

14 July 2015

ITEM: 7

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Youth Offending Service function and performance

Wards and communities affected:

All

Key Decision:

Non key

Report of: James Waud. Strategic Lead, Youth Offending Service

Accountable Head of Service: Andrew Carter, Head of CATO

Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton, 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 funding arrangements

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee comment on the function and performance of the YOS and review plans to address the two areas of improvement as set out in the HMIP, Short Quality Screening Report dated 20th May 2015:

a) Intervention planning should genuinely involve children and young people and their parents/carers. The plans should be constructed in such a way that they are effective tools to drive successful interventions.

b) Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements need to be fully understood by all staff and managers.

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. The YOS effectively has a dual duty; to provide interventions that turn young people away from crime, maximise their potential and keep them safe but also to protect the public from their actions.

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. 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. YOS also provide risk assessed bail packages offering viable alternatives to Youth Detention Accommodation (formerly Remands in Custody and Court Ordered Secure Remands). Thurrock YOS 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 YOS is multi-disciplinary, staffed and funded by partner agencies in Police, Thurrock Social Care, Education, Probation, 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 Local Authority staff is through the Council and YOS manage staff from the partner agencies on a day to day basis in conjunction their own agency line management arrangements.

2.4 **Offices**

As a result of the Grays Court House being redeveloped the YOS have moved into new premises in Corringham's old police station. Despite the initial move, which took place in January last year, being successful, Health & Safety issues have arisen, primarily around leaks in the roof and the presence of asbestos, which need to be resolved urgently. A comprehensive action plan following a full health and safety inspection is now in place.

The original lease on the police station was due to end in November 2015. Discussions have been ongoing between the YOS and Essex Police in relation to extending the lease. Essex Police have currently agreed an extension until November 2016.

The YOS are therefore exploring accommodation options for beyond November 2016 which currently include:

- a) Remaining at the current location at Corringham old Police Station.
- b) Moving to the Civic Offices as part of the renovation work that is being planned for the ground floor.
- c) Locating alternative premises.

2.5 **Structure and Staffing**

Thurrock YOS has had to make considerable efficiency savings this year with further savings to be made next year. Indicated reductions in staffing numbers are as a result of the necessity to balance the current budget.

- 2.5.1 The YOS is essentially in three parts. The biggest function has five case managers (a reduction from seven), including the seconded Probation Officer, the Practice Manager and two Social Workers 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 3/5 officer who delivers prevention programmes for 8-16 year olds and pre-court diversion programmes for 10-17 year olds. The third function is ISS (Intensive

Supervision and Surveillance) which also had two full time staff who delivered programmes for the most prolific/dangerous/high risk cases as a direct alternative to custody. Young people on these programmes receive a minimum twenty five hours, seven day per week contact. Thurrock YOS has cut both these ISS posts and will manage such cases as and when they arise by redeploying remaining staff.

- 2.5.2 Supporting all three functions are a CAMHS specialist seconded from Health and a Police Officer from Essex Police.
- 2.5.3 There is also a second CAMHS worker funded by direct grant from the Department of Health to support the Triage programme.
- 2.5.4 YOS also employs a victim support worker and a reparation co-ordinator 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.
- 2.5.5 Thurrock YOS also used to employ a number of sessional workers who could be brought in to support all of the above roles as and when needed but these are also now unaffordable.
- 2.5.6 The organisation has enjoyed an extremely stable workforce over the years and has thus created a body of experience and expertise and an intimate knowledge of the borough and its offending population.

2.6 Performance

Thurrock is a low spending authority generally and has the smallest YOS in the country. The value for money indicators are therefore good for Thurrock's YOS. Thurrock YOS generally achieves a lower re-offending rate than the national, regional and statistical family averages.

- 2.6.1 Thurrock YOS was last inspected in January 2012 by both the Care Quality Commission and HMI Probation. Both outcomes were very positive with an overall minimal improvement required & the action plan as a result of the inspection was successfully implemented.
- 2.6.2 The inspection criteria for Youth Offending Services has now been changed looking at a systemic approach as opposed to case based. Additionally the criteria for the decision for inspection have changed, with this now being based on poor performance or an identified cause for concern. Currently the Youth Justice Board is pleased with the performance of Thurrock YOS and as a result we do not expect to be inspected in the near future

2.7 YOS is now measured nationally against three outcomes:-

- Use of custody
- First time entrants
- Rate of re-offending

2.7.1 Use of custody

Use of custody			
	11-12	12-13	13-14
Thurrock	11%(18)*	10% (14)*	6% (8)*
Family	Not available	Not available	Not available
National	Not available	Not available	Not available
<p><i>Commentary: As a result of community solutions and the success of TRIAGE in greatly reducing the first time entrants to the youth justice system in Thurrock (a reduction of 40% on the 2010 cohort), the reduction in those appearing before the Courts & undergoing sentencing has greatly reduced & those that are appearing for sentencing are therefore the more serious & persistent offenders and at higher risk of a custodial sentence. Additionally the lesser crimes are now being dealt with by the prevention/pre-Court disposal and can no longer be used to counter balance custodial sentences. This is reflected in the figures above (*young people v percentage).</i></p>			

2.8 First Time Entrants

Thurrock YOS continues to perform highly in the reduction of first time entrants to the criminal justice system. Based on the numbers prior to the introduction of TRIAGE and the re-launching of the Youth Inclusion & Support Programme, it has reduced the first time entrants by over 80 % in total - outperforming all groups it is measured against.

2.9 Rate of re-offending

The percentage re-offending rate continues to be one of the lowest in region, family and national. (please note there is a year's drag for this data as it is based on re-offending activity in the year following the conviction).

2.10 Prevention

Last financial year Thurrock YOS worked with 68 young people as part of our prevention service, with 51 being subject to TRIAGE and 17 interventions via Youth Inclusion & Support Programmes.

2.10.1 So far this financial year (1/4/14-1/2/15) we have worked with only 29 young people on these programmes but this was largely due to YISP being suspended for six months due to staffing difficulties.

2.10.2 However, we have managed to extend our prevention service to offer interventions in local schools, whether this is a specific piece of work to address an identified risk or a general intervention regarding the consequences of crime and anti-social behaviour. So far this year we have worked in six local schools ranging from primary level through to Sixth Form with a further seven having booked sessions.

Re-offending			
	11-12	12-13	13-14
Thurrock	46%	43%	27%
Family	Not available	Not available	Not available
National	Not available	Not available	Not available
<i>Commentary: The out turn for the last financial year 2013/2014 was the lowest re-offending rate in Thurrock YOS history and well below the YJB predicted rate of 39% based on previous trends and socio demographic make up of the borough.</i>			

2.10.3 The good news is that the re-offending rate for the tracked cohort of prevention/Triage cases this year is 0%.

2.11 Violent Crime and knife crime

Knife crime accounted for less than 1% of offences committed in Thurrock by Youths in 2013/2014. However this year we have seen a small increase and what appears to be a number of firearms offences although these relate to a single incident with one offender..

In respect of the data I can give the following for the period 1/4/14 - 31/1/15:

Possession of bladed article - 3

Possession of imitation firearm with intent - 4 (all relating to one incident)

This is from 179 Offences. So knives would be 1.5% and firearms 2.5%

2.12 Migration to Thurrock and Serious Youth violence (gangs).

One emerging issue locally is the migration of young people and their families, primarily from the London Boroughs. These boroughs often have supported accommodation and foster placements in Thurrock. This coupled with the introduction of the benefit cap and the relatively low cost local accommodation, there has been a significant increase in case transfers and oversight supervision for Looked After Children from other authorities. These cases currently account for about 17% of caseloads.

2.12.1 With this migration comes the risk management of some young people who have significant gang affiliations in their originating boroughs. These moves come about for a variety of reasons, not least the wish of parents and police to separate these individuals from their home territory. Most of these young people are assessed as a high risk of serious harm and have to be supervised accordingly. They present a far more challenging prospect, with differing needs and risks than the indigenous young people of Thurrock. However, they rarely offend locally preferring to return to their originating boroughs to commit offences.

2.13 Education, Training, Employment (ETE)

This is one area of where the YOS traditionally underperforms. The number of young offenders engaged in education, employment or training has rarely risen above 55%. Although this is no longer a National Indicator, it is a local one.

2.13.1 However, figures so far look promising with an end of an of year figure for 14-15 being over 80%. Whether this is sustainable with youth unemployment at high levels nationally especially with young people who have the added disadvantages of often poor school attainment and a criminal record will be seen over the coming months.

2.14 Funding

For the year 12-13 YOS funding from the Ministry of Justice was cut by £14,000 to a total of £345,000 which resulted in the loss of some staff hours dedicated to EET and reparation.

2.14.1 This financial year, there has been a further 16% cut in the funding from the Ministry of Justice and a top sliced devolvement of remand funding.

2.14.2 The funding for the current financial year is £291,000 from the Ministry of Justice and a £47,000 remand budget also from the Ministry of Justice, Funding from YOS partners in Police, Health and Probation remains the same as it has for the last five years at £93,000 in total but due to financial constraints the Local Authority reduced it's contribution this year from £595,000 to £395, 000. This has resulted in the loss of the posts outlined above plus curtailment of some activities and the planned expansion of the prevention programme as part of the Early Offer of Help.

2.15 Links with wider Children's Services and partner agencies

This last year has seen the continuing integration of the YOS and Children's Social Care 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, with resources from both services being used to enhance the breadth and effectiveness of each.

- 2.15.1 YOS 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 LAC, CIN or Child Protection plans into account to ensure cohesion and non-duplication of work.
- 2.15.2 Additionally the implementation of the Youth Detention Accommodation Order and the consequent "looked after" status of young people "remanded in custody" has further cemented this working relationship.
- 2.15.3 YOS also works closely with the Troubled Families programme and this year will see the introduction of new working models of practice to ensure that our combined resources enhance the potential for desired outcomes for both services.
- 2.15.4 YOS have also worked extremely closely with the police this year on monitoring and sharing intelligence on emerging gang issues within the borough as per the section on "serious youth violence" above. These are at a low level at the moment but clearly have the potential to increase without continued vigilance and work with those individuals concerned.
- 2.15.5 YOS CAMHS workers have also developed a consultation service which is open to other professionals to offer advice and guidance on cases where young people are suffering emotional or mental health difficulties. This is not designed to replace statutory services but will offer a quick signposting .

2.16 Diversity and Equality

Last year (2013-14) the racial background / ethnicity of Thurrock's youth offending population (as known to the YOS) was:-

Ethnicity 2014

White	65	72.2%
Mixed	9	10.0%
Asian or Asian British	2	2.2%
Black or Black British	9	10.0%
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	0	
Unknown	5	5.5%

2.16.1 Gender Break Down 2014/15

Male	83%
Female	17%

- 2.17 In April 2015 the YOS received a Short Quality Screening from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. The report as attached in appendix A is highly complimentary of the work undertaken by the YOS, particularly in relation to safeguarding.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Future direction of YOS now appears to be settled as the indications are that the government like the model and will largely continue with it. However there is a "stocktaking" exercise about to start by the Ministry of Justice which will look at YOS resources and results which may have some further funding implications.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 1. To continue to address the two areas of improvement as set out in the HMIP, Short Quality Screening Report dated 20th May 2015:
- a) Intervention planning should genuinely involve children and young people and their parents/carers. The plans should be constructed in such a way that they are effective tools to drive successful interventions.
 - b) Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements need to be fully understood by all staff and managers.

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

- 5.1 N/A

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

All aspects of Crime and Disorder Act, including Section 17, as YOS statutory duty is prevention of offending and re-offending.

- 6.1 The work that YOS undertakes with young offenders has a clear impact on the community's perception of crime and fear of crime.
- 6.2 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.

- 6.3 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 in addition to the risks outlined above.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Finance Manager

The financial implications are contained within the body of the report.

It is apparent the general direction of the service and key service targets continue to move in the right direction, despite the financial pressures. The report brings to light new ways of working collaboratively and proactively with children's services and other programmes and affiliated agencies which will identify synergies with YOS services, which in turn will support the ongoing budget reductions and maintain service outcomes.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding.

This report is for information only and there are no legal implications arising from this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
**Community Development and Equalities
Manager**

As the data included in the report demonstrates, diversity is monitored by the service and this will continue to be monitored as the demography of Thurrock continues to change.

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**

- HMIP Short Quality Screening report dated 20th May 2015
- <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/05/Thurrock-SQS-0415.pdf>

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