

KEY DECISION

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Mayor and Cabinet

Report title: Lewisham Youth Justice Partnership Plan 2023-2024

Date: 1st November 2023

Key decision: Yes

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Class: Part 1.

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Executive Director Children and Young People (Chair of Youth Justice Management Board) and Head of Youth Justice Services.

Outline and recommendations

To provide Mayor and Cabinet the details of the annual Youth Justice Plan. In England and Wales Youth Justice Plans are submitted annually and is a condition of the Youth Justice Board grant to local authorities. The plans require full council sign off.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

Youth Justice Plans are approved annually

1. Summary

- 1.2 Youth Justice Services are statutory partnerships, established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, with the principle aim of preventing offending by children and young people. Local authorities have a statutory duty to submit an annual youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services, in accordance with, Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 which sets out the youth justice partnership's responsibilities in producing a plan. 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 annual plan is to be submitted to the Youth Justice Board for approval.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Mayor and Cabinet are recommended to approve the updated Lewisham Youth Justice Plan, noting progress on delivering against the key priorities for the council in preventing and reducing offending by children and young people.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 This report aligns with Lewisham's Corporate Priorities, as set out in the Council's Corporate Strategy (2022-2026):

- Cleaner and Greener
- A Strong Local Economy
- Quality Housing
- Children and Young People
- Safer Communities
- Open Lewisham
- Health and Wellbeing

- 3.2 In particular, this report is closely aligned to priorities for Safer Communities; Children and young People; an Open Lewisham and Health and Well-being.

- 3.3 Children and Young People's Corporate Division Strategy 2022-2025. The three year strategy cites the relevant objectives accordingly:

- Refreshes the current public health approach to youth violence and places a wider emphasis on contextual safeguarding
- Develop an integrated adolescent safeguarding service (extra-familial risk) that can support our most vulnerable cohort of young people to provide expertise and support for our frontline services and the wider community
- Building on the provision of therapeutic responses within the Youth Justice Service
- Ensuring that there is a clearly defined practice approach (which is

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- also trauma informed and aligned with the Signs of Safety model).
- Emphasis on prevention and early intervention/support.

3.4 Safer Lewisham Plan and Public Health approach to reducing Violence:

The public health approach is a science-driven, population-based, interdisciplinary, cross sector approach which emphasises primary prevention. Rather than focusing on individuals, the public health approach aims to provide the maximum benefit for the largest number of people, and to extend better care and safety to entire populations.

3.5 Elements of the approach adopted by Lewisham YJS:

- Trauma-informed restorative borough
- Promoting an anti-racist approach to achieve justice and equality
- Child first systems – policies and practices that safeguard children and adolescents in all decision making

4.0 Background

4.1 The Lewisham Youth Justice Plan has been developed and agreed across the Youth Justice Partnership through the Lewisham Youth Justice Management Board. In 2021 it was agreed that there will be a three year plan 2021-2024 with an annual refresh updating on key information and achievements each year. The last year has seen significant challenges to maintain a high quality of service while keeping staff and the public as safe. The service has adopted the title of 'Youth Justice' as reflected in our recognition of a Child First, Justice for children model including racial justice. This plan sets out the priorities and vision for the Lewisham Youth Justice Partnership for the forthcoming year which will be:

- Sustaining and improving even further our key performance measures to reduce first time entrants, re-offending, and custodial episodes
- Continue our workforce development and learning strategy to be a model of best practice as recognized as the MJ Awards 2023 winners in the category of Innovation in Inclusion and Diversity.
- Fulfil the opportunities provided by the move of the Youth Justice Service into Children and Young People's Directorate including a proposal for a new Integrated Adolescent Service for contextual safeguarding; tackling child exploitation and violence utilizing Lewisham's extensive know how in adopting a public approach to reducing violence.
- A new and revised approach in Children and Young People's Services to prevention and early help.

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- Extend our influence and reach to promote anti-racist policy and practice and other inter-sectional inequalities taking forward the feedback from the HMIP Thematic Inspection 2021 – How the Youth Justice system meets the needs of Black and mixed heritage boys (Lewisham April 2021).
- Applying the unique Lewisham YJS ‘TIAARA’ model (Trauma-informed, Anti-Racist and Restorative approaches) to achieve even better outcomes for children and families and staff wellbeing.

5. Priorities and Progress

5.1 The Lewisham Youth Justice partnership is able to report on some key achievements for the year (2022) which include:

- Strengthening the prevention of children and young people entering the youth justice system via Engage and Turnaround.
- A revised vision to meet needs of children based on ‘Child first’ principles and practice to further reduce first time entrants, re-offending rates and use of custody.
- An evolving anti-racist strategy to reduce over-representation and racial disparity centered around recognized best practice as identified by HMIP’s Thematic inspection (best practice guidance for Black and Mixed heritage boys 2021).
- Local and national interest in the ‘TIARRA’ model integrating established trauma-informed and restorative practice with our vision to become an antiracist service.

5.2 The priorities for the year.

5.3 Children from groups who are over-represented:

In Lewisham there continues to be an unrelenting focus on racial equity, reducing over-representation and inclusion. In 2022/2023 the Service has reviewed and updated our Anti-racist policy, aligned anti-racist practice with those of our partners and continued to develop our innovative ‘Journey of the Black Child’ development plan.

Outcomes: Reduced numbers of black and mixed heritage boys entering the system; Sustained progress in making a difference in prevention, remands and custodial disposals and joining up with key partners to address wider systemic change such as reducing exclusions.

5.4 Prevention, Diversion and Detention in police custody:

This year has seen a significant strengthening of the prevention of children and young people entering the youth justice system via Engage and Turnaround. Lewisham is lead borough for the Engage with three youth workers based at Lewisham and Bexley custody suits. The new Ministry of Justice Turnaround initiative has quickly been established with police referrals into the project being particularly high. These projects serve to strengthen existing and developing programmes in Lewisham’s Early Help services including Family Hubs.

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Outcomes: Earlier support for those most at risk of offending; Closer working relationships with custody police to impact at reachable moment; Contributing to wider objectives such as reducing escalation to statutory intervention thresholds.

5.5 Education:

A sustained effort to improve Enhanced, Training and Employment (ETE) outcomes through the YJS multi-agency ETE panel and a partnership effort to reduce exclusions including disproportionality. Leading on immersive schools Restorative Justice (RJ) program to improve relationships and contextual safety.

Outcomes: Reduced exclusions and improved support for alternative provisions; Speech and language therapy through the Hub; Access to post 16 ETE provision increased.

5.6 Restorative Justice and Victims:

The new YJS Restorative Justice lead has completed a thorough review and is developing an action plan to re-establish this work as central to our aim within the context of Youth Justice, driving forward the voice of victims and embedding opportunities to repair harm and restore relationships.

Outcomes: Victim perspective and restoration embedded in practice; Retail theft initiative working well; several examples of individual, family, and community lead restorative approaches.

5.7 Serious Violence and Exploitation:

The partnership has established the Multi-Agency Criminal Exploitation (MACE) arrangements following the pan London protocol for managing serious violence and exploitation. The borough is planning for the development of a more integrated adolescent service to further enhance joint working. The Therapy Hub provides a valuable Harmful Sexual Panel (HSB) space for the borough via the forensic ARTs Service Clinical Psychologist and the YJS Contextual Formulations including mapping and targeted responses to extra-familial harm.

Outcomes: increased resilience to manage and reduce violence and extra-familial harm, enhanced multi-agency responses and safety planning.

5.8 Remands:

Lewisham contributed to the HMIP Thematic report on the use of Remands (May 2023) which will be published later this year. This provided an opportunity to review and reflect on our approach to bail and remand. The YJS maintains an excellent relationship with the regional Youth Court.

Outcomes: Keeping remands to a minimum, safeguarding children in custody and on bail effectively to manage vulnerability and risk; improving outcomes for black

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and mixed heritage children with a focus on the 'journey' from arrest to post release.

5.9 Use of Custody:

In Lewisham custodial sentences have been imposed exclusively for the most serious offences.

Outcomes: Consequently, numbers are at the lowest rate ever recorded and longer sentences. The focus, therefore, has turned to transitions to the adult estate in custody and the development of a 'trauma-informed' transitions programme for those moving to the adult estate.

5.10 Constructive Resettlement:

For those few released into the community our child first, focus on identity and pathways to effective resettlement are key.

Outcomes: Improved transition to probation/adult estate. Pathways such as accommodation and ETE met.

6. Financial Implications

The youth justice core grant terms and conditions requires sign off the annual plan. Grant payment is made to the local authority when all the compliances have been met. The grant is specifically used by the Local Authority to fund its Youth Justice Service with a view to achieving a reduction in youth re-offending, reduction in the numbers of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System, reduction in the use of youth custody and effective public protection and safeguarding. Financial management is underpinned by regular reports to the Management Board to review budgetary spend, to ensure that available resources are accessed and utilised wisely, and ensuring the budget envelope is maintained, as changes or increase in offending will have a direct implication for financial resources.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to submit an annual youth justice plan 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 in producing a plan. 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.

7.2 Youth justice plans, in England only, must be signed off by the full council in accordance with Regulation 4 of the 'Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000'.

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8. Equalities Implications

- 8.1 All the work of the service contained in this report will be subject to robust contract monitoring processes which include evaluating fair access to services for all. The Council's Comprehensive Equality Scheme for 2012-2016 will provide an overarching framework and focus for the Council's work on equalities and help ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
- 8.2 Addressing disproportionality in the youth justice system is, and has been, a longstanding priority for Lewisham Youth Justice Service. Analysis of our cohort has highlighted that Black and mixed heritage males and children looked after are significantly overrepresented in the Youth Justice Service. Subsequent to exploring the reason for this, we have pioneered and implemented an anti-racist strategy ('TIAARA') providing high-quality service delivery whilst addressing disproportionality. Our journey for racial equity and improved outcomes for Black and mixed heritage children has also included training on trauma informed practice, cultural competence and anti-discriminatory approaches to practice. Essentially, we will seek to ensure that practitioners are sufficiently able to recognise and respond to the prevalence of extra-familial harm through contextual safeguarding.

9. Climate change and environmental implications

- 9.1 There are no direct implications.

10. Crime and Disorder Implications

- 10.1 The revised Youth Justice Strategic Plan if adopted aims to contribute significantly to the reduction of crime and the impact on the public by preventing and reducing offending by children and young people.

11. Health and Wellbeing Implications

If agreed the plan will contribute to the improvement of health and wellbeing of individuals, the public and staff.

12. Report author(s) and contact

- 12.1 Keith Cohen
- 12.2 020 8314 9884, Keith.cohen@lewisham.gov.uk.

13. Please attach appendices as separate documents and list them below.

Appendix 1

Lewisham Youth Justice Plan 2023 - 2024

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