

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Corporate Parenting Panel – 2nd March 2021

Report Title

The Rotherham Youth Offending Team (YOT) Inspection

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

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Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Rotherham Youth Offending Team (YOT) received notification of HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection of youth justice services on Friday 7th August 2020.

Rotherham Youth Offending Team was inspected under the HMIP ‘Small YOT’ inspection Framework which is new. Peterborough, Windsor Maidenhead and Rotherham were selected to be the first Youth Offending Teams to be inspected under this new framework.

Recommendations

That the Corporate parenting Panel notes the Inspection report findings and works with the YOT Board to progress actions against the five recommendations and in particular, recommendation two;

Ensure the partnership understands the reasons for the significant number of Looked After Children known to the YOT and reviews the policies and practices of all agencies to minimise the possibility of children entering the criminal justice system unnecessarily.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 HMIP Inspection report of Rotherham Youth Offending Team – 17th December 2020

Background Papers

Improving Lives Select Commission Report – October 2019

Improving Lives Select Commission Report – July 2020

Improving Lives Select Commission Report - September 2020

Improving Lives Select Commission Report – January 2021

HMIP Inspection report of Rotherham Youth Offending Team – 17th December 2020

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Improving Lives Select Commission – October 2019

Improving Lives Select Commission – July 2020

Improving Lives Select Commission - September 2020

Improving Lives Select Commission – January 2021

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

The Rotherham Youth Offending Team (YOT) Inspection
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1. Background

- 1.1 The Rotherham Youth Offending Team (YOT) received notification of HM Inspectorate of Probation inspection of youth justice services on Friday 7th August 2020.
- 1.2 Rotherham Youth Offending Team was inspected under the HMIP 'Small YOT' inspection Framework which is new. Peterborough, Windsor Maidenhead and Rotherham were selected to be the first Youth Offending Teams to be inspected under this new framework.
- 1.3 Because of the impact of COVID-19, the inspection was conducted remotely. Meetings and case interviews were arranged and facilitated using Microsoft Teams.
- 1.4 The Inspection was carried out across three 'Domains' and within these domains there are 12 standards. Judgements were made against the following areas;

Domain One (Organisational delivery):

- Governance and leadership
- Staff
- Partnerships and services
- Information and facilities

Domain Two (Court Disposals):

- Assessment
- Planning
- Implementation and delivery
- Reviewing
- Risk, safety and wellbeing.

Domain Three (Out-of-Court disposals)

- Assessment
- Planning Inadequate
- Implementation and Delivery

- Joint Working

1.5 As part of the inspection requirement, Surveys were also completed by our, Children & Young People, Staff and Volunteers.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The Overall inspection outcome judgement was Requires Improvement. The report makes five recommendations.

The Chair of the YOT Management Board should:

1. Make sure that Board members understand the specific needs of children known to the YOT and advocate on their behalf in their own agencies.

The YOT Management Board should:

2. Ensure the partnership understands the reasons for the significant number of Looked After Children known to the YOT and reviews the policies and practices of all agencies to minimise the possibility of children entering the criminal justice system unnecessarily.
3. Undertake a comprehensive health needs analysis of YOT children to better understand the health provision being delivered and what needs to be developed.
4. Review the quality and accessibility of education, training and employment provision for post-16-year-old children known to the service.

The YOT Service Manager should:

5. Review the quality of risk of harm work and improve the effectiveness of management oversight in all cases.

2.2 It is with regard to the recommendation number two; *Ensure the partnership understands the reasons for the significant number of Looked After Children known to the YOT and reviews the policies and practices of all agencies to minimise the possibility of children entering the criminal justice system unnecessarily* that the findings from the Inspection report have been brought to the attention of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

2.3 Across the total 199 open cases* 8.0% (16) of these young people (YP) are Looked After, however if we analyse this data further, it reveals that of the 23 young people who have Statutory Orders of YCC or above 8 of these YP (34.8%) are LAC young people.

2.4 Encouragingly, there has been a decrease of two LAC young people within this cohort since Q1. Discussions have commenced with the Head of Service for LAC and Leaving Care to review the way we work in partnership to reduce the cohort of LAC further.

2.5 The Inspection report then goes on to identify some key strengths and areas for improvement.

2.6 Areas noted as Strengths:

- The Chair of the YOT Management Board is very committed to his role and is a strong advocate for children.
- There is priority given to involving children, listening to what they say and responding to their feedback in order to influence future service delivery.
- The Management Board and the partnership are aware that there is a disproportionate number of black, Asian and minority ethnic children known to the YOT, and have projects in place to try to address the issue.
- YOT staff do all they can to encourage good engagement and compliance from the child and their family, and staff and managers are child-centred and know their children well.
- The YOT has good transition arrangements with the National Probation Service and the Community Rehabilitation Company, which includes regular transition meetings where cases are monitored and reviewed.
- The service has good links with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Team, and the Head of Inclusion is a member of the YOT Management Board.

2.7 The inspection was unable to take into account the huge volume of successful preventative work the service does to keep young people out of the criminal justice system in the first place. The emphasis we put on this work has resulted in the number of young people entering the criminal justice system in Rotherham fall by more than fifty percent since 2016 (331 per 100,000 in 2016 down to 159 per 100,000 in 2019).

2.8 Areas noted for Improvement:

- Although health provision is available through the Early Help Service, the arrangements do not recognise the specialised needs of children known to the YOT, including physical and emotional, mental health and wellbeing concerns.
- The pathways for YOT staff to access health services, for example speech, language and communication provision, lack clarity.

- Board members do not understand the specific needs of YOT children so cannot effectively advocate on their behalf in their own agencies.
- The Management Board and the partnership have not focused on why so many Looked After Children are known to the YOT.
- YOT figures for post-16-year-old children who are not in education, training and employment are high, and the partnership has not done enough work to review what provision is available in the locality for this cohort of children.
- Although YOT practitioners can access the interventions that are available as part of the wider Rotherham early help offer, there is little evidence that these services are regularly used for children known to the YOT.
- The inspection found that management oversight is poor both for post-court orders and out-of-court disposals.

2.9 Across the 12 standards, three were judged to be inadequate.

- Domain Two (Court Disposals), Assessments were rated as inadequate. This judgement relates to 6 cases that were inspected out of a cohort of 15 (40%).
- Domain Three (Out of Court Disposals), Planning; ‘The quality of planning is rated as ‘Inadequate’. Planning relating to desistance was outstanding but planning for a child’s safety and wellbeing and keeping other people safe was inadequate, and this has led to the overall rating of ‘Inadequate.’
- Implementation & Delivery were also judged to be inadequate. ‘The quality of implementing and delivering interventions and services is rated as ‘Inadequate’. Delivering services to promote desistance was good; however, for safety and wellbeing and keeping other people safe it was inadequate.’ 4 Cases were inspected out of a cohort of 181 (2.2% of cases).

2.10 In the lead inspector’s feedback she “recognised that the Rotherham YOT was on an improvement journey” and stated that inspectors “were in no doubts, that if they had visited in 6 months’ time or we weren’t in the middle of a pandemic they would have found us further along the journey.”

2.11 Whilst we are disappointed with the overall outcome the partnership is committed to making the required improvements at pace to ensure the best possible outcomes for our young people.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 That the Corporate parenting Panel notes the Inspection report findings and works with the YOT Board to progress actions against the five recommendations and in particular, recommendation two;

Ensure the partnership understands the reasons for the significant number of Looked After Children known to the YOT and reviews the policies and practices of all agencies to minimise the possibility of children entering the criminal justice system unnecessarily.

4. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 4.1 There is already a two-year Youth Justice Plan in place with an Action Plan that is monitored by the YOT Board and progressed through a series of multi-agency sub-groups taking forward the actions.
- 4.2 We have also produced a draft Inspection Action Plan that specifically addresses the 5 HMIP recommendations. This was shared with the YOT Board on the 14th December 2020 and submitted to the YJB on the 11th January 2021.
- 4.3 An 'Extraordinary' YOT Board has taken place on 20th January 2021 to develop the Inspection Action Plan in greater detail with partners.
- 4.4 There is an action plan in place based upon our recent self-assessment against the YJ National Standards for Children 2019.
- 4.5 We will also look to commission a peer review with an Outstanding YOT, to assess our progress against the report recommendations and the Inspection Action Plan.

5. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)

- 5.1 N/A

6. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)

- 6.1 N/A

7. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 7.1 N/A

8. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

8.1 Whilst we are disappointed with the overall outcome the partnership is committed to making the required improvements at pace to ensure the best possible outcomes for our young people

9. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

9.1 N/A

10. Implications for Partners

10.1 Rotherham Youth Offending Team is governed by a partnership management board and also reports to Safer Rotherham Partnership. The HMIP reports makes reference to the need to improve partnership arrangements to achieve better outcomes for children particularly in relation to Looked after children, health, mental health and post 16 education/training provision.

11. Risks and Mitigation

11.1 N/A

12. Accountable Officer(s)

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