

13 December 2011		ITEM 8
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE FUNCTION AND PERFORMANCE		
Report of: James Waud, Service Manager, Youth Offending Service and Targeted Youth Support and Connexions		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No	
Accountable Head of Service: Barbara Foster, Head of Care & Targeted Outcomes		
Accountable Director: Jo Olsson, Corporate Director, People Services		
This report is: Public		
Purpose of Report: To update Members on the Youth Offending Service		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To give an overview of the duties and responsibilities of the Youth Offending Service, its current performance and funding arrangements

1. Recommendations

This report has been requested by the Committee and is for information only.

2. Background

2.1 Youth Offending Services were created by the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act to prevent offending and re-offending by young people between the ages of ten and seventeen years. The Youth Offending Service effectively has a dual duty; to provide interventions that turn young people away from crime, maximise their potential keep them safe but also to protect the public from their actions.

2.2 The Youth Offending Service is responsible for the enforcement of all criminal court orders and for the delivery of interventions attached to those orders plus the planning and through care of those young people serving custodial sentences. Much of the work is done in the criminal courts both Magistrates (Youth) and Crown who cannot, in law, operate without Youth Offending Service Officers in attendance to guide and advise in respect of suitable and available disposals that address identified risk factors. The Youth Offending

Service also provides risk assessed bail packages offering viable alternatives to Remands in Custody and Court Ordered Secure Remands. Thurrock Youth Offending Service is held in high esteem by legal advisors, advocates and magistrates. This is important as it is only with the confidence of the courts that we can achieve the best outcomes for our young people.

- 2.3 The Youth Offending Service is multi-disciplinary staffed and funded by partner agencies in Police, Social Care, Education, Probation and Health and the Ministry of Justice via the Youth Justice Board to whom it reports. It has a governance board, comprising senior members of partner agencies with a reporting line to the Children and Young People's Partnership. Line management of staff is through the Council and Youth Offending Service manages staff from the partner agencies.

3 Structure and Staffing

- 3.1 The Youth Offending Service is in three parts. The biggest function has seven case managers, including the seconded probation officer, who manage all the court work, intervention, enforcement and through-care. The Youth Inclusion Support Panel and Triage focus on prevention and consist of two full time officers plus some sessional workers who deliver prevention programmes for 8-16 year olds and pre-court diversion programmes for 10-17 year olds. The third function is Intensive Supervision and Surveillance who also have two full time staff plus sessionals who deliver programmes for the most prolific/dangerous/high risk cases as a direct alternative to custody. Young people on those programmes receive a minimum twenty five hours, seven day per week contact.
- 3.2 Supporting all three functions are a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service specialist seconded from Health, a Police Officer from Essex Police and a substance misuse worker whom we have recently moved back into the Youth Offending Service from their previous position within Network.
- 3.3 The Youth Offending Service also employs a victim support worker as part of our statutory duty to offer reparation to victims of youth crime. Reparation may be direct in the form of Restorative Justice Conferences where victim and perpetrator meet under carefully controlled conditions or indirect in the form of unpaid work in the community. Much of this is done with the elderly population, either in their own homes or in sheltered housing complexes. This work generates some very appreciative letters.
- 3.4 The success of the Youth Offending Service on a relatively low budget is largely attributable to its success in retaining very high quality staff. One of the Operations Managers has now been appointed as Service Manager which has seen continuity in a management team which has now been in place for nine years and most of the staff have more than five years service – some considerably more. This means that there is a body of experience and expertise on tap and an intimate knowledge of the borough and its offending population.

4 Performance

- 4.1 Thurrock is a low spending authority generally and has the smallest Youth Offending Service in the country. The value for money indicators are therefore good for Thurrock's Youth Offending Service. Thurrock Youth Offending Service has consistently achieved a lower re-offending rate (National Indicator 19) than the national, regional and family averages. This pattern of achievement was interrupted in the last quarter of 09/10 when we ended up with a slightly higher rate than that achieved nationally. Analysis shows that this unusual blip was not reflective of the rest of the year or previous year's performance. The increase was caused by primarily two offenders in the cohort committing a large number of offences between them.
- 4.2 Thurrock Youth Offending Service achieved the third lowest custody rate (National Indicator 43) in the country last year in 2009/2010(2.4%), which is less than half the rate of national, regional and family comparators, with only seven young people receiving custodial sentences in 2009/2010.
- 4.3 2010/11 was less successful in terms of percentages but the numerical increase was relatively small.

5 Custody

- 5.1 Please note that although the percentage of custodials nearly doubled in 2010/11 to 5.2% this represents 11 young people who received custodial sentences, one of whom had 3 separate sentences. In 2009/10 the figure was 7.

To put this in context, a total of 42 "so serious" Pre-Sentence Reports were ordered and completed in the period 2010/2011 where the court had indicated that custody was to be the first option on sentence.

- 5.2 Until the counting rules change we are likely to see a continued rise in the percentage of custodials. This is reflected nationally especially in those authorities which, like Thurrock, have effective court diversion schemes like Triage. As the number of sanctioned detections drop the percentage of those that are custodials will rise – even though the numbers remain much the same. We predicted this a year ago.

6 Re-offending

- 6.1 The percentage re-offending rate continues to be the lowest in region, family and national. However I have been asked to provide this information in straight numbers. These are:-

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>No. in cohort</u>	<u>No. offended</u>	<u>No. of offences</u>
2009/2010	138	59	148
2010/2011	119	34	83 (after 9 months)

This will hopefully give a more meaningful indication of direction of travel as similar problems with counting rules apply to the re-offending cohort as with remands. We expect the total number of disposals to drop but be populated by a more difficult set of offenders. Neighbourhood Resolutions and Triage will effectively remove many of the “easy wins” from the Police National Computer, which is where the data is collected and thus percentage figures start to look worse although actual numbers may drop. This has been reflected nationally as other Youth Offending Services adopt court diversion schemes.

In percentage terms as expressed by the Youth Justice Board the figures are as follows. It should be noted that our reduction of 3.5 % bucks the national trend which saw a small increase in re-offending amongst 70% of Youth Offending Service.

	Thurrock	Region	Family	England	Reduction
Reoffending rate after 6 months 10/11	0.70	0.75	0.85	0.88	-3.5%

This year we intend to track all those who have received interventions i.e. Triage, Reprimand, Final Warning, Sentence in the first 3 months and monitor re-offending after 3,6,9 and 12 months.

Currently our Triage re-offending performance is looking very positive with only 9 out of 130 young people so far this year committing further offences.

This gave us what I think is the best reduction in First Time Entrants to the criminal justice system in the country last year. The figures are as follows

	Thurrock	Region	Family	England
Change in First Time Entrants (since same period last year)	-59.5%	-27.9%	-39.5%	-24.8%

7 Violent Crime and knife crime

7.1 Reporting Year 10-11

444 recorded offences for youths in Thurrock

69 of these relate to the violence against the person act

7 of these are possession of an offensive weapon

4 of these are for bladed articles (the other 3 are for a pole, an imitation fire arm and a sheath)

Knife crime therefore accounts for less than 1% of offences committed in Thurrock by Youths in 10-11.

7.2 There is one area of underperformance. The number of young offenders engaged in education, employment or training (National Indicator 45), has rarely risen above 55%. Performance in 2010/11 improved dramatically (72% in the first quarter and 78% in the second) but has now dropped back again. The biggest challenge is the 16+ group and we do employ two sessional employment mentors whose sole task is to engage this group in meaningful employment or training. However, the national picture is grim with youth unemployment at its highest level for twenty years and it is difficult to buck this trend especially with young people who have the added disadvantages of poor school attainment and a criminal record.

8 Funding

8.1 Thurrock Youth Offending Service suffered a cut of Ministry of Justice funding this year of 21% amounting to some £93,000 giving a total grant of £365,000 Interagency finance (police, health, probation) was £94,000 which was just £500 less than last year owing to a 5% cut from probation. The rest of this year's total budget of £883,000 was made up from the council contribution.

8.2 Next year the Youth Offending Service funding from the Ministry of Justice will be calculated by a different formula which has yet to be decided although the calculations from The Youth Justice Board indicate that whatever formula is used Thurrock will receive an increase.

9 Links with wider Children's Services.

9.1 Last year the links between the Youth Offending Service and Social Care were strengthened by the Youth Offending Service Manager becoming responsible for Adolescent Services (previously Targeted Youth Support). This last year has seen the continued integration of the services which should improve the delivery of service to those young people who are known to both services or who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

The Youth Offending Service staff work closely with Social Care colleagues and are made aware of care plans before implementing their own intervention plans which must, of course, take any looked after children, child in need or child protection plans into account to ensure cohesion and non-duplication of work.

- 9.2 A Youth Offending Service substance misuse worker now works one day per week in Adolescent Services which is beginning to improve the engagement of those young people who previously would not use community provision even when referred.
- 9.3 The Youth Offending Service also gained additional pathfinder funding from the Department of Health this year as a result of operating one of the top thirty performing Triage schemes in the country. This will fund a health post which, although a Youth Offending Service resource, will be based in Adolescent Services to bring additional screening and intervention to Triage cases and also young people identified by social care as being at risk of offending.

10 Issues And/Or Options

- 10.1 Future direction of the Youth Offending Service now appears to be settled as the indications are that the government like the model and will largely continue with it.
- 10.2 The biggest change will be the devolvement of remand custody costs to the Local Authorities in an effort to make them provide more robust alternatives such as Intensive Fostering. The formula for calculating how much funding will devolve has not yet been finalised but it is unlikely to cover actual costs especially when factoring in the cost of viable, robust alternatives that will persuade courts to allow bail. Had we paid costs last year they would have amounted to approximately £160,000. However it must be emphasised that the Youth Offending Service will not make representations to allow bail to court unless it genuinely believes that risk of harm can be managed in the community.

11 Diversity and Equality

- 11.1 Last year the Black Minority Ethnic element of Thurrock’s offending population was:-

- 87.7% White British
- 4.6% Mix/Dual background
- 0.5% Asian and Asian British
- 6.4% Black and Black British
- 0.8% Unknown

The latest data which is probably the best comparator is the schools data which is as follows:-

- 75.1% White British
- 3.7% Mix/Dual background
- 3.3% Asian and Asian British
- 10.4% Black or Black British
- 4.9% White other

It can be seen from this that the Black Minority Ethnic population are not over represented in the offending population.

Approximately 30% of all offences were committed by young women with the type of offence being as one would expect. Robbery, burglary and violent offences predominantly male and shoplifting predominantly female.

12 Consultation (Including Overview And Scrutiny, If Applicable)

Not applicable

13 Impact On Corporate Policies, Priorities, Performance And Community Impact

- 13.1 All aspects of Crime and Disorder Act including Section 17 as Youth Offending Service statutory duty is prevention of offending and re-offending.
- 13.2 The work that the Youth Offending Service undertakes with young offenders has a clear impact on the community's perception of crime and fear of crime.

14 Implications

- 14.1 Youth crime is a major issue for most communities and must be seen to be tackled effectively. Whilst most people look to the police in the first instance to tackle crime it is what happens post apprehension that impacts on the community especially in the management of violent or sexual offenders.
- 14.2 With government policy determined to reduce the use of custody this will inevitably mean more high risk offenders needing to be managed in the community which will have resource implications.

Financial

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These are contained in the main body of the report.

Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
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This report is for information only and there are no legal implications arising from this report.

Diversity and Equality

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This report is for information only and therefore has no diversity implications at this stage although such reports contribute to a thorough understanding of the service being considered and will therefore help inform any future action.

Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental

Duties and responsibilities as described in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 particularly Part 3, Section 37 – Section 42

15 Conclusion

- 15.1 Thurrock has seen a year on year reduction in youth crime and the Youth Offending Service provides an important, if largely unseen, service that contributes significantly to that, and, by default, to the community's perception of Thurrock and their own safety.

16. Background papers used in preparing this report

N/A

17. Appendices to this report:

N/A

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