



## West Midlands Police and Crime Panel

<b>Date</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> March 2018
<b>Report title</b>	Youth Justice reform in the West Midlands
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### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

- 1 To confirm if / how the Panel wishes to continue to be informed.

#### 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Police and Crime Panel on the progress of the work stream.
- 1.2 To inform the Police and Crime Panel of future activity of the work stream.

#### 2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) refers to PSR as “*transforming lives in the West Midlands*” and sets out a clear vision and set of outcomes to be achieved.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.2 The SEP articulates that the Combined Authorities Public Services Reform Programme currently focuses on 4 areas; Multiple Complex Needs (formally Troubled Individuals), criminal justice, employment and skills and mental health.<sup>2</sup> Public Service Reform has reformed this set of ambitions to align the work streams into broader areas of Radical Prevention, Inclusive Growth and System Collaboration.
- 2.3 **Offending, Criminal Justice and the Devolution of Youth Justice**
- 2.4 Offending behaviour significantly reduces the quality of life of West Midlands residents and severely affects the life chances of offenders. The vision is that

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<sup>1</sup> SEP (2016 pg.23)

<sup>2</sup> SEP (2016 pg. 26)

criminal justice collaboration and devolution will enable us to prevent crime and reduce reoffending by giving us the tools and incentives to invest upstream rather than managing the cost of failure.

2.5 The West Midlands achieves the best overall re-offending rates in England. Local investment of £17m in offender management has already prevented £33m of criminal justice costs by reducing re-offending. We already have a strong commitment across our partnerships to better understand the fiscal and policy benefits to criminal justice devolution.

2.5 Building on the initial devolution agreement for Government and the WMCA to work together to address offending, our focus is now on reducing repeat offending by those with particular vulnerabilities – initially children, young people and adult women offenders.

## 2.6 Youth Justice

2.7 Under current legislation Local Authority Chief Executive Officers are responsible for the delivery of youth justice services (Youth Offending Services) in their area. In the Constituent WMCA area there are 7 Youth Offending Services coterminous with the 7 Local Authority areas. The Non constituent members are formed and managed differently (Warwickshire and Staffordshire have Youth Offending Services managed through the Local Authority, however West Mercia has a collaborative approach incorporating Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Worcestershire housed within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner but governed by the statutory partnership Board led by the Local Authorities).

2.8 Each Youth Offending Service has a statutory management board, in the WMCA constituent area this is replicated seven times. Under the current legislation there are five statutory partners, Police, Probation (National Probation Service), Health (CCG's), Children's social care services and Education, with a number of other partners identified as being stakeholders (community safety, housing, fire and rescue services, the judiciary, the voluntary sector). In the WMCA three of those statutory partners have a regional footprint (Police, Probation and health). There is a significant variance in the strategic investment at the board meetings; attendance, performance and financial data differed greatly.

2.8 Local Youth Offending Services have a good understanding of local issues, but there is limited wider (regional) understanding of issues or mapping of current service provision outside specific themes (such as child sexual exploitation). Extensive performance management information is available around Children and young people who are in the criminal justice system.

2.9 Nationally and regionally work to reduce youth offending has been highly successful over recent years. There are no failing Youth Offending Services in the WMCA, in fact several are highly commended. The national 'Charlie Taylor' review on youth justice confirmed that since 2006 the number of children in custody has declined by 64% to its lowest recorded level, however

of these almost two thirds reoffend within a year of release, and this is reflected locally.

- 2.10 Young people now offending are typically highly complex and vulnerable with a history of adverse childhood experiences (ACE's). The extent of abuse, loss, trauma, attachment and resilience in this group has not been researched or evidenced previously.
- 2.11 Around 40% of children in Young Offender Institutions have not been to school since they were aged 14, and nearly nine out of ten have been excluded from school at some point. Many are or were children in care. Levels of special educational needs or disabilities for children who offend are known to be at least 60% (some specialist screening tools suggest this is closer to 85-100%), many have speech and language difficulties and basic literacy and numeracy difficulties.
- Outcomes for many women in the criminal justice system in the WMCA remain poor.

### **3.0 Approach**

- 3.1 **Development of a Strategic Needs Assessment.** The development of a WMCA Youth Justice strategic needs assessment together with population data, stakeholder perception of the issues and evidence of best and emerging practice. The raw data is collected by the Youth Offending Services and a WMCA data set which combines this information has been developed and is currently being populated. Alongside this, Public Health England have committed to developing a high level analysis of children in the criminal justice system. Both of these insights are expected to be completed in May 2018.
- 3.2 **Governance.** A reference group has been formed with a number of key stakeholders already engaged, including the Police and Crime Commissioner, regional leads within local authorities, for example a Director of Children's Services, leading academics, National Probation Service, National Health Service England, the Youth Justice Board, Ministry of Justice, Prison Reform Trust, Crown Prosecution Service, Public Health, Crest Justice Devolution Thinktank and consultants.
- 3.3 **Research into Childhood Adversity.** Dr Alex Chard, the author of 'Troubled Lives, Tragic Consequences' is leading the regional research into Abuse, Loss, Trauma, Attachment and Resilience (ALTAR) The research is intended to establish the extent of abuse, loss, trauma and attachment and resilience (ALTAR) within a sample of cases from the seven Constituent Member Local Authority led Youth Offending team's (YOT's) in the region. Two other YOTs where Non-Constituent local authority areas are present, have opted to participate in this study (Warwickshire and West Mercia). The sample from each service will be stratified to include children in custody, in the community and having received out of court disposals. The West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner has agreed to fund an addition 30 cases to be research through a gang involved lens to add a different dimension to the research.

The WMCA has commissioned Dr Alex Chard to facilitate this research. In the thematic case review, *Troubled Lives - Tragic Consequences* he studied the common themes and professional interventions in the lives of six children, five of whom committed serious violent offences and one boy who was a victim. This study provided significant evidence of the extent of adversity suffered by these older children and the complex issues being faced by the professionals working to protect them and others.

The research will utilise both the systemic research approach, an action research methodology applied and the expertise developed.

*Action research is a term which refers to a practical way of looking at your own work to check that it is as you would like it to be. Because action research is done by you, the practitioner, it is often referred to as practitioner based research; and because it involves you thinking about and reflecting on your work, it can also be called a form of self-reflective practice. Jean McNiff (2002)*

An action research approach has been adopted as it creates experiential learning and is also cost effective as the practitioner develops the information on the case. It is also expected to assist with creating ownership of the findings and developing understanding of the need to change services and responses to service users. This approach will also develop the skills of staff and create a pool of staff and managers familiar with the impact of ALTAR.

The in depth study requires the practitioner to research the ongoing and historic agency involvements including where available, relevant chronologies, key assessments and plans from all involved agencies. This research is used to create a case-story which is developed from a template which covers key areas of the child's life and professional involvements. The in-depth case study generates both quantitative data through the case screening and qualitative data through the case story-line. The case story work revealing a deeper picture of the nature and depth of adversity experienced by the child studied. The case-story also serves to counter the risks from a purely quantitative approach which can de-humanise the subjects of such research. Whilst this process has a key objective of generating information about cases; in practice what it has also served to achieve is a much deeper understanding of children by practitioners including influencing how they relate to them.

Training and support to managers is provided to facilitate the above approach and understandings of the impact of abuse, loss, trauma and attachment. Integrity of approach is being maintained through external guidance and scrutiny of findings.

The research report will include an analysis of the outcome of the screening process and pen-pictures drawn from the case stories. The report will provide a comprehensive analysis of the extent of abuse, loss and trauma in the population surveyed. It will also provide the basis for taking forward reform of the youth justice system in the region. In addition, each participating local authority will receive a summary of local findings.

3.4 To progress criminal justice devolution to the WMCA is it key that the Police and Crime Commissioner continues to be fully engaged and supportive of the proposed areas for collaboration and devolution.

#### **4. Key areas for collaboration and devolution**

4.1 Areas currently being considered for greater collaboration and devolution are:

- Early intervention, prevention and diversion
- Community based engagement
- Governance
- The secure estate

4.2 The WMCA is grateful to the OPCC for their approach to grant funding of Youth Offending work which will, from April 2018, be a regional fund, moving towards collaborative bids on key priority areas and innovation.