



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING JOINT SUB-COMMISSION 26 JULY 2005

Joint report of the Director of Social Services and Director of
Community Safety Partnership

Reducing offending by Children Looked After

RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To note the progress of partner agencies working with children and young people looked after (10 to 17 years) within Derby city. This is a summary of work undertaken to prevent and reduce offending within this vulnerable and priority group.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

2.1 Policy Context

The principal aim of the youth justice system established by section 37 of the Crime and Disorder Act is to prevent offending by children and young people. Youth Offending Teams (Yots) were identified as one of the main delivery vehicles by which the principle aim would be delivered. Yots were designed to undertake work to prevent children and young people offending in the first place.

- 2.2 The Home Office and Youth Justice Board (YJB) believe that given their inter-agency membership, Yots are well placed to identify those children and young people known to the relevant agencies as being most at risk of offending, and working with them and their families to encourage them towards more positive activities.

- 2.3 Youth Inclusion and Support panels (YISPs) have been designed to assist local areas in delivering this aspect of the Crime and Disorder agenda. Local areas can use the Yot partnership as a means of coordinating activities in relation to youth crime prevention. Furthermore, Yots are well placed to support other key responsibilities of local authorities and their local partners including better outcomes for looked-after children and corporate parenting, and community safety generally.

- 2.4 Local authority chief executives with responsibility for education and social services are required to ensure that the range of youth justice services outlined in section 38(4) of the Crime and Disorder Act are delivered through Yots. The duty of Yots is to co-ordinate the provision of youth justice services for those in the area that need them. They are designed to tackle offending behaviour and the risk factors associated with it – from poor parental supervision and domestic violence or abuse to peer group pressure; from truancy or school exclusion to substance misuse or mental health problems.

- 2.5 The legislative framework underpinning Yots recognised that success in tackling

these risk factors required the involvement of a range of local agencies. Yots bring together the staff and wider resources of these agencies – social services, education, the police, probation service, connexions and health services. There is scope to involve others including housing and the voluntary sector.

- 2.6 Yots were not envisaged as belonging exclusively to any one department or agency. The initial guidance outlined the expectation that all the statutory partner agencies were expected to participate fully, with local authority chief executives taking the lead in ensuring the establishment of Yots corporately with the other partner agencies. This was to ensure Yots are embedded within local infrastructures and integral to the successful delivery of the crime and disorder agenda. To this effect the 1998 guidance outlined the need for local areas to establish a steering group that should evolve into a management board with a specific remit to manage performance of the prevention of youth crime agenda and ensure the delivery of the statutory principal aim at the local level.

Derby Youth Offending Service is part of the merged Community Safety Partnership, and the local authority chief executive chairs the management board.

Strategic Developments & Activities

- 2.7 Derby YOS recognises that early intervention with young people is effective in preventing offending and reducing youth crime. Action plans in relation to youth crime are outlined in two key documents – Derby YOS Prevention of Youth Crime Strategy 2005-08, and the Annual Youth Justice Plan.
- 2.8 The YOS preventions Steering Group monitors delivery of the preventions agenda. Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs) identify those children and young people assessed to be most at risk of offending. Children looked after are considered to be three times more likely to offend than the general population. Other risk factors associated with offending are not being in education, employment or training, as well as living in areas of greater deprivation.
- 2.9 Referrals are therefore made from respective partner agencies to YISPs for the most vulnerable young people to participate on YOS Youth Inclusion Programmes (YIPs), together with holiday activity programmes, recognising this period as high risk for the targeted children and young people. The progress of individual young people is assessed, monitored and reviewed throughout their contact with the YOS preventions projects, and action plans are put in place to fully support progress.
- 2.10 Delivery of this work is primarily through the work of mainstream YOS staff, for those who have already offended, and preventions staff within outreach work in the community for those who have been identified as vulnerable to offending. The work centres upon reducing the incidence of risk factors and enhancing protective factors by providing appropriate interventions. Progress of children is monitored within assessment processes, statistical returns and tracking of reoffending rates. As at December 2004 there were 19 children looked after out of 196 (9.7%) who offended during the year, compared against Home Office statistics for Derbyshire of 2.7%, resulting in a ratio of 1:3.3 likelihood of children looked after offending compared to the general population.
- 2.11 Overall performance is likely to be affected by the fact that the total cohort of children looked after has fallen but the age profile indicates that this fall is not

proportionate between the age groups. This will have impacted on this performance figure where out of the 19 children who received a final warning / conviction 8 were aged 16 years or over compared to last year where out of 16 children 5 were aged 16 years plus. This could explain the local increase in ratio from 1:2.8 (2003) to 1:3.3 (2004).

- 2.12 The importance of targeting children looked after in partnership as one of the vulnerable groups is fully recognised. Consequently, YOS Head of Service sits on the newly established Looked After Children strategy group, alongside Social Services Head of Service Assessment and Care Planning, recognising the need to bring greater coordination to operational activity around this priority group by all agencies involved.
- 2.13 One of the initial pieces of work will be to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of information exchange between YOS and SSD at operational level, and agree a consistent and robust methodology for capturing and exchanging data with respect to performance indicators. To this end respective performance management staff have met to agree and move forward this agenda and share data on a monthly basis.
- 2.14 It is also agreed that the jointly owned LAC Action Plan requires a more robust approach and focus by respective agencies. Consequently looked after children will be routinely referred and prioritised for inclusion in targeted prevention programmes to address individual need. Respective case managers will meet to agree joint assessments and levels of respective involvement and record a partnership approach to the delivery of care / supervision plans. Derby YOS have recently drafted a Looked After Children policy which will lead to practice guidance being completed by end June 2005 to capture a best practice approach towards improving outcomes for looked after children, and a reduction in offending.
- 2.15 Joint training of staff working within respective agencies will then be undertaken to take forward the practice guidance, by the autumn 2005. This will also incorporate an appraisal of how SSD residential care and YOS staff work together to explore restorative justice interventions with respect to conflict resolution, to explore alternative approaches to resolving minor incidents. Similarly, the above strategic approach will also need to coordinate with the work of the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) team in the city. As the ASB and YOS are integral parts of the Community Safety Partnership, and co-located, both share a commitment to tackling and reducing anti-social behaviour as fundamental to creating safe, sustainable, active and prosperous communities within Derby.
- 2.16 Consequently, the needs of looked after children will be integral to the successful delivery of the stronger and safer communities agenda, as well as the safeguarding agenda. The joint ASB / YOS protocol will be reviewed before end July 2005 to take this priority forward.

Priorities 2005-08

- 2.17 The Governments vision for the reshaping of children's services is based upon the five key outcomes as identified within the Children Act 2004. The Home Office recognise that whilst the Criminal Justice System (CJS) makes a vital contribution to all five outcomes, its key focus is on two in particular:

- *Making a positive contribution.* A key element in this is encouraging young people to choose to engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour.
- *Staying Safe.* Ensuring children and young people are safe from crime, exploitation, bullying, discrimination and violence is one of the main responsibilities of the CJS.

Therefore Derby YOS will seek to extend Youth Inclusion and Support Panels and YIPs to priority neighbourhoods to ensure effective prevention schemes are in place. We will look for sustainable funding for current Youth Inclusion Programmes. We will continue to ensure that YIPs target vulnerable groups, including looked after children, and young people not in school.

Engaging strategically in partnership to reduce and prevent offending by looked after children as a matter of priority.

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List of appendices:	Appendix 1 - Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1.1 None.

Legal

2. The development and inter-departmental guidance 'Establishing Youth Offending Teams' published in December 1998, amplified the provisions of the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act and was jointly issued by the Home Office, Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), Department of Health (DoH) and the Welsh Office. The establishment of Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) has been largely informed by the implementation of this guidance.

YOTs occupy a unique place within the local service environment. They straddle two major policy areas, being part of the Criminal Justice System and also part of local services for children and families. The statutory aim of the youth justice system is to prevent offending by children and young people.

Personnel

3. The Youth Offending Services response to children looked after are drawn from existing partnership resources of the participating statutory agencies – social services, education, health, police and probation.

Equalities impact

4. The vulnerability of looked after children requires a targeted approach and practice guidance both of which are in place.

Corporate Themes and Priorities

- 5 This report comes under the Council's objectives of
- protecting and supporting people
 - improving life chances for disadvantaged people and communities