

Youth Justice Plan – comments for Cabinet

Bath & N.E Somerset youth offending team and their partners have made great strides towards a more effective response to youth offending, one that prioritises prevention.

We strongly welcome the decrease in the level of first time entrants into the youth justice system, which has seen a positive fall of nearly 18%. I am proud that under a Liberal Democrat administration B&NES made greater improvement than that of any of its comparators.

We commend the collaboration between the Youth Justice Board, the youth offending teams and the judiciary to bring about a significant reduction in the numbers of young people in custody. I am delighted to note from this report that no young person from B&NES has been sentenced to custody for 18 months, making us one of only two Authorities nationally that have a zero custody rate.

Given that girls access 20% of youth offending services, it is heartening to see that after decades of neglect the vulnerability of these girls, particularly in terms of sexual exploitation, is finally being recognised by the way in which data is recorded and services are provided.

However, there are still areas for concern that the Liberal Democrat group call upon the Conservative administration to address.

After 3 years of re-offending rates for young people in B&NES being lower than all comparators, last year there was a 6% increase in the re-offending rate. While overall B&NES is still better than the national averages, it not currently as good as the South West and Avon and Somerset and we urge you to prioritise tackling re-offending.

We also welcome the reports commitment to restorative justice; however we believe more should be done to make it integral to the youth justice system.

Finally, and most importantly, the Council is the lead partner in the multi-agency approach to preventing youth offending, As such, the Council makes a significant contribution in terms of staff, funding and additional support.

Preventing our young people falling into patterns of behaviour that not only damages their future prospects, but which adversely effects the quality of life for all B&NES residents, should be a priority for this administration. We therefore call for reassurance that spending on youth offending will not be reduced below it's current level and is retained at 45% or above of the total youth offending budget.

