

Report of the Safeguarding Children Lead

Summary

This report provides an update for Members on the progress against the Authority's commitment to the Children and Young People Framework.

Recommendation

That the report and Action Plan be noted.

1. The Commitment to Children and Young People Action Plan

The Action Plan (Appendix A) has been updated to reflect progress since the last safeguarding children report was submitted to the Authority.

2. Warwickshire Joint Area Review

The Joint Area Review of children's services in Warwickshire took place in 2008. Ofsted inspected the whole range of local children's services looking at processes and services in place for children and young people, ensuring those at risk or requiring safeguarding are effectively cared for, and looked after children and those with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve the best possible outcomes. The inspection considered all organisations that work with children and young people in the county, including the Police Force and Authority. The Inspection report was published in November 2008 with Warwickshire graded as 'good' overall.

3. Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board

An invitation to the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board meeting in December provided an opportunity for me to observe how the Board functions and to meet representatives from various agencies. Warwickshire Police have a seat on the Board and officers take an active role in implementing the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Business Plan.

4. Meeting with the Youth Offending Service

In December 2008 Debbie Mullis and I met with Diane Johnson, the Head of the Youth Offending Service (YOS), to learn more about the work of the service.

(1) Overview of Service

The YOS works with children and young people aged between 10 and 17 years who have offended or are likely to do so. The service works in partnership with many agencies, including the police force.

The types of services provided include, support to children and young people who are subject to court orders, implementing referral orders and providing programmes of work for children and young people subject to a final warning.

The majority of the young people the YOS work with are aged 16-17. They can be in the system for up to 3 years or occasionally longer in certain cases.

2 Police Constables are seconded to the YOS to work with children and young people who are in the criminal justice system or who are at risk of entering. The service has strong links with the police force and is involved in the Safer Schools Partnership.

(2) Restorative Justice and Community Reparation

Restorative justice allows the YOS to challenge young people about their behaviour and its consequences. Wherever possible the offender is made to apologise to the victim for what they have done and to try to make amends. This can only take place under certain circumstances and only then if the victim agrees. The offender will be carefully assessed and the victim's views taken into consideration at all times.

Community reparation is work carried out in the community free of charge by a young person who has committed an offence. It is mainly for the benefit of the community, but also aims to help young people understand the consequences of their offending and offers them an opportunity to make amends. Activities include graffiti removal, conservation work and assisting at community centres.

The YOS is working closely with the Force to do more of this type of work.

5. Meeting with Warwickshire Probation Service

In November I visited Andy Wade, Assistant Chief Probation Officer in Warwickshire, to discuss the safeguarding of children, particularly those related to offenders known to the Probation Service. Andy was extremely positive about the working relations within the safeguarding children network, in particular the effective working arrangements and communication between the Probation Service and the Police Force.

6. Safer Schools Partnership

The Safer Schools Partnership was launched on 14 November 2008 at Stoneleigh Park. The event was chaired by David Whitehouse with clear messages of support from Cllr Seccombe, Warwickshire County Council Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Families and Chair of the Warwickshire Childrens' Trust and Marion Davis, Strategic Director for the Children, Young People and Families Directorate. There were entertaining presentations from pupils representing George Eliot, Shipston, Campion and Hartshill Schools. The PCSOs engaged in the scheme showed an outstanding commitment to its success.

The scheme aims to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in schools and in the wider community. The programme uses Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) based in schools, to engage through early intervention in crime prevention activities. They assist in the delivery of lessons on topics such as personal safety, drug and alcohol abuse, internet safety, violence and bullying. The officers engage with the young people, their families and local communities in a variety of ways. They challenge unacceptable behaviour and help pupils develop a respect for themselves and their communities. It is hoped their high visibility within the schools and local communities will promote public confidence and make vulnerable children feel safer.

The merits of the scheme include:

- Ensuring greater safety for children in Warwickshire schools
- Preventing crime and disaffection by positive and proactive interventions
- It's potential to contribute to the county drive to combat terrorism
- Increased public confidence in the Police by providing a highly visible service which benefits children, families and local communities.

Early indications suggest the scheme is working well and it plays a useful part in the PREVENT strategy. Six Warwickshire schools benefit from enhanced measures which protect children from harm and make communities safer.

7. Police Force Update

The Force has completed many of the requirements in the Police section of the action plan and good progress is being made on the remaining actions.

Angela O'Boyle
Lead Member