Dudley
Metropolitan Borough Council

Agenda Item No. 8

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 14th November 2012

Report of the Director of Children's Services

The Youth Offending Service Inspection Outcomes

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Children's Services Scrutiny Committee of the outcomes of the recent pilot inspection of Dudley Youth Offending Service.

Background

2. The Full Joint Inspection of Dudley Youth Offending Service was the first of a small number of Full Joint Inspections that will take place annually. These inspections will involve Inspectors from Probation, Police, Care Quality Commission and Ofsted (both Social Care and Learning and Skills).

3. Dudley was chosen for this 'pilot' inspection because national indicators identified it as a high performing service.

4. The inspection took place over two weeks in June and July 2012 with two weeks notice being given prior to the commencement. The first week involved an assessment of the quality of the work undertaken with children and young people supervised by the Youth Offending Service. The second week saw inspectors interrogating the first week's findings to consider the contribution made by the local leadership, management and the partnership to the quality of practice.

5. The inspectors found that Dudley Youth Offending Service had sufficient resources to address the needs of young people. The frequency and seriousness of reoffending had reduced in the vast majority of cases inspected. The Inspectors were pleased to find that the quality of work to protect the public had improved since the last inspection in 2010. Staff were making full and effective use of the range of interventions available and engagement with the children and young people, their parents and carers was good.

6. Governance arrangements were good and Case Managers spoke positively of the support they received from their line managers. Although there were inevitably areas for improvement in key core areas, overall Inspectors reported finding a team which was performing at a consistently good standard with positive prospects for its future development.

7. A more detailed analysis of the Inspectors findings can be seen below. The overall rating is 3 stars out of 4, making the service a 'good service'.

8. The Inspectors judged the Youth Offending Service over 5 key domains Reducing Reoffending, Protecting the Public, Protecting the Children's Young People, Ensuring the Sentence is Served and Governance. Set out below is a summary of their findings.

9. **Reducing Reoffending**

Inspectors judged that overall work to reduce reoffending was good. We found there had been good progress, in addressing offence related needs, these included living arrangements, neighbourhoods, family and personal relationships, lifestyles and emotional, mental and physical health. There was a reduction in both frequency and seriousness of reoffending in the vast majority of cases inspected.

There were clear and thorough assessments of risk of reoffending in pre-sentence reports (PSRs) and the initial assessment. We also found timely and good quality planning to address the assessed needs, and in the vast majority of cases planned interventions were delivered to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. However, reviews of assessment and planning needed to be improved, in particular when there was a significant change in the child or young person's circumstances.

10. **Protecting the Public**

Inspectors judged that overall work to protect the public as well as both actual and potential victims was good. The quality of work had improved since the previous inspection in December 2010. There were clear and thorough assessments of risk of harm to others in pre-sentence reports and the initial assessment. We found timely and good quality planning to address the assessed risk of harm in the vast majority of cases and interventions were delivered as planned. However, reviews of risk of harm screening, full assessments and planning needed to be improved, in particular, when there was a significant change that may affect the risk of harm posed by the child or young person.

11. **Protecting Children & Young People**

Inspectors judged that overall work to protect children & young people and to reduce their vulnerability was good. There was a need for more thorough assessments of safeguarding and vulnerability in pre-sentence reports. However, initial assessments of safeguarding and vulnerability needs were of a sufficient standard. We also found timely and good quality plans that would deal with the safety of children & young who had offended. In the vast majority of cases planned work was delivered to protect the child or young person. However, reviews of vulnerability assessments and plans needed to be improved particularly when there was a significant change in the child or young person's circumstances.

12. **Ensuring the Sentence is Served**

Inspectors judged that overall work to ensure that the sentence was served was good. There was a good level of work and sufficient attention given to the health and well-being of the child or young person, in so far as it might act as a barrier to successful outcomes being achieved. Where there was either diversity issues or barriers to engagement, there was evidence that Youth Offending Service staff worked with children & young people and their parents and carers to overcome those barriers. This high level of engagement was seen throughout the orders inspected. Work to enforce the sentence was sufficient overall, with the majority of young people complying after receiving a formal warning or being returned to court.

13. **Governance** ★★★☆

Inspectors judged that overall governance arrangements were good. However, there were areas in need of improvement, as well as some other areas which we assessed as being innovative, and leading to significant improvements in the quality of services delivered and outcomes achieved.

The Youth Offending Service partnership board needed to take greater responsibility for the quality of service delivered, and to hold to account the head of service and the Youth Offending Service Management Team for the delivery of those services. Case managers spoke positively of the support they received from their line managers; however we found that manages needed to do more to hold staff to account for the quality of their work. We were pleased to see that the Youth Offending Service leadership had developed a number of innovative projects based on local or national need. We assessed that the Youth Offending Service leadership took sufficient account of the diversity needs of both its staff and services users, and had resourced training and interventions to address those needs effectively.

14. There are clearly some areas for improvement and there are summarised in the recommendations in the report, this will form the basis of an important plan which will be monitored by the Youth Offending Service Management Board. The recommendations are as follows:

- assessments of the child or young person's vulnerability contained in pre-sentence reports, take full account of all relevant needs (Youth Offending Service Head of Service)

- regular reviews of assessments, plans and interventions are completed, on time and to a sufficient quality taking account of changes in the child or young person's circumstances (Youth Offending Service Head of Service)

- the make up and role of the Youth Offending Service Partnership Board is reformed to ensure that there is greater attendance at board meetings and to ensure that the board fulfils its governance responsibilities in relation to all aspects of Youth Offending Service activity (Chair of Youth Offending Service Board)

- staff supervision, appraisals and other quality assurance arrangements are of sufficient quality to support performance improvement (Youth Offending Service Head of Service).

Finance

15. The Dudley Youth Offending Service is funded through a pooled budget arrangement between Local Authority, Police, Probation, Health and Youth Justice Board Grant. The Local Authority 12/13 base budget is £1,070,393.

Law

16. Sections 37-40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 set out:

   i. The aim of the Youth Justice System.
   ii. How Youth Justice Services are to be provided in the area.

iii. The requirement to establish a Youth Offending Team
iv. The requirement to prepare a Youth Offending Team Plan.

Equality Impact

17. This report highlights a range of services aimed at reducing inequalities experienced by this group of young people.

Recommendation

18. That Children's Services Scrutiny Committee notes the contents of this report.

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