

Report title	Youth Offending Team Inspection Outcome	
Decision designation	RED	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Beverley Momenabadi Children and Young People	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable Director	Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families	
Originating service	Youth Offending Team	
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Report to be/has been considered by	Directorate Leadership Team	24 February 2022
	Strategic Executive Board	25 February 2022
	Scrutiny Board	18 February 2022 (via email)

Recommendation for decision:

That Cabinet recommends that Council:

1. Endorse the adoption of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) inspection action plan

Recommendation for noting:

The Cabinet is asked to note:

1. The 'Good' inspection rating of the YOT and how the positive work will continue to further improve services for young people in the city.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the recent Youth Offending Team inspection outcome which was rated as Good; to identify the areas of strength and the areas for development that will support Wolverhampton YOT to build on its strong foundations and ensure the team continues to deliver a high-quality service for young people. An action plan has been produced based on the inspection recommendations and progress will be overseen by the multi-agency YOT Management Board on a quarterly basis.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, each Local Authority is required to have in place arrangements for the delivery of Youth Justice services. YOTs are statutory, multi-agency partnerships aimed at dealing with the needs of the whole child. YOTs are required to have staff from local authority social care and education services, the Police, the National Probation Service and local health services.
- 2.2 YOTs work with children aged 10 to 18 who have been sentenced by a court, or who have come to the attention of the Police but have not been charged – instead, they are dealt with out of court. The key focus of YOTs is to reduce the number of first-time entrants into the criminal justice system, to reduce re-offending rates and to reduce the number of young people who receive custodial sentences.
- 2.3 The YOT supports some of the most vulnerable young people and families within the city and has a clear focus on promoting community safety and protecting the public. The work of the YOT is aligned to the Council's priorities; by preventing offending this contributes to stronger families where children grow up well and achieve, and creates safer, more cohesive communities.
- 2.4 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) inspects youth offending services with a focus on three key areas – organizational delivery (including partnership working, leadership and governance); the quality of court disposal work; and the quality of out of court disposal work.
- 2.5 More recently HMIP have included a separate judgement around resettlement support which specifically focuses on how well YOTs support young people being released from custody.
- 2.6 Wolverhampton YOT were inspected in October 2021 and the inspection report was published on 8 February 2022
- 2.7 Overall, Wolverhampton YOT was rated as 'Good', with five specific aspects judged to be 'Outstanding', six 'Good' and one 'Requiring Improvement'. The quality of resettlement policy and provision was also inspected and separately rated as 'Outstanding'.
- 2.8 The inspection found an effective service, with strengths across assessment and service delivery for both court and out-of-court disposals. Positively, inspectors found that the

YOT had adapted quickly to the impact of Covid-19 and ensured that children and their families continued to be supported through a creative approach to delivering interventions.

- 2.9 The dedication of staff was specifically noted in that case managers go 'over and above' what is required to engage children and families. Engagement is achieved through creative interventions that support the trauma-informed approach promoted by the YOT.
- 2.10 Whilst the inspection was overwhelmingly positive, there were some areas identified for improvement - the need for more effective contingency planning in order to manage and mitigate the risk of harm to others; the need for high quality provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), especially for those with education, health and care plans (EHCPs); and more work required to better understand the experiences of Black Asian and other Minority Ethnic groups in the youth justice system.
- 2.11 As a result of the inspection findings, HMIP made three recommendations based on the areas identified for improvement. See appendix 1 for a copy of the full YOT inspection report.
- 2.12 In response to the inspection recommendations, an action plan has been produced to identify how areas for development will be addressed. This plan was submitted to HMIP on 25 February, following sign off from the YOT management board, which is the YOT's governing body. See appendix 2 for a copy of the YOT inspection action plan.
- 2.13 Progress against the action plan will be overseen by the YOT management board on a quarterly basis.
- 2.14 Members of the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel were consulted in relation to the draft action plan prior to it being submitted to HMIP on 25 February 2022. The feedback received was incorporated into the final version of the plan. A progress update on the inspection action plan will be presented to the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel in October 2022.

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 Overall, Wolverhampton YOT was rated as 'Good', with five specific aspects judged to be 'Outstanding', six 'Good' and one 'Requiring Improvement'. The quality of resettlement policy and provision was also inspected and separately rated as 'Outstanding'. Table 1 below outlines the judgements for the specific areas within each domain.

Overall rating	Good
Organisational delivery	
Governance and leadership	Good
Staff	Outstanding
Partnerships and services	Outstanding

Information and facilities	Outstanding
Court disposals	
Assessment	Good
Planning	Requires improvement
Implementation and delivery	Outstanding
Reviewing	Good
Out-of-court disposals	
Assessment	Good
Planning	Good
Implementation and delivery	Outstanding
Out-of-court disposal policy and provision	Good
Resettlement	
Resettlement policy and provision	Outstanding

- 3.2 Key findings about the quality of organisational delivery included YOT management board having good representation and members being fully involved; clear evidence of a trauma-informed approach being reflected in the range of interventions available; an impressive restorative justice unit which takes a holistic approach to working with children and victims; access to an excellent suite of data; and a strong integrated health offer in the team.
- 3.3 However, with regards to organisational delivery, inspector's felt that the YOT management board members' knowledge of the profile and needs of the children was not always evident; there was a gap in high quality provision for children with SEND, especially those with an EHCP; and the YOT management board needed to be confident that YOT staff are comfortable having conversations about children's lived experience when considering their ethnicity.
- 3.4 Key findings about the quality of the YOT's work around court disposals included high quality assessments; effective involvement of children and their parents/carers with planning and delivery taking account of the child's safety and wellbeing.
- 3.5 However, when auditing court disposal cases, inspectors found that there needed to be improvement when assessing a child's risk of harm to others too; staff do not regularly take account of a child's diversity needs when completing assessments; and staff do not consistently set out the contingency arrangements to manage the child's safety and wellbeing and their risk of harm to others.
- 3.6 Key findings about the quality of out of court disposal work included assessments being thorough and effective; victims' needs and wishes being taken into account; strong

planning including young people being supported to access mainstream services following completion of the out-of-court disposal work; and an effective deferred prosecution scheme giving children the opportunity to engage with an intervention and be diverted away from the criminal justice system.

- 3.7 However, with the out of court cases that were audited, inspectors found that the assessment of children's risk of harm to others needed further clarity and contingency planning needed to evidence how a child's risk towards other would be effectively managed.
- 3.8 Work around resettlement when young people leave custody, was found to be well co-ordinated across the partnership. Inspectors judged the resettlement work in Wolverhampton YOT as 'outstanding' and noted that the YOT's resettlement panels are well established.
- 3.9 With regards to contingency planning, there will be refresher training for all staff to focus on the risks a young person poses, the nature of these concerns and the views of victims. This will ensure that contingency plans are identified to manage the risk of serious harm, safety and well-being.
- 3.10 The access to high quality provision for children with SEND/ EHCPs is a citywide priority that was also identified within the SEND inspection September 2021. Therefore, the YOT will ensure it is engaged with the citywide system development work around SEND. In particular, the YOT management board will provide strategic oversight of the quality of SEND/ ECHP provision for the YOT cohort of young people. The YOT will ensure it is represented at all relevant SEND task and finish groups to ensure the disproportionate number of young people known to the YOT with SEND, and the quality of provision is addressed.
- 3.11 As part of the SEND development work, a vulnerability matrix is being developed to enable the monitoring of children and young people of school age, to track school attendance, SEND support, EHCPs, suspensions and exclusions along with other areas of vulnerability, for example, exploitation risks. The YOT will have access to this information to improve the monitoring of young people known to YOT and also help inform whether young people are in appropriate learning environments.
- 3.12 Another key development across the wider SEND system is to implement a co-produced quality assurance framework with parents/ carers, young people, health, education and social care. This framework will allow improved oversight of the quality of provision and will include themed audits with specific groups of young people. Young people working with the YOT will be one cohort specifically focused upon.
- 3.13 To improve the YOTs work around understanding disproportionality, YOT staff will be provided with refresher training around how to consider diversity within assessments and how this should influence interventions. Cultural competence training will also be completed to increase staff levels of confidence in having conversations with young

people about identity. There will be ongoing engagement with young people to provide a focus on young peoples' lived experience.

4.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 4.1 Given the statutory requirements regarding the YOT and the report from HMIP inspection, the YOT management Board agreed the action plan for submission to HMIP on 25 February 2022 and alternative options were not considered to be appropriate in this instance.

5.0 Reasons for decision(s)

- 5.1 To have a YOT is a statutory function and this report and action plan represent a response to a recent Youth Offending Team inspection. The action plan is a requirement stipulated by HMIP following the inspection. The YOT management board approved the plan for submission to HMIP on 25 February 2022 in order to comply with HMIP timescales and deadline.

6.0 Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. Any costs associated with any actions will be met from existing budgets within Children's and Young People's Service.
[JG/22022022/T]

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the report.
- 7.2 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires each local authority in England and Wales to deliver youth justice services in line with a statutory framework that outlines YOS responsibilities in relation to out of Court disposals, Court work, bail and remand, the assessment of young people who offend, the provision of Court reports, the delivery of community interventions, and custody and resettlement.
- 7.3 As a statutory plan, the Youth Justice Plan forms part of the Council's policy framework and as such requires approval of Cabinet and Full Council.
[TC/15022021/B]

8.0 Equalities implications

- 8.1 The YOT provides services for some of the most vulnerable young people both as offenders, but also as victims of youth crime. There is on-going work to address the potential for disproportionality in the Youth Justice System. The inspection noted that a significant amount of work has been undertaken by Wolverhampton YOT to develop a better understanding. However, more work is required to evidence how the child's lived experience is taken into consideration to inform the planning and delivery of interventions.

- 8.2 YOT performance data indicates a disproportionate representation of males from Black Asian and other Minority Ethnic groups. The YOT cannot solely influence and address this disproportionality as the police and the courts are also key in the decisions made when a Black Asian and other Minority Ethnic young person commits an offence. There is also a key role for universal services, e.g. health and education, to deliver early intervention support to prevent Black Asian and other Minority Ethnic young people entering the youth justice system. The YOT, as a multi-agency forum, will continue to co-ordinate a partnership response to disproportionality and the YOT's deferred prosecution scheme specifically aims to divert young people from the criminal justice system as well as identify unmet health needs.
- 8.3 The YOT is committed to developing practice and interventions that positively engage young people from Black Asian and other Minority Ethnic communities. Although there is a disproportionate representation of black males within the criminal justice system, Wolverhampton YOT data shows that black males have better engagement rates with the YOT than white males. Similarly, the re-offending rates for black males are lower than for white males. Staff will be provided with further training around cultural competence to improve confidence levels when having conversations with young people about their identity.

9.0 All other implications

- 9.1 There are no other implications arising from this report.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

- 10.1 There are no background papers pertaining to this report.

11.0 Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix 1: Full Youth Offending Team inspection report.
- 11.2 Appendix 2: Youth Offending Team inspection action plan.