



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

26TH JANUARY 2023

CWM TAF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

REPORT OF INTERIM DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES, IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR G CAPLE

**Author: Lyndon Lewis, Head of Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service
Tel: 01443 827300 / 01685 724960**

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 2022/23. This includes an update on current service delivery following the restructure of the service in August 2021, to outline some of the current priorities and to inform members of future service priorities, challenges/risks.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that members:
- 2.2 Acknowledge the changes made within the YOS, and the direction and challenges that lie ahead as a result of service changes following restructure and strategic change in relation to YOS performance measures.
- 2.3 Receive further reports in due course in order to be satisfied of the progress and improvements made and how this contributes to better outcomes for children and families.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (YOS) 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 offending and re-offending of children and young adults who are either referred into the service or become subject to statutory interventions by the Law

Courts. The statutory partners to the service 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 and external grant funding is provided by the Youth Justice Board (YJB), Welsh Government (WG) and the Police and Crime Commissioner's office (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, 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 The YOS is required to provide an annual and comprehensive Youth Justice Plan for the YJB, some of the content of which is summarised and reported upon within this report.

4.0 WHERE WE WERE

- 4.1 Alongside our partners, for much of 2020/21, many YOS staff undertook their day to day tasks remotely, meaning reduced face to face contact with children, families and victims whilst adjusting to working in a more agile way from home. This period also delayed the restructure of the YOS, implemented finally in August 2021 to meet new demands upon the service, and as such, the YOS now has two area based intervention teams operating across the Cwm Taf region. Prevention activity within YOS is now increasingly involved in the management of more complex cases, and subsequently the restructure ensured that Prevention work included increased management capacity as well as additional social work and senior practitioner oversight to ensure children and families received the right support at the right time.

5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

- 5.1 This year, Cwm Taf YOS has been proactive in developing a 'child first' approach which treats children as children and seeks to ensure that they are not unnecessarily criminalised as a result of their vulnerability or the challenges they face. Despite the reduction in the numbers of children who enter into the criminal justice system, the service is currently dealing with larger numbers who are on the cusp of the system and who present with varied and complex needs. This situation has been exacerbated by the negative impact of the Covid 19 pandemic which includes disruption to education and training for a large cohort of children and

young people. The YOS is currently working alongside education via a working group to consider the challenges of pupil attendance and quality of ETE provision for those who become known to the service.

- 5.2 To some degree, the restructure of the service was a response to the development of a WG/YJB led 'Blueprint for Youth Justice for Wales'. A Blueprint Implementation Plan was 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 was central to the contents of the Blueprint, and a National Project Board, incorporating several workstreams took this work forward. However, Cwm Taf YOS had already begun to embed a trauma informed 'relationship based' approach to better meet the needs of young people who enter into the youth justice system and who have experienced a number of adverse childhood experiences (ACE's). The continuation of this work has progressed as a priority during 2022/23 and there is a drive to further embed this model of working across the prevention arm of the service as well as those who are referred into YOS from the Law Courts.
- 5.3 The YOS utilises the Welsh Gov't Children and Communities Grant (CCG) 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 last year the YOS held meetings with colleagues from RFS, Youth Service and YEPS to improve and develop the coordination of early intervention and prevention services. This will go some way to ensuring that resources are better aligned to impact positively upon reducing anti social behaviour and limit the escalation of children into statutory services in the longer term. Cwm Taf is also the only youth justice service in South Wales currently operating a 'Restorative Street Disposal' policy. This means that with the clear agreement of the victim, a restorative intervention is delivered by a trained police officer, and further work undertaken by a YOS case manager if wider needs/risks are identified.
- 5.4 Prevention and Diversionary work now accounts for the majority of Youth Justice Service business, but there is inconsistency in the way in which this work is undertaken and coordinated across all regions in Wales. Subsequently, a task group and a number of workshops have been set up involving youth justice managers across Wales in an attempt to clarify and implement a common set of guidelines and principles to improve delivery of these services.
- 5.5 The YOS has an education training and employment (ETE) team that supports children and young people and to engage with individuals to help them to achieve their potential. The ETE team has developed resources and processes to monitor exclusions and ensure that information flow across agencies is effective. The team also convenes weekly ETE workshops which offers a bespoke, trauma informed service for children with additional learning needs and who are not in education, training or employment. The challenges ahead are clear, more so since the Covid 19 period, which highlight the barriers that young people face in relation to accessing education, training and employment and the potential risks for children to become isolated, involved in ASB and who are often criminally exploited within

the community. YOS is currently identifying those known to the service who are either excluded or home educated, and management are working alongside partners, including Education, to try to resolve some of these issues.

- 5.6 Health (CAMHS) provision within the YOS was an issue for concern by the HMIP inspectorate when the service was last subject to a full joint inspection, and this remains one of the key challenges going forward for the service in the weeks and months ahead. Negotiations with Health previously reported to this Board are still current, and difficulties remain regarding the recruitment of appropriate health provision to the service. Subsequently, during the Autumn, a further letter was sent to the Health CEO from the co chairs of the Offender Management Board to try and resolve this situation. On a positive note, the YOS has, in partnership with Bridgend Youth Justice Services, purchased specialist speech and language provision to assist case managers to better understand the learning needs/styles of children and to achieve better outcomes.

6.0 FUTURE CHALLENGES, RISKS AND IMPACT ON SERVICE


- 6.1 During the past two years, the Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on services, with YOS and our partner agencies needing to prioritise critical areas of work to safeguard our most vulnerable children and adults. The closure of some services, such as schools, youth clubs and community facilities during lock down has inevitably had a negative impact. The full nature of this impact is as yet unknown and the partnership including YOS will need to be prepared and flexible to respond to changing demands. Set out within the 2022/23 Youth Justice Plan, we are developing strategies to respond effectively to these demands, including early intervention and prevention work alongside our partners in the medium to longer term.
- 6.2 It should be recognised also that YOS business is very much linked into local authority 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. Both YOS bases across the region are used to meet families and children face to face as well as to facilitate one to one supervision with staff and team meetings. Previous YOS accommodation at Unit 2 in Ty Catrin is now also used by our partners in Children's Services and this arrangement has encouraged joint staffing supervision sessions to assist in complex cases where YOS and 16 Plus teams are involved with an individual child, parents and carers.
- 6.3 Our work with victims of crime will continue to be at the centre of all open interventions with children and young people and we are currently working to progress further capacity within the team to ensure that the voice of the victim is heard at Referral Order and Out of Court Disposal panels and during the course of any intervention.

- 6.4 A joint regional exploitation strategy is currently being developed across RCT, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend. This should promote a shared understanding of the exploitation of children and young adults to adopt a contextualised safeguarding approach across the region.
- 6.5 Following an uplift in in central government spending on youth justice over the coming three years, the YJB has now developed a new set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that focusses on YOS activity as a multi agency local partnership to ensure that the breadth and success of the work that youth justice services carry out is captured. Therefore, the KPI's will now apply to all children with which YOS are carrying out an intervention and not just those who are on our statutory caseloads who have been convicted by the law courts. One of the KPI's will measure the effectiveness of YOS Management Board attendance and general governance of the service. Subsequently, a development morning is planned with the Offender Management Board in February to ensure a shared understanding by partners of future expectations across all of the KPIs.
- 6.6 In November last year the Ministry of Justice announced a commitment to fund the Turnaround Programme, which will offer multi-year funding to all Youth Offending Teams across England and Wales over three financial years (22/23, 23/24 and 24/25). For Cwm Taf YOS, this equates to over 400k over the three year period. This will enable the service and local strategic partners to expand best practice in early intervention and deliver evidence-based interventions. The programme has been designed, using an Early Help approach to enable YOTs to improve outcomes for children on the cusp of the justice system, with the ultimate aim of preventing them going on to (re)offend. The YOS is currently recruiting staff to take this work forward.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The new structure and the increase in staff and management resilience within the prevention arena has certainly improved capacity for developing our practice across the Cwm Taf region. However, there is still much work to be done to embed new practice, such as the child first and trauma informed approach and deliver a more targeted needs led service, alongside partners, that continues to be effective and outcome focussed.
- 7.2 The YOS has yet to receive confirmation of grant funding from the Youth Justice Board for the next financial year, the outcome of which could potentially impact on future service delivery. However, should it continue to remain stable and enable the YOS to embed new roles and responsibilities, then the service is well placed to deliver better outcomes for children, families and victims of crime.

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document (s)	Date	Document Location

<p>Cwm Taf Youth Justice Plan 2022/23</p>	<p>13/01/23</p>	 <p>YJ Plan 2022-23 Cwm Taf YOS.docx</p>
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