

Report of the Deputy Director (Children's Social Care) to the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on 19th July 2017

B

Subject: LAC and Offending

Summary statement:

The report summarises the activities undertaken to date in 2017 to ensure that young people who are Looked After (LAC) are not unnecessarily criminalised when living in residential or foster care.

The report will provide data on re-offending by young people with LAC status who are involved with the Youth Offending Team (YOT).

Jim Hopkinson
Deputy Director
(Children's Social Care)

Report Contact: Charlie Jones
Phone: (01274) 436063
E-mail: charlie.jonese@bradford.gov.uk

Portfolio:

Children's Services

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's Services

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.2 National data for young people in England and Wales who receive a custodial sentence indicates a disproportionate number were Looked After at the time of sentence. This cohort represents around 35% of young people in custody who have LAC status.
- 1.3 Despite a continuous decline in the numbers of young people receiving custodial sentences over the last 6 years, both locally and nationally, Looked After young people remain over represented in the custodial settings.
- 1.4 The overwhelming majority of LAC young people in custody were in residential accommodation at the time of offending and sentencing.
- 1.5 Serious concerns have been raised over this period by a number of bodies including the Magistrates Association and young people, that low level, minor but unacceptable behaviour was being criminalised when the same behaviour in a family setting would be addressed without resorting to formal Police action.

2. LOCAL RESPONSE

- 2.1 The protocol between West Yorkshire Police (Bradford), Children's Social Care and the Youth Offending Team is being reviewed and will be updated shortly. The protocol sets out an overarching response to incidents in residential accommodation that may result in Police action. The key principle in the protocol is that where possible, as an alternative to formal police involvement, all those working with the young person will consider other ways of addressing such behaviour such as the use of permitted sanctions, informal education and increasingly, a restorative intervention.
- 2.2 This approach sits comfortably with the model of care being adopted across all the Local Authority residential homes. Essentially the model focusses on the development of positive attachments between the young person and those undertaking a parenting, caring role with each individual young person. Creating improved positive emotional attachments enables challenging behaviour problems to find easier resolutions.
- 2.3 Supporting these developments is the Safer Homes Police Officer plus 2 new officers recently recruited. The officers link directly with and support each residential unit. They provide support and guidance to both young people and staff. They will be trained in the model of care and are able to instigate restorative interventions.
- 2.4 The overall aims of these developments is to prevent offending and anti social behaviour and reduce the number of episodes young people go missing. The development of positive relationships between the link Police officers and the young people is a key element on achieving these aims.

- 2.5 Within the local protocol there is reference to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) 10 point checklist. The CPS will allocate one of their specialists youth prosecutors to review the need for a prosecution. The guidance highlights that there is a strong potential for the Police to be called to more incidents in a residential setting than to a domestic setting. The CPS will also expect to see an endorsement from a senior residential manager where the community home seeks a prosecution. The checklist is Appendix A below.
- 2.6 Case managers in the YOT will receive input around the PACE model of care to enable the interventions to support that approach. The YOT screens new cases using the YJB approved Speech Language and Communication tool and any significant issues shared with those involved with the young person.

3. OFFENDING

- 3.1 Between 19 June 2016 and 18 June 2017 the YOT database shows 45 young people with LAC status received a formal intervention either a Youth Conditional Caution or Court Order. A further 11 young people were LAC at the start of an intervention but that status ended during the intervention. Overall the cohort represents 27.18% of the total number of interventions started in the period.
- 3.2 38 were male and 18 were female. Subsequently 19 young men and 6 young women received a further intervention during the period which represents 44.64% of the LAC cohort. This however does include those young people returned to Court for breaching the Order.
- 3.3 The latest re-offending rate for Bradford YOT is 36.6%

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- 4.1 This work contributes to providing a great start and better lives for all young people in Bradford.
- 4.2 Contributes in improving the outcomes for young people who are Looked After.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Corporate Parenting Panel note the contents of this report.

6. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - The CPS 10 Point Action Plan