

<b>Item No.</b> 7.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 16 February 2011	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Corporate Parenting Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Children in Care and Youth Offending	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Assistant Director Children's Specialist Services	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The corporate parenting committee note the revised procedure and guidance of the Youth Offending Protocol implemented in 2010.
2. The corporate parenting committee considers writing to the lead officer and chair of the Safer Southwark Partnership to request a briefing on the key issues affecting children on the cusp of care and how the role of the Section 20 resource panel could be promoted.
3. The corporate parenting committee notes the low rates of criminal activity concerning Southwark children in care compared with London Authorities and England.
4. The corporate parenting committee considers recommending to the strategic director of children's services that the children in care drop-in service is included as part of the review of youth services to ensure continued support for looked after young people is provided in future.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

5. The Youth Justice Board inspection of Southwark's youth offending service in February 2008 and the JAR inspection in April 2008 both recommended that there needed to be improved working arrangements between Youth Offending Services and teams responsible for looked after children.
6. The main identified concerns focused upon the following areas:
  - Information tracking for children remanded into care
  - More effective involvement and care planning activity by front door teams during the 1<sup>st</sup> four weeks of care (including family assessments, initial health assessment and personal education plans)
  - Improved discharge planning for children in care who are subject to a custodial sentence.
7. As at 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 there were 538 children in care to the London Borough of Southwark. Out of these 7 were in care as a result of criminal courts remanding them into care.
8. Magistrates courts will elect to remand a child into care prior to trial or sentencing if they feel a young person has a chaotic or inappropriate home environment which might lead to a young person not being sufficiently cared for in the community.

9. Over 95% of remands into care last for 5 days or less, being concluded once the young person returns to court for resolution and youth offending services have been able to provide a greater picture of the child's immediate family circumstances.
10. Each year Southwark is required to report to the Department of Education relating to youth offending patterns of looked after children who have been in care for twelve months or more.
11. Appendix 1 outlines Southwark's performance against this key indicator for the last five years compared with London and England averages.
12. In August 2010 the Youth Offending Service was subject to a significant restructuring.
13. In April 2010 Southwark Front Door Service had its unannounced Ofsted inspection. This inspection provided an intensive review of assessment activity provided by Southwark's referral and assessment team to all children who may be considered in need.
14. This unannounced inspection included the initial response provided for remands into care through the criminal justice system and how safeguarding issues are integrated into all assessment activity.
15. Additionally the unannounced inspection criteria also considers the effectiveness of how any children remaining in care for 4 weeks or longer are appropriately and professionally transferred to the looked after service.
16. The result of the unannounced Ofsted inspection was extremely favorable identifying Southwark's referral and assessment services as "good"

#### **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

17. Over the last three years a number of initiatives have been undertaken to transform the partnership working arrangements between the Youth Offending Services, Front Door Teams and CLA Service.
18. A comprehensive review of the working protocols between Children's Services was undertaken and a new protocol launched in January 2009.
19. This was further revised and implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2010.

20. The Youth Offending Protocol (Appendix 2) outlined the following strategies for Southwark's children:

- Youth Crime prevention
- Work with children aged 13-18 years
- Young people aged 14-17 at risk of offending or anti social behaviour
- Pre court services for young offenders age 10-17
- Young people appearing in court are made subject to court ordered interventions
- Joint procedures relating to young offenders sentenced to custody
- Protocols for looked after children
- Management of Southwark looked after children placed outside the borough.

21. In addition to the agreed protocol there are a number of targeted partnerships between CLA Services and Youth Offending Services to provide a range of preventative and intervention services for children in Southwark's care. These being:

- Risk Management Panel

Southwark's youth offending service has a risk management panel attended by all Southwark's services involved with young people including the police. This panel identifies the most prolific youth offenders in Southwark or those presenting the most concern. The CLA Service is fully represented on the panel to ensure a fully integrated care planning approach where a looked after child might meet the panel's thresholds. This enables additional resources to be targeted in a coordinated way to identify looked after children to break the cycle of offending behavior and assist their reengagement with core services.

- Resource Panel

Introduced in July 2010 a newly established resource panel has been developed in Children's Specialist Services to manage the threshold for children entering the care system. The resource panel is chaired by the Head of Assessment and Safeguarding Service who has additional budgets and partnerships to target considerable family support resources where a child is at risk of entering the care system. The preliminary findings (6 months) of the resource panel is that for a significant proportion of teenagers entering the care system, youth offending is the primary issue. Accordingly it has now been agreed that the youth offending service cannot recommend a remand into care through the court unless they have first sought the agreement (and additional prevention resources) from Southwark Resource Panel.

- Research

Southwark is one of four authorities in England selected to undertake research relating to offending patterns and looked after children (partnership with University of East Anglia). This project began in September 2010 and is expected to report in September 2011. It is hoped this will identify relevant practice learning for both the CLA and Youth Offending services.

- Data Systems and Information Exchange

In July 2010 an exercise was undertaken to review the effectiveness of the Youth Offending Services Data System (Careworks) to deliver necessary tracking and government reporting requirements. This review included the potential advantages of bringing the data management arrangements under single management with Carefirst (Children's Specialist Services data and record recording system) and to consider whether ultimately Youth Offending Service staff should start using Carefirst so that all work is inputted onto a single record. This review has now concluded and a report is now being submitted to the Strategic head of Children's Service to reconfigure the recording and data provision needs of Youth Offending Services. If agreed this will enable youth offending workers to immediately access and input into records of children in care whilst also enabling allocated social workers for children in care to access all information relating to young offending, and potential gang activity.

- Discharge from Youth Offending Institutions

Since the introduction of the new protocol the CLA service has not had a single occasion where a YOI Governor has had to express any concern relating to a discharge plan. The CLA service provided briefings for its Adolescent and Aftercare Service to ensure a greater understanding of statutory requirements and the need to deliver a discharge plan (including accommodation, support, education, finance and supervision) in a timely way.

- Offending Rates for Looked After Children in long term care

Appendix 1 outlines the last five years performance with regards to looked after children (in care for twelve months or more) who commit an offence are cautioned or warned. Southwark's performance for children in care over this period has remained in line and compares favorably with statistical neighbors and the London average.

- Drop In Service

In January 2010 the Adolescent and Aftercare Service introduced a "drop in service" at Bradenham. The drop in service has been previously reported to the Corporate Parenting Committee as a key initiative to maintain contact with the most difficult to engage children from age of 16-18 and care leavers aged 18-21. Whilst the drop in addresses issues relating to young people not in employment education and training, it also fulfils a key safeguarding issue. There is a link between looked after children (aged 16-18) who are not in employment, education and training and raised vulnerability to becoming involved in offending behavior and gang related activity. Whilst attending young people can access advice from specialist nurses, employment advice, substance misuse teams, connexions and other support services (i.e. dental sessions). This initiative has been very successful with regards to attendance (as demonstrated through 3 significant young offenders forming part of the choir during the October 2010 celebration event). The drop in service is well supported by youth work services (TYS) who provide 15 hours senior youth work support a week.

The drop in was reviewed through young people being interviewed in July 2010 and is now being reviewed one year after its implementation. Appendix No 3 is the drop in review undertaken by a Southwark care leaver.

- Specialist Fostering Arrangements

In partnership with Southwark's commissioning service the CLA Service have commissioned specialist foster placements from the private and voluntary sector who would be able to support and manage children in care with significant offending behaviors. In partnership with the Youth Offending Service a targeted carer specification was identified as part of the tender documentation. In January 2011, six independent fostering providers were approved to provide this service which will come into place on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2011. This will enable the CLA service to consider placing children in care with offending behaviours in a family setting rather than in residential care. Whilst this is considered a more appropriate environment for young people, it is also a more financially effective way of providing service.

22. While there is not a causal link between children in care and offending, there is no question that children who are in unstable placements are more at risk of falling into a pattern of criminal behaviour in later life. Considerable support is put into residential and fostering placements to prevent breakdown including fostering support and help with education, mentoring and independent visitors.
23. All looked after children have regular reviews of their arrangements and their care plan is updated regularly which includes identifying any measure which can help young people stay out of trouble, including a referral to their local youth offending service for advice and support where warranted.
24. Southwark's strategy for substance misuse has commissioned "Insight" to target interventions for the most vulnerable groups. Children in care have been identified as a key group (youth offending service users are also a key group). This new contract arrangement began in September 2010 with CLA Services being able to make direct referrals to Insight. In response, Insight have agreed that they will place one of their team each week at the drop in to improve early referral and intervention arrangements (linkage between youth crime and substance misuse).
25. There are a number of young people being remanded into the care system due to gang related activity who cannot return home as their families are unable to cope (or afraid) or the young person needs to come into care for their own protection. The looked after care service is not designed as a public protection system and is finding itself ill equipped to manage children coming into care with significant gang related behavioral issues who either do not wish to be in care or are literally in fear for their lives. The impact of gang related activity is a council wide challenge under the leadership of the Safer Southwark Partnership. It is evident however that the children looked after service is being asked to provide care planning and placement arrangements for increasingly numbers of 14-18 year olds who are drawn in to this destructive lifestyle.

26. Partnership working between the CLA service and Youth Offending Service has significantly improved over the last three years whereby Managers from either service can convene a strategy meeting if they are concerned about the planning or crime prevention arrangements for any child in care. This arrangement enables early recognition and intervention plans to be set in motion to avoid subsequent escalation and involvement of the risk management board. Given that over 60% of Southwark's looked after population are not living in Southwark, leadership for drawing in local youth offending teams rests with the Children Looked After Service. However Southwark's youth offending service are available to intervene should the CLA Service not be able to access appropriate engagement and support from local youth offending services.

**Policy implications**

27. There are no policy implications as this report relates to Children's Specialist Services delivering appropriate and targeted interventions for children on the cusp of care and looked after children.

**Resource implications**

28. The Children Looked After and Youth Offending Services are statutory agencies which are supported through core and central government grants. It is recognised that during the 2010/11 financial year grant funded provision for the Youth Offending Service has been significantly reduced.

29. The planned budgetary reductions for 2011/12 both the CLA and Youth Offending services will involve service reduction and reconfiguration.

**Community impact statement**

30. Southwark's CLA services works to promote the five outcomes for children in care as outlined in Every Child Matters. It is recognised that placement stability, engagement in education, access to leisure activities and healthy lifestyles all help to build resilience in young people to avoid offending behaviour

31. The Youth Offending Service and Looked After Service recognise that offending is a significant concern for the community and is subject to intense scrutiny especially around gun and knife crime. The leadership for addressing youth crime issues in Southwark is lead by the Safer Southwark partnership who deliver a range of specialist services and staff to provide targeted interventions for named children (team around the child approach).

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Previous corporate parenting committee agenda papers and key statistics for LAC	160 Tooley Street, SE1	Strategy, Planning and Performance Team, Children's Services

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Southwark's performance – key indicator for last five years
Appendix 2	Youth Offending Protocol
Appendix 3	Drop In Service – closed document (client confidentiality)

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Rory Patterson Deputy Director Children's Specialist Services & Safeguarding	
<b>Report Author</b>	Chris Saunders Head of Services for Children in Care/ Head of Youth Offending Services	
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Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	No	No
Finance Director	No	No
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