



CYPSP Children, Young People and Offending Sub-Group

Minutes of meeting held on 21st October 2015

YJA Waring Street, Belfast

Present:

Declan McGeown	YJA (Chair)
Maurice Leeson	HSCB
Alison Foster	HSCNI
Stewart Finn	INCLUDE YOUTH
Michael Heaney	YJA
Ronan McGinley	Start 360
Sinead Simpson	DOJ
Alex Barr	SELB
Eithne McElroy	PBNI
Tony Martin	NIACRO
John Duffy	HSCNI
Jim Wharton	YJA (minutes)

Apologies:

Colm Walsh	EXTERN
Kiera Lloyd	DOJ

1. Declan advised those present that the primary focus of the meeting would be the ongoing Scoping Study looking at children in the justice system and advised that the Steering Group had met on Monday (19th Oct) and he that he had a meeting with the Children's Commissioner yesterday. Declan stated that that good progress was continuing to be made and that there was a positivity behind the work being done.

2. Declan reminded all present that the Steering Group first met in mid-June to look at Terms of Reference and subsequently subgroups were formed to look at:

1. **Pre-Sentencing**
2. **Community disposals**
3. **Custody and Re-Integration**
4. **PACE/Bail/Remand**

3. Each Subgroup has met on 3 occasions over the summer and 2 workshops were also held involving the voluntary sector.

Declan stated his intention to update the meeting with progress to date across the different subgroups and asked that anyone with ideas or comments should feed into this.

The key points emerging from each Subgroup were as follows:

(i) Pre-Sentencing

No Young Person should be involved in the justice system unless absolutely necessary. Where possible, a welfare-related approach should be taken with young people entering the system or at risk of entering the system, with all of key agencies involved.

Exploration of how young people might benefit from a 'neutral space' where they could take 'time out'. Ideally this would be a physical space, but, if not, then a virtual space.

Recommendation that the age of criminal responsibility should be raised.

(ii) Community Disposals

The current number of Orders (7) is seen as being too complex. There was a suggestion to repeal current Orders and replace them with 1 tiered Order.

Importance of getting the judiciary to work with us and agree a plan of action prior to court or instead of court. Direction given to courts should be by way of assessment of young people's needs.

(iii) Custody and re-integration

Custody should always be a "last resort".

A number of young people in Woodlands have mental health issues and welfare problems – What is the service we provide? Is it possible to re-purpose the sites for young people, namely Woodlands, Beechcroft and Lakewood? Young people should not be in Woodlands for punishment but to get help and have their needs assessed.

Can we have some facility to help with the re-integration of young people into society?

(iv) PACE/Remand/Bail

Alternative accommodation to Woodlands needs to be available so that young people are not directed to the JJC as the place of safety.

Need to look at bail conditions and how appropriate they are.

Need to look at the prospect of young people on remand being sentenced – too many young people on remand in Woodlands – only 9% are actually sentenced

4. There was some discussion around the need to think carefully about how children would be dealt with if they were viewed as “outside of the justice system”.
5. Declan stated that the next phase would be to look at and test the viability of the various options, to then take these back to the Steering Group and the Children’s Commissioner with a view to eventually putting the proposals to the Minister in January.

Declan asked that anyone with ideas or views on those currently being discussed should contact Keira Lloyd in DoJ.

It is Declan’s intention to revisit these areas and to discuss progress at the next meeting of the CYPO sub-group which will be held possibly end of January 2016.