



**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children Services**

Report to:	<b>Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date:	<b>02 December 2022</b>
Subject:	<b>Joint Diversionary Panel - Update on Recommendations from University of Lincoln Evaluation</b>

**Summary:**

This report provides Committee members with an update on progress made against the recommendations following the evaluation undertaken of the Joint Diversionary Panel by the University of Lincoln which was presented to the Committee in November 2021.

**Actions Required:**

The Committee is invited to review and seek assurance on progress against the recommendations contained within the evaluation and the on-going development of the Joint Diversionary Panel.

## **1. Background**

The Lincolnshire Joint Diversionary Panel (JDP) was first established in 2017 in response to detailed analysis of criminal justice disposals which evidenced the inappropriate use of Police Cautions against children and young people. As a direct consequence of this practice there was a much higher number of First Time Entrants (FTE) into the criminal justice system in Lincolnshire, in comparison to our statistical neighbours. The implications of acquiring a criminal conviction for a child or young person can have potentially long-term negative impacts upon their future.

The JDP reviews cases of children and young people aged between 10 and 18 where there is an admission of responsibility for the offence. The JDP seeks to understand the underlying causes of children and young people's behaviour. In addition, it offers the ability to provide timely and effective intervention to reduce the potential for children and young people to become involved in the formal justice system.

The progress and the development of the Panel has been brought before the Committee on a number of occasions. The Committee has shown a strong interest in ensuring that the Panel maintains credibility, robustness, and transparency around its practice. There is

wide ranging scrutiny through several oversight forums which assess its performance and impact in supporting efforts to reduce youth crime within Lincolnshire and support safer communities. The need to provide an objective perspective of the impact of the Joint Diversionary Panel led to the commissioning of an evaluation undertaken by the University of Lincoln and led by Dr Sue Bond-Taylor.

### **University of Lincoln Evaluation**

The evaluation of the Joint Diversionary Panel was commissioned and funded by Lincolnshire County Council and the Office of the Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and carried out between January 2018 and April 2021.

The evaluation was informed by elements of an appreciative inquiry approach, in the context of a longer standing reciprocal relationship of partnership working. In the role of researcher Dr Bond-Taylor acted as a 'critical friend' to Lincolnshire County Council and Lincolnshire Police in highlighting what is already working, developing 'provocative propositions' that stretch and challenge the service, and generating practical recommendations to help direct future practice and achieve improved outcomes for children and young people in the county.

### **Evaluation Objectives**

The objectives of the evaluation were twofold:

1. Evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of the Joint Diversionary Panel process for making decisions about outcomes for young people who have admitted an offence.
2. Review the effectiveness and suitability of any subsequent Youth Restorative Interventions being delivered as out of court disposals. The evaluation was designed to identify evidence outcomes set out within the Joint Diversionary Panel Terms of Reference. This included a necessity to ensure that victim satisfaction and confidence are maintained and that the Panel contributes towards community safety and reducing the risk of re-offending.

The overall findings of the evaluation presented to the Scrutiny Committee in November 2021 concluded that:

- Lincolnshire's Joint Diversionary Panel has provided a robust and effective process for making informed decisions about young people in conflict with the law, which prevents their unnecessary criminalisation and diverts them into supportive and preventative interventions.
- In addition, it was concluded that the introduction of the Youth Restorative Intervention (YRI) utilised by the Panel has significantly improved outcomes for young people in the county whilst maintaining community safety.

Whilst recognising the successful impact of the Joint Diversionary Panel, there was a strong desire to ensure that any key learning was captured and utilised to drive forward improvement and development.

Consequently, the evaluation highlighted a small number of areas to consider for future development which were formed into the following recommendations:

1. **Develop a young person participation strategy:** There is scope for developing a more participatory approach in which young people's views and contributions are embedded more systematically into the process and which collaboratively address the issues impacting other young people in their community.
2. **Expand the Future4Me offer:** Building upon the creative emergency approaches which the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown prompted, the Future4Me team could broaden and enhance the offer of positive diversionary activities, promoting social inclusion and citizenship, and restorative work with young people.
3. **Increase victim participation:** Whilst it is important to separate victim needs from the outcome for the young person, so as not to undermine the non-escalatory approach, there is scope for enhancing victim inclusion, information, and communication. The design and distribution of the Victim Survey needs rethinking to provide more reliable data.
4. **Undertake enhanced data analysis:** The opportunity for quantitative data analysis has been limited within this evaluation. It would be useful to engage in a more systematic collection and analysis of service data in key areas.
5. **Improve communications and share success stories more widely:** There is scope for further public relations work to share the purpose and successes of the JDP and YRI.

## **2. Conclusion**

In each area of the recommendations which are highlighted within the evaluation document, significant progress has been taken forward and key developments established alongside our partner agencies. This includes the following:

### **Young Person Engagement**

A robust process was established to gain the voice of the child to inform JDP discussions and decision making which was fully embedded with effect from 31 January 2022. Specific questions and areas of focus have been agreed for professionals to use and are consistently captured through face-to-face discussions with children and young people prior to the Panel. This information is then shared and discussed to actively inform the Panel's discussions.

All young people in Police custody in Lincolnshire are now referred to either mental health Liaison and Diversion services or health care professionals. These changes in practice have

been agreed following the acknowledgment that all young people, by virtue of being in custody, are vulnerable and should be given the opportunity to access support from these services. This provides a critical opportunity to seek the young person's views and for these to be shared with and inform the Panel's discussions.

We have worked in partnership with the OPCC and the Lincolnshire Youth Commission to support the Big Conversation and Annual Conversation. This is geared towards giving young people a stronger voice in raising policing and crime issues within their local communities. The Youth Commission report for 2022 is published on the OPCC website and includes the key findings and recommendations following their engagement with young people. This examines how young people would like organisations to work together to make improvements in the support, information, services, and advice available to them. The key findings were presented to the Youth Offending Service (YOS) Strategic Management Board in August 2022.

### **Expand the Future4Me Offer**

The existing offer to children and young people is extensive and has been supported by significant funding through NHS England (Health and Justice) in establishing a dedicated complex needs health team fully integrated within the service. This provides support in key areas such as clinical and forensic psychology, speech and language and specialist formulation sessions to practitioners to enhance their knowledge, skill set and confidence.

Future4Me has a significant range of support and intervention available at a universal level through our Youth and Community Development team and Positive Futures offer. We regularly update details of activities with local partner agencies and district councils to ensure they have the most up to date information to promote and share with young people around positive activities in their area.

Our Future4Me Community Interventions Team provide targeted interventions on both a group and 1-1 basis. Our open access programmes, including sports, activity and youth club sessions, have fully resumed across our communities. There have also been responses to concerns raised around anti-social behaviour and exploitation concerns where we have undertaken assertive outreach work to young people considered at risk in identified areas.

Our offer is enhanced by the delivery of eight-week groupwork modules which are Status (male) & Filter (female). The aims of the group are to encourage an understanding of society's expectations of males and females and how these can better promote healthy relationships. The programmes also enable young people to identify acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relationships, to identify the impact of thoughts, feelings, and rules behind conflict and to improve emotional management.

### **Increase victim participation**

Victim Liaison Officers (VLO's) are now core Panel members of the Joint Diversionary Panel. The VLO's will advocate for victims ensuring victims' views are heard and

considered as part of the Panel's discussion and decision-making process. Since being JDP core Panel members, the VLO's have an improved understanding of the Panel process which enables them to ensure relevant victim information is gathered and shared and provide informed advice, guidance and support to victims.

We have established an Information leaflet for victims of youth crime. The leaflet provides detail about the JDP process for victims and is shared with them prior to the Panel to ensure they have a clear understanding and know how their views will be taken into consideration.

A Future4Me Victims Charter has been drafted to provide confirmation of the support and service which victims of youth offences should expect. This document shows our commitment to ensuring victims are treated with dignity, respect, sensitivity, and compassion.

### **Undertake enhanced data analysis**

An analysis of the cohort is presented on a quarterly basis at the Youth Offending Service Strategic Management Board. It provides a commentary around throughput, risks, and impact for scrutiny and to inform planning/ decision making.

There is an enhanced focus upon education data for the children in this cohort which reflects the importance of children being in education to provide stability and positive and constructive activity which is supported by the work of the four Education Mentors within Future4Me.

In January 2022, we undertook a comprehensive and detailed analysis of all cases open to Future4Me for youth justice interventions using data from internal and external partner agencies. This included data related to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), school exclusion, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)/ Healthy Minds involvement, and social care intervention. This enabled us to analyse the profile of needs for these cases and provide a comparison with the profile of needs for the wider population of children outside the youth justice system for comparison. This data contributed to the Youth Justice Plan and was also considered by Strategic Management Board members in establishing service priorities.

In reporting to the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, we now provide an analysis of our 'out of court' and 'post court' data including rates of children and young people sentenced to custody, first time entrants into the criminal justice system and the percentage of children that receive restorative outcome from the JDP.

In our analysis of re-offending data, it enables tracking on an individual basis and of the wider cohort to inform understanding of the Panel's impact and the sequencing of different interventions at different times for children. This is highlighting the positive use of early intervention and use of restorative outcomes and the impact that this can have upon re-offending rates.

## **Improve communications and share success stories more widely**

Since its publication, the evaluation of the Joint Diversionary Panel has been shared with a significant number of internal and external partner agencies to share positive feedback and findings from evaluation.

The success of the Panel has been referenced in discussions with the National Audit Office, Youth Justice Board, and the Ministry of Justice in examining innovative approaches to tackling crime and work around out of court disposals.

The University of Lincoln has designed a child and young person version of the report and also a professional's bulletin, to highlight and share the main findings of the report.

Numerous opportunities have been provided to enable stakeholders and professionals to observe the Panel to gain a wider understanding of its impact which has undoubtedly been shared in various forums across the county. Feedback has also been captured via the observations which has further supported developments.

In summary, the evaluation in 2021 provided an objective challenging and yet supportive platform to reflect on how the Panel can continue to develop to maintain its effectiveness. This was also important to crucially retain the confidence of all stakeholders, particularly those victims of crime, and ensure that the Panel is robust and credible.

Whilst these developments continue to be taken forward, there is certainly no on-going complacency, and all partners share a clear commitment that all further learning will be assessed as the Panel evolves. This will ensure it provides us with an exemplary practice model to support our shared goals in reducing the impact of youth crime across Lincolnshire, offering meaningful and proportionate support to children and young people and in turn creating safer communities and fewer victims of crime.

### **3. Consultation**

#### **a) Risks and Impact Analysis**

Not Applicable

### **4. Background Papers**

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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