

<b>Report of:</b>	<i>Kay Dargue, Head of South Tees Youth Justice Service</i>
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<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Board- 29.2.24</b>
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<b>Subject:</b>	<i>Annual update from South Tees Youth Justice Service</i>
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**Contribution to the guiding principles of the Corporate Parenting Strategy**

<p><b>Your Home</b></p> <p>The service work closely with Cleveland Police and residential homes to ensure children who are looked after are not unnecessarily criminalised in their homes.</p> <p><b>Your Family and Friends</b></p> <p><b>Your Education</b></p> <p><b>Your Adult Life</b></p> <p><b>Your Health and wellbeing</b></p> <p>The service has adopted a trauma informed approach to practice, and a pathway has been developed with FCAMHS for young people with complex needs.</p> <p><b>Your Voice and Influence</b></p> <p>South Tees Youth Justice Service considers the voice of young people to be important in their work. Young people are listened to and have influence in the plans that are put together to support them.</p>
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**Is the report confidential or does it contain exempt information?**

No

**What is the purpose of this report?**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with an annual update of the work of South Tees Youth Justice Service, with specific reference to children looked after.

**Report Overview**

2. This report outlines the 'offer' to children who are looked after and also open to South Tees Youth Justice Service. Some brief caseload demographic information is included within the main body of this report to provide some context to the Board.

This report will focus upon the key achievements in the last twelve months and planned development going forwards.

## Report Background

3. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) are clear that the justice system must see “children as children first, and offenders second”. In line with the Child First vision, the YJB wants to make sure that children are not unnecessarily criminalised as a result of their vulnerabilities and the challenges they face. South Tees Youth Justice Service embraces the child first ethos and has sought to ensure that all interventions with young people are informed by this approach. Young people are encouraged to engage and participate, and we seek to listen to them and ensure their voice can be heard.
4. South Tees Youth Justice Service (STYJS) have strong partnership arrangements with children’s safeguarding services at strategic and operational levels and engage at a managerial level at a number of multi-agency forums designed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people. Reducing the number of Children who are Looked After in the criminal justice system is a key priority for STYJS. We seek to work proactively with those young people who experience significant vulnerabilities including children in local authority care. Our work with looked after children is in line with the National protocol on reducing unnecessary criminalisation of looked after children and care leavers 2018.
5. In 2020, STYJS produced a guide for Youth Justice and Children’s Care practitioners on ‘Working with Looked After Children’. The document sets out the requirements for local authority and YJS staff in order to achieve the best results for Looked After Children within the criminal justice system, so that expectations are clear around each other’s roles and responsibilities. This guide outlines that although many of the working practices undertaken by the YJS and Children’s Services are similar, there is a significant difference in the criteria for which they are undertaken. Therefore, there is a need to have explicit arrangements in place to support each other’s involvement with Looked After Children, be they placed in foster care, residential units, residential schools or within the secure estate.
6. Working as part of a broader partnership, STYJS provides a representative to the two interrelated groups that monitor and review children who are Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing or Trafficked (VEMT). The VEMT practitioner group and the Risk Management Group (where cases are escalated for high level strategic risk management) are key to managing risk for children who go missing or have/at risk of involvement in exploitation. Exploitation and offending are often linked therefore STYJS provides key information to these meetings to ensure there is a holistic overview of the child and safety plans can be updated accordingly for children who are looked after.
7. The Board may recall from previous reports and presentations that STYJS offer a range of additional activity for Children who are looked after including;
  - Work with Cleveland Police and Children’s Home staff to ensure those young people in Children’s Homes who offend have their offending behaviour addressed appropriately, including the use of restorative intervention as a solution to minimise prosecution

- Ensure active STYJS attendance at all planning or strategy meetings for young people with CLA status
- STYJS safeguarding case managers provide an essential link to Children's Services teams in both Local Authorities as well as providing advice and guidance to colleagues on safeguarding issues and processes.
- Ensure all Intervention Plans for CLA are shared with young people, their carers and colleagues from Children's Services
- Joint supervision arrangements between STYJS and Middlesbrough Children's Services are in place offering the opportunity to share decision making and agree strategies to meet the needs of young people known to both services.
- A working agreement between STYJS and Early Help is in place to ensure joint planning and supervision arrangements. The agreement aims to reduce escalation in the criminal justice and / or looked after system by working collaboratively.
- A YJS 'single point of contact' has been provided to the Multi Agency Children's Hub. This offers MACH staff the direct opportunity for information and advice on young people known to our service.
- MACH case admin have access to STYJS case management system 'Childview' which allows for checks to be made as a referral is received to ascertain if the case is open to STYJS and ensure that joint working commences at the earliest opportunity.
- When any Looked After Child is placed out of area (who is subject to a Criminal Court Order) STYJS retain responsibility for the Order. Care taking arrangements will be put in place for the child with the local YJS in line with the national protocol, however STYJS will remain in contact with the child on at least a monthly basis to maintain the relationship with the child.
- The STYJS Team manager is the vice chair of the VEMT practitioner group, providing a key role in safeguarding children as part of a wider partnership.

### Caseload demographic

8. The vast majority of looked after children and care leavers do not get involved with the justice system, however they remain over-represented compared with others in the criminal justice system. In December 2022 the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published information which showed that children in care appear to enter the justice system earlier than children who have not been in care. Whilst imprisonment is a relatively unusual outcome a high proportion of those in custody have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
9. Information contained within the Local Authority Interactive Tool, shows that in Middlesbrough in 2023, 3% of children who were looked after had been convicted or were subject to a Youth Caution. This in line with the North East (3%) but above the national (in England 2%) figures.
10. Between 1st January 2023 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023, the breakdown of cases open to STYJS was as follows;

Middlesbrough		Percentage of Total		
		Female	Male	All
Gender	All cases	14.9%	85.1%	100.0%
	Population Estimate	48.5%	51.5%	100.0%
		Percentage of Gender		
	Asian	0.0%	3.0%	2.6%
	Black	3.4%	1.2%	1.5%
	Chinese	0.0%	3.0%	2.6%
	Mixed	6.9%	4.2%	4.6%
	Not Known	3.4%	6.1%	5.7%
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	White	86.2%	82.4%	83.0%
Ethnicity	All	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Percentage of Gender		
	10-13	20.7%	18.1%	18.5%
	10	0.0%	1.8%	1.5%
	11	3.4%	3.0%	3.1%
	12	10.3%	4.2%	5.1%
	13	6.9%	9.0%	8.7%
	14	20.7%	13.3%	14.4%
	15	24.1%	24.1%	24.1%
	16	10.3%	21.7%	20.0%
	17+	24.1%	22.9%	23.1%
Age	All	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Percentage of Gender		
	Yes	24.1%	11.4%	13.3%
LAC	No	75.9%	88.6%	86.7%

**Note:**

Based on Start Dates from 01/01/2023 to 31/12/2023.

Age is at the time of intervention. Where a young person has had more than one intervention in the time period then age is at the point of the earliest intervention.

A young person is counted as being looked after if they were LAC at the start of any intervention in the time period.

Population Estimate 2021 published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS).

11. The table above shows that the largest proportion of children open to the service were white British boys aged 15 or over. 13.3% of children open to the service in 2023 were children looked after. The STYJS Executive Management Board meets on a quarterly basis and scrutinises caseload information relating to first time entrants to the system, re-offending and use of custody. This multi-agency Board offers challenge to the service in relation to the data and has responsibility for monitoring and responding to any disproportionality issues.

Key developments in the last 12 months

12. The Service has successfully introduced three key new projects within the last 12 months: Turnaround, Immediate Justice and Custody Navigators. Turnaround is a new programme developed by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), providing funding to Youth Justice Teams to enable them to intervene earlier and improve outcomes for

children on the cusp of entering the youth justice system. The overall aims of the Turnaround programme are to:

- achieve positive outcomes for children with the ultimate aim of preventing them going on to offend;
- build on work already done to ensure all children on the cusp of the youth justice system are consistently offered a needs assessment and the opportunity for support;
- improve the socio-emotional, mental health and wellbeing of children; and
- improve the integration and partnership working between YJS's and other statutory services to support children.

13. Turnaround went 'live' in January 2023 and is funded until March 2025. STYJS have been given a target number of children to work with and to date only 1 out of 45 successful closures has gone on to re-offend. Sadly, the eligibility criteria for Turnaround precludes Looked After Children, however it does allow the service to work with children subject to Early Help and Child in Need therefore the service works closely with colleagues in those services with the aim of preventing escalation in both children's care and the criminal justice system.
14. In relation to Immediate Justice, the Government published the 'Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan' in April 2023. The Cleveland Police Force area was identified as one of four areas to receive funding in respect of 'hot spot policing' and additionally 'Immediate Justice' as part of this government plan. In partnership with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the other two Cleveland YJS a model of service delivery for Immediate Justice was developed. Known locally as 'Making Good' STYJS now works with children from the age of 12 who are referred in by Community Safety colleagues following a second incident of anti-social behaviour, thus working with them in a pre-crime space to prevent escalation in to the criminal justice system. Educational and Restorative activity takes place alongside reparative activity, which is victim led. The criteria for this project is less restrictive than Turnaround and all children including those who are looked after are offered this intervention. The project is funded until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024.
15. With regards to Custody Navigators, in conjunction with Cleveland's Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV), the three YJS's in Cleveland have developed a 'Custody Navigator' model focussing on providing immediate interventions when young people present at custody, followed by advocacy to ensure appropriate longer term local support is offered and accessed. Four case workers are now placed into the custody suite in Middlesbrough to support people who have been detained because of a serious violence offence. This offers the opportunity for 'reachable and teachable' moments to engage with young people involved in serious violent offending, and at an earlier point than ever before. Navigators seek to identify opportunities to develop a trusting relationship whereby the detainee can be referred to appropriate support through a tailored service plan that connects them to services such as counselling, mentoring, or help with conflict resolution, employment or substance misuse. Navigators will liaise with Social Workers of Looked After Children and share information about the custodial episode, and can continue to provide ongoing support to individuals beyond release where appropriate. This pilot will operate across Cleveland until March 2025.
16. A further key achievement for the service has been the introduction of the 'Inclusion pathway'. The Pathway creates a mechanism which enables Case Managers to access support for young people who are at risk of disengagement from education.

The pathway has been designed to promote engagement in the education system, improve attendance, prevent exclusions (fixed-term and permanent), improve attainment and deliver well-targeted educational support. The STYJS Inclusion Pathway was endorsed by the Middlesbrough Council scrutiny panel as a means of raising the needs of young people at risk of exclusion. The Education specialist within the service advocates for Looked After Children in such circumstances to make sure their voice is heard and any additional needs taken in to account.

17. Since January 2023 STYJS has commissioned a highly specialist speech and language therapist (SALT) to meet the needs of the YJS service. The role of the SALT therapist includes direct speech and language therapy intervention with young people, further assessment of children's speech, language and communication needs including the development of personalised plans and recommendations which will influence their experiences within the justice system (Court or Police), and indirect speech and language therapy intervention. The SALT therapist has reviewed all the written information and correspondence used by the service with children and families, and offered staff training to raise awareness of Speech Language and Communication Needs and strategies to support children. This provision is highly valued by staff, and positive comments have been received by parents and carers in relation to the service provided. The importance of this work cannot be underestimated when we know such high numbers of children in custody have additional, and often undiagnosed, needs.

#### Issues and challenges

18. The three projects described above are all time limited with funding due to end by March 2025. The risk is that funding may not continue, and these highly valued projects may be lost which will be detrimental to the children who could benefit. The challenge for the service will be to find a way to either mainstream the projects into the service, or maintain some elements which of course will need to be funded. The longevity of each of these projects will be determined by external evaluation and consultation with external bodies (such as the MOJ).

#### Next steps and actions

19. The Service will engage with all external evaluations relating to time limited/funded projects in order to maximise involvement and contributions to consultation processes. The STYJS Board will also be kept abreast of developments on a quarterly basis and may need to escalate discussions to a more strategic level depending upon the outcome of decisions made by external bodies.
20. STYJS will continue to deliver targeted staff development sessions to raise awareness of working with Looked After Children within the criminal justice system, and also continue to deliver sessions as part of the Principal Social Worker's 'Hot Topics' sessions to raise awareness of our work within the Children's Social Care workforce.

## **Appendices**

There are no appendices to this report.

## **Recommendations**

The content of this report is for noting by the Board.

## **Background papers**

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

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