

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD  
20<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

**YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE SUPPORT  
FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER**

**BRENDA THOMPSON - EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR  
CHILDREN, FAMILIES & LEARNING**

**JAN DOUGLAS – INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF  
CHILDREN, FAMILIES & LEARNING**

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**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Parenting Board with a summary of the support available from the Youth Offending Service for Children Looked After and to highlight issues relating to corporate parenting in respect of the joint target to reduce offending within this group.

**BACKGROUND**

2. South Tees Youth Offending Service is a multi-agency service established as a result of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998. Our aim is to prevent and reduce offending by children and young people aged 10 to 17 years across the boroughs of Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland. We work closely with partners from Police, Probation, Children, Families & Learning, Health, Safe In Tees Valley and the Youth Service as well as a number of voluntary organisations.
3. We recognise that children who are Looked After by the Local Authority represent some of the most vulnerable members of society and we therefore aim to maximise their life chances and minimise risk of offending,

exploitation and social exclusion by joint working and providing appropriate levels of offence focussed intervention.

## CURRENT SITUATION

3. As at 15<sup>th</sup> March 2007 there were 150 young people in the age group 10 to 17 years being looked after in Middlesbrough. (This is a rise from 128 as noted in our report dated 15th November 2004.) Of these young people, 17 have offended in the past 12 months. This represents 13.33% of this cohort of young people offending. Of the 17 young people, the breakdown is as follows:
  - 4 first time entrants into the system receiving Police reprimands for offences of Section 5 Public Order, attempted theft of a vehicle, possession of class c drug and theft from a stall.
  - 9 are persistent young offenders with a wide range of offences from Public Order to Violence against the person with outcomes from Police reprimands to Detention and Training Order.
  - 4 Final Warnings with offences of criminal damage, theft, public order and assault.
4. The joint target to reduce offending by young people looked after (PAF C18) makes specific reference to those who have been looked after for 12 months or more. This is a much smaller number and the latest statistics up to September 06 shows a ratio of 0.9, which was well within target.

INDICATOR	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
PAF C18	1.6	3.0	0.9

5. One anomaly to which we would like to draw the Board's attention, is in relation to young people who appear in the statistics not due to family circumstances but following a Court appearance when they are remanded into the secure estate or into the care of the Local Authority. During this period of remand they are technically in the Looked After system. Usually this is for a very short time period after which they return to their families with continued support from the Youth Offending Service. Remand periods vary according to the complexity of the case and can be for a week or several months. In all cases, the aim is to keep this time to a minimum.
6. There are currently 358 young people open to the Youth Offending Service in the Middlesbrough area. The Courts have issued 5 remands into Local Authority care and on average there are 3 young people from the Middlesbrough area remanded into custody every month.
7. As a service, we work with sentencers to offer alternatives to custody wherever practical. This includes offering intensive bail support packages and working closely with parents/carers to try and resolve any family difficulties which may prevent the young person returning home.

## **FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS**

8. Financial implications can include remand costs when the Courts deny a young person bail. South Tees YOS offers a comprehensive bail support package, with or without ISSP, depending on level of risk assessed by our experienced Court Team staff. In the majority of cases an alternative to custodial remand is offered to the Court.
9. There are issues of suitable accommodation for all age groups and a reluctance on the part of private landlords to take young people who are not eligible for benefits. In the case of children who are already in the looked after system, discussion always takes place between the YOS worker and the Social Worker in order to provide the Court with a satisfactory address.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

10. That the Corporate Parenting Board advises the Executive to:
  - a) Note the information relating to the Make a Positive Contribution agenda for Children Looked After.
  - b) Endorse the continued work of South Tees Youth Offending Service in offering alternatives to custody to prevent children and young people coming into the Looked After system.

## **REASONS**

11. It is important that elected members are aware and approve of this aspect of Youth Offending Service work in order that they can effectively fulfil their responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Children Act 1989.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12. No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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