

4 December 2018		ITEM: 8
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Youth Offending Service Report		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Yes	
Report of: Jason Read, Operations Manager Youth Offending Service		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director for Children's Care and Targeted Outcomes		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

To give an overview of the duties and responsibilities of the YOS, its current performance and the work it is implementing regarding gangs and serious youth violence.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee note and provide comment on the update and information provided within the report.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Youth Offending Services (YOS) 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 old. This is achieved by implementing specific interventions that reduce the risk of young people offending or re-offending, maximising their potential and keeping them safe but also protecting the public from the risk they may present.

2.2 YOS 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 or made subject to Youth Detention Accommodation (secure remand) by the Courts. Much of the work is done in the criminal courts both Magistrates (Youth) and Crown who cannot, in law, operate without YOS Officers in attendance to guide and advise in respect of suitable and available disposals that address

identified risk factors. Thurrock YOS is held in high esteem by legal advisors, advocates and magistrates and currently chairs the Essex Youth Justice Action Team (YJAT), which manages and oversees the youth Justice system across Essex.

- 2.3 The YOS is multi-disciplinary, staffed and funded by partner agencies in the Essex Fire and Police Crime Commissioner (PFCC), Thurrock Children's Social Care, the National probation Service, 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 Thurrock Community Safety Partnership. Line management of Local Authority staff is through the Local Authority and YOS manage staff from the partner agencies on a day to day basis in conjunction with their own agency line management arrangements.
- 2.4 The YOS has been based in Corringham since 2013, initially at Corringham Police station and since 2016 at the old housing office in Springfield Road. To a certain degree this has left the YOS detached from generic Children's Social Care and, with the vast majority of its service users residing in the West of Thurrock can be difficult for young people and their families to access. Early discussions are currently taking place in respect of moving the service back to Grays, either within the newly developed Civic offices or an alternative provision that meets the needs of the service.

Structure and staffing

- 2.5 As a result of austerity and in line with other public services locally and nationally, Thurrock YOS has had to make considerable efficiency savings over the preceding years that have consequently resulted in reductions in staffing numbers. However, this has been in line with a reduction in young people coming into the criminal justice system and has not affected performance. This year there has been no reduction in funding from any of our statutory partners and the YOS have been successful in a pan Essex bid to fund extra health staff through a 3 year Health and Justice project. Additionally, with our partners in the PFCC office we were successful in a bid to the home office under the Early Intervention Youth Fund, which aims to reduce young people being exploited by gangs (see gangs, knives and child criminal exploitation section).
- 2.6 The YOS has fundamentally two key performance indicators these being to reduce re-offending and prevent children entering the criminal justice system. The biggest function has 4.5 case managers including a part time seconded Probation Officer who manage all the court work, intervention, enforcement and, finally, through-care and resettlement from the secure estate. The Youth Inclusion Support Programme (YISP) and Triage focus on prevention and consist of one full time officer and one 4/5 officer who deliver prevention

programmes for 8-16 year olds and pre-court diversion programmes for 10-17 year olds.

- 2.7 Supporting the core work of the team there is a strategic lead, two operations managers, a seconded Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service (EWMS) worker, an administrator/receptionist a restorative justice and victim worker and support from “Wize up” the young people’s substance misuse service.

Performance

- 2.8 Thurrock YOS continues to perform well, with the latest nationally published data from the Youth Justice Board evidencing a 30.1% binary re-offending rate. This compares to the national average 41.6% and our identified family average 38.3%. In respect of first time entrants to the criminal justice system, based on the tracked cohort at the point that Thurrock introduced a new prevention scheme, we are currently performing at -44%, this compares to the national average -37% and our identified family average -33% (good performance is typified by a negative performance).
- 2.9 A three year Youth Justice plan has recently been approved by the Thurrock Youth Justice Governance Board and received positive feedback from the Youth Justice Board: *“The plan clearly sets the strategic direction for the YJ partnership and the revised format will make it more understandable to both partners and public. The approach by the partnership to addressing Gangs & Serious Youth Violence (GSYV) is particularly innovative and an area of notable developing practice.”*
- 2.10 The plan focuses on six strategic identified priorities based around the core principal of continuing to reduce offending, protect the public and improve the safety and wellbeing of young people. Please see *appendix A* which is an overview of the Youth Justice Plan.

Restorative Justice

- 2.11 The YOS have a statutory duty to ensure that young people make amends for the harm they have caused by their offending, either directly to the victim or the community at large. This year the YOS have supervised numerous community based projects including: extensive work carried out at Grays beach, the building of two boules pitches and preparation for a children’s play area, hand delivering leaflets across Thurrock in respect of crime, anti-social behaviour and cuckooing and the making of poppies for the Royal British Legion.
- 2.12 We continue to recruit, train and work with local volunteers as part of our Youth Offender Panels. This area of work allows local people to hold young people in their community accountable for their offending and agree with them what they should do to address their behaviour and how they can make amends for their actions.

Gangs, knives and child criminal exploitation

- 2.13 The biggest challenge that the YOS continue to face is the emergence of gangs and a significant increase in knife crime. This increase is above both the national average and the figure published by Essex police. However it should be noted that the majority of these offences are not committed in Thurrock, but by young people resident in Thurrock, offending in other areas. All young people convicted of a knife related offence have to undergo a mandatory knife prevention programme. The current re-conviction rate of young people subject to knife prevention programmes is only 5%. This evidences that they are very successful, however it also highlights the need for better generic prevention programmes across children's services so that young people can be engaged and diverted before they carry a knife.
- 2.14 A consistent and robust approach to prevention programmes has been highlighted as an area for development across Essex, resulting in a pan Essex bid between the YOS and the PFCC to access a grant from the Home Office Early Intervention Youth Fund. A key part of this bid is a programme of primary and secondary school education to "*build resilience and critical thinking on the impact of violence*". The bid was successful.
- 2.15 The YOS supported by the Community safety Partnership and Essex police has been a key agency in tackling the issues of gang related violence in Thurrock. We have chaired the Gang Related Violence (GRV) Operation Group since its inception in 2014. This group devises and implements multi agency plans to "*prevent, disrupt and enforce*" identified gangs or individuals affiliated with gangs. It reports to the Gang Related Violence Strategic Group which is currently chaired by the Director of Children's Services.
- 2.16 The GRV operation group has provided information and the YOS have written supporting statements in relation to the successful applications for the recent C17 gang injunction. We are also offering support programmes for all children (which is a condition) subject to the injunction and working closely with Gangsline who are offering gang exit programmes.
- 2.17 The YOS continue to work with the Courts to implement conditions and requirements attached to individual Court Orders to restrict movement, reduce the risk of reoffending, protect the public and safeguard young people associated with, or at risk of being criminally exploited by gangs.
- 2.18 In addition to the above, the YOS have, within its current resources, completed gang awareness training with (amongst others) social workers & support staff, Grays campus staff, Palmers staff, the National Probation Service, youth workers, youth magistrates, staff at the Harris Academy, police officers as well as knife prevention programmes with all year 10 students at the Harris Academy.

2.19 This area of work remains a key priority in our three year Youth Justice Plan and has been identified and published nationally as an area of good practice by the Youth Justice Board.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Gangs, knives and child criminal exploitation

- 3.1 The biggest challenge that the YOS continue to face is the emergence of gangs and a significant increase in knife crime. This increase is above both the national average and the figure published by Essex police. However it should be noted that the majority of these offences are not committed in Thurrock, but by young people resident in Thurrock, offending in other areas. All young people convicted of a knife related offence have to undergo a mandatory knife prevention programme. The current re-conviction rate of young people subject to knife prevention programmes is only 5%. This evidences that they are very successful, however it also highlights the need for better generic prevention programmes across children's services so that young people can be engaged and diverted before they carry a knife.
- 3.2 A consistent and robust approach to prevention programmes has been highlighted as an area for development across Essex, resulting in a pan Essex bid between the YOS and the PFCC to access a grant from the Home Office Early Intervention Youth Fund. A key part of this bid is a programme of primary and secondary school education to "*build resilience and critical thinking on the impact of violence*". We are currently waiting to see if this bid has been successful.
- 3.3 The YOS supported by the Community safety Partnership and Essex police has been a key agency in tackling the issues of gang related violence in Thurrock. We have chaired the Gang Related Violence (GRV) Operation Group since its inception in 2014. This group devises and implements multi agency plans to "*prevent, disrupt and enforce*" identified gangs or individuals affiliated with gangs. It reports to the Gang Related Violence Strategic Group which is currently chaired by the Corporate Director Children's Services.
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- 3.5 The YOS continue to work with the Courts to implement conditions and requirements attached to individual Court Orders to restrict movement, reduce the risk of reoffending, protect the public and safeguard young people associated with, or at risk of being criminally exploited by gangs.
- 3.6 In addition to the above, the YOS have, within its current resources, completed gang awareness training with (amongst others) social workers &

support staff, Grays campus staff, Palmers staff, the National Probation Service, youth workers, youth magistrates, staff at the Harris Academy, police officers as well as knife prevention programmes with all year 10 students at the Harris Academy.

- 3.7 This area of work remains a key priority in our three year Youth Justice Plan and has been identified and published nationally as an area of good practice by the Youth Justice Board.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- Not applicable

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 This report has been written in consultation with Clare More Strategic Lead for the Youth Offending Service, Sheila Murphy Assistant Director of Children's Services and Rory Patterson Director of Children's Services.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 All aspects of Crime and Disorder Act including S.17 as YOS statutory duty is prevention of offending and re-offending.
- 6.2 The work that YOS undertake with young offenders has a clear impact on the community's perception of crime and fear of crime.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Michelle Hall**
Management Accountant

There are no financial implications at this stage, however any costs associated with this report need to be met from existing resources.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal Children's Social Care

No legal implications.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
**Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer**

No diversity or equality implications.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- None.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None.

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix A - Overview of the Youth Justice Plan 2018-2021

Report Author:

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Thurrock Youth Offending Service