

Additional questions posed outside of the meeting and responses received.

Minute No. 25 Relates

Q1 During Andy Cook's presentation he made reference to 5 children/adolescents currently being in custody (it was not clear if this was for the whole County, or just West Lindsey), but with such low numbers (given a secondary school population of 50K throughout the County), I assume that they are not in custody locally. I therefore assume that their families may have to travel significant distances to visit a person in custody. Is there anything more which the Youth Justice Team think WLDC could do to better support these families in this regard?

A: The number of children referenced related to Lincolnshire children across the whole county and generally we have had low numbers of children in custody which is positive. There are secure children homes in both Sleaford and Nottingham which provides local options and where possible would want children closer to their home to maintain important family links although Wetherby in Yorkshire is the main centre for children from this area as a larger youth detention centre. There are schemes available which financially support families around visits and case managers liaise closely with families and custody units to ensure there are no barriers to family members seeing children within custody which is regarded as critical.

Q2 On the fifth PowerPoint slide - Key Strategic Priorities - the fifth priority is given as "Recognising the importance of education, training and employment for children and young people in Lincolnshire." Is that correctly worded as a Key Strategic Priority; who is recognising it; how? How were these key priorities approved, how and when are they to be reviewed, to ensure that they remain suitable?

A: This priority has been recognised by the Youth Justice Board, HMIP and Ofsted (inspectors) and was identified as a key priority by the Lincolnshire YOS strategic management board. The priorities were shaped within a recent board development session and are driven by intelligence, performance data and analytics. They are reviewed annually within the youth justice plan and also reflect the importance of children having stable and regular attendance at school or college to mitigate the risk of involvement in criminal behaviour.

Q3 During the presentation reference was made to the escalatory 'ladder' which had been the way the system worked before 2018, can either of the County Council officers comment on what led to that system and what produced the change - was it national government, external events, or something else?

A: The 'ladder' of disposals available to youths still exists and is applied relatively rigorously in some areas of the country. Lincolnshire YOS, along with Lincolnshire Police, recognised that the previous system and its application of

these disposals was leading to increasing numbers of first-time entrants to the criminal justice system whilst at the same time offering certain disposals, such as the Youth Caution, which were entirely ineffective in reducing the likelihood of a young person committing further offences. The YOS and Police thus devised the Panel as a means of making consistent, proportionate and informed decisions with the ability to offer intervention and support to young people without having to criminalise them where appropriate/defensible.

Q4 What percentage of outcomes have direct restorative outcomes. What does this suggest; has feedback been obtained from victims, especially regarding why this may not be taken forward? Is there a danger of re-traumatising victims by pursuing restorative justice and how is this mitigated?

A: As part of the JDP referral process the Police officer will outline the panel process to the victim and will ask them if they are happy to be contacted by one of the YOS Victim Liaison Officers (VLOs); we would always respect a victim's wish not to be contacted. All victims who consent will be contacted prior to the Panel process by a VLO in order to ensure their voice is heard at Panel both in terms of the impact of the offence but also as to whether they would be willing to engage in a directly restorative outcome.

Whilst we do not at present keep statistics as to the split between direct and indirect restorative elements I can reassure members that there are few instances where a victim has asked for a directly restorative outcome and we are not able to deliver this. However, on occasion safeguarding, risk or other concerns may make a directly restorative element unsuitable and in these instances we may have to progress an indirect restorative element. The VLO would keep the victim updated as to progression of the restorative element and the reasons behind any changes would be relayed to the victim.

Q5 Given the County Council's legal duties, is there a danger of a 'sausage machine' mentality, in that individuals become lost in the process rather than receiving bespoke attention/outcomes? How is this prevented?

A: I can confidently say that we have moved away from a 'one size fits all', prescriptive approach in terms of dealing with young people who commit criminal offences. We have removed all elements of automatic escalation from the process and now look at each admitted offence in its own right. The holistic range of information we gather ensures that we have a full understanding of the young person's past and current circumstances/experiences and we are confident we have an effective range of disposal options which allow us to implement a bespoke mix of intervention, restorative content and other support in each case.

Q6 Allied to question 5, what assurance can County Council officers provide that junior colleagues can exercise their discretion confidently, how is this monitored and assessed?

A: All staff within the team have clear avenues to access learning and development opportunities which enable them to fulfil their roles and ensure that they are confident within their professional role. Staff have access to monthly supervision and also are set annual appraisal targets which are reviewed within 1-1 sessions and feedback provided to promote development.

Q7 What are the risks to the service and to young people of being at the forefront of the 'non-universal' elements of the service as discussed in the presentation? How are these mitigated?

A: This is mitigated by the principle that support is based upon a very clear needs profile and ensuring that any support or intervention is both proportionate and time limited to only as long as required. We are committed to a child first approach and not drawing children into the system where this is not necessary. Additionally many of the services such as Youth Centres, youth and community development and Positive Futures also retain a universal offer. The service can reduce the potential for children to require more long term and complex support if we act in a preventative and targeted way. Where those needs are not addressed the long term consequences are potentially significant and progress into adulthood thus also placing a financial burden upon many services.