

SUBJECT: HM Inspectorate of Probation: Inspection of the Monmouthshire & Torfaen Youth Offending Services October 2022

MEETING: People Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 15th Nov 2022

1. PURPOSE:

To provide committee members with the opportunity to scrutinise i) the Inspection Report published in October 2022 and ii) the service response to the recommendations and outcomes of the inspection via the Inspection Action Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

The committee scrutinise the Inspection Report and Inspection Action Plan.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 Youth Offending Services (YOS) in Monmouthshire are provided through a partnership arrangement between Monmouthshire and Torfaen Councils and is established under the Crime & Disorder Act (1998). Governance arrangements are enacted through the Local Management Board chaired by the Director of Torfaen Social Services, with membership from statutory partners from both Councils, Police, Probation and Health.

3.2 The core objective of the Youth Offending Services is to prevent offending and re-offending in children by challenging their behaviour and raising awareness of the consequences of offending / anti-social behaviour, helping children take responsibility for their actions and ultimately helping them to break the cycle of re-offending and move forward in positive ways.

3.3 In June 2022 the service was inspected by HM Inspectorate of Probation across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. This inspection was conducted through a review of documents, audits of case files, focus groups with staff; interviews with members of the Local Management Board and feedback from children and their families.

3.4 Monmouthshire & Torfaen (YOS) has received an overall rating of 'Good' out of the four-point scale: 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Requires improvement' and 'Inadequate'.

3.5 The quality of resettlement policy and provision was separately rated as 'Requires improvement'.

3.6 Chief Inspector of Probation Justin Russell said: "Monmouthshire & Torfaen Youth Offending Service has a strong understanding of the children they supervise and what it takes to reduce the risk of them being drawn back into committing further offences. However, improvements were required in specific elements of court work, such as the assessment of children's safety and wellbeing, and in planning to manage risk of harm to others."

3.7 Inspectors found staff at Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOS to be highly skilled and motivated in their supervision of children, particularly in the implementation and delivery of casework. The YOS partnership has access to a wide volume and range of quality services, including specialist and mainstream interventions. Case managers supported YOS children to access such services swiftly, which led to positive outcomes.

3.8 However, inspectors judged that the service needs to improve its governance and leadership. The YOS Management Board should establish a consistent, cohesive membership and set of arrangements, to allow it to communicate a clear vision across the partnership and to key stakeholders. We were encouraged that the new board chair recognises these challenges.

3.9 In total seven recommendations were made, which are as follows:

The Monmouthshire & Torfaen Youth Offending Service Management Board should:

- review its membership, role and function to make sure that its representatives have the seniority to make decisions and commit necessary resources
- improve its analysis and use of data to shape strategic and operational delivery
- develop a strategy and response that meets the needs of girls supervised by the YOS.

The Monmouthshire & Torfaen Youth Offending Service should:

- improve the quality of assessment of children's safety and wellbeing in court disposal cases
- strengthen the quality of contingency planning in court disposal casework to manage risk of harm to others
- develop a standalone resettlement policy and formal practice guidance, with partners, to strengthen current arrangements.

The Probation Service should:

- provide a probation officer to the YOS, to support effective transitions and risk management.

3.10 The service has developed a detailed action plan in response to the recommendations made which has been endorsed by the Local Management Board.

4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL:

Not applicable to this report

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA:

5.1 The action plan provides the mechanism via which progress towards the recommendation made will be monitored and reported on through the LMB.

5.2 The YOS is subject to comprehensive performance management data which is reviewed by the Youth Justice Board on a quarterly basis.

6. REASONS:

To provide the Council with information and assurance regarding the quality and effectiveness of Youth Offending Services.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

The total gross expenditure of the YOS is £1.6mil made up from partnership contributions from the Local Authority, Health, Probation, Police with MCC's contribution being 41.14% (£436,121.00).

There are no additional resource implications associated with this report.

8. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

8.1 Youth Offending Services supports children to desist from offending behaviour and works to promote their welfare and wellbeing. Services provide opportunities for children to engage in pro-social and positive community orientated activities.

8.2 Prevention and reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour is a cornerstone of creating cohesive communities.

8.3 The service promotes the rights of victims to be safe and protected from harm. This often includes children themselves who can be equally at risk of victimisation and offending.

8.4 The service has a good awareness of and works to address the ways in which structural inequality, exclusion and diversity issues can impact on a child's experience of the criminal justice system.

9. CONSULTEES:

Local Management Board

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

HM Inspectorate of Probation Report

Post-Inspection Action Plan

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