

YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2024-2029

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| Cabinet Member & Portfolio | Councillor Susan O'Brien Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education |
| Responsible Officer | Corporate Director of Children's Services |
| Report Author & Directorate | Nuzhat Ilyas – Youth Justice Service and AXIS Children's Services Directorate |
| Papers with report | Appendix A - Hillingdon Youth Justice Strategy consultation responses Appendix B - Hillingdon Youth Justice Service Draft Strategy 2024-2029 |

HEADLINES

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| Summary | <p>The Hillingdon Youth Justice Service Strategy 2024-2029 seeks to set out a clear vision and priorities for how youth justice services are delivered in the next five years.</p> <p>At the Cabinet meeting in June 2024, it was agreed to commence a public consultation on the proposed Youth Justice Strategy. The consultation took place from 1 July 2024 to 11 August 2024, including feedback from the Select Committee on 17 July 2024.</p> <p>This report to Cabinet presents the findings of the consultation. Cabinet is asked to note and consider the consultation responses, the recommended changes and recommend the adoption of the Youth Justice Strategy.</p> |
| Putting our Residents First Delivering on the Council Strategy 2022-2026 | <p>This report supports our ambition for residents / the Council of: Live active and healthy lives</p> <p>This report supports our commitments to residents of: Thriving, Healthy Households, Safe and Strong Communities</p> |
| Financial Cost | This strategy will come at no additional cost to the Council and is delivered within existing youth justice resources. |
| Relevant Select Committee | Children, Families and Education Select Committee |
| Relevant Ward(s) | N/A |

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. **Considers the findings and overall positive response from the consultation which has informed the final proposed Hillingdon Youth Justice Service Strategy 2024-2029.**
2. **Recommends to the Full Council the adoption of the five-year strategy, as a policy framework document.**

Reasons for recommendation

The Youth Justice Service Strategy sets out a clear vision and priorities for how youth justice services are delivered in the next five years and forms a key element of the policy framework. During consultation process, residents and partners have had the opportunity to consider and comment on the priorities for service delivery which are outlined in Appendix A.

Alternative options considered / risk management

Without a Strategy, the Council would not be able to make clear its priorities in relation to youth justice and assist in the development and performance management of work streams and provide a framework for our work with partner organisations. An alternative would be to have youth justice plans signed by Cabinet annually, however, this would not be conducive for the efficiency of the democratic process.

Democratic compliance / previous authority

Along with the recent guidance from the Youth Justice Board, Democratic Services note that the Youth Justice Plan is one of the Council's policy framework documents as set out in Chapter 4 of the Council's Constitution. Consideration of this Plan has therefore been undertaken in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules and these require the Cabinet to set out a timetable for the Strategy's adoption, to include a minimum 6-week consultation period, consideration by the relevant select committee, and therefore, also not subject to scrutiny call-in. The following timetable has been followed:

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| Draft strategy to Cabinet | 27 June 2024 (not subject to call-in) |
| Consultation (six weeks) | Commence from 1 July 2024 |
| Children, Families & Education Select Committee consultation | 17 July 2024 |
| Cabinet final draft | 10 October 2024 (not subject to call-in) |
| Full Council adoption | 28 November 2024 |

Select Committee comments

The Children, Families & Education Select Committee considered the draft Strategy at its meeting on 17 July and has made the following comments:

“Placing the child at the heart of the Youth Justice Strategy and having a strong focus on early help and prevention is a real strength of this strategy. The voice of the child is not only crucial in enabling young people to feel empowered, but also in shaping and developing long-term positive outcomes for them.

It is important that this strategy is regularly monitored to ensure that the Council continues to deliver positive change for our young people and their families.”

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Local authorities have a statutory duty to submit an annual youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services as per Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which stipulates that it is the duty of each local authority, after consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan. The plan sets out how youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded, how they will operate, and what functions will be carried out.
2. Following updated guidance from the Youth Justice Board (YJB) in 2023, all youth justice plans must be signed off by the full council in accordance with Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000. To align with other council strategies, we propose the completion of a 5-year plan with annual updates to the Select Committee and Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education.
3. The Youth Justice Service Strategy builds on the success of the Youth Justice Service and sets a clear vision of how services are delivered to our residents, and key priorities over the next five years to continue to be responsive and meet changing demands and requirements.
4. The vision for the Youth Justice Service is:

“We are committed to taking a child first approach to understanding the challenges faced by children and families including social deprivation, discrimination, trauma, unmet health needs, and will actively empower children and families to improve outcomes by providing opportunities for every child to succeed. We take a “justice for all” approach by supporting victims, protecting the public and engaging our communities to divert children from entering the criminal justice system.”

5. Hillingdon Council is committed to putting residents first and reflects this commitment across the council’s plans and services. Our youth justice priorities are directly aligned with this commitment, which are set out in further detail within the strategy. The five priorities are:
 1. Prevention and Early Intervention - Addressing the root causes of offending behaviour and intervene at the earliest possible stage to prevent escalation and reduce the risk of future harm, ensuring the safety and security of our communities.
 2. Over-representation and disproportionality – Addressing disproportionality in youth justice is crucial for ensuring fairness, equity, and justice within our

society to reduce the barriers that prevent children from accessing support, thereby promoting trust in the system.

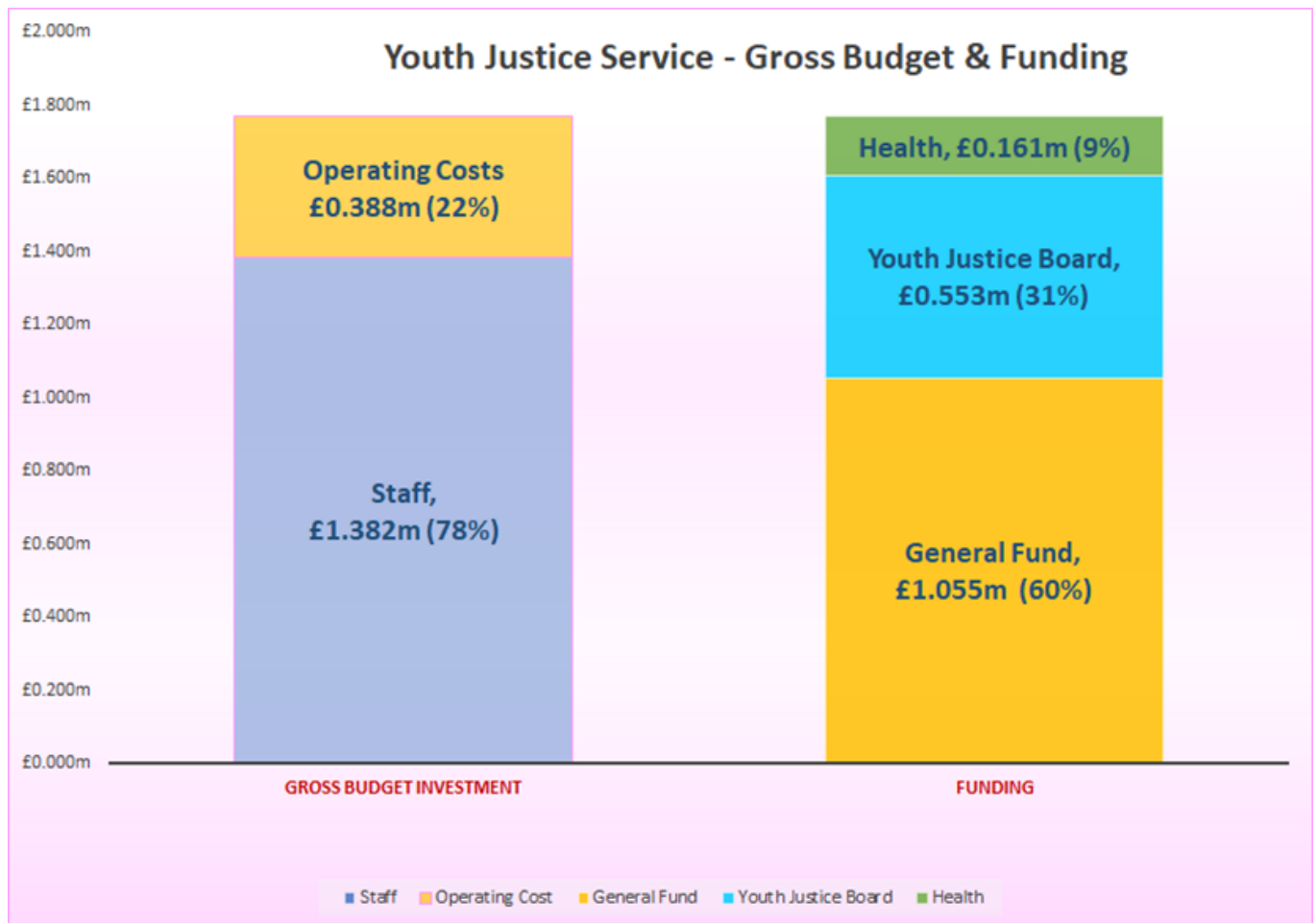
3. Child-centred practice - Recognising children as active participants in their own lives and advocates for their rights, well-being, and development, creating nurturing environments where every child can thrive.
 4. Reducing re-offending - Providing rehabilitation, support, and positive development opportunities, we can break the cycle of offending and promote the reintegration of children into society.
 5. Victims and restorative justice - Giving victims a voice and an active role in the justice process, empowering them and helping them to regain a sense of control over their lives, providing them with an opportunity to heal and recover from the harm they have experienced.
6. The strategy is attached at Appendix B. Following consultation, it is recommended Cabinet approve the new Youth Offer which is informed by the resident consultation, as set out in Appendix A.

Financial Implications

The Youth Justice Service currently employs 20 Staff (18.75 FTE) and spends £1.770m per annum which is funded by a combination of:

- General Fund – 1.055m (60%)
- YJ Board - £0.553m (31%)
- Health - £0.161m (9%)

The service had a small underspend of £0.128m in the Outturn for 2023/24 primarily on staff, accommodation and shortfall on grant which has been addressed in this financial year. The chart below highlights the breakdown of investment and funding. As highlighted in the Strategy paper the service is very successfully managing demand despite the challenges post COVID and the current Cost of Living and financial instability.



There is a duty to provide the service, and it is clear in the current climate that the demands on the service will intensify over the next 5 years of the Strategy. While, at this stage there is no additional risk of financial pressure, there are a few potential risks going forward which the service will need to monitor including:

- Increase in Youth Offending particularly during the ongoing financial instability
- Potential pressure on remand accommodation costs
- Any reduction in funding, particularly grant funding which could critically undermine the effectiveness of the service and result in growth in offending and unintended rise in greater / more acute costs.

While these risks will be closely monitored, the performance of the service over recent years including robust and effective management of its budget, provides a lot of assurance that the Strategy can be delivered effectively within the current budget.

RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities?

The Youth Justice Service Strategy sets out identifies key challenges and sets out priorities for the coming five years and has a direct bearing on the Council's vision of 'putting residents first.'

The Council will need to ensure that any policies or decisions in relation to youth justice take account of requirements under equalities and human rights legislation, including ensuring that policies and decisions do not discriminate against those with protected characteristics, and complying with the public sector equality duty.

Consultation carried out or required.

Following approval at the June 2024 Cabinet meeting, a public consultation was undertaken with the wider strategic partnership that contribute to the prevention of offending behaviour, as well as residents, including those who access youth justice services in Hillingdon to seek views on the proposed five-year youth justice strategy to inform the final strategy to be presented to Cabinet. Due to democratic process timeline and adherence to the YJB grant conditions the consultation was conducted during a prescribed period.

The consultation involved a structured survey available to all residents which was available continuously for the period 1 July 2024 to 11 August 2024 inclusive.

The consultation was publicly available and actively promoted through a wide range of communication channels during the consultation period, including;

Website

The on-line survey was publicly available on the Council website for the duration of the consultation period [Have your say on Hillingdon Council's youth justice plans - Hillingdon Council](#). This included publication of a child friendly Youth Justice Service Strategy to maximise consultation engagement from Hillingdon children.

Press Release

The press release was published on 1 July - Residents encouraged to have say on draft youth justice strategy

Social Media

Social media was actively used to promote social media posts as per the link below which was shared five times across Twitter and Facebook, 2, 8, 15, 22, and 29 July 2024. This linked back to the above press release. <https://twitter.com/Hillingdon/status/1817877891352330672>

Hillingdon People

The strategy was also publicised to residents in the July/August edition of Hillingdon People which was delivered to residents between 8 July and 19 July 2024, and available online.

Schools

The strategy was shared with all Headteachers, Governing Board and Education internals in the Education Weekly Update on 16 July 2024 to encourage staff and pupils to complete the survey and was also uploaded onto the LEAP website.

Proactive Promotion to Strategic Partnership and children accessing youth justice services.

The survey was pro-actively promoted to all strategic partners organisations and children and families, inviting comments. This included focus groups held with children and families.

Internal Staff

The strategy was publicised to staff via the Intranet, and through the all-staff email.

Select Committees

A presentation and discussion on the draft strategy at the Children Families and Education Select Committee on 17 July 2024 to invite comments.

Consultation key findings

There were 104 survey responses, 19 of which were completed by children open to the youth justice service. There were also 4 focus groups held with a total of 18 children open to youth justice service, as well as the Children's Participation team.

The five priorities outlined in the strategy have been overwhelmingly supported by the community. This strong endorsement reflects a shared vision for our future and a collective commitment to these key areas.

Valuable feedback from surveys and focus groups, particularly those involving children highlighted a need for more detailed data regarding disproportionality. Addressing this issue is crucial to ensuring fairness and equity in service planning and delivery therefore this has been amended within the strategy itself, particularly to include how the youth justice service will address the over-representation of looked after children and children with speech and language needs.

Appendix A sets out the consultation findings in more detail.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance have reviewed this report and concur with the Financial Implications set out above, noting there are no additional risks of financial pressures associated with the recommendation contained in this report, the Strategy can be delivered effectively within the current approved 2024/25 budget. The below table shows the service has been delivered over the last two financial years with favourable variances at Outturn, with this current financial year it is forecasted to deliver the service with a favourable variance of £57k.

| Financial Year | Budget | Actuals / Forecast | Variance |
|----------------|---------|--------------------|----------|
| 2022-23 | 889,100 | 760,604 | -128,496 |
| 2023-24 | 941,900 | 869,531 | -72,369 |
| 2024-25 | 829,000 | 771,971 | -57,029 |

Furthermore, it is noted the future potential risks highlighted in the financial implications will be monitored as part of regular monthly budget monitoring process and reviewed as part of the wider MTFF budget setting process.

Legal

The local authority must, in consultation with the relevant persons, formulate and implement for each year a Youth Justice Plan setting out how youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded; and how the youth offending teams are to be composed and funded, how they are to operate, and what functions they are to carry out. The Youth Justice Plan must be submitted by the local authority to the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. The formulation and preparation of the Youth Justice Plan is a function which may not be taken solely by the local authority's executive. Youth Justice Plans must be formulated having regard to Youth justice plans: guidance for youth justice services.

The guidance provides that local authorities may if they choose, produce a plan over multiple years; in this case an annual update will be required, covering progress against priorities, a summary of performance, any changes in demographics and legislation, and any additional reporting requirements. There are no legal impediments to the recommendation set out at the beginning of report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. [Hillingdon Family Hub Strategy 2023-2025](#)
2. [Youth Justice Board for England and Wales Strategic Plan 2024-27.odt \(live.com\)](#)
3. [Reducing criminalisation of looked-after children and care leavers | London City Hall](#)
4. [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales \(Victims' Code\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
5. [Youth justice plans: guidance for youth justice services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)