

Title of report: Youth justice

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: 16 September 2025

Report by: Head of Service, West Mercia Youth Justice Service

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All wards

Purpose

To provide the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with an update on the performance of West Mercia Youth Justice Service.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The committee read the attached report and appendices, and prepare any lines of enquiry and questions for officers attending the meeting.**

Alternative options

1. The committee have requested this report for consideration at this meeting. Therefore no alternative options are presented.

Key considerations

2. As part of its work programme, the have asked to receive an update on the performance of the West Mercia Youth Justice Service.
3. Appendix 1 to this report provides a copy of the West Mercia Youth Justice Service annual plan for the period 2025-2026.
4. Appendix 2 contains performance information on:
 - a. Reoffending rates

- b. First-time offending rates
 - c. Accommodation, housing and homelessness
 - d. Education and training
 - e. Health
 - f. Working with offenders and victims
5. Appendix 3 provides an overview of the service.

Community impact

- 6. The scrutiny function supports community development through robust scrutiny of the council's policy framework, including the Local Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, County Plan and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 7. Scrutiny also supports community issues more directly through the work of the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee.
- 8. The function also helps to ensure that the council discharges its corporate parent duties effectively, through scrutiny of the corporate parenting board and the council's broader work to support its looked after children and their families.

Environmental impact

- 9. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
- 10. All reports to scrutiny committees, as with all council committees, include appraisals of the impact of the report content on climate change. Scrutiny committee work programmes directly link to the Herefordshire Council Plan priorities, including the key priority to "Protect and enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live.
- 11. Climate change and carbon reduction related issues are directly identified in the remit and therefore the focus of the Environment and Sustainability scrutiny committee.
- 12. In preparing this information report, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the council's Environmental Policy. Examples include:
 - a. Online meetings, eliminating the need to travel to Hereford for a single meeting.
 - b. Paper-free briefings and informal meetings, eliminating the need for printed paper.

Equality duty

13. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
14. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. As this report is primarily for information, we do not believe that accepting (or rejecting) this report will have an impact on our equality duty.

Resource implications

15. Effective scrutiny produces evidence-based recommendations. These can be informed by learning from best practice and an understanding of 'what works' at other similar local authorities, as well as developing a robust picture of what the situation is locally based on data, intelligence and insights. Where adopted recommendations can help with the efficiency and effectiveness of services that can be delivered differently, as well as informing the development of current and new policies.
16. As this report is primarily for information, there are no direct resource implications arising from this report. However the function may require some funding in order to carry out its work effectively. Requirements may include purchasing training or expert advice. However it is anticipated that much of the training and development required during the year can be met using existing council resources.

Risk management

17. Effective scrutiny is a feature of the council's governance arrangements, where the council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range of factors that could result in risks to the council of not doing scrutiny effectively. These include the failure to:
 - a. challenge and hold decision makers to account
 - b. link scrutiny work to the delivery of the council's priorities and risk management
 - c. carry out thorough and appropriate research to make evidence-based recommendations
 - d. engage partners and providers
 - e. ensure that structures and models of operation are fit for purpose and match ambition and available resources
 - f. ensure that scrutiny can operate as the voice of communities and
 - g. draw on member knowledge and experience to inform policy development.

18. To mitigate, tolerate or eradicate these risks, enablers for effective scrutiny include:
- a. operating in an apolitical manner
 - b. clarity of vision and purpose
 - c. scrutiny support availability, capability and capacity
 - d. effective engagement and commitment by members and officers at all levels, including cabinet, opposition leaders, scrutiny chairs and senior officers who play a central role in setting the tone and direction
 - e. robust work programming and prioritisation of topics with clear objectives and expected impacts
 - f. ensuring that scrutiny work will add value to the council and communities e.g. through strong links between work programme topics and the integrated strategic plans that set out the actions and timescales to deliver the priorities in the County Plan
 - g. access to and availability of robust data and intelligence and
 - h. good relationships with partners and providers.

Consultees

19. None

Appendices

Appendix 1: West Mercia Youth Justice Service annual plan 2025-2026

Appendix 2: West Mercia Youth Justice Service quarter 1 performance

Appendix 3: An introduction to West Mercia Youth Justice Service: presentation to committee

Background papers

None