

## Youth Justice Plan Scrutiny Workshop - 6 December 2012

### Panel Members

Cllr Andrew Wealls, Chair (AW)  
Cllr Anne Pissaridou (AP)  
Cllr Liz Wakefield (LW)  
Mark Price, University of Brighton (MP)

### Officers

Anna Gianfrancesco, Service Manager, YOT (AG)  
Kath Vlcek/ Tom Hook, Scrutiny Team

### Introduction

- 1.1 AW chaired the meeting. This was a chance for scrutiny members to consider the update of the new Youth Offending Team plan, to discuss the outcome of the recent service inspection and for AG to highlight challenges in the team over the next few months. It was noted that success wasn't just dependent on the YOT, it also relies on the work of external teams
- 1.2 AG – it was a useful time to meet, as the YOT plans were still in the formal consultation phase, so any scrutiny comments could be fed back into the service.

### November 2012 Inspection Results

- 2.1 AG - To begin by going through the November 2012 inspection, there were no real surprises, if anything it was slightly more positive than anticipated. Overall, the managing risk element is still not performing as well as it should be but it has improved from a score of 66% to 75% so there are elements of improvement, even through the restructure.
- 2.2 It's a new inspection framework, BHCC was the first team to be inspected this way. The inspectors picked 20 out of 80 open case files and then inspect those 20 in detail. Some case files were chosen specifically as BME or female service users, some were chosen because they had custodial sentences whilst others were more random.

The inspectors didn't look at specific interventions but look at how the plans have been constructed, up to and including the date of the inspection. The inspection was less about the

effectiveness of the intervention rather than the presence of intervention, multi agency working and thinking about risk.

There was a paper audit on each case, after which the inspectors spoke to the case worker, talking and unpicking the individual case and the work carried out. It resulted in a percentage outcome score. They didn't speak to any managers.

- 2.3 The inspection did highlight things that could be easily remedied- for example on p4, it says there needed to be improvement in 'management oversight'. In fact, the YOT has various casework meetings with management, with notes saved on the shared drive but not electronically attached to the offender database. Staff will now print out the minutes and keep them on file as evidence that the oversight has taken place.
- 2.4 Q –on p3, under 'operational management', it highlights different levels of understanding. What are the issues?
- 2.5 AG – thinks it due to a lack of understanding of a new shared approach. Previous approaches have put the young person (YP) at the centre, with services focussed around them, now its moved to have the victim at the centre but not everyone has moved their thinking accordingly. It's much easier to change tangible things but softer, less measurable things can take longer to adapt. Its about seeing the YOT as part of the criminal justice system, and sharing a common understanding of what that means.
- 2.6 Reflective supervision is being introduced in the YOT, with a more analytical approach, so officers can unpick issues and consider the outcomes for the YP.

MP- this approach does help to develop a practitioner's ongoing skills development. It's vital to ensure that the restructure of the YOT supports this new approach.

### **Numeracy/ Literacy Needs and Other Support**

- 3.1 Q - Are YP helped with numeracy/ literacy issues where needed?
- 3.2 AG – When YP are in the prison system, they do get help with numeracy/ literacy but they are often not in for long enough to receive enough help. When they leave prison, some have an order saying that they must have help with literacy/ numeracy, but the YOT doesn't have a remit for all YP leaving prison.

There will be an Education worker in the restructure with an overview of educational needs, they will work with colleagues to check needs for YP who haven't gone to prison, including educational psychology needs. Hoping to get money for Speech and language therapy (SLT) resource in the team, it's a key need for some YP as they can't articulate or communicate properly, and struggle to express themselves. SLT can help address a lot of the Educational psychology needs but at a lesser cost (so more support can be provided with resources). The problem is that there are limited SLT resources in Brighton and Hove.

- 3.3 MP – Yes, having SLT on offer will help the YP make connections between thoughts and feelings, helping to re-programme brain pathways.
- 3.4 RECOMMENDATION –can we write a letter as a Scrutiny Panel, recommending that we embed SLT provision in the YOT, engaging with teenagers with a range of communication issues? Agreed.
- 3.5 AG - The YOT is also looking at how to provide some support after the statutory intervention has ended, making more positive plan for the YP's journey afterwards. They are also looking to join up services , eg housing, education etc, to look at all of the areas of a YP's life that needs to be improved/ supported to reduce risk of re-offending

### **Early Intervention/ Low Risk Offenders**

- 4.1 Q- it seems that more effort currently is put into supporting those young people who are going to be seen by an external agency, eg those who are going to court. Is this the correct approach?
- 4.2 AG – yes it has been the case that low risk offenders get less attention than high risk repeat offenders. The high risk offenders have pre-sentence reports and a high level of resources given to them, whilst low risk offenders have less information gathered and decisions are made on limited information.

Currently officers deal with a mix of low and high risk offenders, which means they give more priority to the high risk group. In the YOT restructure, this will be addressed with a group of case workers specifically for the medium to low risk offenders, and senior officers working with the high risk group. A number of local authorities work on a similar split. Its really important to change the approach to early intervention and its hoped that this will help.

- 4.3 Q – We must look at the 13/14 year old low-risk offenders before they become more prolific and enter the criminal justice system. Will some more senior officers work with this group too to help direct them away?
- 4.4 AG – This has been recognised in the change of emphasis given to 13/14 year olds, more resources now for this group. They are working with police and other colleagues to identify those 13/14 yr olds who are potential prolific offenders to work with them early on
- 4.5 Q- how do schools become involved?
- 4.6 AG – they refer in to the YOT. There is an Education Worker in the restructure, who may be shared with Alternative centre for Education (ACE) as there is a significant overlap of service users.

A YOT worker is going to be seconded in to the Stronger Families, Stronger Communities (SFSC) team, to work with YP with low school attendance (under 85%) and/or offending behaviour. The SFSC team has the remit to work with families with two or more of the following: 15% school absence/ youth offending/ persistent ASB/ more than six months of worklessness.

- 4.7 Comment – this is welcomed, school attendance really affects life chances. A lot of young offenders have 10/20% attendance; setting an 85% threshold will help capture and support them much sooner

### **Restorative Justice**

- 5.1 AG – There is a new post for a Restorative Justice (RJ) coordinator, including community resolution, victim input, meetings with victims, practical work etc. The focus is on building resilience in YP, with a city wide approach to restorative justice. A referral order will say how many hours of RJ should be carried out, its key to find things to fill the RJ hours up.
- 5.2 MP – other teams in the city incl the Drug and Alcohol team are considering trialling a restorative community panel approach, where community members decide the RJ. However there are concerns about this moving into a judgmental/ vigilante approach so it needs to be considered carefully. Many schools have anti-bullying policies with an RJ ‘collective problem’ approach.

## **Other Financial Changes**

- 6.1 AG –new legislation that says any YP remanded to custody becomes a Looked After Child, with the local authority covering costs (which are upwards of £700 pw). One YP has been remanded into custody this week, with 2 others expected soon.

The intention is for authorities to work to reduce numbers of YP being remanded into custody. Its also aiming to stop YP being remanded for breaking their bail conditions – most YP in remand don't have a custodial sentence. A lot of problems occur around curfews – the YP consistently won't keep to the curfew and eventually magistrate remands them

- 6.2 East Sussex CC has a remand and intensive lodging scheme, where young offenders are moved into supported accom rather than foster placements. There is a supportive contained environment for the YP. BHCC is looking into joining up with ESCC to share the scheme

## **Restructure proposals**

- 7.1 Q– Could AG outline the restructure plans and explain what is being changed to address the identified needs?
- 7.2 AG – On p8-9 of the consultation papers, it lays out the current and the proposed system. In the current system there are anomalies between different pay scales for jobs, and whether some jobs require a professional qualification or not. This has been addressed in the new proposals; affected staff will be on protected pay for 3 years.

In the new proposals, there will be two senior youth justice workers and a senior social worker (who will be seconded into the team). They will deal with YP with a high risk of re-offending/ high vulnerability and those in custody. The teams below will have missed caseloads and shared understanding of work. There will be lower level of support for YP at the prevention level, in order to reduce offending. 3 temp posts have been deleted.

- 7.3 AG firmly believes that the new system will work; the key is managing the change for staff to make the process work. The team will take on another manager for a year to develop the team's capacity and quality assurance systems. When the quality assurance works, then YOT management will feel reassured enough to reduce inspections.

There has been thought put into how managers and staff can handle the cultural change, managers have had coaching and staff have had some training on cultural change, with more planned. Its anticipated that it might take a while to bed in the new system and for staff to feel comfortable with new roles, so it might take a while for changes to be seen in the inspection results but it is hoped that by December 2013, there will be some positive changes.

- 7.4 The current system is too expensive and isn't working. The new proposals will start in April 2013, and then managers will have to tightly manage costs etc. AG is aware that they will need to talk to the new Police and Crime Commissioner regarding funding.

### **Next Steps**

- 8.1 The scrutiny panel members have taken confidence that things are moving in the right direction with regard to the restructure and addressing the problems that have been identified in the current system. There has been a lot of extremely good work and the panel has confidence in Anna's leadership.
- 8.2 It would be useful to have another meeting in May at YOT to see how the restructure went, for an update, and after that, a report to whole HWOSC in a year to see how it has settled in and the results. All agreed.