

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2021/22**

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

**3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021**

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR,  
COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**Agenda Item No:**

**CWM TAF YOUTH OFFENDING  
SERVICE**

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**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 2020/21. This includes a summarised response to the Covid 19 pandemic, and to inform members of future service challenges/risks.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that members:
- 2.2 Acknowledge the impact of Covid and the response of the YOS during the past 10 months whilst setting out the future challenges for the service.
- 2.3 Receive further reports in due course in order to be satisfied of the progress being made to meet future demands and ensure the needs of our service users are met.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service 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 the offending and re-offending of children and young people. The statutory partners are: South Wales Police; Cwm Taf Morganwg 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. The Youth Offending Service also attracts external grant funding from the Youth Justice Board, Welsh Government and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

- 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 (YJB), 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 As a result of Covid 19, The YOS were not required to provide an annual Youth Justice Plan for the financial year 2020/21. However, the Youth Justice Board instead requested that YOS complete a self assessment and action plan in relation to a new set of National Standards for Youth Justice. This work had begun in September 2019. The National Standards work is linked to the Structure and Governance of the service and will be overseen by the Offender Management Board. The YOS has sought operational and strategic 'buy in' from partner agencies represented on the Board and this work is ongoing. Furthermore, the YOS was also required to submit a YOS 'Transition to Recovery Plan' for 2020/21, (see attached document) the details of which are summarised in this report.

#### **4. UPDATE SINCE MARCH 2020**

- 4.1 Alongside partner agencies, the YOS staff have undertaken much of their day to day tasks remotely. This has meant reduced face to face contact with young people and families whilst adjusting to working in a more agile way from home. Initially, this created some difficulties with the normal day to day business and many staff experienced problems, mainly related to technology in order to undertake tasks in an efficient manner.
- 4.2 However, during this time, YOS staff have continued to support young people who appear in the law courts (including a Remand court based in Cardiff), or who required an appropriate adult (AA) at the police station when arrested, or who agreed to attend for interview on a voluntary basis. Face to face contact with young people assessed as 'high risk' or subject to 'intensive supervision and surveillance' has also continued during this time and the input of experienced sessional workers has ensured that contact with this cohort could be made consistently during evenings and weekends as necessary. However, the numbers of staff available to offer physical one to one support has fluctuated as restrictions have eased and then tightened during this time. Nevertheless, it is pleasing that the core/critical business of the service has been maintained.
- 4.3 More recently, YOS staff have been equipped with the resources to function more effectively and most staff can see the benefits of working in a more flexible manner. However, the onset of Covid has also brought challenges in relation to managing risks both to the public and to the children known to our service. Importantly, since May last year, the YOS has continued to work with a skeleton staff from its office base in Merthyr Tydfil and this arrangement has provided invaluable support for those staff who require it the most. It also ensured effective on going communication with our partners and agencies outside the Cwm Taf

region. Similarly, the reopening of the YOS base in RCT has ensured that one to one supervision and various team meetings can take place whilst enabling practitioners to discuss challenges/problems and enjoy managerial and peer support within the workplace.

## **5. WHERE WE ARE NOW / FUTURE PRIORITIES.**

- 5.1 The YOS is currently in the process of restructuring the service in order to meet the demands of Early Intervention and Prevention work which now accounts for the majority of our workload. As such, there is a requirement to create two area based prevention/early intervention teams to enhance the quality of prevention services for those most at risk of anti-social and/or offending behaviour. Prevention activity within YOS is increasingly involved in the management of more complex cases, and subsequently these teams will include social work and senior practitioner oversight to ensure children and families receive the right support at the right time. In addition, this aspect of the service will also be allocated more management capacity across the Cwm Taf region. Performance Data and a victim survey report can be found embedded into this document as background papers.
- 5.2 To a large degree, the restructure of the service is a response to a review of the youth justice system across England and Wales, and the YJB was asked to advise Welsh Gov't on the development of a 'Blueprint for Youth Justice for Wales'. A Blueprint Implementation Plan has now been drafted to take this work forward. Early Intervention and Prevention and a trauma informed, child focussed approach is central to the contents of the Blueprint, and a Project Board incorporating several workstreams has been set up to take the work forward. However, Cwm Taf YOS has already begun to embed a trauma informed approach to better meet the needs of young people who enter the into the youth justice system and who have experienced a number of adverse childhood experiences (ACE's).
- 5.3 The YOS utilises the Children and Communities Grant 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 also ensures that the Cwm Taf YOS Prevention Service can provide a swift and proportionate response to anti social behaviour (ASB), Restorative Justice Street Disposals (YRD's) and respond quickly to crisis referrals from the Children's Services Dept. Outreach work engaging with young people in identified hotspot areas resumed in July last year and this work continues alongside our police colleagues.
- 5.4 The YOS continues to expand its use of a Viewpoint data feedback system to ensure the voice of service users is heard and which will inform the future development of the service. The YOS currently completes a specific online questionnaire with children who offend and a separate restorative justice survey for victims of child crime.
- 5.5 The YOS education training and employment (ETE) team has continued to support young people through the past 10 months and have trained a group of community volunteers to engage with individuals (remotely and face to face) to help them to achieve their potential. Furthermore, the YOS has continued its reparation work with young people in the community in a safe manner, whilst contributing, alongside the

YOS police officers to facilitate face to face mediation in care homes where some children have experienced difficulties, many of which are linked to Covid restrictions.

- 5.6 The YOS has recently negotiated CAMHS provision with Senior Health Managers to provide increased support for staff dealing with young people who present with more complex well being issues, and work continues in order to strengthen links with psychology, neuro development and speech and language provision. This provision is being monitored by the Offender Management Board.

## 6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The service is currently dealing with staffing issues that weren't quite as apparent during the first lockdown period in spring of last year. These include increased sickness rates, the care of vulnerable family members and home schooling/childcare issues as a result of school closures. Anxieties may be further increased by the uncertainties of the restructure of the service and future accommodation for YOS staff in the medium to longer term. It should be recognised that the YOS 'Transition to Recovery' is very much linked into local authority recovery plans.
- 6.2 The potential impact of future Covid restrictions, service changes and the risks associated with potential changes to (yet unconfirmed) grant funding will need to be monitored closely to ensure that Cwm Taf YOS can, alongside its key partners, properly meet the demands, aims and objectives ahead and to deliver better outcomes for young people who offend or who are at risk of becoming involved in offending behaviour.

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document (s)	Date	Document Location
YOS Transition to Recovery Plan	Sept 2020	 Cwm Taf Covid19 Recovery Plan Sept 2
YOS Performance		 YOS Performance figures.docx
YOS Victim Survey		 YOS Victim Surveys.docx

