

25 January 2021

Briefing Note for Children's Scrutiny Committee

A Peer Review of Devon Youth Offending Service by Essex Youth Offending Service.

1. Context

Devon Youth Offending Service was last inspected by HMI Probation in July 2015. Although no grading was given for the inspection, the report highlighted a mixed picture of excellent creative work and areas that were not adequate. The identified actions gave a picture of the service requiring improvement. It is anticipated that Devon Youth Offending Service will be inspected by HMI Inspection anytime from March 2021. A peer review will provide a sense check on the quality of service that is currently being delivered and serve as valuable preparation for the forthcoming inspection.

Essex Youth Offending Service was inspected by HMI Probation in early October 2018 and was rated as Outstanding. Essex Children's Services hold Partners in Practice status and have undertaken Peer Reviews in Devon's Social Work Teams as well as other Local Authorities. Essex Youth Offending Service are establishing themselves as 'professional support' for other Youth Offending Services who are striving to provide a good and outstanding service.

2. The Peer Review offer

In October and November 2020, in preparation for the peer review, Essex Youth Offending Service supported Devon Youth Offending Service in establishing a Quality Assurance Framework. This has involved re-designing the audit tool and pairing auditors in Devon with auditors in Essex, to ensure consistency in review and a learning opportunity. By mid-November 2020, over 25 audits had been undertaken.

These audits have shown some consistent themes that we would expect to also be identified in the peer review. Strengths are that very strong relationships are being built with young people and their families and that innovative and supportive programmes of work have continued during the current pandemic. Interventions are being delivered in a positive, impactful and meaningful way. Assessments are completed to a high standard and, when asked during the audit process, young people and their families say they are very grateful for the support they have had, which has assisted them in improving their lives. Areas for further development include that assessments are sometimes delayed (tighter monitoring of this has been introduced), plans were sometimes confusing and did not fully capture the young people's views (full service training has been undertaken to address this) and feedback surveys did not always capture the positive views gathered above (young people's feedback has been improved and parents feedback processes have been greatly increased).

In terms of the peer review, Essex Youth Offending Service has agreed to undertake the following;

- Analysis of current practice using the 3 main domains of the HMIP inspection framework;
 1. Organisational Delivery
 2. Court Disposals
 3. Out of Court Disposals.
- A sample of cases will be reviewed using Essex Youth Offending Service's QA format and triangulate with Devon's own case audit to provide a peer benchmark.
- Review of the approach of Devon to the use of Restorative Justice and involvement of victims of crime.
- Review the involvement and inclusion of young people and their families in work with Devon YOS.
- Review of the Education offer to YP involved with YOS and the strength of partnership working in relation to this.

3. Methodology

1. Staff survey.
2. Review of key policies and procedures.
3. Online meetings/focus groups with:
 - Management Board
 - Devon Youth Offending Service Manager
 - Management Team
 - Case Managers
 - Staff groups.
 - Young People/Parents/Carers.
4. Case file review of small sample (Court and Out of Court Disposals) of previously and recently audited cases using Essex's Quality Assurance processes to include a discussion with the case manager and possibly the young person and parent/carer.
5. Video or Telephone conference post review meeting to discuss findings.
6. Post review report highlighting the strengths, areas to for development and action.

4. Timescales

The peer review will formally commence on 1st February 2021, when Devon Youth Offending Team's 'Story of Place' will be presented in verbal and written format. The peer review will take place remotely over an eight-week period. By the end of week five, all the information will have been gathered, leaving weeks six and seven for the writing of the report to be presented in verbal and written format in week 8.

Findings will be presented to a future Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

Reading the reports of recent YOS inspections, it is anticipated by Devon YOS that Essex will rate Domains Two (Court Disposals) and Three (Out of Court Disposals) as 'good', but that Domain One (Organisational Delivery focussing particularly on the role of the YOS Management Board) is likely to be rated as 'Requires Improvement'. Devon YOS Management Board has become more effective in the last 12 months, doubling the frequency of Board meetings and becoming more involved in judging the quality of the work of the YOS. Given the standard that inspections are seeking, however, it is likely that some further improvements will be required.

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