



Briefing Paper for the Corporate Parenting Board 30th November 2021

South Tees Youth Offending Service

Introduction

This Briefing paper provides the Corporate Parenting Board with an annual update from South Tees Youth Offending Service (STYOS). The focus of this report will be upon the STYOS offer to children and young people who are looked after along with key developments and achievements in the last twelve months.

National Context

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) for England and Wales is an independent public body appointed by the Secretary of State for Justice, who have a statutory responsibility to oversee the whole of the youth justice system. The YJB published their Strategic plan 2021-2024 in October 2021 and the document outlines their vision, mission statement, and three strategic priorities which are underpinned by the central guiding principle of a 'Child First' youth justice system.

The 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.

In order to achieve these strategic aims, Youth Offending Service's are required to produce a Youth Justice Plan each year which details their local priorities. South Tees Youth Offending Service has developed a strategic youth justice plan for 2021-22 aligned to the values of the YJB, and as part of this will look to embed the child first principle in to operational practice.

Youth Offending Service's have three key strategic priorities on which they are measured;

- To reduce first time entrants to the youth justice system
- To prevent re-offending by children and young people
- Reduce the use of custody for young people (both sentenced and remanded)

Quarterly performance data is returned to the YJB in relation to the three national outcome measures, and also reported to the STYOS Management Board along with a number of other performance indicators.

Local context

South Tees Youth Offending Service is a dual authority service hosted by Middlesbrough Council. STYOS sits within Middlesbrough Council Children's Services, within the Education and Partnerships directorate and is a statutory partnership between the local authority, Police, Probation, Education and Health. The service has a range of statutory responsibilities and supervises young people between the ages of 10 and 18 on a range of Court ordered

interventions, Out of Court Disposals and those who receive custodial sentences. In the last twelve months the service has also introduced a prevention offer to those at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice arena.

STYOS Caseload demographic

STYOS closely monitor their caseload demographic and this is reported to the YOS Management Board on a quarterly basis. The role of the Management Board is to provide strategic direction and challenge to the YOS management team on service delivery and development, provide accountability for the performance of the service, and challenge partners with regards to their commitments to STYOS, including financial and resource commitments.

The most recent information is shown below in the table below;

Caseload demographic April to September 2021;

		Percentage of Total		
		Female	Male	All
Gender	All cases	11.3%	88.7%	100.0%
	Population Estimate	48.5%	51.5%	100.0%
		Percentage of Gender		
	Asian	0.0%	2.1%	1.9%
	Black	0.0%	1.6%	1.4%
	Chinese	0.0%	1.6%	1.4%
	Mixed	0.0%	5.3%	4.7%
	Not Known	8.3%	2.6%	3.3%
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	White	91.7%	86.8%	87.3%
Ethnicity	All	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Percentage of Gender		
	10-13	29.2%	18.0%	19.2%
	14	20.8%	14.3%	15.0%
	15	25.0%	14.8%	16.0%
	16	12.5%	22.2%	21.1%
	17+	12.5%	30.7%	28.6%
Age	All	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Yes	29.2%	13.8%	15.5%
LAC	No	70.8%	86.2%	84.5%

This table shows that the majority of young people who have been open to the service within this six month time frame were white British boys aged 17, 15% of whom were looked after children.

The profile of the types of offences committed by young people and the factors impacting on the offending by young people are detailed in the STYOS Youth Justice Plan.

STYOS offer to Children Looked After

STYOS 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 STYOS. To achieve this STYOS offer a range of additional activity for Children who are looked after;

- 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 STYOS attendance at all planning or strategy meetings for young people with CLA status
- STYOS 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
- Developed joint supervision arrangements between STYOS and Middlesbrough Children's Services offering the opportunity to share decision making and agree strategies to meet the needs of young people known to both services.
- Developed a working agreement between STYOS and Early Help to ensure joint planning and supervision arrangements are in place, the aim being to reduce escalation in the criminal justice and / or looked after system by working collaboratively.
- Arrangements are now in place for YOS single points of contact for the Multi Agency Children's Hub. This offers key points of contact for MACH staff to contact for information and advice on young people known to STYOS.
- MACH case admin have access to STYOS case management system 'Childview' this allows for checks to be made as a referral is received by the MACH to ascertain if the case is open to STYOS and ensure that joint working commences at the earliest opportunity.
- Reciprocal arrangements are in place to offer access to case management systems and this allows YOS staff to access these systems to identify if new referrals are known to children's services and to access information. STYOS staff log new referrals into individual children's files where they are open to safeguarding teams and this ensures effective communication and joint working.

Key developments in the last 12 months

STYOS were inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) in 2019, which resulted in the service being rated as 'Good' with elements of outstanding. There were no specific recommendations relating to children who were looked after, however HMIP did recommend that *'there is specialist education provision, in the Youth Offending Service to*

meet the needs of children and young people who are not accessing suitable education'. The link between education and YOS is key as we know there is a risk of 'NEET' young people becoming involved in criminality.

In addition to ensuring there is now representation from Education senior leaders on the YOS Management Board, there have been three key developments in the last 12 months Firstly, STYOS have strengthened the relationship with the Virtual school and have developed a joint protocol. There is now a formal process where information on all new YOS start orders are shared with the Virtual school with the aim of improving communication, build on joint working and supporting the Virtual school to create robust Personal Education Plans. As a result of this protocol young people are now identified and support is offered at an earlier point, information sharing is improved and there have been positive outcomes for some young people placed in to training/college.

Another key development specifically relating to children looked after is the 'Child Looked After Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) forum'. In the last year, an information sharing agreement between Middlesbrough Council and Middlesbrough College has been written which enables Looked After Children to be supported by the College to reduce their risk of becoming NEET. YOS were instrumental in establishing this forum and writing the governance process.

A Joint Custody protocol has also been written for those young people who are given custodial sentences, with the aim of ensuring a smooth transition for between the community and custodial establishment. The protocol aims to improve information flow, and robust planning for resettlement.

Future risks and challenges

The environment in which we work continues to be very difficult and challenging with financial pressures across public services impacting on our budget. The young people we work with present with high levels of needs as well as presenting greater risk to the public and the communities we serve.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought about challenges to service delivery. However, throughout the pandemic STYOS continued to conduct joint visits with Social Worker's, attend joint supervisions and strategy meetings, and continued to provide appropriate adult services to young people in police custody and to those young people attending Court. Although Covid initially impacted upon how we engaged with young people, staff, and partner agencies forcing digital solutions to be utilised during lockdown periods, there were some benefits to using technology and this will continue in how we interact with young people and partners going forwards, alongside the direct face to face work. Should there be any further lockdowns/restrictions STYOS has the digital solutions in place to work effectively including the Cloud Video Platform (CVP), which offers the facility for young people to 'attend' Court virtually from a Police station and is available at Teesside Youth Court in future if required.

Developing our understanding and responding to the risks presented by young people at risk of or involved in serious violent crime and exploitation is one of our current strategic priorities. Discussions around the potential impact of these issues on our practice and the young people we work have been undertaken although there is no easy solution to tackling this issue, and will need careful consideration of how we can work with partners to develop a response.

Re-offending by young people continues to be a challenge for the YOS and its partners. The cohort of young people that we track in 2021-22 is now the smallest cohort ever, half the number of the cohort for 2020-21 and this will create pressures as it will only take a small

number of young people to re-offend to impact on performance in this area. We will continue to monitor this using our live tracker tools and offer an appropriate response to those young people we identify as priority offenders.

STYOS introduced a preventions offer during 2020-2021 to offer support to young people and their families and divert them away from offending and anti social behaviour. This service has been created using existing resources through our case management and support worker team. There are concerns around the capacity and sustainability of this model given the high demand for the service, and in order to sustain the service it may be necessary to seek additional funding.

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