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## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on Monday 5 September 2022.

**PRESENT:** Councillors D McCabe (Chair), M Saunders (Vice-Chair), A Hellaoui, D Jones, M Nugent and G Wilson

**OFFICERS:** R Brown, S Butcher, C Cannon, K Dargue, T Dunn, I Hanif, G Moore and K Smith

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors T Higgins and C Hobson

### 22/15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

### 22/16 **MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 18 JULY 2022**

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 18 July 2022 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

### 22/17 **YOUTH OFFENDING AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH SCHOOLS - AN INTRODUCTION**

The Head of South Tees Youth Justice Service (STYJS) and the Youth Offending Service's Education, Training and Employment Specialist were in attendance to provide:

- an overview of the role of the STYJS;
- information on the link between education and young people in the criminal justice system; and
- an outline of planned changes to data requirements in order to capture and evidence the impact of offending on educational attainment, truancy and exclusion from school.

In terms of the role of youth offending teams, the Head of STYJS explained:

- Youth offending teams supervised 10 to 18 year-olds who had been sentenced by a court, or who had come to the attention of the police because of their offending behaviour but had not been charged - instead, they were dealt with out of court. There was a range of out of court disposals, which were available to youth offending teams.
- Youth offending teams were multidisciplinary statutory partnerships that aimed to deal with the needs of the whole child.
- Youth offending teams were required to have staff from local authority social care and education, the police, the National Probation Service and local health services.
- Youth offending teams were governed by the Youth Justice Board (YJB). The YJB provided the majority of funding to youth offending teams and monitored their performance. The YJB also published guidance on issues, such as the national standards for youth justice services.
- HM Inspectorate of Probation was the regulating body of youth justice services.
- There were three national outcome measures for youth justice services:
  - to reduce first time entrants to the youth justice system;
  - to prevent re-offending by children and young people; and
  - reduce the use of custody for young people (both sentenced and remanded).
- Currently, there was no requirement for youth justice services to collect data in respect of educational attainment, truancy or exclusion from school. However, future changes to data requirements were planned, in order to capture and evidence the impact of offending on those areas.

In terms of the link between education and young people in the criminal justice system, the Head of STYJS explained:

- In 2016, Charlie Taylor had been commissioned to review the entirety of the youth justice system. Following the review, it was concluded that education needed to be central to the response to youth offending. The review reported that too many children in the youth justice system had been out of school for long periods of time through truancy, or following exclusion, and half of 15-17 year olds in youth offending institutions had the literacy or numeracy levels expected of a 7-11 year old.
- In 2017, One Education had reported that;
  - approx 90% of young people in the youth custody population had been excluded from school, at any one time, compared to 3-5% of general population;
  - 63% of boys and 74% of girls had been permanently excluded (Members were advised that there was a significantly lower number of girls in the youth custody population and that needed to be taken into account when considering the data);
  - 40% of young people had not been to school since they were 14; and
  - 90% were not attending before they reached 16 years old.
- To provide a snapshot of data, on 1 August 2022, just over 25% of the young people open to STYJS were Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET).
- There was no data currently available in relation to young people open to the service who had been excluded. However, in preparation for the meeting, work had been undertaken to report on data from the last academic year (1 September 2020 and 31 August 2021). It was highlighted that the percentage of young people open to the STYJS, who had been permanently excluded, was 6.6%. In comparison, the percentage of all young people who had been permanently excluded was 0.29%.

Members were advised that, currently, there were some secure schools being built. In respect of young offender institutes, there was currently four in operation, previously there had been more. It was planned that two of those young offender institutions would now become secure schools.

For introduction in April 2023, the YJB had proposed key performance indicators (KPIs) to capture suitable education, training and employment (ETE). It was anticipated that, in future, youth justice services would be required to capture data in relation to:

- the percentage of children in the community, and being released from custody, with a suitable ETE arrangement; and
- the percentage of children who had identified special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and the percentage of those children who were receiving support.

In June 2022, following a joint inspection of education, training and employment services in youth offending teams in England and Wales, the HM Inspectorate of Probation had published a thematic report. The recommendations proposed that the YJB should revise its national indicator of ETE engagement to one that provided a more meaningful measure of performance. The report also included seven recommendations for youth justice management boards. Those had been included at Appendix 2 of the submitted report. In summary, the recommendations stated that youth management boards should:

- ensure children receive comprehensive ETE assessments;
- monitor, alongside the local authority, key aspects of ETE work for children working with the youth offending team, including:
  - the extent of school exclusion in the youth offending team cohort;
  - the actual level of attendance at school, college, work or training placement;
  - the extent of additional support provided to children with special educational needs (SEN)/additional learning needs (ALN);
  - that every child with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) or individual development plan (IDP) had it reviewed on an annual basis to meet the statutory requirement.
- develop ambitious aims for ETE work in the youth offending teams, including the achievement of Level 2 English and Mathematics by every child;
- establish a greater range of occupational training opportunities for those children

- beyond compulsory school age; and
- monitor and evaluate the levels of educational engagement and attainment in disproportionately represented groups within the youth offending teams caseload.

To conclude, the Head of STYJS explained:

- There was a clear need for an improvement in the educational experience and outcomes for young people involved in, or at risk of being in, the criminal justice system.
- There was evidence that young people in the youth justice system required a joined-up response to exclusions, truancy and attainment.
- The Local Authority and the STYJS needed to work collaboratively, going forward, to ensure the expectations of the Government, YJB and HM Inspectorate of Probation could be met.
- There was a need to develop a framework that focused on prevention where young people could be identified with low attendance in the youth justice system, so extensive support could be provided.

It was commented that in recent months, the STYJS had developed a prevention offer to young people on the periphery of criminal behaviour, with one of the referral criteria being - young people at risk of exclusion from school/education. Referrals were taken directly by the service or via the Multi-Agency Children's Hub (MACH), and support was provided which was tailored to meet the needs of the child and the school. The young person's parent/carer was required to provide consent in respect of the intervention. Further information in respect of prevention work was included at paragraph 15 of the submitted report.

In terms of next steps, it was explained that:

- One of the STYJS strategic priorities in 2022/23 was to ensure that the service contributed to supporting those young people at risk of exclusion.
- As youth justice services would be measured upon a new set of KPIs, the STYJS planned to:
  - put in place monitoring systems to ensure that young people and those at risk of exclusion were tracked and supported to access services they needed;
  - monitor assessment processes for young people identified as at risk of exclusion to ensure that those included effective plans to engage them in ETE; and
  - conduct audit activity of ETE processes.
- The Head of STYJS would work with the management board and heads of service within the education directorate to take forward the recommendations included in the HM Inspectorate of Probation thematic report. That work would include:
  - introducing new data sharing agreements to enable pupil-level data to be captured and reported upon; and
  - implementing tracking and monitoring systems to analyse and evaluate data in the future, with the overarching aim of reducing exclusions and improving the education experience and outcomes for young people.

A Member commented that the proposed changes to data capture were welcomed and would improve collaborative working between youth offending teams and education.

A Member raised a query in respect of partnership working. In response, the Youth Offending Service's Education, Training and Employment Specialist, who had been appointed in August 2020, commented that work had been undertaken to improve collaboration and connectivity. From August 2021, every young person open to the STYJS was recorded, monitored and shared with the Inclusion Team. It was clarified that there had been communication in the past, however, collaboration had now improved and a more formalised process had been established. The joint protocol that had been developed between the Inclusion Team and STYJS enabled effective communication, including the sharing of information and planning joint visits. Through regular sessions, the Youth Offending Service's Education, Training and Employment Specialist was able to develop trusting relationships, capturing the voice of the child and identifying barriers. Those barriers were then discussed with the Inclusion Team and through partnership working, solutions were put forward. A recent example, highlighted in the submitted report at paragraph 13, demonstrated that STYJS was making a direct impact

through relationship building, addressing barriers, and partnership working where real tangible opportunities were being created for young people to engage in education.

The Head of STYJS explained many children/young people open to the service had multiple and complex needs. The Youth Offending Service's Education, Training and Employment Specialist had formalised processes and played a key role in building positive relationships with young people to identify and address those barriers preventing them from engaging in education. In addition, support staff, working for the service, were able to provide additional support such as transport to and from school.

The Youth Offending Service's Education, Training and Employment Specialist highlighted the importance of challenging schools in respect of exclusions.

A Member raised a query regarding secure schools. In response, the Head of STYJS explained that currently there was youth offending institutes for young people aged 15 to 18. When in custody, those institutes offered 17 hours of education to young people. Charlie Taylor's report had questioned the reason why those institutes offered a reduced number of hours, in comparison to those offered in the community. Therefore, essentially, secure schools planned to provide an emphasis on education and they would operate more like schools than prisons. Regardless of whether a young person had been remanded or sentenced, those in custody would be offered education. Wetherby Young Offender Institution was currently the closest institution to STYJS.

For those in custody, the Youth Offending Service's Education, Training and Employment Specialist undertook work in terms of sentence planning. It was added that a protocol had been developed and shared with all schools in Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland to ensure institutions received the correct information in respect of EHCPs and learning plans. The protocol aimed to ensure that those in custody received effective support. It was added that, currently, there were no plans for Wetherby Young Offender Institution to become a secure school. It was anticipated that the nearest secure school would be located in Manchester. The Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision advised that although Wetherby Young Offender Institution did operate essentially as a prison, the education provision was good. Therefore, those in custody were able to access a reasonable standard of education.

In response to a Member's query, the Head of STYJS explained that there was currently four young people in custody (two had been sentenced and two had been remanded). Nationally, there was less than 500 young people in custody.

A Member raised a query about the service's involvement with schools. In response, it was advised that the Youth Offending Service's Education, Training and Employment Specialist was a member of the Pupil Inclusion Panel, which involved working with schools across the area to ensure placements met the needs of young people.

A Member raised a query regarding work undertaken with families. The Youth Offending Service's Education, Training and Employment Specialist explained that following a referral, assessments were undertaken and the views and opinions of parents/carers were obtained. Parents/carers were also involved in planning meetings and a whole family approach was taken by the service.

A Member raised a query in respect of the preventative work undertaken by the service. In response, the Head of STYJS explained that the service made contact with the young person and their family to assess if support could be offered with consent. If a referral had been received from the police following an offence being committed, a multi-disciplinary panel would work closely with the police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to determine and assess the options available to the young person. A Triage disposal could be used, which aimed to prevent young people from re-offending and slipping deeper into the criminal justice system. In low-risk cases where the young person admitted the offence, and both the family and victim agreed, that could involve restorative intervention, rather than court action. The procedure followed was quite complex and technical.

## **AGREED**

- 1. That the information presented at the meeting be considered in the context of**

**the scrutiny panel's investigation.**

- 2. That draft Terms of Reference be submitted to the scrutiny panel's next scheduled meeting, for consideration.**

22/18

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - AN UPDATE**

The Chair advised that at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, held on 22 June 2022, the Board had considered:

- the Executive Forward Work Programme;
- an update from the Chief Executive;
- the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel's Final Report on Enforcement in Middlesbrough and its Impact on Crime and Anti-social Behaviour;
- information on school exclusions and feedback received from school visits;
- the Strategic Plan 2021-24 - Progress at Year-End 2021/22;
- the Revenue and Capital Budget - Year-End Outturn Position 2021/22; and
- updates from the scrutiny chairs.

It was also advised that at the following meeting, held on 19 July 2022, the Board had considered:

- the Executive Forward Work Programme;
- an Executive Member update from the Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Children's Services;
- an update from the Chief Executive;
- the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel's Final Report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND);
- the Scrutiny Work Programme Report for 2022-2023; and
- updates from the scrutiny chairs.

## **NOTED**

22/19

## **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

### **Cost of School Uniforms**

A Member raised concerns in respect of the high costs associated with purchasing new school uniforms.

The Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision advised that, over the past 18 months, work had been undertaken with schools in respect of uniform related issues. It was commented that generally primary school uniforms were relatively inexpensive. However, secondary school uniforms were more expensive.

Each secondary school in Middlesbrough had been approached in order to determine their uniform requirements and the costs associated with those. It became apparent that some secondary schools had bespoke suppliers and costs were high. Prior to the summer break, all secondary schools had confirmed that uniform requirements had been relaxed, some schools had changed their requirements quite considerably. Therefore, all secondary schools had reduced the number of branded items that were required and a number of schools had reduced the requirement to buy all items from a particular supplier and were allowing the purchase of non-branded items from high street stores or supermarkets. Although the cost of uniforms could be reduced further, on average, costs were now considerably less than last September (2021). Therefore, schools were moving in the right direction.

Members were advised that the Government had introduced guidance on the cost of school uniforms. The purpose of the guidance was to ensure the cost of school uniforms was reasonable and secured the best value for money.

Schools aimed to ensure that their uniform supplier arrangements provided the highest priority to cost and value for money. All schools had taken positive steps to ensure their uniforms were more affordable.

It was added that a number of schools had set-up exchange schemes, which ensured that second-hand uniforms were available for parents to acquire.

A Member queried whether the Local Authority provided school uniform grants for parents/carers. In response, the Director of Education and Partnerships advised that grant funding had previously been associated with local-authority-maintained schools. However, as many schools had now become academies that money was dispersed directly to schools, rather than being held by the Local Authority. In order to make uniforms more affordable for parents/carers, it was explained that each school had a different approach to utilising the funding provided by the Government.

**NOTED**