

**Decision Maker:** PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN EDUCATION AND FAMILIES

**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent Executive Key

**Title:** BROMLEY YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE UPDATE

**Contact Officer:** Betty McDonald Head of Youth Offending and Youth Services:  
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**Chief Officer:** Janet Bailey, Director of Children's Social Care:  
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**Ward:** All Wards

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1. Reason for report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the work of Bromley Youth Offending Service since January 2020, to include managing the service during the pandemic as well as the performance and other work of the service.

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2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 The Education, Children and Families PDS is asked to:

- The contents are received, noted and provide any comments on the work of Bromley Youth Offending Service.

2.2 The Portfolio Holder for Education, Children and Families is asked to endorse the annual report.

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### Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
  2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People
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### Financial

1. Cost of proposal: None
  2. Ongoing costs: N/A
  3. Budget head/performance centre: YOS Budget
  4. Total current budget for this head: £1,682,315m
  5. Source of funding: LBB. Statutory Partners and the Youth Justice Board
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### Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 30.5FTE
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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### Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement:
  2. Call-in: Applicable
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### Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: None
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### Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): N/A
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### Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

### **3. COMMENTARY**

3.1 The YOS is multi-disciplinary, multi-agency service that works with children and young people aged 10-18 years and their families to deliver statutory responsibilities in relation to a wide range of provision to addressed as needs. The work of the YOS includes out of court disposal, statutory supervision for those sentenced by the courts this include those sentenced to detention, on licence in the community, court work and those remanded on bail under supervision.

#### **3.2 Managing during Covid-19**

3.3 The YOS has continued to undertake core responsibilities and tasks during the pandemic and maintained contact throughout adhering to guidance from the government and locally, including briefings from Chief Executive.

3.4 In response to the pandemic the YOS service delivery from its main office base in Masons Hill ceased. However, the delivery of interventions to children and young people have been undertaken virtually, although our front-line delivery office remained open throughout to ensure that we were available for our most vulnerable children many of whom attend the office without appointments.

3.5 The numbers of children and young people has decreased as a result of the pandemic. This is partially due to the prioritisation of adult criminal justice work that has seen many children's cases being delayed that would normally have progressed through the system.

3.6 The changes to how we contacted and worked with children has been significant. The Youth Offending Service has continued through the pandemic to operate a service to children, families and victims. Regular contact has been maintained with vulnerable and high-risk children as well as others in contact with the justice system using digital engagement. This has included home visits and setting tasks for children to complete in relation to their offending. There has been issues regarding isolation as a direct result of restrictions in place caused by the lock down, but staff have tried to increase contact with young people via telephone and other media in response to this.

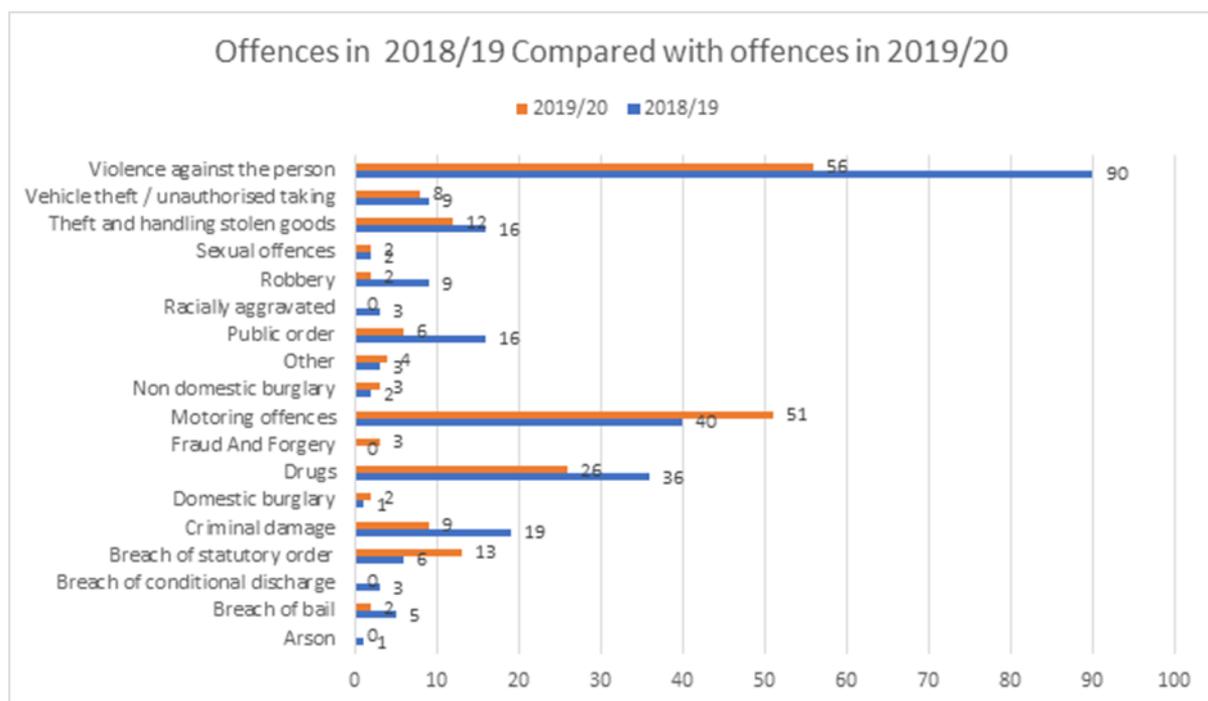
3.7 The decision to use digital media as opposed to telephone calls was to provide a more robust supervision and management of risk and to seek compliance from the children and young people. This has particularly been important especially in relation to those children vulnerable to exploitation. This period of delivering interventions appears to have been effective with staff reporting good engagement with parents as well a more consistent approach with young people appearing to be willing to be open and discuss issues over digital platforms. It was anticipated that there might be an increase in non-compliance but that has not been the case, there has been two breaches instigated during this period and generally high levels of engagement from children. The YOS is however seeing as many young people face to face wherever possible and in line with government advice.

#### **3.8 Key Performance indicators**

3.9 The YOS has three national performance indicators set by central government: First time entrants, reoffending and the use of custody and these indicators are used by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) to measure our performance. There has been a delay on the part of the Ministry of Justice in publishing the latest data, so we are reliant on the previous data outturn. In this period, we saw first time entrants rate reduce by 29% (74) with 54 new entrants into the justice

system compared with the previous year. Bromley has continued to reduce its rate from 243 per 100,000 (Oct 2017 to Sept 2018) to 174 (October 2018 to Sept 2019) per 100,000. In reviewing trends in relation to first time entrants it is evident that Bromley has had some of the lowest rates and there has been periods over the last few years where first-time entrants rated plateaued, however, there has been a slight increase. It is expected that when the data is published this could see more children coming through the system. The rate of reoffending in Bromley is 37.4% this is 5% lower than the rate for London and 4% higher than our statistical neighbours. Bromley has the 7<sup>th</sup> lowest reoffending rate in London and ranks 74<sup>th</sup> out of 154 YOS in the country. The trends from our data shows that the cohort of children has reduced over the last four years from highs of 221 children to 182 representing a 18% reduction (39 children) over the four years.

### 3.10 The types of offences committed by children in Bromley



3.11 The cohort of children in Bromley has reduced from 261 in 2018/19 to 199 in 2019/20 a 24% reduction on those involved in offending. In both years the top three offences continue to be violence against the person, motoring offences and drugs.

3.12 The use of custody in Bromley is low and therefore statistical conclusions need caution in terms of actual numbers that impact on percentage outturn. During July 2019 to June 2020, 3 young people sentenced to custody twice for separate offences. In terms of this measure this represents 5 custodial sentences up by one child on same period the previous year, thus representing a 9% increase per 1000 of custodial sentences. However, the Bromley custody rate is 14% below London and 2% below the national average. There are several challenges for the service in maintaining performance in this area and work to address desistance from offending, use of illegal substances and addressing violent offending are key priority areas for the YOS and its partners agencies. It is notable that our rates for BAME children in custody reflect national over representation of this group despite lower proportions of BAME children in our local population. In examining all those children their offending was very serious giving the court no options than to impose a custodial sentence.

3.13 The Youth Custody Service (YCS) introduced restricted access to the secure estate. This included suspension of all social and professional visits and in place increased access to telephone contact so that children could maintain contact with family members and

professionals during this period. There has been increased activities both in room (cells)s and with earlier easing of lock down this changed to more out of room activities and increased access to education.

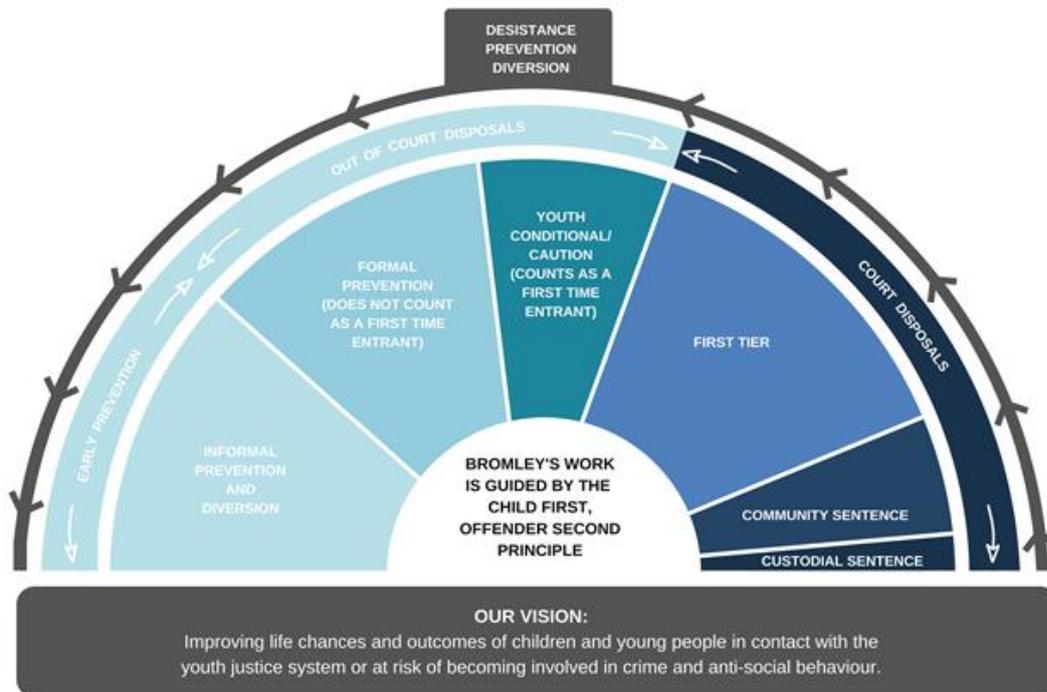
- 3.14 Bromley YOS acknowledges the additional pressures that the Covid-19 restrictions may have had on families and children and in terms of managing during this period both emotionally and financially. We have therefore increased contact levels with children and sought assistance and advice from the YOS seconded Clinical Psychologist in working and managing well-being. Some families have required referrals and assistance to food banks and vouchers to help them through this period. The youth workers have maintained outreach contact with some children and young people particularly engaging with those to sustain education, employment and training especially for post 16 statutory school age young people. There has been a small group of families where they have no access to the internet or IT equipment to assist with schoolwork and through the Dfe allocation of laptops we were able to secure these for YOS young people.
- 3.15 The YOS has a recovery plan that outlines how the service has operated during the pandemic as well as highlighting areas of good practice that will be enhanced and retained during the lock down. This includes staff being involved in auditing case work and delivering virtual training sessions.

### **3.16 National standards self-assessment**

- 3.17 The Ministry of Justice and the Youth Justice Board (YJB) published a new set of standards for youth justice which came into effect in April 2019. These standards place greater emphasis on achieving suitable outcomes for children and are less prescriptive than previous iterations. The YJB required all YOS's to assess their compliance with the standards with an audit of cases to create a baseline of initial performance and to identify areas for development. In terms of Bromley there were high levels of compliance and fewer areas for development which is being addressed through our improvement plan.

### **3.18 Youth Justice Strategy**

- 3.19 In the last year we have published our Youth Justice Strategy 2020/23 that sets out our ambitions for our children by improving their life chance and outcomes. Our work as a YOS Partnership is guided by *the Child First, Offender Second* principle. Our priorities are:
- Reduce the number of first-time entrants into the youth justice system
  - Reduce reoffending by children
  - Improve the safety and wellbeing of children in the youth justice system
  - Address ethnic disproportionality and over representation of other protected characteristics and vulnerable groups
  - Protecting the public and victims
  - Strengthening our Partnership Board and workforce.
- 3.20 We are focused on desistance, prevention and diversion from offending and have developed a safeguarding rainbow well-being model, so we have built on this idea to reflect on our YOS cohort.



Our aim is to tackle issues that children face with our partners to build a trusting relationship with them whilst challenging and supporting change in their lives away from offending.

### 3.21 Focus on Practice

3.22 The YOS has been on an improvement journey to improve the quality of practice and management oversight of the work. There were examples of inconsistency in practice and drive to ensure that cases were progressing, and work being undertaken to address desistance. A practice consultant has helped in contributing to the service through regular intensive programme of practice audits. The improvements demonstrated during this time has led to:

- The voices of young people are now more visible in their case records, and there is clearer evidence that they are informing practice
- There are fewer delays between referral and first contact with families has reduced.
- Supervision is being held promptly after allocation, and then more regularly and at sufficiently frequent intervals; it is being recorded with greater clarity and depth, with more frequent evidence of reflective discussions.
- There is clearer evidence of challenge and of supervision helping to drive cases forward.
- The type of assessment undertaken with families is more proportionate to the level of risk and need.
- Young people are more often seen and spoken to alone during their assessments and this is an area to continually focus on that this is happening.
- Specific risk assessment tools (gangs, Child Sexual Exploitation etc.) are used more regularly to inform risk analysis.

- The quality of assessments is improving – with evidence of greater professional curiosity and explicit hypothesising occurring.

3.23 Our work with SEND has strengthened over the last year with greater emphasis on understanding the cohort of children with SEND in the criminal justice system. In order to efficiently ensure no children are overlooked or missed, the SEN/YOS meet monthly with a focus on open cases across both services, ensuring the children/young people are in an appropriate provision, have scheduled annual reviews and are getting suitable support or education, training and employment. Information sharing and exchange has enabled us to ensure that children are supported well by both services.

3.24 There has been a detailed action plan in place to chart and track progress from various audits and reviews of case files. We have reviewed all policies and procedures over the last six months. This is overseen via a YOS Improvement Board chaired by the Assistant Director and a Challenge Board chaired by the Director of Children's Service (DCS). The overall work and accountability for the YOS Partnership is governed by the YOS Partnership Board chaired by the Chief Executive and meets quarterly. The Board has exercised its role and function of scrutinising and seeking assurance that the service is able to discharge its role of managing and work with children involved in offending.

3.25 The Board set up a task and finish group to focus on one of the priorities from the strategy to address ethnic disproportionality. This is chaired by the DCS and a number of partners are also contributing to examining the evidence in relation to disproportionality in their areas. The Task and finish group will be reporting to the YOS Governance Board in December 2020 and further direction and information will be shared in future updates.

### **3.26 Safeguarding**

3.27 In terms of safeguarding children, the YOS continues to carry out its responsibilities under section 11 of the Children's Act (2004) which places several duties to ensure that day to day operations considers the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. One of our key priorities is keeping children safe from harm. The main offences that children in the borough are involved in is violence against the person, criminal damage and theft.

3.28 Young people tell us that they don't always feel safe on the streets and for a small number they carry weapons for self-protection. The fear of crime can add to the emotional wellbeing of our children and cause anxiety and stress. We work with children to help them to develop strategies to manage their anxiety through our work with Bromley Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and Well-being service.

3.29 CAMHS provides a range of interventions to the YOS roughly equating to 2.5 days per week this includes:

- Group and individual case consultation
- Reflective case discussion
- Specialist training (e.g. Conduct Disorder, Complex Trauma)
- Liaison
- Multi-agency panel attendance (MEGA, Risk & Safety)

3.30 Certain adjustments were made to this service provision in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and following government guidance, in order to ensure that the YOS was able to continue to access specialist mental health expertise when required. One of the main themes picked up during case consultation was mental health and ensuring that we are able to respond and support children in need of specialist services.

3.31 Risk in the YOS is managed within the service via the YOS Risk and Safeguarding (RASP) Panel and a wider tracking of high-risk children involved in missing, exploitation (sexual and criminal) are tracked via the Missing, Exploitation and Gang Affiliation (MEGA) panel. There is currently 13 YOS children on MEGA representing around 20% of YOS caseload and 25% managed under RASP.

### **3.32 Workforce**

3.33 We continue to have a stable workforce and have over the years reduced our reliance on agency workers. We currently have 3 agency staff and are currently looking to recruit permanently to these posts. Exit interviews with all staff has highlighted one leaving to pursue a new career in the business world and another has secured a position on a social work course. We continue to support staff through professional development provided by the local authority learning and development team, this includes induction session, specialist training on assessment, serious youth violence, sexually harmful behaviours, court training, comprehensive safeguarding training offer, management development and other workshops.

3.34 We have developed an integrated health offer in the YOS comprising of a Nurse, Speech and Language worker, CAMHS Psychologist and substance misuse worker. We also continue to have staff seconded from the National Probation Service, Police, Education welfare and youth service in the YOS working with our children. We have specialist workers delivering restorative justice work, reparation activity and diversion from criminal justice system.

3.35 The team has really developed over the last year and has been able to demonstrate that they have the capacity to produce high quality work and in turn good outcomes for our children.

## **4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN**

4.1 The YOS works with some of our most vulnerable children and young people, many of whom have unmet needs and through the multi-agency working and set up there are a range of specialists staff and services to work directly with children and to facilitate their engagement and access to services. Children in the justice system often experience and exposed to risks in terms of their well-being, safety, at home and in the community and these can be detrimental to them and their future.

## **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

None

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The YOS budget is a pooled budget with partnership contributions from the London Borough of Bromley, Police, probation and Health. The annual YOS Plan outlines the financial resourcing of the YOS, with the main contributors being the local authority and a grant from the Youth

Justice Board. Other partner contributions are in kind which covers staffing costs. The annual cost for 2020/21 for the YOS is £1,682,315.

## 7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 also stipulates the statutory requirements for staffing composition of the YOS. The YOS is staffed with personnel directly employed by London Borough of Bromley Council as well as employees of partner agencies who have been seconded into the service and who remain employed by the partner agency.

## 8. LEGAL IMPLICATION

- 8.1 Under section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1989 local authorities are required to form a local Youth Offending Team under the auspice Act. This requires every local authority in England and wales to set up and deliver youth justice services in line with the statutory framework that outlines the duties and responsibilities in relation to youth offending. To implement an annual youth justice plan outlining how services will be delivered and to submit the plan to the Youth Justice Board annually and this will be published.
- 8.2 National Standards for youth justice define the minimum standards of service provision and these standards are set by the Secretary of State for Justice on the advice of the Youth Justice Board. The standards cover a range of practice areas related to safeguarding children and young people, public protection and ensure the effective delivery of services.

## 9. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

N/A

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	