

Youth Justice Review 2016

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Cabinet Member: Frances Nicholson

Division and Local Member:

1. Summary

- 1.1. After considerable delay, the Youth Justice Review authored by Mr Charles Taylor was published in December 2016. On the same day the Government published its response. Overall the Government response makes clear that, apart from some specific points, the recommendations of the review will be considered over the longer term and no change in legislation or guidance is currently planned.
- 1.2. County Plan – safer and healthier place
Social Policy – “target young people who are involved in/at risk of offending and positively engage with them”

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1. Members are asked to consider and comment on the report with particular reference to the outcome of the Taylor review.

3. Background

- 3.1. The central and local funding and resourcing provided to Somerset Youth Justice services has fallen steadily over the past decade lead to a reduction in overall YOT resources from a value of £2.7m in 2005/6 to a approximately £1.2m in 2016/17. The impact of this reduction has been mitigated by a reduction in the number of children entering the Youth Justice system. In the same period the active statutory caseload in Somerset has fallen from around 300 to about 100. Of course, the resources required to deliver some Youth Justice services do not fall in direct proportion to the size of the caseload and the caseload itself consists generally of more challenging young people. Nonetheless, the combination of a reduced caseload, efficiencies in management and support roles and close collaboration with the Targeted Youth Support Service, Youth Offending Team to sustain good performance levels.
- 3.2. The reduction in resources and workload reflects that national position and it was in the light of these changes that the Ministry of Justice commissioned the national review.
- 3.3. The Review and Government Response address five core areas
 - Devolution of Youth Justice
 - Taylor recommends removing the duty to have a YOT, removing the ring fence from the Youth Justice Grant and transferring statutory Youth Justice tasks to the Local Authority.

- The Government says it will continue to ring fence the Youth Justice Grant and will look further at the proposals to see how local authorities can be given more flexibility
- Children in contact with Youth Justice system
 - Taylor makes a number of recommendations for improvements to pre-court processes.
 - The Government identifies current development addressing most of these areas
- Children in Court
 - Taylor makes a number of suggestions for radical reform of Courts and sentencing.
 - The Government says it will work to develop an approach to sentencing reform incorporating the Taylor principles.
- Secure Schools
 - Taylor recommends that Education should be at the heart of custody and that “secure schools” should be set up.
 - The Government agrees that Education should be at heart of custody and will set up two “secure schools”
- Role of Central Government
 - Taylor recommends that the Youth Justice Board should be replaced with a Youth Justice Commissioner and an expert committee to advise on youth justice should be established
 - The Government says it will work with the YJB to review the governance and accountability framework for the whole system.

3.4 Thus, the overall indications are that there will be no change in the current statutory arrangements for the provision of Youth Justice Services. Two unknowns remain: the figures for the 17/18 Youth Justice Grant have not yet been notified; the format for the 17/18 Youth Justice Plan has not yet been published

4. Consultations undertaken

4.1. The contents of the Taylor Review and Government response were presented to the Somerset Youth Justice Partnership Board meeting in December 2016 which agreed that the Review did not itself drive a need for local change.

5. Implications

5.1. Any reshaping of Youth Justice services will be in the context of the current legislation

6. Background papers

6.1. Youth Justice Review 2016
Government Response to Review 2016

Note: For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author