

SCRUTINY REVIEW MEETING ON REDUCING YOUTH RE-OFFENDING – 18 OCTOBER 2005

Members: Councillors *Matt Davies (Chair), Alan Dobbie Stephen Gilbert, Jayanti Patel,

*Members present

Cecilia Hitchen – Children Services

Vinnett Percy – Operational Manager

Jean Croot – Head of Youth Offending Service.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Agenda Item 1 – Apologies received on behalf of Councillors Patel and Gilbert
2. URGENT BUINESS – Agenda Item 2 – None notified
3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST – None notified
4. MINUTES 10 October 2005 – agreed.

Notes of an informal meeting.

5.0 INTERVIEW SESSION - CECILA HITCHIN – (DEPUTY DIRECTOR) CHILDREN’S SERVICES

- 5.1 What are the current strategies designed to identify why young people offend? How does information gathered from your risk assessment feed into how you work in practice? How would you assess the effectiveness of Haringey risk assessment strategy?
- 5.2 Young people who offend shared similar characteristics of those who are at risk i.e. not in education or poorly educated, from troubled background, experiencing parental difficulties and mental health problems. We are currently in the process of revising our protocol with the Youth Offending Service and Children and Family Services to examine our working practice. A new Strategic Manager will be appointed and work with young people who offend.
- 5.3 There are currently two Senior Managers 2 Deputy Managers. We are represented on the Youth Offending Services Management Board also Chair of Substance Mis-use Group. There is good cross over work.
- 5.4 There are usually gaps in the services - the drivers from central government have pushed services apart each service work to different agenda and performance indicators. For example workers in Children and Families Services have little knowledge of youth offending.
- 5.5 There is a need for further training to avoid any risk of confusion in roles and responsibilities. Youth offending workers have clearly defined roles but have no knowledge about the role of Social Workers. It's important to define roles and boundaries.
- 5.6 Guidelines were developed about three years ago – these are currently being reviewed and updated. There is a high turnover of staff.

What more could be done

- 🚦 More working together between Children & Family Services and the Youth Offending Service would benefit vulnerable teenagers and help to develop overall strategies.
- 🚦 Issues around getting young offenders into full-time education is difficult for those who have dropped out of the education system but more difficult for those with a criminal record. Specific strategies to get

young offenders back into education include working with connexions Advisors for 16 plus who work with young offenders at the assessment stage.

- ✚ Pilot with Youth Justice Board and Connexion to get them back into education within five days of release.
- ✚ Too many initiatives from Youth Justice Board make it difficult to keep up.
- ✚ Lack of long term aims, some successful programmes (funding issues). There is a need for consistent service and adequate funding.
- ✚ Vast numbers of young people are sentenced into custody, reparation and community sentences works better for young people than custodial sentences.
- ✚ Parental Orders - and provision of help in parenting skills.
- ✚ Insufficient funds targeted at the older youths, different techniques needed for the 11 to 12 year olds and parents to help prevent family breakdown, more investment needed from central government

5.7 Good Practice

The important thing to remember is that the offenders are young people first. It's important to get the community involved they would see the youth as a person and not some mysterious offender.

- **Family support strategies** - looking to identify gaps in provision.
- **The Children Trust** – this is still in the developmental stage however the important thing is to work out for gaps in the future.
- **Anti Social Behaviour Orders** – all are referred to YOS to prevent escalating of bad behaviour the YOS in turn refers them on to the Children Service.
- The Important thing is not to criminalise young people in the care system (it's important to consider how we deal with them).
- Children Services would assist in finding suitable accommodation for them.

6.0 INTERVIEW SESSION - VINNETT PEARCY (OPERATIONAL MANAGER) YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE.

6.1 Could you tell us how many young offenders the Council currently houses and how many young offenders are waiting to be housed? Please give us a breakdown in terms of gender, age and ethnicity? Are there any gender/age/ethnicity issues that make one group of young people particularly difficult to house?

(Figures needed from Vinnett)

- ✚ Young offenders under 16 years of age are referred to Social Services.
- ✚ 70% are at home with parents or carers.
- ✚ 10% in unsuitable accommodation – Criteria lay down by YJB.
- ✚ 10% were in foster care or residential units.

6.2 We work with those who are hard to housed until they reached 20 years of age – It's difficult to house violent and sex offenders as this involved high level multi-agency public protection issues.

6.3 Depending on their age they would be referred to Social Services or placed in a hostel. This post is currently vacant.

- 6.4 10 bed space provided by Christian Action and Rainer. In order to be eligible for access the young person must have 6 months left on the Probation Order and in genuine need of housing.
This would be highlighted by the ASSET Tool. Those aged 16 and under were not usually referred for housing as they are considered to be too vulnerable and must be 17 years old.
- 6.5 All have key worker support for education, training and employment. To date four young offenders have been moved to independent housing, two were bidding for accommodation. Two have been served Notices to Quit by Christian Action as they are not adhering to their Order.
- 6.6 **ASSET Tool**
There are 13 sections on the ASSET Tool which also include housing needs. The Assessment Profile is used to assess the offence-related needs of all young people referred following a final warning or conviction. Offenders were referred by information in their ASSET Tool
- 6.7 Homeless person units are for over 16s they are usually placed in bed and breakfast then an assessment is made and mediation take place with parents or carers. In some cases families did not want the young person to return to the family home.
- 6.8 The Service has a good relationship with the YMCA.
- 6.9 There is an Accommodation Forum for YOS where accommodation officer attends. Most accommodation officers do not have housing background but Haringey has been fortunate in the past and the service is looking to ensure that the next post holder has experience in working with homelessness.
- 6.10.1 The target is that 100% should be in good accommodation, Haringey currently performs at 96%.

What more could be done?

- ✚ Closer links with Housing Service to make them aware of the issues with the YOS in strengthening links and identifying suitable accommodation.
 - ✚ Signing up to an agreement between Housing and YOS to take a number of young people in accommodation spaces provided.
 - ✚ Issues with ALMO – from April this year only 2 bed spaces are available. This has been reduced from 6.
 - ✚ The panel expressed concerns about the risk of reduced accommodation under the Arms Length Management Organisation arrangement.
 - ✚ There was a need to undertake a cost benefit analysis.
 - ✚ All departments should have regard to reducing crime and disorder (especially housing services).
- 6.11 Vulnerable young people have been targeted by the government as a group in need of additional support. With educational attainment and key placement being the main focus of support, the many challenges faced by young people today, especially those leaving care, are often overlooked.
- 6.12 Housing is a critical requirement in helping young people move into independence but it needs to be underpinned by a range of supporting services.