

## **Chairs report to AYM AGM 2021**

### **2020/21 overview**

Whilst I write this report my role has changed within my LA and I now also take on responsibility for Child Exploitation, Missing and Edge of Care and I know through conversations with many of you that you also have other areas of responsibility. Reflecting on this it is even more critical that we continue to champion the views of the youth justice sector to ensure that the needs of our children remain a priority for our partners and what we provide is not an 'add on'.

Throughout these unprecedented times AYM and YOTs have been concerned about the impact that the pandemic has had, and continues to have, on individual children and on those children in the justice system. We are acutely concerned with the long term impacts on children's education and future training aspirations and the mental health of our children, particularly those who have spent longer than required on remand whilst waiting for sentencing.

Many of us are now considering what a hybrid model of delivery would look like and the significant learning of the digital practice that the pandemic brought about and I have heard lots of examples of good practice during these times and it will be interesting to consider how we use this learning moving forward.

As the AYM executive we have continued to influence the youth justice agenda during this period and we have worked closely with the YJB, LGA, DfE, HMIP and ADCS to highlight the great work YOTs have done and continue to do to support children in the justice system as best as we are able.

One of the significant pieces of work this year has been the oral and written evidence we have provided to support the scrutiny of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill which we know through the impact assessment completed will more than likely disproportionately affect our Black and Asian and Gypsy Traveller children. As YOT Managers we need to consider how the impact of this bill will disproportionately affect our children and the likely effect on our children who are receiving direct alternatives to custody and what this means for practice.

The AYM executive continues to work to its delivery plan objectives: supporting our members; influencing the politics of Youth Justice and growing and developing the organisation. Members have been working directly with the MOJ policy unit through a series of workshops to support the policy unit in their understanding of the youth justice agenda and to support the new justice minister.

Over the last year we have continued to support and develop the Youth Justice Sector Improvement Programme, and we are pleased that the programme has a 3-year costed plan and an ongoing commitment from all parties to continue this tripartite agreement.

Influencing the politics of youth justice remains a big task and we have continued to represent the interests of YOTs in the national discussions around NPS resourcing and were very pleased to secure NPS funding for the dedicated posts to look at prevention and diversion and we are pleased that the definitions for this area of work are starting to emerge and the children being counted. We have also spent time nurturing and developing our relationship with ADCS, working together on a Youth Justice Policy paper to support and develop the understanding of the children we work with.

We have continued to run the Youth Justice SEND Quality Mark, with Achievement for All and are now at that point where services are being encouraged to renew their awards.

On a personal note, I have now been in post for 12 months and I have thoroughly enjoyed the challenge that this role has brought. It is a privilege to represent a sector that has so many dedicated people who are determined to make things better for our children in the justice system and I hope to continue in the same vain moving forward.

I would also like to say a few personal thanks to some great people I have the privilege of working with. All our exec members who take on portfolio leads and regional representation, without whom we would not be able to represent our collective views and who turn up to packed exec agenda's because they want to make a difference. I would also like to thank Lesley as our comms lead, our admin, treasurer, secretary, and support officers who do all those hidden and very important jobs, without whom we would not function. Many of whom do this within their own time or do extra hours in their own time to make sure we do a good job. And finally, a huge thank you to Jacqui who is 'simply the best' Vice Chair and has supported me immensely in my first year as Chair.

The AYM is becoming the 'go to' organisation and to ensure we have the right support in place and are able to respond to consultations, policy groups and developing practice we are commissioning a piece of work to increase the capacity within the AYM and we will share the findings and recommendations with you as our members in due course.

As ever, we are keen to hear from members as to how you feel AYM operates and for any views you may have as to how we might represent YOTs more effectively. If you have any suggestions or comments, please do let your regional representatives or any of the executive members know.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hazel Williamson".

Hazel Williamson  
**Head of Staffordshire Youth Offending Service & AYM Chair**