

Executive Report

Cabinet – 3 December 2024

MILTON KEYNES YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2024-25

Name of Cabinet Member	Councillor Joe Hearnshaw Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Report sponsor	Mac Heath Director of Children’s Services
Report author	Martin Clement Head of Children’s Quality Assurance, Performance & Youth Justice

Exempt / confidential / not for publication	No
Council Plan reference	Ref number / Not in Council Plan
Wards affected	All wards

Executive Summary

This report will consider the work of the local authority and partners with young offenders, and to review the Youth Justice Plan published in June 24.

The Youth Justice Service is designed to ensure Children, Young People and their families are well supported, and their outcomes are met. The aim for the local authority is to ensure that the priorities in the Youth Justice Plan are achieved, thus contributing to a reduction in youth enabled crime and criminal exploitation across the city.

1. Proposed Decision(s)

1.1 That Cabinet endorse the Youth Justice Plan for 2024-25 and recommend the Plan to Council for adoption.

2. Reasons for the decision?

2.1 As well as being a requirement of statute, the Youth Justice Plan forms part of the Council’s Policy Framework and approval by the Council is therefore required.

3. Background to the decision

3.1 Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, local authorities are legally required to create and submit a plan for their Youth Justice Services (YJSs). This plan outlines how YJSs will be funded and operated, and the roles they will perform. The plan

details the tasks of a YJS, including strategies for preventing and reducing criminal behaviour.

3.2 All Youth Justice Plans need to ensure that the Youth Justice Boards' Child First Ethos is adhered to throughout the document, [A Guide to Child First – Youth Justice Board for England and Wales \(October 2022\)](#). The Milton Keynes Youth Justice plan was filed with the Youth Justice Board in June 2024 and formally signed off by the internal Youth Justice Management Board in July 24. All Youth Justice Departments are scrutinised via their individual boards on a quarterly basis, and it is here where plans are approved and reviewed. Feedback on the quality of the plan from the Youth Justice Board was as follows:

- A clear and comprehensive document
- Evidence of Strong SEND offer
- Good focus on education
- Clear about diversion and prevention
- Good choice of priorities

3.3 The table below indicates progress on some of last year's priorities:

Target	Progress made
Further developing assessment practices and intervention, risk and vulnerability planning through staff training.	Assessment and Planning training was held in March 2024. Feedback from the training was positive with staff feeling they had a clearer understanding of how each of the sections of AssetPlus interlink to ensure that the child's story is accurately recorded and clear analysis of desistance factors and planning to support desistance takes place. We are currently using a staggered approach to implement the new approach and utilise further bite size training sessions to ensure consistency across the service. Improved consistency of quality of assessment and planning will ensure that young people's needs are accurately identified and assessed, and appropriate interventions delivered to support desistance alongside ensuring risks to others are also accurately assessed and planned for.
Developing a multi-agency sexually harmful behaviour (SHB) pathway including, developing a training package to be delivered across the partnership, to address the full spectrum, from awareness through to specialist assessment and intervention.	The pathway is currently in development with the first panel to be held at the end of June. Training is being delivered to both YJS staff and wider Children Services to undertake assessments and interventions in June and July 2024. Alongside this is ongoing development of the pathway to ensure staff have training around understanding sexual harmful behaviour and how to respond to concerns as well as oversight of tier 3 and 4 referrals.

<p>Developing the deferred outcome methodology (linked to National NPCC Guidance on Outcome 22) to ensure more opportunities for young people not to be drawn into the formal Youth Justice System and to be offered appropriate interventions whilst avoiding the stigmatisation of being criminalised.</p>	<p>We are seeing increased use of Outcome 20 and are currently liaising with Thames Valley Police regarding the use of Outcome 22.</p>
<p>Developing multi-agency workshops to provide training around the inter-related complexity of serious youth violence and its overlap with inter-group conflicts including county drug lines, organised crime groups, gang membership and knife crime. Developing Exploitation training to be delivered within the Youth Justice Service, Contextual Safeguarding Team and to wider Children's Social Care Staff to upskill practitioners in Exploitation</p>	<p>The Professional Lead for the Contextual Safeguarding Team has developed on-going workshops which are being delivered across the local authority. Individual areas have identified staff to become exploitation champions who will attend regular workshops and training to understand current patterns, trends and responses to concerns regarding exploitation and serious youth violence, this training can then be disseminated amongst individual teams by the champion lead for each area. The Contextual Safeguarding Team are leading this work, however staff within youth justice will be active participants and will ensure that the service are updated with key information which will help inform needs and risk assessments and better engage young people directly involved in risks outside of the home.</p> <p>This area of work will be reviewed under the forthcoming Joined Targeted Area Inspection into Serious Youth Violence. MKCC are currently undertaking self-audits of cases identified to be involved in or at risk of serious youth violence to identify trends, patterns and contexts, alongside areas of good practice and areas for improvement.</p>
<p>Explore options with health partners to address the current key gap around physical health assessments and interventions for young people involved with the service.</p>	<p>This area continues to be explored and consideration is being given as to how best this gap in service can be met alongside health colleagues. The focus of this role is to explore and address the needs of young people who have been harmed due to contextual safeguarding concerns such as young people who are victims of criminal and sexual exploitation and the specific health related concerns due to this, for example associated risk concerns for young people who have been concealing drugs within internal cavities.</p>
<p>Revising and reinvigorating the role of the Entry to Employment (ETE) Co-ordinator we are looking to bring stronger focus to ensure greater support for children to</p>	<p>The ETE Co-ordinator role is currently vacant, the role is being reviewed with education services within the local authority to explore</p>

<p>access appropriate education, training or employment.</p>	<p>whether there are aspects of the role which can be supported by existing services.</p>
<p>Creating a resilient workforce, maintaining and rewarding the workforce and improvement in the diversity of the staff team better representing the changing demography of the young City population.</p>	<p>A resilient workforce is supported by ongoing training both in house and externally to ensure staff feel empowered and well informed on how best to engage our young people and also have opportunity to both personal and professional development. We have regular team meetings and access to clinical supervision alongside regular one to ones which provide staff with the opportunity to reflectively look at practice both individually and as a team.</p> <p>Recruitment of staff in Milton Keynes is responsive to need. Recruitment goes through the senior leadership team to ensure that posts are reviewed for need and efficiency. Milton Keynes City Council pay competitive rates and have a wide range of benefits and where possible staff are recruited into permanent posts which are more attractive and offer job security.</p> <p>Recruitment is shared on social media and within the council itself, further work is required to try and target specific groups to ensure we have a good representation of candidates applying for positions. This will be further addressed within the work around disproportionality that we will undertake in the upcoming year.</p>
<p>With secondary schools and partners, there is a need to continue to address the issues related to attendance at school and access to appropriate timetables and levels of individual support that meets their needs to reduce the risk of children getting involved in offending behaviour or being exploited.</p>	<p>We have seen improvements in the number of young people being subject to part time timetables. Data analysis shows that from March 2023 to March 2024 the number of young people in our cohort attending 0 hours education has improved by 17% and the number of young people engaging with full time education has improved by 6%. Where young people are placed on part time timetables, staff continue to ensure appropriate challenge to provisions in line with Milton Keynes City Council's policy on Part Time Timetables – Partnership Engagement and Escalation. The appointment of an Education, Training and Employment Officer is also being explored to ensure specialist oversight and challenge as well as supporting those young people not in full time provisions. The ETE figures are consistently reviewed at a strategic level to ensure appropriate challenge</p>

	and support for those not receiving full time provision.
To explore opportunities for children aged over 16 who have offended to achieve greater access to employment, training and education opportunities, through collaborative work with relevant partners including Young People's Careers Information Advice and Guidance, Milton Keynes College, other local providers, and employers.	Our post 16 cohort's engagement in post 16 provision has improved from 2023-2024 with a reduction of 17% in those attending 0 hours and an improvement of 1.4% engaging in 16+ hours provision. We continue to have dedicated access to an Information, Advice and Guidance officer to work with the 16+ cohort within Milton Keynes.
<p>Maximise opportunities for improvements for children, and Participation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing current examples of good practice in the area of engagement and participation and co-production across YOT's / Youth Justice Services in England and Wales with a view to benchmark our current approaches. • Reviewing current practice and identifying any key learning opportunities to further develop this key area of work within the service. 	<p>This year we have continued to offer 'Where 2 Now' sessions to young people at the end of their interventions, young people complete a survey with an independent youth worker and the information of which is then used to inform the board regarding areas of strength and concerns across partnerships.</p> <p>During our latest round of recruitment, we also involved a young person in the interview process, this gave an invaluable insight in to how potential worker engaged with young people and the views of the young person were included in the final scoring.</p> <p>The area of participation is an area we are keen to continue to grow and 2024-2025 will focus on this as a priority.</p>

3.4 The core priorities for the upcoming year are as follows:

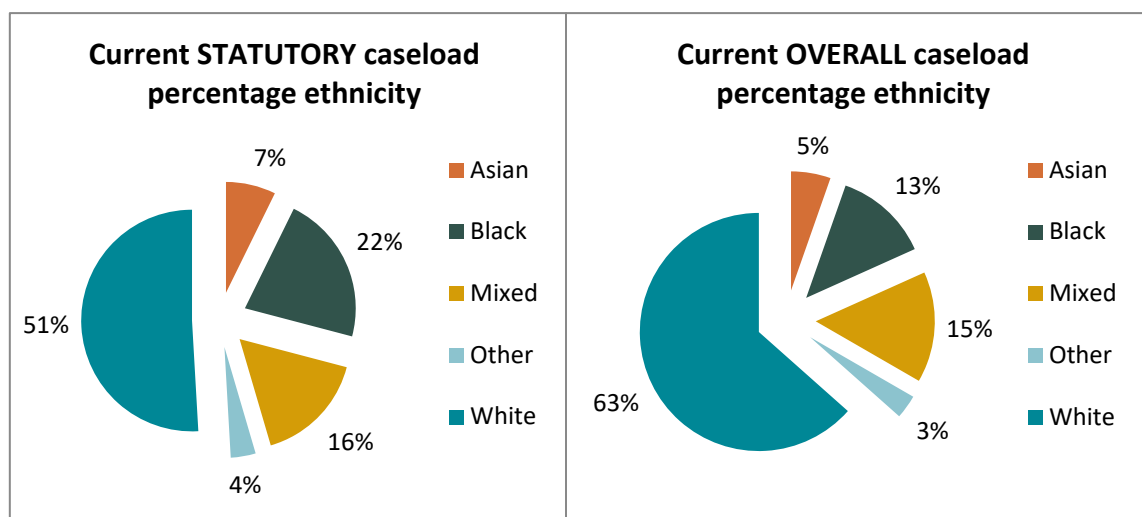
3.5 **An increase in Speech, Language, and Communication Need (SLCN) intervention.** Across all young people assessed for a SLCN it was found that 93% had a SL&CN an increase from 81% last year.

3.6 Whilst Milton Keynes has been innovative in reviewing the SLCN's for all first-time entrants into the service, the therapists only provide an assessment and plan that is then given to schools to take up and review. As there is external funding for these posts from the NHS and there is evidence of success in this area, we have spoken to NHS commissioners about an increase in the number of therapists so we can start to offer an intervention in certain schools and not, despite its success, assessments alone.

3.7 **Adultification Bias:** The service aims to explore whether adultification bias affects overrepresented groups, leading to unmet needs being overlooked.

3.8 **Ethnic Disparity:** Young people of mixed heritage are overrepresented in community orders and certain offence categories, prompting a need for targeted interventions and training.

- 3.9 The tables below set out the % of young people that are open across the service. 22% of the statutory cohort are Black, coupled with 13 % in the overall caseload also being made up of Young People who identify as Black. Mixed race young people make up 16% of the statutory cohort and 15% in the overall caseload.
- 3.10 The 2021 Census indicated that across the city Black, (African, Caribbean, British), residents made up 9.7% of the population and Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups made up only 4.1%, (13.8% in total). Additionally, the combined percentage of Black and Mixed Race young people across the city aged 10-15, (therefore, crossing the threshold for YJS service provision), is 23%, compared to a total of 28% being present in our overall caseload.
- 3.11 This level of ethnic disparity across the service will need to be understood through a series of training and development sessions for staff and the wider partnership. Questions that we will ask will relate to the presence of adultification across the partnership, the need to understand why most Black and Mixed Race boys travel to court as opposed to their White counterparts and how we can use data more thoughtfully to review, understand and respond to disproportionality.



- 3.12 **Girls in YJS:** There has been an increase in girls entering the Youth Justice System, and the service plans to review data and case studies to address specific risk factors for this group.
- 3.13 In the previous two quarters, there has been a surge in the number of girls entering the Youth Justice System. Although it seems that most of these girls do not proceed to a formal YJS intervention, the goal is to examine both the data and case studies to find similarities among this group. This will help us pinpoint specific risk factors for girls and determine the most effective ways to mitigate these risks. Additionally, we plan to enhance the skills of our staff who work with girls in the youth justice system by providing training on the most effective methods to engage with them and deliver evidence-based interventions.
- 3.14 **Knife enabled crime:** Maintaining the ACT NOW initiative is critical over the next 12 months, to function the offer has two YOT officers in post. The approach led by MK and Slough is being rolled out across the Thames Valley in upcoming

months as it has a proven evidence base. There has been a 12.3% decrease in violent offences committed by young people between Jan 2021 and Apr 2024 this is linked to a range of initiatives including the ACT NOW approach. The program is designed to engage with young people who are arrested for a knife enabled crime within 90 minutes of their arrival in custody. The aim being to divert them away from crime at the earliest opportunity.

3.15 The approach offers a broad range of interventions to support with re-engagement with education and training opportunities as well as pro social behavioural skills i.e. weapons awareness / staying safe online / staying safe in the community / awareness of substance misuse and the development of healthy relationships. Since the start of ACT NOW there have been 128 referrals for 95 young people, 29 successfully completed and 7 are still open. As a result of the success of ACT NOW in Milton Keynes and Slough it will be rolled out across the whole of the Thames Valley and will be utilised for other offences i.e. drug offences.

3.16 **Keeping children in education:** the Early Support Project role will also be progressed over the next 12 months given the strong evidence base it has in reducing re-offending. The role offers children and young people early support and intervention to reduce the likelihood of the child or young person becoming known to the formal Youth Justice Service. The service also provides targeted prevention for children and young people that have previously accessed the service yet require further support. The role is geared towards identifying young people with SEN needs who are susceptible to exploitation, who maybe school refusing or are on a behaviour support plan. This role also supports those young people reintegrate into formal education, gives them an awareness on how to engage in formal, structured activities that will increase social competence, whilst also recognising issues such as neurodiversity that might play a role in criminality.

4. Implications of the decision

Financial	Y	Human rights, equalities, diversity	
Legal	Y	Policies or Council Plan	
Communication		Procurement	
Energy Efficiency		Subsidy	
Workforce		Other	

a) Financial implications

The Youth Justice service is a multi-disciplinary partnership that is funded through a range of different funding streams. The plan for 2024-2025 has been endorsed through the Youth Justice Strategic Board alongside current resource allocations. There is, therefore, no additional financial repercussions in the endorsement of this report.

b) Legal implications

The Youth Justice Plan forms part of the Council's Policy Framework and approval by the Council is therefore required. It is therefore that this plan is endorsed to enable its journey to full council.

c) Other implications

Nil.

5. Alternatives Considered

5.1 Not Applicable – A Youth Justice Plan is a statutory requirement for local authorities.

List of annexes

Annex A: Youth Justice Plan 2024 -2025

Annex B: Youth Justice Plan: Development Plan

List of background papers

A Guide to Child First – Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (October 2022) [Link](#)