

Children & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel	Agenda Item No. 7
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REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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Report title:

THE YOUTH CRIME ACTION PLAN

1. PURPOSE

To consider the implementation of the youth crime action plan (YCAP) in Peterborough, backed by government funding to deliver 7 specific interventions designed to reduce antisocial behaviour and youth crime.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

To consider and comment on the proposals to deliver this government initiative.

LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

The youth crime action plan addresses directly the NI 111, reducing the numbers of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time. This national indicator is one of the children's priority indicators in the local area agreement.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The youth crime action plan was launched on 15th July 2008 and is a cross-government initiative involving the Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Department for Children, Schools and Families. Described as a "£100 Million Triple Track Approach To Tackling Youth Crime" it aims to get young people off the streets late at night, provide intensive support for the most problematic families and tougher, more visible 'community payback' sentences for young people who offend. At its heart, the plan is driven by the following three principles:-

- **Enforcement and punishment** where behaviour is unacceptable - with clear boundaries and consequences for those who over-step them;
- **Non-negotiable support** and challenge where it is most needed - for those families and children at greatest risk of long term, persistent and serious offending;
- **Better and earlier prevention**, transforming early year's services, tackling poverty and unemployment, increasing opportunities.

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT FOR THE YOUTH CRIME ACTION PLAN

- 3.2 The national youth crime action plan builds on progress that has already been made since the instigation of youth offending teams in 2000. The action plan highlights the following developments which have had a positive impact on youth crime reduction: -
- Young offenders are now more likely to receive an intervention to prevent further offending;
 - Multi-agency youth offending teams have demonstrated a real improvement in preventing and reducing youth crime, including a 17% reduction in reoffending between 2000 and 2005;
 - Developments in children's services and local government reforms which deliver a more integrated approach to tackling antisocial behaviour and youth crime.
- 3.3 However, the youth crime action plan states that "a minority of young people continue to blight communities". Whilst the volume crime has gone down, the level of youth crime self-reported by young people remain static. Whilst offences are relatively small in number, there is understandable public concern about violence, use of weapons and gang related offending nationally. The plan also identifies the scope to improve local co-ordination and accountability and to focus on early intervention and prevention by focusing on the underlying causes of offending and the family circumstances associated with youth offending. The significant success to date in reducing crime is therefore the basis for the youth crime action plan, closely linked to the reforms of children's services within the 'Every Child Matters' agenda of integrated services, early intervention and prevention.
- 3.4 The key headlines relating to the reduction of youth crime nationally are as follows: -
- Personal crime is down by 40% and violent crime down by 41% since 1995;
 - Programmes such as 'Tackling Gangs Action Programme' have made real differences;
 - There has been a significant investment in prevention, family support and the early years provision;
 - Children's centres are increasingly targeting vulnerable families;
 - Extended schools are offering a variety of co-located services for children, families and young people;
 - There has been substantial investment in positive activities for young people at risk of offending and poor outcomes generally;
 - The Youth Justice Board has developed a range of targeted intervention programmes;
- 3.5 Identifying individual and family risk factors associated with youth crime and antisocial behaviour is crucial in understanding how best to prevent and reduce youth crime. Key issues are as follows: -
- Aggression and poor self control which start very early in childhood;
 - A relatively small group of young people with severe problems commit over half of all youth crime through persistent re-offending;
 - Factors which contribute to other poor outcomes for young people also contribute to offending behaviour, therefore general preventative services from early years onwards will impact on reducing youth crime.
 - Offending may be triggered by delinquent peer groups, particularly in disengaged communities, with almost 20% of 14-15 year olds belonging to a delinquent peer group. (This is not the same as belonging to a "gang")

- 3.6 The Youth Crime Action plan therefore analyses current progress in tackling youth crime and identifies promising schemes piloted or implemented successfully in certain areas. Authorities granted YCAP money are required to implement services from a specified menu of projects and interventions designed to reduce youth crime. Peterborough was one of 69 local authorities qualifying for a YCAP grant of £790,000 over the next three years. Qualification was based on a needs analysis, around levels of social deprivation, disadvantage and offending levels. Southend is the only other area qualifying in the eastern region.

YOUTH CRIME REDUCTION IN PETERBOROUGH

- 3.7 Although local data to match the national picture presented in the youth crime action plan is not readily available, the picture is nevertheless one of consistent crime reduction since the inception of the youth offending service. Since 2005, the number of first time entrants has reduced by 17% and re-offending by 8%. We anticipate there being around 300 new entrants to the youth justice between 1st April 2008 and 31st March 2009 system. At any one time there are around 25 young people, mainly aged 15 and 16 year olds, who are subject to priority and prolific offender (PPO) monitoring and intervention. Although small in number, these young people generate a considerable amount of antisocial behaviour in areas where they live, mainly committing offences relating to car crime, burglary and assault.

YOUTH CRIME ACTION PLAN: MENU OF INTERVENTIONS

- 3.8 The summary of the menu of interventions and project offered as part of the eligible spend for YCAP is as follows : -
- a) **'Operation stay safe', using child protection legislation to remove young people from the streets at night** and take them to a safe place, building on lessons from initiatives such as 'Operation Stay safe';
 - b) **Using street-based teams of workers** to tackle groups of young people involved in crime and disorder;
 - c) **Increasing after-school police patrols where needed** to tackle anti-social behaviour and disorder at the end of the school day;
 - d) **Placing youth offending team workers in police custody suites** so that young offenders can be assessed and directed to appropriate services at the earliest opportunity;
 - e) **Expanding YOT reparation schemes during young people's leisure time**, including on Friday and Saturday nights to make young offenders feel the consequences of their actions;
 - f) **Developing Family Intervention Projects** to work with the most vulnerable and problematic families with children at risk of offending, with non-negotiable elements and sanctions for a failure to engage;
 - g) **Implementation of the 'think family' reforms** to provide an integrated and appropriate service response to all families at risk by the end of the funding period.

NB: The government requires half of the total funding to be spent on option developing a family intervention project.

4. IMPLEMENTING THE YOUTH CRIME ACTION PLAN IN PETERBOROUGH

- 4.1 The youth crime action plan menu aims to extend interventions into weekends, and encroach constructively into young people's leisure time. This means that on Saturday evenings some young people will be undertaking unpaid work to benefit the community, supervised by youth offending workers as a form of reparation. In addition detached youth workers are joined by committed volunteers to form the street-based teams, using the 'NACRO bus', effectively a mobile youth centre, to engage young people who may otherwise be involved in antisocial behaviour. These street-based activities are now taking place weekly.
- 4.2 The stay safe programme whereby police officers, social workers and youth offending workers work together to identify young people on the street late at night who are engaging in antisocial behaviour or who may be otherwise vulnerable. Typically these are young people who are under the influence of alcohol and who need to be returned safely to their parents' care. There have been two successful stay safe operations in Peterborough with a third taking place on 20th February. How this has benefited the young people concerned and the wider community is evidenced in the short case studies appended to this report.
- 4.3 After school 'sweeps' are taking place 3 times a week across Peterborough. Using uniformed police officers and police community safety officers, young people engaging in antisocial behaviour after school are picked up and returned to their parents. Early intervention of this nature had been found to prevent more serious problems occurring in the majority of cases.
- 4.4 Placing youth offending workers in the police custody suite is also aimed at responding to identified problems as quickly as possible, providing an immediate assessment of the young person's needs and engaging their family in addressing the offending behaviour. In addition, Peterborough has been successful in gaining funding to take part in the national pilot to divert young people with mental health vulnerabilities from the criminal justice system. Trained mental health workers who have recently been recruited will also shortly be in attendance at the custody suite, to assess young people whose offending may be influenced by mental health difficulties.
- 4.5 The family intervention programmes (FIP) required within the youth crime action plan are based on the 'think family' research which has demonstrated quite convincingly the positive outcomes for reducing antisocial behaviour by working with families. The development of a family intervention programme in Peterborough is in the early stages of planning. The funding will cover the costs of a team manager and two social workers. However, it is also anticipated that the team will be substantially increased through secondments of staff from the youth offending services, housing and potentially the police, providing a holistic and intensive response to dealing with antisocial behaviour of a small number of families in Peterborough. Evidence from elsewhere in the country would support this approach.
- 4.6 Two other family based programmes will also work in conjunction with the family intervention project (FIP) to tackle antisocial behaviour and the risk of offending. The multi-systematic therapy (MST) pilot was introduced in August 2008 with around £1m of government grant to Peterborough over the four-year programme. MST has already been effective in preventing young people from entering care and custody and we have every confidence that it will continue to do so. However, the pilot works to strict eligibility criteria and will be evaluated nationally towards the end of the four-year period; not all young people and their families are suitable for this programme. The YMCA, supported by the city council and Safer Peterborough Partnership was successful in gaining funding for a new intensive intervention programme (IIP) aimed at tackling persistent offending in a small number of young people. Peterborough will thus shortly have three family based programmes supported by dedicated government grant to tackle youth crime and antisocial behaviour.

5. IMPLICATIONS

The YCAP interventions are delivered to government specification across the city whilst being targeted using all available data to identify high risk young people and neighbourhoods. The programmes are currently fully funded by central government grant. Sustainability of the programmes will be kept under review. If successful, as anticipated, there will be significant savings through intervening early and preventing the need for higher cost care or services, which can be re-invested to sustain the programmes beyond the period of the time limited grant.

6. CONSULTATION

The youth crime action plan is overseen by a multi agency steering group. The government are keen to ensure wide publicity on the outcome of the activities and seek feedback from the public. Young people and their families will be actively engaged throughout the programme in evaluating its effectiveness.

7. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

That panel will review the proposals of delivering the YCAP proposals and comment on the early impact on reducing antisocial behaviour and youth crime.

8. NEXT STEPS

On-going Governance of the YCAP action plan will be provided through the Safer Peterborough Partnership Board and the Children's Trust Partnership Board.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

HM Government: Youth Crime Action Plan July 2008

APPENDIX 1: CASE STUDIES

1. OPERATION STAYSAFE

Friday December 5th was a bitterly cold and wet night. It was also the night of the first Operation Staysafe in Peterborough. Based in the Dogsthorpe area, with the Bluebell community centre designated as the place of safety, one of the young people removed to the centre was a 14 year old girl. She was found at about 10pm in a nearby park by police officers who were told she had been assaulted by another girl. At the place of safety she was interviewed by social workers and it transpired she was a 'looked after' child from another authority and should have been in residential care in Lincolnshire. Enquiries established that she was reported missing from the children's home on the Monday of that week. She also disclosed that the assault was by the girlfriend of a 23 year old man who had been having sex with her. The social services team manager working on Operation Staysafe was able without delay to contact a senior police officer in Lincolnshire and arrange for the safe return of the girl.

Friday 30th January was the night of the second Operation Staysafe in the city and again the temperature was well below freezing. At about 9.30pm officers engaged on the operation saw about 100 young people in Hampton Hargate, near an off licence. The young people had just left a private youth club and the officers were particularly aware of 5 young girls carrying bags. On checking the bags they found bottles of cider and alcopops which the girls admitted to buying from the off licence. There was no consistency in their accounts of where they were intending to go, so all five were taken to the place of safety which on this night was the Charteris Centre. They were then interviewed and assessed by social workers who established that their ages ranged between 13 and 16 and were all going to be staying at the home of one of the girls whose parents were out for the night. The parents of the girls were contacted and they attended the Charteris centre from where, after suitable advice from the social workers and police who were satisfied that a lesson had been learned, they went home with no further action necessary.

However as well as safeguarding the welfare of the young people, this incident gave clear evidence of a disregard for the legislation concerning the sale of alcohol to under 18s which is now being further investigated by the licensing officer. The police inspector on duty for Operation Staysafe is also the sector inspector covering Hampton Hargate. He commented that anti social behaviour by young people in this locality had earlier been raised as a policing priority by his neighbourhood policing panel and that Operation Staysafe would have a very positive impact in its reduction.

2. AFTER SCHOOL POLICE PATROLS

The recent snow has hampered the patrols but despite this, since they were introduced in the middle of January, contact has been made with 343 young people from secondary schools across the city using safer schools officers and neighbourhood policing staff. Some of the young people were made subject of guardian awareness programme reports, and others have been directed to a youth club. In the Ortons, pupils were caught writing graffiti on a wall and under supervision were instructed to remove it.

Of particular note, the patrol officers were able to intervene in a gathering of about 200 young people from 2 schools intent on a confrontation. The officers' presence ensured no offences or public disorder were committed which otherwise potentially could have resulted in a serious situation, not least creating difficulties for residents and passers-by.

3. STREET YOUTH PROJECT

The project has been in operation since January. It is a mobile youth provision based around the use of a converted bus equipped with IT and refreshments. It is staffed by youth workers traveling around the city and targeting anti social behaviour (ASB) hot spots.

Of particular note is the impact they have made in Lawson Avenue, Stanground where ASB has long been a problem in the vicinity of the shops. Since the outreach bus has been regularly deployed to this area youth workers have engaged with a core of 12 to 15 young people who have had the benefit of a range of specialist advice around drug and alcohol misuse, training, education and employment. The shop keepers have reported very positively about the impact. Effective links have been made with the local police officers which have helped with partnership working and sharing information.

In order to record activity, whether it is the negative ASB or the positive results achieved, the project is making a video film for each of the key areas - Stanground, Orton and East. The video will include interviews with the young people, shopkeepers and the youth workers. It will then be used to promote the work and as an educational guide for other young people.