

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY REPORT

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

12th December 2022

Youth Offending and Partnership Working with Schools

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide the panel with information regarding the barriers to young people in the youth justice system engaging in education. This follows on from the first scrutiny panel where information was provided in relation to South Tees Youth Justice Service (STYJS) and partnership working with schools.

Introduction

The first scrutiny panel in relation to this subject was held on 5th September 2022. Members were provided with an overview of South Tees Youth Justice Service (STYJS), its work with partners including schools and education providers, current key performance indicators along with anonymised information about children who are open to the Youth Justice Service. This report will provide information relating to children in Middlesbrough who are open to STYJS and the issues/challenges/barriers relating to their education.

Evidence/Discussion

The significant majority of students attend school each year and go on to achieve great things. In some circumstances a small but crucial minority may become involved in crime and therefore require support and rehabilitation.

Issues leading to these incidents vary case-by-case but can typically be described as exposure to exploitation such as substance misuse and or the inability to regulate behaviour resulting in violence or persistently disruptive behaviour.

Substance misuse

With regards to drug and alcohol related issues, STYJS works with Project ADDER to provide substance misuse support. This post was introduced in May 2021 and has been successful in the following ways:

- Introduced additional capacity in STYJS to provide intervention and support for young people with substance use needs. The YJS worker provides intervention, support, advice and guidance and onward referral into tier 3 services.
- The role has improved links with the young person's substance misuse service and redefined pathways to ensure that those young people are referred in a timely way.
- Links have been established with the Substance Misuse Services in the Youth Custody Service and this has supported a better pathway for the resettlement of young people back into the community and opening doors into services locally.
- The role offers a point of contact and support for YJS staff, re-introducing a level of expertise for staff which was previously not available.
- Staff have also benefitted from increased training in substance misuse and how to work with young people in this area.
- Links have been established with the wider ADDER team and this will support pathways into adult provision for those young people who transition to Probation.

All young people open to the service who have identified drug/alcohol issues can be referred to the ADDER worker for specialist support.

Youth Violence

Serious Youth Violence has become an area of significant concern for agencies working with young people, and this includes schools. There are increasing concerns that the most vulnerable young people in society are being drawn into differing forms of organised crime. Exposure to such behaviours and lifestyles can leave young people vulnerable to exploitation. A report produced by the Crest Advisory Group-Violence and Vulnerability published in February 2021 (Appendix 1), highlighted that the number of young people at risk of serious youth violence is unevenly spread across England. The report detailed that the risk to serious violence is heightened by high levels of neighbourhood crime and income deprivation such as areas like Middlesbrough. STYJS are currently working with CREST Advisory Group as part of a strategic needs assessment for the newly developed Cleveland Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV). Once published we will work closely with the CURV and partners, including schools, to address the issues identified.

Support for pupils

There is a range of support available for pupils including the multi-agency pupil inclusion panel, which is part of the new inclusion and outreach model. Alongside this, STYJS have worked in partnership with colleagues in the other Cleveland area Youth Justice Services and TEWV NHS Trust to develop our Trauma Informed Model of working. This continues to be an effective way of working with our young people with the most complex needs and the model supports staff to develop bespoke approaches to meeting needs and also supporting young people into the services they need. If accepted on to the Trauma informed pathway, a formulation meeting is held followed by sessions for up to 15 weeks. A discharge report provides a psychological overview of the mental health symptoms, and informs an onward trauma informed care plan

linking to an individualised intervention plan for the child. For young people who are disengaged from education, have emotional well-being issues, and are presenting a risk to themselves or others, this approach can be beneficial to better understand the barriers to attendance and gain psychological input into formulating a holistic plan.

Conclusion

Young people in the youth justice system have often experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences and consequently there can be numerous and complex reasons contributing to a child not attending school and / or being excluded. STYJS believe that by working in partnership with schools and education providers this can promote inclusion and support children with their identified needs. The development of an 'inclusion pathway' would enable youth justice case managers to refer to the ETE specialist to target support to those young people at risk of poor attendance and/or exclusion and then develop a bespoke action plan. The development of an inclusion pathway would also need to take in to account the young person's views, and parent/carer views to ensure the challenges and barriers to attendance were understood.

In the last year there has been an increase in partnership working between STYJS and schools in Middlesbrough, and a contextual safeguarding approach has been promoted by the STYJS Education, Training Employment Specialist via the Pupil Inclusion Panel. This approach encourages partners to share information and collectively plan to reduce risk in different settings. In addition, the Partnership Information Sharing form (intelligence sharing form that is submitted to the Police) has been shared with schools to enable them to share concerns with Police as they arise. Scrutiny panel may wish to endorse this contextual safeguarding approach in schools to promote the sharing of relevant information and ultimately improve the safeguarding of children.

As noted in the previous panel, there is 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. Making such improvements will be complex and it will take time to put appropriate systems in place to capture data for analysis and evaluation. From April 2023, Youth Justice Services will be measured upon a new set of KPI's, one of which is

Education, training and employment (ETE): % of children in the community and being released from custody attending a suitable ETE arrangement.

This KPI looks at the number and proportion of children in ETE by suitability, provision type and type of order for children of school age and children above school age and how many hours were offered and attended. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) recognise that there are established links between low educational engagement and attainment and the risk of childhood offending. This KPI should highlight where children are not in suitable ETE to help Youth Justice Services to escalate concerns with ETE providers. At a wider level, this data will allow the Ministry of Justice and YJB to understand where the wider system acts as a barrier to a child's desistance and raise these with relevant other Government departments if necessary. Currently, youth justice services are not required to capture this information and as stated at the last

scrutiny panel meeting the key next steps will be to work with colleagues from within MBC education directorate and school leadership teams to ensure data sharing agreements be put in place to capture pupil level data.

The service will now need to work at pace to ensure the aforementioned data can be captured to enable the statutory returns to the YJB. In addition to capturing relevant data, the Panel may wish to endorse the proposed approach of introducing an 'inclusion pathway' with schools to promote inclusion, increase attendance with the aim of improving overall attainment for the child. Schools have highlighted some significant issues and challenges in improving rates of attendance, and reducing exclusions. However, STYJS will continue to be aspirational for young people subject to our supervision and will continue to work in partnership under the direction of this panel to make improvements.

Appendix 1

<https://www.crestadvisory.com/post/report-violence-and-vulnerability>