

Decision Maker: CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY

Date: Tuesday 9 November 2021

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: BROMLEY YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE UPDATE

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Ward: All Wards

1. Reason for report

This report provides an update on the work of Bromley Youth Offending Service over the last 6 months (since July 2020) to include managing the service during the pandemic as well as the performance and other work of the service.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

The contents are received, noted, and provide any comments on the work of Bromley Youth Offending Service.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact:

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable Existing Policy New Policy: Further Details
2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People Excellent Council Quality Environment Safe Bromley Supporting Independence Vibrant, Thriving Town Centres Healthy Bromley Regeneration Not Applicable: Further Details

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable:
2. Ongoing costs: Recurring Cost:
3. Budget head/performance centre: YOS Budget
4. Total current budget for this head: £1,682,315m
5. Source of funding: Statutory Partners and the Youth Justice Board

Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 30.5FTE
2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement Non-Statutory - Government Guidance None: Further Details
2. Call-in: Applicable Not Applicable: Further Details

Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications:

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected):

Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

YOS PDS update for November 2021

1. Executive summary

This report gives an overview of the Bromley Youth Offending Service (YOS) and the impact of the pandemic on service delivery. This report will set out our priorities for the next year as well as our priorities in the Youth Justice Strategic Plan and our annual Youth Justice Plan 2021/22. The report will also provide information and data related to performance in the last six months. As well as work we are doing in relation to reducing offending and reoffending and more importantly our adoption of “child first” principle for children and young people in the justice system, this focuses on children and families getting the right help at the right time.

2. COMMENTARY

The YOS is based at Masons Hill in Bromley. It is fully staffed with both experienced and permanent workers most of whom have professional qualifications in social worker as well as other disciplines some of whom are seconded from other agencies. The team is multi-disciplinary, multi-agency service that works with children and young people aged 10-18 years and their families to deliver statutory responsibilities in relation to a wide range of provision to address their needs. The work of the YOS includes out of court disposal, statutory supervision for those sentenced by the courts this include those sentenced to detention, on licence in the community, court work and those remanded on bail under supervision.

2.1 Child First

In 2020 we launched our first Youth Justice strategy 2020/23 where our governance board agree to adopt the YJB’s “child first” principle. We see this as our ability to recognise through our assessments and prioritise the needs of children, their capacity, and their potential. We do this by promoting the individual strengths of the child to develop pro social identity for them to desist from offending which will lead to fewer victims and more safer communities. We work to encourage and support children to engage in activities and interventions to promote a childhood removed from the criminal justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion, and minimal intervention.

Over the last year we conducted two surveys to hear the voice of the child and that of parents of carers involved in the youth justice system. We wanted to provide an opportunity for children and families voice to be heard and to use the feedback to explore and enhance our service delivery as well as shape the future delivery. We recently conducted a survey on young people’s experience of being supervised during the pandemic. The purpose of the feedback is to glean an insight into our current practice in order to implement a dynamic, innovative, and improved service offer for young people that meets their needs within a changing environment. The questions were framed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from young people in order to gather their perspectives about their experience of the YOS during

the pandemic. The age range was 13-18 open cases between September 2019 to 1 August 2020.

The sample size includes 78 cases, of which, 39 questionnaires were completed and used in the analysis. 39 cases (50%) were not received for the following reasons:

- 26 contact was attempted by case worker and this was unsuccessful
- 5 declined to participate
- 8 were not appropriate due to circumstances such as being placed out of borough, a young person being unable to respond due to being in crisis or the young people did not wish to be contacted.

The majority 81.5 % (n30) of young people within the sample identified that they thought that the YOS helped them to do better in the future. When asked specifically about how the YOS had helped them, 27 provided a narrative, themes that arose included that young people believed that the YOS helped them to do better; case workers helped them think about the consequences of their actions; sessions helped them cut down on smoking cannabis; and they received support with acquiring education and training opportunities. Furthermore, each young person who answered the question, (100% n37) said that they felt listened to; they felt that their case worker cared about what happened to them; and, that they believed that their case worker had tried to help them. Another significant finding includes that almost all the respondents (34, 97%) thought that they could tell their case worker if they needed help.

When asked to comment on the YOS experience 66 comments were received when young people were asked to highlight, "What is good about the YOS," and, "What is not good about YOS." Key findings from the respondents included that they identified the YOS to be a supportive and non-judgemental environment and that this was important to them. They also enjoyed simple, informal sessions where they were able to connect with their case worker. In most cases, respondents were happy with the service they received from the YOS.

Our survey of parents was equally encouraging with parents reporting positively on how we assisted their children during the pandemic.

The pandemic has given us new challenges within the YOS when dealing with the most vulnerable and high-risk children who often presented with a range of complexities and past trauma and the need to balance this to ensure public protection.

2.2 Performance

The YOS has 68 open interventions with children and is broken down into type. There has been a reduction in the number of interventions with fewer cases coming through the courts partially related to the pandemic.

Intervention	Active cases
Referral Order	15
Remand in Custody (YDA) YOI	1
Section 90/91/Through Care Programme	3
Triage/Prevention Programme	19
Youth Caution	2
Youth Conditional Caution	5
Youth Rehabilitation Order	6
Informal Diversion Work	2
Pre panel OCCD Programme	6
Liaison & Diversion Programme	5
Assessment Programme (PSR)	2
Bail Support Programme	1
Section 90/91/Licence Programme	1
Grand Total	68

The YOS has 3 national key performance indicators, First Time Entrants (FTE); offending and reoffending and the use of custody and performance is measured by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) who in turn publishes the data. The latest outturn for Bromley is:

First Time Entrants (FTE)

We continue to reduce the level of FTE's to the criminal justice system from a rate of 157 (Jan – Dec 2019) to 153 (Jan – Dec 2020) per 100,000 and we are performing well. Bromley's rate of first-time entrants has reduced annually by 3% and is 33% lower than the average for London and is 27% below the national average. FTEs are 1% higher than our statistical neighbours. Bromley also has the lowest rate compared with the 6 surrounding boroughs. (Bexley, Croydon, Southwark, Lewisham, Lambeth, Greenwich) Bromley has the 7th lowest FTE rate in London and are ranked 77th out of the 154 YOS in the country.

Bromley YOS are Triaging an average 100 cases a year which is having a direct impact on keeping the number of first-time entrants low in comparison to the London and national average. (A young person receiving a triage for a 1st offence prevents them from becoming an FTE). Our review and analysis of first-time entrants is that

The reductions in the number of children entering the criminal justice system is supported in Bromley by our continued pre-emptive prevention and diversionary activities. Our review of Local trends shows that young people who are most likely to offend are also most likely to have complex needs with in some cases little prior opportunity for the YOS to help prevent the majority from entering the criminal justice system. We continue to prioritise all our work with children and offering a range of support to help effect positive lifestyle changes.

Reducing offending and reoffending

This measure helps in understanding the effectiveness of the youth justice system in supporting young people who previously offended not to reoffend. It is a quarterly rolling measure of the rate of re-offending after 12 months of a cohort of young people. Data taken locally shows that age plays a significant part with the older young people being more prolific in their offending.

The YOS tracks a cohort of offenders who received a pre-court, court disposal or were released from custody in a 12-month period. The latest figures available are for a 12-month period October 18 - September 19. (Tracked until the end of September 2020)

105 Young people were sentenced between October 18 - September 19. 32 (30%) reoffended within a 1-year tracking period. Bromley YOS have achieved a 7% reduction in the rate of reoffended compared with the previous year, October 17 – September 18.

This cohort of young people being tracked has reduced over the past 4 years where 234 young people were serving YOS interventions by the end of September 2015. This is a 55% (129 cases) reduction over a 4-year period.

Bromley YOS reoffending rate is 10% lower than the average for London and 5% lower than National average. Bromley's rate is also reoffending is 3% lower than stat neighbours.

Bromley has the **lowest reoffending rate in London** and are ranked 42 out of the 154 YOS in the country.

7 out of 105 (7%) have committed 4 or more offences within a year (Prolific offenders). These 7 young people had committed a total of 69 offences, which is 66% of the offence frequency rate. 1 young person has committed over 30 offences within a year, and another committed 9 offences. These were repeat motoring offences including Theft of vehicle, no licence, no insurance, failure to stop and dangerous driving.

Many of these young people were involved in Gangs. Had episodes of missing, having mental health issues and are high risk cases with vulnerability issues. They have committed serious and violent offences (Murder, GBH, knife/weapons, Supplying Drugs, and Robberies). All were aged between 15-17 and 6% (2) of those who have reoffended were females.

There is a continued focus within the YOS and with partners in respect of this vulnerable group of young people. These young people receive specialist and multi-agency packages of support that can improve their lives. We are working towards training staff and adopting a trauma informed practice model in the YOS to improve and enhance the quality of our work with children and young people.

Custody

The YOS tracks the number of young people sentenced to custody on an annual period. The latest figures available are for the 12-month period of July 2020 – June 2021. Good performance is typified by a low figure.

- 3 Young people were sentenced to custody Between July 2020 - June 2021.
- This is an annual reduction of 7% in the rate per 1000 of custodial sentences, compared with the same period last year (5 custodial sentences) Bromley's rate of custodial sentences is 10% below the average for London and is 4% below the National rate. Bromley's custody rate is 2% higher than the statistical neighbours.
- Bromley is currently ranked 66 out of the 154 YOS in the country and has the 15th lowest rate of custodial sentences in London. Bromley has the lowest custody rate in comparison to its 6 neighbouring boroughs. (Bexley, Croydon, Southwark, Lewisham, Lambeth, Greenwich)

All 3 of the young people serving custodial sentences between July 2020 - June 2021 were sentenced to long term custodial sentences.

Education, training, and Employment (ETE)

The YOS monitors the percentage of young people engaged in suitable education, employment, and training at the end of their YOS intervention. The latest reporting period is for April 2021 to June 2021.

The YOS had 42 interventions which ended between April 2021 to June 2021. All school aged young people were on roll and attending an ETE provision at the end of their order. This is a 4% increase on the same period last year.

6 young people who were above school age were NEET at the end of their order these young people were all referred to the 16+ education officer who assisted these individuals with CV writing, interviewing and motivational skills. Unfortunately, 5 of these young people moved out of borough while serving their YOS orders and was unable to continue with the education processes put in place by the YOS education officer. The YOS has seen an 7% increase on the number of above school age young people being in a suitable education in comparison to last year. The YOS continues to meet regularly and work with colleagues in education there is a particular focus on SEND and how we support these children. This joined up working has enabled us to track and ensure that children with Education Health and Care Plan needs are met for those involved in the justice system with a stronger focus on these children's needs.

Accommodation

The YOS tracks the number of young people who have access to suitable accommodation at the end of their order. The latest reporting period is for April 2021 to June 2021 where we had 42 interventions which ended between April 2021 to June 2021. All were living in a suitable accommodation with their parents/relatives

and carers at the end of their order. Young people in suitable Accommodation is 4% higher than last year.

Youth Justice Plan 2021/22

The annual Youth Justice Plan is a statutory requirement under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 section 40 that sets out the YOS Partnership responsibility in producing a plan. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, after consultation with partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual plan, setting out how youth justice services will be delivered in Bromley and the composition and operation of the service.

The Bromley Plan headlines our achievements over the last year and highlights our priorities and opportunities for the coming year as well as risk to future delivery. The work of the YOS is monitored and overseen by the YOS Executive Partnership Board which in turn reports to the Children's Executive and the Bromley Safeguarding Partnership (BSCP) both receive updates and reports at every meeting. The separation of our Executive Board from the Operational subgroups allows a stronger focus on delivery against our objectives from an operational perspective.

The service improvement for 2021/22 are:

- Keeping young people safe
- Continued commitment to delivering high quality service provision
- Deploing wider evidence base on what works to reduce offending and continually upskilling of our staff though training and supervision.
- Sharing our work with partners at all levels to increase their insight and understanding of the work of the service.
- Greater partner involvement and updates of how they advocate and promote the work of the YOS in their organisations.
- Inclusion of a court representative on the YOS Partnership Board
- Our Quality assurance framework of audits and practice reviews will remain and followed.
- Understanding disproportionality and focus on making a difference
- Learning from research, inspection, and serious cases reviews through the YOS and beyond to help develop and enhance our services and support.
- Ensure that we use the voice of the child and parents in our planning and service development
- Implement some of the learning from our covid recovery plan 2020.

Governance and leadership

The YOS governance board has continued to meet throughout the pandemic although after careful consideration the board has been revised to ensure that there is senior oversight and scrutiny of the YOS Partnership. There is now an Executive partnership Board chaired by Ade Adetosoye (OBE) (Chief Executive Officer) and three operational subgroups focused on our key performance indicators – Reducing

First Time entrants chaired by Associate Director at Oxleas, reducing offending and reoffending chaired by Police Superintendent and Reducing Custody, resettlement and education chaired by the Director of Education.

The Executive Partnership Board and subgroups supports the service in overcoming any barriers to effective multi-agency working. There is good representation and attendance and a refreshed term of reference to reflect the change which enables partners to make an effective contribution to delivering key youth justice outcomes and to hold partners to account for their operational performance and outcomes. There is a clear vision detailed in the plan that we work to. The Board is continually updated on the YOS, Risk Register and performance reporting and analysis of local data. This year the agendas have included:

- Disproportionality and understanding of issues locally
- Liaison and Diversion offer
- Voice of the child
- Victim and Restorative Justice
- Resettlement developments
- National standards
- Audit of practice

There has also been a series of inspection readiness workshops to prepare Board members for the forthcoming inspection although we have no date as this is an unannounced inspection led by HM Inspectorate of Probation.

Work with children

Our focus with all the children we work with is to support them with various interventions that will lead to positive change. We understand that the process of desistance for some of our children and young people can be as simple as becoming a first-time entrant into the youth justice system and for most don't go onto reoffend. We have seen first time entrant's rate reduce significantly over the years. However, for the more persistent children and young people who offend this can be challenging often requiring more structural support to move them away from crime.

The interventions we offer in terms of positive activities include employment and training, education from our dedicated YOS teacher, leisure activities and learning new skills. We are implementing joint working peer to peer to see if this will make a greater impact on working with the friendship network to effect change in the offending group. We continue to promote desistance as this is our statutory aim of reducing re-offending. All the interventions we deliver are part of a whole process to change behaviour and ultimately reduce offending.

We have a range of specialist staff from a nurse, speech and language worker, substance misuse, psychologist who interventions too. We also provide one-to-one support, group work activities for children depending upon need and risk. In the last six months we have facilitated a girl's group with a small number of females who come into the justice system. Females represent approximately 18% of our caseload,

average age 14-17 years old. Since September 2021, we have had 12 girls referred to us for a range of offences. 9 of whom received out of court disposals. In relation to gender we ran a specific session facilitated by the YOS nurse and a case worker on healthy relationships and a girl's group. This is a gender specific programme which focuses on building self-esteem, gaining an awareness of what respectful relationships with others look like and participating in general feel-good interventions the feedback was overwhelming positive from all the participants all of whom expressed a view for the sessions to be longer in duration and ongoing. With this in mind we are actively preparing to run further groups throughout the year.

Other interventions we run include a bike maintenance course teaching young people vital skills around bike safety and repairs and this has proved very popular amongst young people with a current waiting list.

As part of our commitment to address issues related to disproportionality we are running a programme targeted at BAME young people. It is a highly motivational course directly addressing issues of identity and race, attitude and behaviour and breaking down stereotypes. The course can be effective in helping young people challenge their existing beliefs and thought patterns. We have delivered previously, and the cohort of participants talked encouragingly of the areas explored and how this had sparked an interest in wanting to further explore these areas and giving them a confidence boost in terms of the career aspiration and journey.

We are also focused on restorative justice and have a dedicated worker who is in contact with the victims of youth crime to ensure that they have a voice and the option to specify they are willing to engage in direct or indirect reparation. We have a wide range of community projects available that young people attend to complete unpaid hours of work to repair the harm or damage caused to the community by their offending.

Parenting

In September 2021 we appointed a Parenting worker who will work closely with parents to offer support. Since the inception of YOS in 1998, parenting has played an important role in the development of the service. We recognise and acknowledge the importance of parenting in a child's life and as a powerful agent for change. We have therefore enhanced the support available by creating a dedicated YOS Parenting worker that sits within the YOS but also working closely with our family intervention service. We aim to deliver an evidenced based parenting programme, offer one to one support to parents. We see this as an opportunity to build upon existing good practice as well as bring new thinking to target and encourage parents to engage as we know the wider benefits including school performance and increased family stability.

Serious youth violence

The operational definition of serious youth violence (SYV) used by the Youth Justice Board is a drug, robbery or violence against the person offence that has a gravity

score of 5 or more. Robbery offences carry a gravity score of 6. Gravity scores range from 1 (least serious) to 8 (most serious). In the year ending March 2021 there were 13 offences of SYV committed by children in Bromley.

Serious youth violence continues to be a cause for concern and with heightened attention as we constantly hear of tragic incidents of fatalities and other serious injuries caused by a small number of people. We have a small number of children involved in such offending many of whom have been sentenced to custody due to the serious nature of their behaviour. However as a service we continue to support these children throughout. For most of the pandemic the Youth Custody Service (YCS) introduced restorative measures, with social visits and other professionals' meetings and visits cancelled or held virtually. This was complemented by increased telephone contact with families and professionals. This has been a difficult time for families having these restrictions in place so the YOS increased contact with these children and provided additional resources to alleviate the frustration and boredom than some faced with longer time kept in confined areas.

Summary

The last year has been a challenging one where service delivery has been delivered differently and in a creative way to fulfil statutory duties as well as meet the needs of children receiving our service and support. A business continuity plan to manage risk was approved by the YOS Governance Board and submitted to the YJB. Risk assessments have been completed on all aspects of our work and this period has enabled us to review our work with safety of children, families and staff being our priorities. For some children we have managed risk virtually but for others the service has continued with direct interventions taking account of government guidance and the need for social distance.

A child-centred approach is central to our vision alongside effective prevention and we remain committed to our aims which underpins our priorities as a Partnership in preventing youth offending and reoffending.

Betty McDonald

Head of Service 16/09/21