

Education Scrutiny Committee
Meeting to be held on 17 November 2015

Electoral Division affected: All

Youth Offending Team
(Appendix A refers)

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Executive Summary

This report provides information on the support for young people's education provided by the Youth Offending Team to young people in the criminal justice system.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note and comment on the report.

Background and Advice

Lancashire's Youth Offending Team (LYOT) is managed by a Partnership Board and delivers, in partnership, statutory services for youth justice. The service is provided through a multi-disciplinary area based model and consists of staff from the Police, Probation, Health, Education and Social Services. There are also a number of volunteers within the service which support specific areas of delivery. The service model is derived from the legislative duties outlined in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and is subsequently jointly funded by partner agencies. The principal aim of the service is to prevent offending by children and young people, with local strategic decision and direction primarily made through the Lancashire Youth Justice Management Board.

The YOT works with children and young people aged from 10-17 years who are involved in the criminal justice system. The service receives the majority of its cases through the youth courts when young people are sentenced to disposals which are managed by the YOT. This includes Referral Orders, which are the outcome for the majority of young people appearing for the first time in court, and which involve the use of community volunteers in setting objectives for the young person. Other disposals are the Youth Rehabilitation Order (YRO) to which various conditions can be attached, and for more serious offending the Detention and Training Order (DTO).

The YOT also works with a smaller cohort of young people, who are not yet involved in the court system, through the Out of Court Disposal Panel. This is a joint police and YOT meeting, which considers young people whose behaviour may be dealt with by way of a Caution or Conditional Caution. Preventative work takes place with young people who have not reached even this stage, by the provision of a 'triage' service, which diverts young people prior to their being cautioned, and which offers work on offending and thinking skills to prevent them from engaging in similar behaviours again.

Assessment

Young people known to the YOT are assessed using a specialist tool called Asset. This allows the practitioner to review all aspects of a young person's life which may be contributing to their offending behaviour. One of the most important aspects is the young person's engagement with education, training or employment. The assessment in respect of this area is carried out with support from the specialist education workers based in the YOT. Lancashire has three such workers, one in each geographical base of East, North and South/ Central. In respect of assessment, the specialist worker makes contact with the educational setting where the young person is on roll, to establish their levels of attendance and attainment. The specialist worker then informs the assessment and intervention plan which is developed between the YOT case manager and the young person under supervision.

Evidence shows that engagement in appropriate education, is a key factor in reducing the risk of a young person becoming involved in offending, or in re-offending if they are already in the justice system. The role of the YOT education specialist is to ensure that suitable education opportunities are identified, and that young people are supported to make best use of such opportunities. This involves liaison with local schools and colleges, a significant challenge when only three workers cover the whole of the Lancashire County Council area. The YOT has a working agreement with secondary schools, and the education specialists ensure that this is reviewed on an annual basis and signed off by the chair of the Lancashire Association of Secondary School Heads (LASSH).

Where suitable education is not available, or a young person is struggling within their current educational setting, the YOT will become involved to support better engagement. This can include an element of advocacy between school and family if relationships have become strained, which can happen as a result of poor attendance or inappropriate behaviour in school. While the YOT retains a neutral stance, it can be helpful for a third party to attend meetings between school and family, to enable constructive dialogue, which often leads to an improved outcome for all parties.

Relationships between YOT and educational settings are generally extremely positive. It is not surprising that some settings have very few contacts with the YOT, and in these cases it is not necessary to make regular visits, however the YOT will always respond if there is a need. In schools where there are more young people involved with YOT, the specialist education worker will be in regular contact with key schools personnel, including pastoral as well as teaching staff. YOT education

workers are seen as a valuable resource in making decisions about suitable provision for young people.

The YOT measures of success are based on national indicators which are: to reduce young people coming into the justice system for the first time; to reduce reoffending by those in the system; and to reduce the numbers of young people in custody. In respect of education there is a contribution to all three measures made by the provision of suitable educational opportunities for young people. The work of the YOT is constantly monitored and evaluated both internally, and by the Youth Justice Board, which is a department of the Ministry of Justice. The YOT is also subject to inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) as well as being part of any children's services inspection conducted by Ofsted.

In Lancashire, in the year April 2014 to March 2015, the YOT worked with 511 young people subject to 740 orders of the court. The difference in number is accounted for by some young people having been dealt with on more than one occasion for different offences. A further 391 young people were dealt with by the Out of Court Disposal Panels. LYOT performance in respect of the three national measures compares favourably with other youth offending teams in the 'family' of similar sized areas. This effectiveness is attributable to the thorough assessment, planning and intervention with young people involved in the criminal justice system, including supporting them in or into suitable educational provision.

Performance

Following the discontinuation of nationally mandated employment, training and education (ETE) targets from the Youth Justice Board, LYOT has worked to create realistic and challenging ETE measures, to inform the local management board and other relevant agencies. The emphasis is on 'distance travelled' while a young person is known to the YOT, and maintenance of educational placement to improve outcomes for children and young people. The YOT has refocused the duties in respect of education work, from the YOT case manager, to specialist consultant practitioner. This, alongside the introduction of consultation procedures and documentation, has ensured that the appropriate use of the specialist practitioner resource underpins LYOTs ability to deliver a quality and effective delivery of service in respect of ETE.

The two targets created by LYOT are that of all young people who start a YOT programme in education, employment or training (EET), no more than 20% end their programme not in education, employment or training (NEET). This has been comfortably achieved in the last four quarters (October 2014 to September 2015). The second target is that all young people who start YOT programmes as NEET, at least 10% will be in EET by the end of their programme. Performance in respect of this target is extremely positive, with at least 20% achieving this in the last four quarters, and in two of these more than 30% being in EET.

Consultations:

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

The report is for information only and therefore does not have any proposals with risk implications.

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A