendices	Appendix 1: Youth Justice Plan

## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. This is a summary of Waltham Forest’s detailed annual Youth Justice Plan (Appendix 1). The plan provides a progress update on the development of our 2022/23 strategic priorities and objectives and details how we will continue to take this plan forward in 2023/24. The Plan was submitted to the Youth Justice Board (YJB) on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

## 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. Council is asked to approve the Youth Justice Plan 23/24

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to submit an annual youth justice plan to the YJB relating to their provision of youth justice services. Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth justice partnership’s responsibilities. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, after consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out how youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded, how they will operate, and what functions will be carried out. The plan should equally address the functions assigned to a youth justice service, including how services will prevent offending behaviour and reduce reoffending. Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 also requires that the youth justice plan is published, which is a condition of the YJB grant.

- 3.2 The plan sets out the strategic aims that we have as a partnership to continue to drive positive outcomes for children, young people and their families against the backdrop of continued challenging times.
- 3.3 Waltham Forest Youth Justice Service (YJS) is focused on reducing first time entrants into the criminal justice system, reducing rates of reoffending, reducing racial disparities, addressing factors that lead to inequalities and ensuring all children engage in education, training, or employment. These are supported by our three strategic priorities and ambitions which the service will continue to work towards achieving throughout 2023/24.

### **Our strategic priorities are:**

#### **1. Reducing Serious Violence:**

We continue to see the impact that serious violence has on the lives of children and families within the borough and are committed to addressing this. Waltham Forest YJS and our youth justice partners are at the heart of the Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) and will continue to shape its development and support the implementation of our ambitious violence reduction approach.

#### **2. Embedding Child First youth justice responses:**

We are clear within Waltham Forest YJS that anyone under the age of 18 years is a child and should be seen and responded to as such. A child first approach does not negate away from our responsibilities to protect the public, support victims and ensure we appropriately manage risk. A 'child first' approach emphasises the universal entitlement of children to good quality education, healthcare, and development opportunities; it recognises that children's behaviour is often an expression of their adverse experiences and their need; it seeks opportunities to safeguard and create environments in which children can thrive.

A key focus for our child first ambitions is to reduce the number of children who are criminalised through formal contact with the youth justice system. Reducing first-time entrants is a collective effort that we continue to work on. We have a strong focus on ensuring all children enjoy the benefits of education and are not limited in accessing services. As we lead on the boroughs Alternative Provision and inclusive schools' strategy, we are well placed to realise our ambition of putting prevention at the heart of our approach to our vulnerable children.

#### **3. Racism and racial disparity:**

Outcomes for children in Waltham Forest continue to be impacted by experiences of racism and structural inequality. This is apparent within the YJS where we continue to see an overrepresentation of Black children at all stages of criminal justice system and global majority children overrepresented in our school exclusion rates. The

reasons for racial disparities are complex and requires a collaborative approach if we are to see any impactful and sustainable change. This means working with partners across all agencies including schools, police and Children Social Care (CSC).

#### **4. Progress**

- 4.1 Waltham Forest YJS are proud of the progress made to date in supporting children and families. Reoffending rates in Waltham Forest have reduced by 3.5% in the past 12 months and we have less children in custody than we did a year ago. We have a strong and committed workforce and Youth Justice Management Board membership champion the work of the YJS within their respective services. This has strengthened our ability to provide a whole-system response across health, safeguarding and justice.
- 4.2 Waltham Forest also has a number of challenges to contend which include; addressing our first time entrant rates which are currently higher than our national and regional neighbours, working with partners to address school exclusions attendance rates and identifying and providing services and support to children with Special Education Needs (SEN).
- 4.3 In March 2023, 'Waltham Forest YJS were selected to form part of the His Majorities Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) and Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) thematic inspection into children remanded into custody. The inspection took place in June 2023 and HMIP identified areas of good practice as well as areas for improvement and recommendations for further development. These have been incorporated into our 2023/24 development plan.
- 4.4 Areas of good practice that were identified include:
- Skilled and experienced practitioners and managers
  - Good quality Pre-Sentence Report
  - Good partnership work
  - Evidence of Child First approaches in our work
  - Good planning with Children Social Care to consider placing children into suitable accommodation upon their release from custody.
- 4.5 **In 2022/23, progress made included the following:**
- 4.6 **Developing a Child First Approach-** Reviewed the Out of Court Disposal (OCD) panel to ensure it addresses the needs of children and all partners adopt a child first approach in the decision-making process.

Signed up to the London accommodation Pathfinder (LAP) along with five other East London boroughs (Newham, Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and Havering). The LAP will provide an alternative to custody or can be used as a resettlement placement for

boys aged 16-17 years. The placement is based in the London Borough of Newham and will provide onsite education, mentoring and therapeutic intervention. The LAP was launched in June and opened to children in August 2023.

**4.7 Serious Youth Violence-** As serious violence duty holders, we have begun work with our partners in community safety, police, probation, CSC, ASB, education, our youth engagement groups and community-based projects to devise a robust strategy and action plan.

**4.8 Racial Disparities-** Commissioned Wipers to deliver 'The Ether Programme', which is an eight-session programme aimed towards boys who identify as Black or Minority Ethnic who are involved with the youth justice system. In 2022/23, of 8 children that started the programme, 7 completed. We have commissioned further sessions for 2023/24. Wipers will also facilitate staff training around Disproportionality in the Criminal Justice and Education systems.

Improved our data reporting in relation to Gypsy Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities to enable a better understanding of the needs of the children and families we work with.

Started to review the disproportionality action plan that was devised in 2020/21 as part of the School's inclusion strategy. This is a sharp focus for 23//24.

**4.9 Outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC):** LAC lead has monthly meetings with the designated Youth Justice lead within CSC. These meetings aim to ensure all children with looked after experience are supported through the system and any concerns are raised and addressed in a timely manner. Waltham Forest council have made LAC a protected characteristic. This is in line with our commitment to ensuring better outcomes and improving life chances of all care experienced children.

**4.10 Trauma Informed Practice-** Contributed towards Enhancing the safeguarding pathway for children involved in criminal exploitation and have continued to embed psychologically and trauma-informed practice across the service with some staff completing the effective practice trauma informed award.

**4.11 Education, Training and Employment (ETE)-** Begun work on the post 16 inclusion subgroup to work closer with education providers to reduce exclusions of children within the YJS.

Monitored the school attendance and engagement of children within the YJS through weekly vulnerable children attendance updates to identify any attendance issues for those attending an Alternative Provision at the earliest opportunity.

- 4.12 Quality of Assessments:** Commissioned an external auditor to QA statutory and non-statutory cases followed by training to address identified areas for development.
- 4.13 Transitions to Probation-** Although we had been working well with our transitions programme for young people being transferred to the Probation Service in 2022, our post is now vacant, and we have not had a seconded Probation Officer in post since February 2023. We have been working closely with our colleagues in the Probation service to complete transfers of 18-year-olds however, we are conscious that there is a gap in the transition preparatory work usually completed by the Probation Officer. The Probation Service are currently leading on a recruitment campaign and hope to have the position filled within the next few weeks.
- 4.14 First Time Entrants-** Turnaround programme was developed by the Ministry of Justice and is based on similar principles to those underlying the Supporting Families programme, including the view that children on the cusp of offending often have complex needs. Turnaround funding supports YJSs, and their local strategic partners, to expand best practice in early intervention. Waltham Forest has now appointed a Turnaround coordinator and project worker and is receiving referrals from Diversion worker, Anti-Social behaviour team, OoCD team, MASH team and education. We are also hopeful that this intervention will help towards tackling the over-representation of certain groups of children within the YJS.

Despite our best efforts and extensive discussions and support from statutory partners in our Management Board and the Borough Commander, we have not been able to develop the 4-borough deferred prosecution pilot as planned. The management board understands that the blockage is attributable to a regional plan to roll out a similar programme across London. WFYJS is wholly committed in our endeavour to unblock this or to find an alternative pathway for the benefit of children's life chances in this borough.

- 4.15 Interventions-** The Your Choice programme has been successfully delivered over the past 12 months. We have met our target of supporting 20 children through the programme. Goals achieved have included children completing their theory driving tests, enrolling on college courses and joining their local gym. We have been selected to continue to deliver the programme in 23/24 with the Youth At Risk and Intensive Supervision and Surveillance teams leading.

In the summer of 2022, the WFYJS completed a summer programme where young people participated in a music project and 5 children were awarded a Bronze Award for their work. We have continued to deliver

the Stay Safe trauma informed weapons awareness programme in 2022/23 and will continue to deliver this programme in the coming year.

- 4.16 Addressing Diversity-** As part of the Vanguard programme, WFYJS now has access to consultation from Speech and Language Therapists (SALTs) once weekly. This supports practitioners to consider ways to work with children suspected to have or with diagnosed speech and language needs.

The Youth and Family Resilience Service is currently working with our SEN colleagues to address issues around school attendance, school exclusions and our Alternative Provision strategy, all of which are relevant to children involved in the YJS.

- 4.17 Victim's Voice-** The Restorative Justice (RJ) practitioner sits on and contributes towards the OOC and high-risk panels. The RJ practitioner is now delivering victim awareness groups as well as one-to-one sessions with children in the service. The RJ worker also liaises with police colleagues to contact victims who are directly impacted by crime in order to include their voices in interventions wherever possible.

- 4.18 Improving Reparation-** Developed our reparation activities that facilitate improved skills or qualifications to improve life chances and prevent re-offending and further victimisation. These have included the Streetwise bike project, which has a qualification attached.

- 4.19 Constructive Resettlement framework-** Waltham Forest YJS now has a strength-based resettlement policy in place that is consistent with the HMIP resettlement standard.

- 4.20 Staff skills support the delivery of a high-quality service-** Conducted the annual staff survey which has been used to plan training and development opportunities for the coming year.

- 4.21** The Youth Justice Management Board will continue to monitor and review the progress of the objectives within the 2023/24 plan.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1. The Waltham Forest Youth Justice plan provides a comprehensive overview of the work undertaken within the Youth Justice Service in 2022/23 whilst the development plan clearly sets out the service priorities for the next 12 months. The development plan is reviewed quarterly to assess whether we are on target to meeting our objectives and allows for any adjustments to be made to ensure that we are effectively meeting the needs of children and young people.

## **6. IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Finance, Value for Money and Risk**

6.1.1 The annual YJB grant allocated to Waltham Forest YJS for 2023/24 was for £521,686. The YJS uses the YJB grant, partner contributions from Police, Probation Service, Health, the Local Authority, and available resources to deliver the services highlighted within the plan.

## **6.2 Legal**

6.2.1 The YJB has stipulated that the plan must be signed off by the full council in accordance with Regulation 4 of the 'Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000' **however, the plan will be submitted to the YJB before the next scrutiny committee. The plan will therefore be agreed and signed by our Youth Justice Management Board Chair and Lead Member, Cllr Kizzy Gardiner prior to submission on 07<sup>th</sup> July 2023.**

## **6.3 Equalities and Diversity**

6.2.3 The work within the YJS is in line with and supports Waltham Forest's commitment to tackling inequalities. Having fearless conversations and recognising the need for change that will benefit all of the communities that we work for will continue to drive these aims forward. Improving life chances and affording equal opportunities to all is a golden thread that runs through all strategies, plans and delivery commitments.

## **6.4 Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder)**

6.4.1 This plan and the work within the YJS is part of Waltham Forest Council's programme to make the borough and safer and healthier place for all residents.

## **6.5 Council Infrastructure (e.g. human resources, accommodation or IT issues)**

6.5.1 There are no specific implications.

## **6.6 Implications for Looked After Children/Care Leavers**

6.6.1 7% of children within the Youth Justice Service have had Looked After experience. There will continue to be a collaborative approach to supporting the needs of Looked After Children. This includes work with Children Social Care, Schools and education settings, Virtual School, SEN, custodial settings, police and the Probation service. This work supports the council's policy for Looked After Children/ Care Leaver.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)**

No documents.