



Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee	02.01.17	Update on Youth Offending Service Improvement Plan	All

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SUBJECT: Update on Youth Offending Service Improvement Plan

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 Islington Youth Offending Service was subject to re-inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in November 2015. This inspection found that while there had been some improvements, overall performance remained poor. This represented the third poor inspection result for Islington in the past five years, and the first time ever nationally that re-inspection did not show improved performance.
- 1.2 As a result of its inspection outcomes, Islington has been designated as a 'priority YOS' for the Youth Justice Board, which oversees the performance of Youth Offending Services in England and Wales, for the past two years. After the resignation of the last Head of Service, the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales agreed to second in the Head of London as acting Head of Service for Islington, to drive Youth Offending Service improvement activity. This secondment is for one year and commenced in April 2016.
- 1.3 HMIP cited three key priorities for the Youth Offending Service - addressing the relationship with the police including co-location; improving management of risk of harm and vulnerability and agencies understanding the interplay between the two; and support, training, resources and guidance for staff. These priorities formed the basis for the Youth Offending Service Improvement Plan, put in place in April 2016.
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- 1.4 **In the past nine months there has been substantial progress in improving the Youth Offending Service's performance. The latest performance data from the Youth Justice Board shows that we are improving against three of our five performance indicators, and now officially have an Amber rating. This is the first time Islington has not been Red in nearly three years, and demonstrates**

the huge amount of work that has gone into improving our performance. We have improved in each of the past three quarters on reducing First Time Entrants. We have also improved on binary re-offending rates and for the first time this quarter, the use of custody has gone down. The frequency re-offending rate and re-offences by re-offender remain up, but this is usually a corollary of a reduced cohort size. This is a very positive performance trajectory and demonstrates the skills and commitment of the Youth Offending Service team.

2. Detail

The three key objectives of the Plan were those identified by the re-inspection process:

2.1 By April 2017, to have in place effective joint work between the local authority and police to reduce offending, protect the public and keep children and young people safe, including co-location of the police

The Service Level Agreement between the Youth Offending Service and Islington police was jointly agreed and signed off in September 2016, setting out clearly the detail of how joint working will happen. Progress against this has been impeded by delays to co-location but the first review of the Service Level Agreement is now set for later this month. Issues to remain to be resolved include the provision from police of a protocol for communication with different police teams where a young person is named in more than one police initiative – though the Service Level Agreement does clarify that the Youth Offending Service police will be the conduit for information sharing across police teams.

The police computer equipment was finally installed and up and running at the end of December 2016. This now means that both seconded police officers are present in the office full time, which will allow for much more consistent service provision and the inclusion of the officers as integrated members of the team, as well as enabling much quicker turn around times for intelligence requests. The Service Level Agreement meeting later this month will now focus on division of responsibility between the roles of the two officers, to ensure accountability, consistency and development of professional expertise.

We are now using the Youth Justice Board's re-offending toolkit to analyse the profile of young people re-offending in Islington, in order to be able to target our resources most effectively on areas of highest need.

The use of Criminal Behaviour Orders was identified as a key contributory factor to the high re-offending and custody rates in Islington. A protocol was agreed with police and Community Safety services, under which all applications for youth civil orders would have a formal consultation with Youth Offending Service management, and the length and restrictions discussed. This has led to an overall decrease in the number of civil orders imposed, and where they are imposed, fewer restrictions leading to an increased compliance rate.

2.2 By April 2017, manage risk of harm to others and safeguarding needs so that actual and potential victims, including those who are also perpetrators, are protected as far as possible.

Substantial work has been undertaken by the Youth Offending Service management team on improving the quality of case management of young people on court orders. This has included a keen focus on identifying and responding to risk of harm and safeguarding issues, and consistent oversight of these by managers. Internal audits are showing that the quality of case management by Youth Offending Service practitioners has dramatically improved, and that the majority of cases dip sampled are of good quality. An intensive National Standards audit is under way to self assess quality across a range of indicators, and take action against any remaining areas of development. We have also been fortunate to secure the agreement of the Youth Justice Board London team to undertake a two day intensive audit of our cases in February – this will follow the format and standard which would be used by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation under their inspection regime, so will give us a clear externally validated picture of how far the quality of our service has developed.

A review has taken place of the systems within the Youth Offending Service to oversee and manage risk of harm posed by young people. Panels have been streamlined, and the most concerning cases are discussed monthly at a multi-agency panel chaired by the Service Manager. Representation at this

panel is now consistent and at sufficiently senior level from all agencies. The Multi-Agency Public Protection processes have also now been reviewed, and there is oversight of all eligible cases by the Service Manager. All case management staff have received training in managing risk of harm, and in explaining its management in reports for court.

A partnership document developed jointly with managers in Children's Social Care has been finalised, which sets out how children and young people who are Looked After will be consistently dealt with by the agencies involved, plans are aligned and consistent, and there is a shared responsibility for safeguarding and risk management. This is now being extended to include young people engaged with Independent Futures, and once this is completed will be developed further to include the Children In Need service. There is also a partnership document being developed with the Integrated Gangs Team, to ensure that where there are young people involved with more than one service, the work is joined up and complementary.

Extensive work has taken place to ensure that mandatory safeguarding documents are always submitted when young people enter the custodial estate. At the time of re-inspection, Islington was subject to escalation measures for poor performance in this area. Since then there have only been two occasions when documents were not submitted on time, and performance action taken in both cases to ensure there is not recurrence. The Youth Justice Board have positively noted the turn around in delivery against this measure.

A process has been developed to ensure that exit plans are in place for all young people completing court orders. Exit plans can include transition to the adult estate, step down to Targeted Youth Service or involvement of the voluntary sector, where there are ongoing support needs. This aims to reduce incidences of recidivism and support young people to maintain the progress made in engagement with the Youth Offending Service.

2.3 By April 2017, to ensure all staff have the relevant training, support and resources to manage the complex cases they hold

A great deal of work has been undertaken to develop greater integration between the Youth Offending Service and Targeted Youth Service elements of the service. This is important as Targeted Youth Service activities can work to prevent young people from entering the justice system, or from re-offending after orders have ended. Shared team meetings and awaydays, joint service planning and management functions and increased day to day contact over shared cases have led to more joined up working and consistency for young people. There is more work to do to ensure full synergy of service delivery but there has been significant progression. This has included substantial work to develop the management team across the whole service, establish clear lead areas to drive forward progress.

The managing Board for the Youth Offending Service has agreed three key underpinning principles for service delivery.

The first is 'Good Lives' a strengths-based approach to offender rehabilitation, which is premised on the idea that we need to build capabilities and strengths in people, in order to reduce their risk of reoffending. It also directs practitioners explicitly to construct intervention plans that help offenders acquire the capabilities to achieve things and outcomes that are personally meaningful to them.

Secondly, we are actively restorative approaches in all areas of our practice. By maximising the use of restorative justice in the administration of court orders, we involve and empower victims and enable young people to repair the harm their offending has caused.

Lastly, we acknowledge that many of the young people engaging in criminal activity in Islington have experienced serious traumatic stressors which are influencing their behaviour and ability to understand its impact. By the time young people come to the Youth Offending Service, they have often experienced a range of issues which might include bereavement, violence, abuse and neglect. These factors can not only heighten the risk of negative choices, but can actually affect brain development in adolescents, blunting emotional development and inhibiting an ability to empathise, develop self esteem and positive relationships. This is also linked to an increase in risk taking behaviour and negative coping strategies

such as substance misuse. Trauma informed practice does not seek to excuse offending, but emphasises the need to support young people to learn new skills and means to achieve positive outcomes.

The approaches outlined above dovetail to form a cohesive approach to the needs of the challenging and complex cohort of young offenders in Islington, and aim to reduce rates of re-offending.

We have developed a specialist court team, to ensure that the service we provide to the court is consistent and high quality. This includes providing training opportunities for youth court magistrates to ensure they are aware of the range of provision available in the Youth Offending Service and our ethos in supporting young offenders to change. We are also developing an Intensive Supervision and Surveillance service which enables the most prolific and high risk young people to be safely and effectively managed in the community, reducing the need for custody.

3. Recommendations

3.1 The Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee note the achievements against the Improvement Plan, and ask the Youth Justice Services Management Board to continue to oversee progress.

Final report clearance:

Signed by:



Carmel Littleton

Date 3.1.17

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