

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE : 22 MARCH 2007

YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICES

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the progress in relation to the co-location of youth services within the Social Work Services.
- 1.2 To advise Committee of the performance of East Ayrshire Youth Services in relation to the National Performance Data within the Quarterly Youth Justice Reporting Framework.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Justice Minister tasked the Youth Justice Improvement Group to report on youth justice services and to develop and lead on a programme for improvement. The Group reported in October 2006 and an action plan has been developed for Youth Justice Services. Each local authority has been assigned a special advisor who will support the development of the local Youth Justice Plan in accordance with the areas of improvement identified in the Improvement Group report.
- 2.2 East Ayrshire Council's Youth Justice Forum has been working to incorporate the areas of improvement into the Youth Justice Services strategic plan. Through Community Planning and Children Services Planning East Ayrshire has well established strategic and operational arrangements to support youth justice services to address the challenges of improving outcomes for young people who offend and communities affected by youth offending and anti- social behaviour.
- 2.3 Within East Ayrshire the Corporate Governance Committee of the 16 February 2006 approved a post of Service Manager (Youth Services). This post was created to strengthen the management of youth services within social work. The Corporate Governance Committee was advised that the post would manage the relocation of the youth justice service from Criminal Justice Services to Children and Families Services in order that the services to young people in trouble could be developed within a cohesive framework.
- 2.4 The Service Manager (Youth Services) has led improvements in relation to the delivery of youth services across the East Ayrshire area. These improvements have included the co-location of the youth justice, community and youth support and throughcare teams within new accommodation in John Finnie Street.

3. PERFORMANCE

3.1 The primary objective of strengthening the management arrangements for youth services was to improve the quality of services provided to young people and their families. Youth justice services are subject to rigorous external scrutiny through the Quarterly Youth Justice Reporting Framework.

3.2 This framework reports on national and local performance against key targets and includes important information in relation to offence referral trends to the Reporter to the Children's Hearing, the completion of offence based report requests and statistics relating particularly to persistent young offenders.

3.3 The latest statistics in relation to the Quarterly reporting framework were published on the 3 March 2007. These statistics allow comparisons to be drawn across the third quarters for 2005-06 and 2006-07. The quarterly periods run from 1 October in each year to the 31 December in each year. The following provides a summary of the improving performance within East Ayrshire Council:-

- The percentage of new offences committed by qualifying persistent offenders in East Ayrshire received by the Reporter decreased by 40% between the 2005-06 and 2006-07 comparable third quarters. The National figure reduced by 22%.
- Qualifying persistent offender percentage rates for East Ayrshire across the comparable third quarters of 2005-06 and 2006-07 showed a downward trend in terms of the percentage of new persistent offender referrals. The East Ayrshire proportion of the National total reduced from a position of 3.5% in 2005-06 to 2.7% in 2006-07. Neighbouring authorities reported an increase in these rates.
- The average number of referrals per quarter for qualifying persistent offenders in East Ayrshire fell from 5.00 to 3.00 referrals. This progress has taken East Ayrshire to a referral figure below the National average of 3.64 referrals.
- The percentage of local referrals attributed to qualifying persistent offenders also fell from 11.5% to 5.6% of the total number of offence referrals to the reporters. The National figure reduced from 8.9% to 7.6%.
- The Persistent Offender count reduced in East Ayrshire from 41 to 35 (a reduction of 15%) which demonstrates a strong trend towards reducing the overall numbers of persistent offenders. The National figure in the same period rose by 6%.
- East Ayrshire Council also performed well against the National Standard for completed social background reports for all children reported on offence grounds attaining 67% reports completed within 20 days. The National figure for completion was 47%.

- East Ayrshire completed 80% of persistent offender social background reports within the 20 day standard. The national rate of completion for these reports was 53%.
- East Ayrshire Council's overall performance showed trends of improvement and was one of 14 Local Authorities that have now achieved reductions in persistent offender numbers in the first 9 months of 2006/07 compared to the same period last year.

4. YOUTH JUSTICE ACTION PLAN

- 4.1 The Scottish Executive has appointed a number of key advisors for Youth Justice who work closely with designated Local Authorities. The role of these advisors is to support the improvement agenda for youth justice services and to support the production of the Youth Justice Action Plan.
- 4.2 Local authorities are required to submit Youth Justice Action Plans to the Scottish Executive which set out the key priorities for action within the Local Authority area. These plans are evaluated by the Scottish Executive based on the progress made within the authority area and the capacity for further improvement. East Ayrshire Council's action plan has been evaluated and the Scottish Executive has indicated that they are satisfied with the progress being made in addressing youth offending.
- 4.3 The Scottish Executive has indicated that they intend to request that Authority areas that are performing well, such as East Ayrshire, are linked to Authority areas where improvement action is required. This process is aimed at sharing examples and experiences of best practice across a broad range of Local Authority areas.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There is no new policy or legal implications arising from this report

7. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The effective management of the risks posed to the Council and the community by young offenders is a key priority for youth services.

8. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The delivery of robust integrated services to young people involved in offending and anti social behaviour is consistent with the Improving Community Safety theme of the Community Plan

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Social Work Committee is asked to

- (i) note the service developments within social work youth services noted in this report;
- (ii) note the positive trends in relation to performance in managing persistent young offenders within East Ayrshire outlined in section 3 of the report;
- (iii) request that the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services present annual reports on performance for youth justice services to Committee; and
- (iv) otherwise note the contents of this report.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services
5 March 2007
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Scottish Children's Reporter Administration - Scottish Youth Justice Data, Quarterly Monitoring Report 1st October 2006 to 31st December 2006
2. Youth Justice Improvement Group Report – October 2006
3. Youth Justice Action Plan – February 2007

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