

Report of the Assistant Director – Environment & Sport to the meeting of the South Area Committee to be held on the 30th June 2016.

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Subject:

Neighbourhood Resolution Panels – Progress Report 2016.

Summary statement:

This report gives an update on the progress that has been made in the setting up and use of Neighbourhood Resolution Panels in Bradford district over the past 12 months.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area: Corporate



1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report gives an update on the progress that has been made in the setting up and use of Neighbourhood Resolution Panels in Bradford district over the past 12 months.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In July 2011 the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) invited Expressions of Interest from Community Safety Partnerships who wanted to be part of a pilot scheme to evaluate the rolling out of Neighbourhood Resolution Panels (NRPs) across the country.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 1 December 2011 the Bradford District Community Safety Partnership approved the submission of an Expression of Interest and allocated funding to be used to set up NRPs in Bradford District. Bradford Community Safety Partnership continues to support the project.
- 2.4 Neighbourhood Resolution Panels bring local victims, offenders and criminal justice professionals together, using restorative and reparative approaches and facilitated by a community volunteer, to agree what action should be taken to deal with certain types of low level crime and disorder.
- 2.5 It is recognised nationally that restorative approaches have a significant impact on community safety outcomes. In Bradford these have included: reduced re-offending rates from people who have gone through a restorative process, high victim satisfaction rates, reduced repeat calls for service from the Police and reduced costs to public services. The approach in Bradford has been to engage local communities (our volunteers are all local residents) in a restorative process to resolve community issues. It is also important to note that a restorative process is not simply about achieving a conference meeting. 90% of those who are referred in where a conference is not undertaken have said that they felt their circumstances have improved by taking part in this process, and being supported by caring and impartial volunteers.
- 2.6 Bradford Neighbourhood Resolution Project has consistently had a high level of victim satisfaction, with the current rate at 90%. Of the offenders that have been through the process, 95% have not reoffended. In addition to reoffending rates, victim satisfaction with service delivery for anti social behaviour is also measured. Bradford has seen an overall improvement of 6.7% over the last year.
- 2.7 In Bradford, the NRP scheme initially targeted low level offenders (including those who are first time entrants). This includes those offenders who would attract the following sanction:
- Theft under £100
 - Criminal damage under £300
 - S.4 Public Order offence (Using threatening, abusive, insulting words towards another)
 - S.5 Public Order offence (Within hearing or sight likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress)
 - Any other low level offence
 - Neighbourhood dispute
 - Those on the cusp of entering the Anti Social Behaviour process
- 2.8 Due to the success and national recognition of restorative justice in Bradford, the NRP project changed significantly in 2014, where initially the primary focus was upon pre court work such as low level crimes (as above) anti social behaviour cases and neighbour nuisance, the project developed in to the Restorative Justice Hub. The RJ Hub serves to deliver restorative justice right across the Criminal Justice System. This was funded from the Victim Services Fund from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner in 2014/2015.

- 2.9 The ambition of the RJ Hub was to create a 'Centre of Excellence' in restorative practice and services for victims of crime and anti social behaviour across the District. We anticipated that this would be a model that, if successful, could be adopted across West Yorkshire for all victims. This was later evidenced in the PCC's Annual Report 2014/2015.
- 2.10 In Bradford we have demonstrated a good quality scheme, and in March 2015 the RJ Hub achieved the Restorative Service Quality Mark (RSQM). This demonstrates that the Hub delivers RJ in accordance with Best Practice Guidance and delivers to a high standard with excellent victim satisfaction. The development of the RJ Hub ensures that Victims can easily access a service and the Hub focuses on raising awareness and understanding of RJ.
- 2.11 In March 2016, The RJ Hub received a Commendation from the MJ Awards for the work undertaken across the district.
- 2.12 Since the project began in May 2012, 290 referrals have been made. These referrals had primarily come from the Police and Housing but since the launch of the RJ Hub in December 2014, other organisations now refer, which includes Victim Support, HMP Leeds, West Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company (Formally Probation), as well as self referrals. On average 25 cases are actively worked on a monthly basis, each case with 2 volunteers co-facilitating. 20% of referrals received have come from Bradford South constituency.
- 2.13 The restorative process is delivered by Restorative Justice Volunteer Facilitators and managed by the Restorative Justice Volunteer Coordinator. Since its implementation in 2012, over 120 volunteers have been trained. All the volunteers have been trained by an accredited trainer from a social enterprise company called Restorative Solutions. Restorative Solutions have been the lead trainer for Restorative Justice in Bradford and West Yorkshire. The training they deliver is a 3 day course which equips the volunteers with a strong knowledge of RJ, the ability to conduct instant RJ and the training to allow volunteers to run a full RJ conference. Restorative Solutions are accredited via the Restorative Justice Council. Since May 2012 over 5000 volunteer's hours have been spent on cases, training, practice sessions and workshops.
- 2.14 The following performance outcomes have been achieved between Jan 2015- December 2015
- Number of referrals: 121 referrals** – 22 cases completed, 40 cases ongoing. 59 cases returned as unsuitable (unsuitable usually refers to one party not agreeing to the process, or being assessed as unsuitable). Further work has been done with services to ensure only the right cases are referred in to the project.
- Victim satisfaction:** 90% satisfied or very satisfied.
- Current number of volunteers:** 50 Volunteers.
- Reoffending rate:** As of November 2015: 5%
- 2.15 From September 2014 – December 2015, over 400 people have been trained in RJ, and over 100 have attended the 3 day RJ Facilitator Training. Over 40 organisations and departments were represented, including the voluntary service. The aim of the training is to increase awareness of Restorative Justice so a far greater number of victims have access to RJ.
- 2.16 The RJ Hub has endeavoured to work with the Conditional Caution pilot which launched in Bradford in 2015 to ensure that these cautions were more victim focused. The RJ Hub created a pathway whereby victims are better informed, supported and can have a greater say in what the outcome is, whilst also supporting offenders to change.
- 2.17 The Ministry of Justice Action Plan for Restorative Justice for the period to March 2018

details the vision for a good quality, victim-focused RJ scheme which is available at all stages of the Criminal Justice System, In achieving this the MOJ has allocated funding to all Police and Crime Commissioners for 2015/2016. Bradford will receive £110,000 for the provision of Victim Services including Restorative Justice.

- 2.18 In Bradford we intend to use the Victims Service funding to continue the development of the Hub, but look towards developing new and innovative projects which aim to address current and emerging issues.
- 2.19 The RJ Hub Manager has been seconded from West Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company (formally Probation) since 2012. This is a strategic role, and the manager has responsibility for the continual development and management of Restorative Justice across the Criminal Justice System. They have line management responsibility for the RJ Hub Volunteer Coordinator.
- 2.20 The Volunteer Coordinator also seconded from West Yorkshire CRC manages all the case referrals and enquiries as well as the active volunteers who are working cases. This includes case discussion, supervision and ongoing training and development. From the 1st May 2016, Restorative Solutions will formally lead on the RJ Hub with the existing staff. Restorative Solutions are a national Community Interest Company who will look to support Bradford to drive and develop even further to fully embed restorative approaches across the District.
- 2.21 In addition the RJ Hub manager line manages the ASB Victim Support Champion role. This post was funded from December 2014 and the ASB Victims Champion acts as a single point of contact, identifying vulnerable victims of ASB and providing dedicated and specialist support for victims across the district. The post was recruited by Victim Support but is managed within the Restorative Justice Hub, embedding victim centred approaches.

New Initiatives encompassing Restorative Approaches

- 2.22 Like other areas, Bradford is working hard to address child sexual exploitation and what we know is that there are limited interventions locally or nationally which focus specifically on perpetrators (except the National Sex Offender Group within the National Probation Service). What we are not looking to do is defer these perpetrators from traditional routes, but instead develop a project which complements the current system. We want to place a greater emphasis on these offenders recognising the impact of their actions by being involved in restorative meetings with those affected who have been affected by this type of crime, however, this will not be their direct victims.
- 2.23 We are working with specialists in the field, including Children's Services, Police, the Prison Service, West Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), National Probation Service (NPS), Parents Against Child Exploitation (PACE) and Barnardos to develop a bespoke project. Perpetrators will then meet with people who have been affected by these crimes. This will not be the perpetrator's direct victim or their family. Rather those working with organisations such as PACE, who are willing to share their experiences, so perpetrators can begin to increase their understanding of the impact of their actions whilst having to take responsibility for their behaviour. We hope this will become a project which different services can access, including the Police, Youth Offending Teams, CRC and the NPS.
- 2.24 Increases in the use of social media, has brought about an increase in cyber crime. Restorative approaches can be an integral part in the work to combat this. CPS can prosecute for 'Grossly Offensive Social Media', but what happens to those cases not deemed 'grossly offensive', just 'offensive'. There are victims every day who are affected, and by giving them the opportunity to engage in a restorative process, at any point of the Criminal Justice System can empower them and give them the opportunity to ask questions

which can be so crucial to recovery.

- 2.25 RJ Training for Police Ward Officers, Cyber Crime Officers and CSE Hub staff was undertaken in November 2015.
- 2.26 The RJ Hub manager attends a number of different strategic groups such as Hate Crime and ASB to identify emerging issues and try to respond with a focus on victims and giving them a voice.
- 2.27 The development of the RJ Hub has been overseen by the RJ Strategy Group which meets on a monthly basis and continues to support the development this work in embracing new ideas and approaches to restorative practices. The RJ project plan is a driver to combine efforts in a truly focused way which embeds restorative approaches across the district to maximise delivery and shared outcomes. The Strategy Group reports to the CSP Strategy Group and CSP Board.
- 2.28 In October 2015 Bradford established a multi agency working group to examine and tackle the emerging problems related to gender based bullying and harassment. The group has been established to look at increasing concerns of bullying and harassment around the Great Horton Road locality. Issues have been increasingly emerging are of a gendered nature with predominately males targeting female residents and students of Bradford University and College campuses.
- 2.29 Women in particular report having to adjust and change their movements due to issue of personal safety and fear of crime. There are wider issues with ASB, dangerous driving, and drug dealing that may possibly be linked to the same group of people; there is feedback stating incidents of intimidation and threatening behaviour, particularly on some of the side streets, as well as on the pedestrianised campus areas.
- 2.30 There has been consensus to develop a robust and sustainable action plan to begin to look at societal, behavioural and environmental issues in order to realistically tackle some of the problems presented. The aim is to incorporate approaches to behaviour change using classroom and cognitive based approaches this includes a suggestion to harness the vast volunteer base from the student body to look at restorative justice and victim focused interventions.
- 2.31 Based on the success of the model developed in Bradford, other districts across West Yorkshire have been allocated Victim Services funding from the PCC to develop Restorative Projects based on the Bradford approach.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Bradford Community Safety Partnership has demonstrated, over a number of years, a strong commitment to the development of restorative justice. Bradford already has a wealth of nationally and locally recognised RJ services both pre and post sentence, in Bradford Youth Offending Team and in West Yorkshire Community Rehabilitation Company (formally the Probation Trust)
- 3.2 Bradford has been delivering RJ interventions for a number of years which builds on the foundations of this work and strengthens the aspirations to deliver this practice across a number of crime types including Hate Crime to provide a holistic and consistent approach to supporting victims.

4. OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Committee can approve the recommendations or amend them and/or make further recommendations.

5. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 5.1 Since 2012 Bradford Community Safety Partnership has funded the work of the project, this has been funding from West Yorkshire PCC.
- 5.2 West Yorkshire PCC has allocated £110,222 to Bradford Community Safety Partnership. This funding has come from the MOJ Victims and Witness Fund. This funding will be used to continue and expand the work of restorative justice in Bradford.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk map has been developed for the scheme and the significant risks have been identified as: failure to recruit and train volunteers, failure to get referrals to the scheme, failure to secure funding beyond March 2016. Plans are in place to minimise the effects of these risks on the success of the scheme.

7. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 7.1 Advice was sought from Bradford Council Legal Services in order to ensure that any potential legal issues which may arise from the scheme are suitably addressed.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The RJ Hub is an active member of the Bradford Hate Crime Strategic Management Group and looks at how restorative approaches can support those who are affected by hate crime or incidents, in a way that supports victims by giving them a voice.

Volunteers come from a diverse background which ensures that the RJ Hub is able to allocate volunteers who have the best experience and skills to each particular case.

8.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

No implications.

8.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

No impacts.

8.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.4.1 The aim of this scheme is to contribute to improving community safety outcomes across the district including reducing crime and reoffending and providing a universal service for victims.

8.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

No implications apparent.

8.6 TRADE UNION

No implications apparent.

8.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

8.7.1 This scheme may have beneficial implications for all wards in Bradford district.

9. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 South Area Committee considers and comments on the progress made over the past 12 months in developing Neighbourhood Resolution Panels in Bradford district as set out in this report.

11. APPENDICES

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

12.1 None.