



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**13<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021**

### **CWM TAF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE**

#### **REPORT OF GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR C LEYSHON**

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#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the work of the Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (YOS) for 2020/21. This includes a summarised response to the Covid 19 pandemic, and to inform members of future service challenges/risks.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that members:
- 2.2 Acknowledge the proposed/potential changes within the Youth Justice System and potential impact upon the work of the YOS.
- 2.3 Receive further reports in due course in order to be satisfied of the progress and improvements being made as a result of the service restructure.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service is a statutory partnership legislated by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and provides services across two local authority areas, namely Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. The local authority YOS areas merged to form Cwm Taf YOS in August 2014. The aim of the service is to prevent the offending and re-offending of children and young people. The statutory partners are: South Wales Police; Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board; HM Prison and Probation Service; and the local authority areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. These partners provide financial and staffing contributions to the Youth

Offending Service. The Youth Offending Service also attracts external grant funding from the Youth Justice Board, Welsh Government and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).

- 3.2 Overall governance is facilitated by the Regional Cwm Taf Offender Management Board (OMB) which meets quarterly to hold the service to account, examine performance, and to monitor the delivery of the service.
- 3.3 In addition to the scrutiny provided via the Offender Management Board, the Youth Offending Service also reports its performance on a quarterly basis to the Youth Justice Board (YJB), and to the Welsh Government in relation to its prevention work. The YOS is also subject to an inspection regime carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP).
- 3.4 As a result of Covid 19, The YOS were not required to provide an annual Youth Justice Plan for the financial year 2020/21. However, the Youth Justice Board instead requested that YOS complete a self-assessment and action plan in relation to a new set of National Standards for Youth Justice. This work began in September 2019. The National Standards work is linked to the Structure and Governance of the service and will be overseen by the Offender Management Board. The YOS has sought operational and strategic 'buy in' from partner agencies represented on the Board and this work is ongoing. This year, the YOS submitted a Youth Justice Plan for 2021/22, (see attached document) some of the content of which is summarised in this report.

#### **4.0 WHERE WE WERE**

- 4.1 As with our partner agencies, for much of 2020/21, many YOS staff have undertaken their day to day tasks remotely. This has meant reduced face to face contact with young people and families whilst adjusting to working in a more agile way from home. Initially, this created some difficulties with the normal day to day business and many staff experienced problems, mainly related to access to technology in order to undertake tasks in an efficient manner.
- 4.2 However, during this time, YOS staff continued to support young people who appeared in the law courts (including a Remand court based in Cardiff), who required an appropriate adult (AA) at the police station when arrested, or who agreed to attend for interview on a voluntary basis. Face to face contact with young people assessed as 'high risk' or subject to 'intensive supervision and surveillance' also continued during this time and the input of experienced sessional workers ensured that contact with this cohort took place during evenings and weekends as necessary. Importantly, since May last year, the YOS has continued to work with a skeleton staff from its office base in the Merthyr Tydfil Law Courts and this arrangement provided invaluable managerial and peer support for those who most required it. The numbers of staff available to offer physical one to one support has fluctuated as Covid restrictions have been eased and then reimposed during this time, yet it is pleasing that the core/critical business of the service was maintained throughout. The YOS has also continued its reparation work with young people in the community in a safe manner, whilst contributing alongside the YOS police officers to facilitate face to face

mediation in care homes where some children have experienced difficulties, many of which were/are linked to restrictions relating to Covid 19.

## **5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW**

- 5.1 At the present time, all YOS staff are equipped with the resources to function more effectively and most staff can see the benefits of working in a more flexible and agile manner. However, the onset of Covid has brought new challenges in relation to managing risks both to the public and to the children known to our service, and more recently there has been a significant increase in referrals for prevention services.
- 5.2 Following a lengthy delay as a result of Covid, the YOS has now completed the process of restructuring the service in order to meet future demands on the service. The significant changes includes the creation of two area based prevention/early intervention teams based in Merthyr Tydfil and RCT to enhance the quality of prevention services for those most at risk of antisocial and/or offending behaviour. Prevention activity within YOS is increasingly involved in the management of more complex cases, and subsequently these teams will include social work and senior practitioner oversight to ensure children and families receive the right support at the right time. In addition, this aspect of the service will also be allocated more management capacity across the Cwm Taf region.
- 5.3 To some degree, the restructure of the service is a response to the development of a WG/YJB led 'Blueprint for Youth Justice for Wales' and a Blueprint Implementation Plan has been drafted with an outline vision of the changes in the short, medium and longer term. Early Intervention and Prevention and a trauma informed, child focussed approach is central to the contents of the Blueprint, and a Project Board, incorporating several workstreams is taking this work forward. However, Cwm Taf YOS has already begun to embed a trauma informed 'relationship based' approach within current practice to better meet the needs of young people who enter the into the youth justice system and who have experienced a number of adverse childhood experiences (ACE's).
- 5.4 The YOS utilises the Welsh Gov't Children and Communities Grant to develop, deliver and coordinate prevention services across the Cwm Taf area. Some of this work is coordinated alongside the Resilient Families Service (RFS) and ensures that the Cwm Taf YOS Prevention Service can provide a swift and proportionate response to antisocial behaviour (ASB), Restorative Justice Street Disposals (YRD's) and respond quickly to crisis referrals from the Children's Services Dept. Outreach work engaging with young people in identified hotspot areas resumed in July last year, and this work continues alongside our police colleagues in identified 'hotspot' areas during evenings and weekends.
- 5.5 The YOS education training and employment (ETE) team has continued to support young people through the past 10 months and have trained a group of community volunteers to engage with individuals (remotely and face to face) to help them to achieve their potential. The YOS management have raised concerns and made presentations to the OMB to highlight some of the barriers that young people known to our service face in relation to accessing education, training and employment.

Management have made progress alongside partners, including education, to try to resolve some of these issues, and this work will be prioritised during 2020/21.

- 5.6 The YOS continues to expand its use of a Viewpoint data feedback system to ensure the voice of service users is heard and which will inform the future development of the service. The YOS currently completes a specific online questionnaire with children who offend and a separate restorative justice survey for victims of youth crime.
- 5.7 The YOS has recently negotiated CAMHS provision with Senior Health Managers to provide increased support for staff dealing with young people who present with more complex well-being issues, and work continues in order to strengthen links with psychology, neuro development and speech and language provision. Health services to YOS was an issue for concern by the HMIP inspectorate in 2017, and so this provision is being monitored by the Offender Management Board and is retained as a priority for this financial year within the Youth Justice Plan.

## 6.0 **FUTURE CHANGES AND IMPACT ON SERVICE**

- 6.1 Following an unsettled period for YOS during the past 17 months, the situation has more recently improved with staff more confident to undertake their work as normal lifestyles and routines return. However, it should be recognised that YOS business is very much linked into local authority recovery and delivery plans for this year, and future arrangements regarding accommodation, whereby staff can meet safely with children, families and partner agencies in a range of community venues/offices, will be a main priority going forward.
- 6.2 The most immediate priority of the restructure of the YOS is now complete, and we are better prepared to respond effectively to the demands of early intervention and prevention in the medium to longer term.
- 6.3 Further priorities includes securing the necessary health provision for the YOS to ensure the service can maintain and build upon embedding trauma informed practice into its day to day business. As mentioned above, this work is currently being negotiated.
- 6.4 As mentioned in 3.4, the monitoring of the National Standards for Youth Justice in Wales alongside our partners will be central to the future effectiveness and governance of the service and improve accountability for ASB and offending across the partnership. The YOS also recognises that it needs to develop better communication and awareness raising both ways between operational practice on the ground and how it relates to the work of the Offender Management Board, and wider elected members.
- 6.5 The priorities set out in this year's plan will allow us to improve our understanding of the needs of the cohort and contribute to better outcomes (see attached plan).

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The new structure seeks to ensure improved capacity and ideas across the Cwm Taf region and increase staff and management resilience within the prevention arena. In line with the Blueprint recommendations, we need to ensure that any change will promote consistency within our practice and deliver a more targeted needs led service that continues to be effective and outcome focussed.
- 7.2 The potential impact linked to some of the issues outlined above and the risks associated with potential changes to grant funding will need to be monitored closely. Following the restructure, Cwm Taf YOS should be better placed to meet the aims and objectives to deliver better outcomes for young people who offend or who are at risk of becoming involved in offending behaviour, and victims of crime.

<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>		
<b>Title of Document (s)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
Cwm Taf Youth Justice Plan 2021/22	01/07/21	