

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: July 29 2009	Meeting Name: Executive
Report title:		The YOT Inspection– Response to Recommendations of Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Romi Bowen, Strategic Director Children’s Services	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Executive notes the comments/recommendations of the Assistant Director – Specialist Children’s Services and Safeguarding, in response to the recommendations of the Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee as set out in the report.

BACKGROUND

2. In 2008 the Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee looked at the outcome of the inspection of the work of the Youth Offending Team by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation. The inspection was undertaken in February 2008, and made 12 recommendations which were incorporated in an action plan and endorsed by the lead inspector. Action has been taken to address all 12 recommendations, although some, like the quality of assessments require ongoing training Members considered the findings of the inspection report and questioned officers about what measures were being put in place to address the weaknesses identified.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

3. The scrutiny sub-committee made a number of recommendations which have been addressed individually below and appear in bold type throughout the report. The sub-committee was particularly concerned by the poor grading for the category: Work with young people who offend. An action plan was drawn up and approved by the Inspectorate in July 2008, and the majority of the actions have now been completed. The report summarises some of the key recommendations from the inspection in bold type, and the proposed actions from the Assistant Director Specialist Children’s Services and Safeguarding to address the issues appear under each recommendation.
4. **The quality of both Onset and Asset is improved**
5. The Onset assessment tool is undertaken by staff working in preventative services and includes staff in voluntary sector organisations which have been commissioned by the YOT to undertake preventative work (Youth Inclusion Programmes) with young people at risk of offending. Refresher training on Onset completion has been provided for staff in the YOT early intervention team and other commissioned services. An Asset quality improvement plan has also been put in place which provides refresher training for all managers on Asset completion and quality assurance. Supervision sheets have been

embedded on Careworks (the YOT database and case management system) to audit Asset and Onset quality and identify improvements through the reviewing process. This will be monitored through audits, supported by the Specialist Children's Services Quality Assurance Unit.

6. **The recording of safeguarding issues and the subsequent actions taken to address identified individual needs is improved and documented where necessary in a vulnerability management plan**

7. The Asset is a structured assessment tool used by all YOTs. The information gathered from Assets can be used to draw up court reports, and it will also highlight any particular needs or difficulties the young person may have. Embedded in the Asset tool is a specific section which addresses the vulnerability of the young person. Staff within the YOT have received refresher training to enable them to complete this important document and address all the key issues in relation to the young person. The quality of the assessments is then monitored through supervision and case audits. A new protocol has been developed with children's social care to improve the interface between services, and ensure that there is effective integrated team working with these vulnerable young people. The effectiveness of these changes is monitored through regular meetings between the services, and the development of a shared understanding of service thresholds. An escalation process has also been implemented to ensure that any disagreements are resolved quickly.

8. **Risk of Harm to others is thoroughly assessed and recorded, with appropriate timely actions taken and documented where necessary in a risk management plan.**

A risk of serious harm assessment is triggered by an Asset, and provides an opportunity to look more closely at some of the concerns that have been identified regarding the possible risk of harm to others. The risk management plan sets out how these risks are to be managed by the YOT and its partner agencies. The YOT holds regular multi-disciplinary risk management panel meetings chaired by the YOT manager, so that medium to high risk cases and their management plans can be monitored and progress checked. YOT managers review risk of harm assessments in their regular staff supervision sessions, and this is supported by the audit programme which checks the quality of practice.

9. **A sufficient number of appropriately trained staff have access to all relevant information on the social care database relating to children and young people engaged with the YOT.**

10. A number of key personnel within the YOT already have access to the social care database to enable YOT staff to check whether young people are known. Work is underway to widen access to more staff in the YOT, and allow them to view assessments which may be held on social care files. This will inform the YOT's assessment of the young person's risk and vulnerability.

11. **Education, training and employment staff have agreed record keeping systems for assessment purposes, target setting or monitoring progress together with robust quality assurance systems.**

12. The YOT's education worker and Connexions staff complete monthly records of young people's access to education training and employment, monitor

attendance and note any corrective action required. This is shared with Connexions link manager to ensure that the wider Connexions Service is aware of these young people, and their progress can be tracked when they move on from the YOT. Hard to engage young people are referred to bi-monthly joint YOT/Connexions Panel for review and action.

13. **Victim work is an integral component of case management and is effectively communicated between the relevant staff**
14. Victims should receive a high standard of work from the YOT. While no single organisations has the sole responsibility to support every victim, the Youth Justice Board's code of practice aims to ensure that all victims have access to appropriate and timely support suited to their individual needs. A restorative justice manual has been completed by the YOT, and this has helped to ensure that all victims are invited to take part in the restorative justice process. Further work has been undertaken within the team to ensure that victims' staff are more fully integrated in the service, and that this work is given a priority by case managers.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

15. The inspection highlighted the fact that there were weaknesses in use of the assessment tools, and that there needed to be greater supervision of case managers to ensure they were complying with national standards. A recent internal review of the YOT has highlighted the need for fundamental changes in the structure of the service to meet the challenges posed by the new approach to managing young offenders in the community. The scaled approach aims to ensure that interventions are tailored to the individual and based on an assessment of their risks and needs. This will increase the amount of contact time YOT workers must have with young people and the service will have to be restructured to cope with the supervisory requirements. The purpose of the restructure is to increase the number of case managers available to supervise young offenders in the community, and to strengthen the management structure to ensure all staff are regularly supervised, and work is quality assured.

COMMENTS FROM THE FINANCE DIRECTOR

16. Sufficient resources have been identified from within existing core budgets and additional grant allocations to meet these costs during 2009/10.

COMMENTS FROM THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES, LAW & GOVERNANCE

17. The report provides a response from Children's Services to the report provided by the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny subcommittee. The report sets out how the service has responded to the specific recommendations of the scrutiny committee. The report is therefore for the Executive to note.

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Scrutiny Sub-Committee - minutes and reports	Scrutiny Team Room 3.16 Town Hall Peckham Road London	Scrutiny Project Manager Tel: 020 7525 7224

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Romi Bowen, Strategic Director Children's Services	
Report Author	Rory Patterson Assistant Director Specialist Children's Services and Safeguarding	
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Key Decision?	No	
Consultation with other officers / directorates		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Finance Director	Yes	Yes