

**YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE - UPDATE**

**REPORT OF SERVICE MANAGER TARGETED YOUTH SERVICE**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report seeks to inform Scrutiny of the complexity of young people known to services such as the Youth Offending Service and Youth Drug and Alcohol Project and work undertaken by TogetherforChildren in working with young people at risk. It will also include a brief overview of what is known about young people at risk of exploitation.
- 1.2 Attached as Appendices are tables showing data from the Youth Offending Service showing our improvements in relation to First Time Entrants as well as a general overview of performance.
- 1.3 In addition to this written report, a worker will give a verbal presentation on the work undertaken with a young person who was open to several services.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 Targeted Youth Services includes several more specialised services which comprise Youth Offending Service (YOS), Return Home Interviews with young people reported missing, the Youth Drug and Alcohol Project (YDAP) and Wear Kids which engages young people identified as at risk of entering the Criminal Justice System.
- 2.2 Whilst these services have a focus on specific worrying behaviours such as offending or substance misuse the young people, we work with are complex and will present as having more than one area of concern or worry. They are young people who are very often vulnerable and may have experienced trauma as well as potentially undiagnosed needs such as Speech Language and Communication difficulties. Consequently, any work undertaken is in the context of either multi – agency working or utilising the knowledge and expertise of staff in other areas of TfC.
- 2.3 There are specialist assessments and plans within specific service areas, and they will take account of any other services currently working with the young person. However, it is important to recognise that each assessment framework has commonalities in seeking the voice of the young person to understand their lived experience, what is going well in their lives and what worries they may have.

- 2.4 In addition it is important for staff working with young people, particularly young people who may have experienced trauma to build a positive trusting relationship with them and ensure they are not overwhelmed by the numbers of professionals in their lives. This can be challenging for workers who need to demonstrate patience and persistence.
- 2.5 In respect of exploitation, it is important to note that any child or young person may be at risk of regardless of family background or other circumstances and can occur in all communities and amongst all social groups. It affects both girls and boys and child exploitation has links with other forms of crime, for example, domestic violence and abuse, online and offline grooming, the distribution of abusive images of children, criminal exploitation, and child trafficking. The perpetrators of exploitation are often well organised and use sophisticated tactics. They may target areas where children and young people gather, use parties to create networks for abuse, or use technology to organise both online and offline abuse.
- 2.6 The Missing, Slavery Exploited and Trafficked (MSET) operational group aims is to prevent and disrupt exploitation by working together with our partner agencies, sharing, and understanding information and intelligence, to protect our young people. Partner agencies include Northumbria Police, Sunderland Council, Education, Targeted Youth Support, Health, Probation, Gentoo, and CYPS. Risks of exploitation are complex, and requires robust communication, information sharing and close partnership working to help mitigate those risks and ensure the safety of our young people, and this can include trying to make the places young people socialise safer. Whilst MSET focuses on potential and actual harm and danger, it is important we balance the analysis with things around the young person that are considered strengths and protective factors, so we can continue to build upon what works well.
- 2.7 MSET therefore adds value to and agrees a collaborative multi-agency disruption plan.

### **3. Current Position**

- 3.1 The YOS has seen several initiatives in the last few years. One initiative with Northumbria police over the last two years has enabled us to move to a position whereby most young people are worked with at a pre-court stage. This has several benefits not least that young people are less likely to acquire a criminal identity which research suggests can increase the likelihood of re-offending. The service has also continued to build on “desistance” theory which involves identifying what is going well in young people’s lives and embedding positive activities which pulls them away from negative influences. Data does show us that by the time young people enter Criminal Justice they have evidence of poorer outcomes than average such as lower school attendance, higher numbers of school exclusions, have been known to Social Care for parental domestic violence, neglect or abuse etc. We also through

assessment can identify undiagnosed health issues including autism, learning difficulties etc.

- 3.2 YDAP is a service that requires consent from young people referred to them and in the past two years has seen a varying level of work linked to covid as schools are a key agency that refers to them. However, we have continued to work with agencies and have rolled out training for staff across Sunderland as well as responding to requests to deliver group sessions in schools etc. In the last 12 months they have also implemented a new case management system which has enabled them to better report on data such as referral sources which allows us to target areas of low referrals. As the case management system is still relatively new the data is not as rich as is available to the YOS, but we do know that there are similar themes as identified above within the YOS cohort
- 3.3 Targeted Youth Services is also linked to MSET procedures and unsurprisingly many of the young people we work with are either known to be exploited or staff believe there may be being exploited but do not have evidence to substantiate the concern particularly as young people may not either recognise the exploitation or feel safe to make a disclosure.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 The young people open to services and identified as at risk exhibit several inter-related vulnerabilities, concerns and issues which necessitate a well organised multi layered approach and that puts the young person at the centre of the plan.

#### **5. Recommendation**

- 5.1 It is recommended that Scrutiny consider this report
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#### **Appendix 1- Case studies**

#### **Appendix 2- YOS data**

#### **Appendix 3- Rate of First Time Entrants (FTE's) in Sunderland**

## **Appendix 1**

### **Young person A (with verbal report at Scrutiny)**

A had quite a long history of substance misuse issues but had been referred to YDAP several times and had declined support previously. Had misused several substances including Cannabis though a greater big concern was Diazepam. Was referred by YOS following an offence committed whilst heavily intoxicated and he had only narrowly avoided custody. Engaged with myself and the case involved joint working with YOS Advocate (possibly Paula/Health) and the YOS Case Manager. Positive outcomes were no further offending, found work and when closed to YDAP he was using only Cannabis but at a significantly reduced level. Contact continued informally for a short time after he turned 18.

### **Young Person B**

Recently referred to Wear Kids for an assessment as identified as potentially at risk of perpetrating serious violence and had therefore been referred to a preventative intervention You Only Live Once (YOLO) run by the Foundation of Light with funding from the Violence Reduction Unit. Identified risks and vulnerabilities show a young person with reports of troubled and challenging behaviour from the age of 4 in school of inappropriate sexualised behaviour in school.

Mother has also reported to school that she is struggling to manage his behaviour and he lives between mother and fathers' home when his parents struggle. Reported behaviours from parents include setting a fire, firing Nerf bullets at a pet rabbit and threats to hurt family members. He is currently being worked with by Wear Together given concerns he may become Cared for if family continue to struggle with his behaviour.

### **Young Person C**

This young person has had intermittent contact with the YOS over the last 5 years since the age of 11. Over that time, we have had significant concerns and worries about him. At the initial point of contact his offending was unusually sophisticated for a young person let alone an 11-year-old and there was a concern that he was being exploited to offend by adults or older offenders. He had a history of involvement with Social Care and became subject to Child Protection during the time we worked with him. His father was in prison and mother has previously been involved in offending but also had mental health issues. Family members were also Cared for young people and at one point he and his mother were homeless.

His behaviour was challenging, and he was coming to the attention of police on a regular basis for Anti-Social Behaviour. A referral was also made to Prevent. At the beginning of our work with this young person he would gravitate towards anyone who showed him friendship or interest, and this led him to being involved in some risky situations and led him to make poor choices. However, he is in the view of his

case manager showing greater capacity to make considered decisions about his lifestyle

He had had contact from YDAP and the Forensic CAMHS service who have now discharged him due to the progress he made. During his time with the YOS he has had supervision and contact not only from his case manager but also the seconded police officer and has engaged well over the time we have known him.

He was excluded from school was also diagnosed with moderate learning difficulties by two psychologists which meant we had to adapt the way we worked with him.

In the last 11 months he has worked with us on a Court order and currently is doing well not having committed any further offences for over a year. He is attending twilight education and we are working towards increasing the hours of education he receives; whilst a small success he had maintained his current education placement since December 2021, which is the longest sustained period, he has attended this placement.

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