



CYPSP Children, Young People and Offending Sub-Group
Minutes of meeting held on 8th February 2017
YJA Waring Street, Belfast

Present:

Declan McGeown	YJA (Chair)
Maurice Leeson	HSCB
Michael Heaney	YJA
Eithne McElroy	PBNI
Michelle Janes	Barnardos
Paula Rodgers	Include Youth
Anne Marie McClure	Start 360
Patricia Nicholl	HSCB
Mirjam Bader	Mindwise
Graeme McArthur	PSNI
Jim Wharton	YJA (minutes)

Apologies:

Donnie Sweeney	NIACRO
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Declan asked for a round of introductions.

Minutes of last meeting

Anne-Marie informed Opportunity Youth now rebranded as 'Start 360' – Jim has noted this.

Mirjam advised that apologies were sent but not noted in the minutes – Jim has corrected this.

All present agreed that the minutes of the last meeting on 12th August 2016 were an accurate reflection of what took place.

Matters Arising:

Map of Young Person's journey through the Youth Justice system was circulated by Maurice.

Maurice stated that there was a need to review this document and discussion followed on current trends in terms of falling numbers of young people within the system – 65% decrease in numbers entering Hydebank, 25% fall in numbers entering Woodlands – YJA referrals down 25%. It was agreed that the Map of Young Person's journey through the Youth Justice system should be re-visited.

Action Point: Maurice to circulate Map of Young Person's journey through the Justice System with a view to reviewing same.

EITP

Michael provided an update on the YJA Early Intervention Transformation Community Diversion Project – **see Appendix 1.**

There followed discussion around evidencing the effectiveness of the YJA EITP Project. Michael stated that systems are in place to gather both quantitative and qualitative information but, due to the limited scale (and funding of the project), the scope and depth of this information would be limited.

Declan stated that randomly controlled and independently validated data would be too expensive to procure and that it may be of limited value in any case. There was a suggestion that Queens University may be interested in undertaking a study

There was also discussion around which young people are or should be the focus of early intervention. Michael clarified that the YJA EITP Project is targeted at both at individual young people who are at an early stage of involvement in the justice system, for instance the subject to informed warnings or restorative cautions; and groups of young people where the majority are involved in the youth justice system already or who have parents or siblings who are. It was stated that engagement should be voluntary.

Mirjam spoke about issues which gave rise to offending amongst young people and the aspiration that early intervention could lead to improved life outcomes for young people apart from, or in parallel with, a reduction in rates of offending or re-offending. Mirjam asked that she speak further with Michael about the contribution of the MindWise Linked-In Project to earlier stage intervention, and he agreed to this.

There was further discussion around the difficulties in measuring how well early intervention in the justice sector is working and how it might link with other broader early intervention strategies. It was agreed that the CYPO sub-group will continue to act as a strategic reference group for the YJA EITP Project.

Action point: Mirjam to speak with Michael re the Linked-In Project.

Action Point: CYPO sub-group to continue to act as the reference group for the YJA EITP Community Diversion Project.

Scoping Study

Declan outlined the developments with the Scoping Study from its inception through to the present. Declan spoke about the proposal to re-purpose Woodlands which, whilst retaining a custodial role, should also provide welfare support for young people with mental health problems, drug issues and those under paramilitary threat. Declan talked about some of the meetings which the justice minister has had with ministers from other departments and how these have been overwhelming supportive of the general direction of travel of the Scoping Study. Declan also stated the need to revisit legislation if these proposals are to be advanced.

There was discussion about the need to provide an update on the progress made on the Scoping Study to a wider group and Declan advised that he would speak with Kiera Lloyd on plans for such an event and update members at the next meeting.

Action Point: Sharing of information and consultation about the Scoping Study to be discussed at the next meeting.

Terms of Reference

It was felt that in light of various changes over the passage of time, the Terms of Reference for the CYPO sub-group should now be reviewed. Declan suggested that a further meeting be arranged for mid-March to look at this issue.

Action Point: Next meeting to be arranged for mid-March 2017.

AOB

None

Appendix 1.

Youth Justice Agency (YJA) Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP) Community Diversion Project Update Report January 2017

1. Background

Consistent with the “Scoping Study of the Youth Justice System in Northern Ireland”, commissioned by the former Justice Minister David Ford, one of YJA’s strategic priorities is to rebalance its services and resources towards earlier stage intervention. YJA secured 3 year funding from EITP (2015 -2018) which it hopes can help it to make this transformational shift.

In Year 1 (2015/16) YJA developed and delivered a small grant scheme, which predominately funded very local community based projects across Northern Ireland, which targeted children who were on the cusp of the criminal justice system or who were in the early stages of involvement in it.

A very broad range of initiatives were funded through the small grant scheme differing considerably in terms of aims, geographical span, targeting, methodology, outputs and outcomes. A total of 26 initiatives were funded and these included plays about the dangers of alcohol and social media; personal development programmes delivered through mediums such as sport, drama, motorcycle marshalling and bicycle repair; and intergenerational gardening projects.

Despite a relatively short delivery period, because of the length of time involved in developing the project, the YJA EITP Small Grant Scheme was able to deliver a significant level of output in this period. YJA was also able to learn a lot from this experience which helped us to further develop the Community Diversion Project in Year 2. These lessons included the need for YJA to be much clearer about the focus of the project; to have more specific targeting within initiatives; to develop a standardised and validated evaluation tool; and to explore other ways to use this funding to learn about what works best with regard to earlier stage intervention.

2. Development of YJA Community Diversion Project in Year 2

Following the delivery of the Small Grant Scheme in Year 1 (2005/16), YJA decided that it would collate and analyse the evaluations and feedback from funded initiatives before considering allocating Year 2 funding. A “Summary of Evaluation of Small Funded Initiatives: 2015/16” report was written, and shared with EITP and DOJ. This report focussed on the learning gained by the agency in Year 1 and included recommendations on how to develop and improve the project.

The actions stemming from the recommendation of the Year 1 project evaluation report included work on the following:

- YJA EITP Community Diversion Project Design:

The primary aim of the project is now for YJA to use EITP funding to “test the effectiveness of innovative initiatives/interventions and learn what works best in diverting children from the justice system at the earliest stage”. We also agreed to move to a hybrid delivery model in Year 2 which would continue to involve a small grant scheme, while also providing funding for YJA Earlier Stage Intervention Case Workers to purchase additional bespoke services/supports for children with whom they are already working.

Funding for both these strands of the project was to be more sharply focused on those who are early in their involvement in the youth justice system and who require additional support to exit from it at the earliest possible stage.

- Project Monitoring and Evaluation:

In parallel with other developments of the project in Year 2, YJA developed an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) framework for monitoring and reporting the progress of the project.

Before launching the revised delivery model, YJA also adopted and adapted a “Common Metric” tool to try to measure the impact of services/supports on the individual children who receive them. This tool measures self efficiency, focus on control and well-being pre and post intervention.

3. Delivery of the YJA Community Diversion Project in Year 2: Progress to Date

Funded initiatives include projects aimed at developing personal and social skills; improving mental health, emotional wellbeing and resilience; building community relations; increasing awareness of risk e.g. car crime, drugs and social media; and developing social responsibility. They were delivered through a wide range of mediums, including boxing, fishing, outdoor activities, circus skills, gardening, bicycle repair and digital storytelling. Given that the majority of these initiatives will only be completed by the end of March 2017, it makes sense to only submit an OBA Report Card at the end of the financial year, after and the initiatives have been delivered. This report card will include information on both strand and how much was delivered, how well it was delivered and difference it made.

YJA’s development of earlier stage intervention (ESI) is still at a relative early stage in most area teams. Given this, the number of ESI cases in each team is still

relatively small and only increasing gradually. Therefore, not surprisingly, there have only been 5 applications for additional funding from EITP for these cases (see Appendix 2). These included the funding of cognitive behavioural counselling, a sports psychologist and an activity to help build family relationships. Given this small number of applications any evaluation of this strand will be very limited and, therefore, it will be very difficult to gain any real learning at this stage.

4. Conclusion

The aim of the YJA EITP Project is, “to help YJA to begin to balance its services towards earlier stage intervention by contributing to the development of services to divert children from the justice system at an early stage. YJA hopes to use this funding to fund external initiatives and augment some of its own services, in order to test their effectiveness and learn what works best. This learning will inform YJA’s strategic direction and practice with regard to earlier stage intervention.

In Year 3 the YJA EITP Community Diversion Project will focus on funding additional services/supports for YJA ESI cases, while providing a much more limited number of small grants.

Michael Heaney
Assistant Director
Youth Justice Agency