

Warwickshire Police Authority – 21 May 2008

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 Members agree an Agenda Management Sheet is developed by the Authority, to be used for all Committee and Panel meetings.
That the report and Action Plan be noted.

1. APA Children and Youth Issues Group

The group was set up as a task and finish group to develop the children and young people guidance document and template for Police Authorities. The documentation has been produced and it is now up to Police Authorities to take on the role of delivering the document. The group will cease to exist in the new APA policy group structure, having achieved its purpose.

Meetings were held in January and March and considered the following areas.

(1) The Children's Plan

The Department for Children, Schools and Families published 'The Children's Plan – Building Brighter Futures', in December 2007. This was followed by the supporting document, the 'Staying Safe Action Plan', in February 2008. These documents focus on a number of key areas including:

- Safeguarding of disabled children.
- The sexual exploitation of children.
- The safety of young people in the criminal justice system.
- Safety on the streets.

The government are encouraging partnership working to achieve the aims of the plan.

(2) The British Crime Survey

The Home Office are proposing to extend the British Crime Survey to cover those under 16. Independent advice has been commissioned by the Home Office, which concluded that the survey should be extended to cover children aged 10-15 in households taking part in the main survey. Initial work and pilots will be taking place over the coming months, which if successful, will lead to an introduction in October 2008, subject to ministerial approval.

There were some concerns from the group that parental permission would have to be sought and whether children could be interviewed alone. The APA will pass these issues to the Home Office.

(3) Self-assessment Toolkit

The APA has produced a Police Authority self-assessment toolkit, to allow authorities to assess their own and the Forces performance against the Commitment to Children and Young People Action Plan. This is likely to be issued to authorities in the next few months, for completion by October 2008. The APA will collate the assessments to provide a national picture.

(4) The Youth Crime Action Plan

The Government intends to develop a Youth Crime Action Plan, to sit alongside the Crime Strategy. The Action Plan is still in the early stages of development and will be a coherent, cross-government narrative on youth offending. There is lots of work already underway including work on prevention, tackling gangs and combating drugs and alcohol. Youth crime is reported to be stable, but fear of crime has increased.

There will be two main strands of work in the strategy, youth crime prevention and youth justice. In addition there will be two cross cutting themes, youth violence and victimisation.

(5) ACPO Strategy

“It’s Never Too Early...It’s Never Too Late” – The ACPO Strategy for Children and Young People, was released in January 2008. The strategy sets out the policing response to the children and young people agenda. The document considers young people who encounter the Youth Justice system as offenders and those who are victims and witnesses to crime.

2. The Commitment to Children and Young People Action Plan

The Action Plan is attached at Appendix A for information.

(1) Engaging with Children and Young People

More work needs to be done to engage with young people as a specific group. I hope to work in partnership with the County Council and partners to develop work in this area.

The Partnership Forum in the County Council is being redeveloped. I am waiting for further information, as there could be the potential to make links with this group.

The County Council has produced a partnership strategy titled, ‘Learning to Listen, Listening to learn’. The strategy outlines how children and young people will be consulted with. The document will be a useful tool for any consultation the Police Authority does with children and young people.

(2) Partnership Strategy

A partnership strategy stating how the Authority will work with partners to meet the objectives of the Every Child Matters outcomes is being produced and will be available shortly.

(3) Awareness Session

Action 3c of the action plan requires Members, staff and Custody Visitors to be aware of children and young people in carrying out their duties. We are sourcing a speaker to deliver an awareness session for Members and staff. It is likely that we will delay the session until the Member recruitment process has been completed and new Members are in place.

(4) Agenda Management Sheet

Action 4c of the action plan requires all Authority committee reports to demonstrate the impact of decisions on children and young people. I propose that to achieve this, an agenda management sheet could be used for Authority committee and panel reports. The sheet could be used to provide various information, for example, a summary of the report and recommendations as currently used and in addition, background information, the impact that the report could have on diversity and the impact on children and young people. I ask that Members agree this proposal and for the Authority to draft a sheet to be discussed at a future meeting of the Police Authority.

(5) Action Plan Document

I would like to develop the Commitment to Children and Young People Action Plan into a report that can be provided to the Police Authority at meetings and as an outward facing document. The report would include details of our aims and objectives to achieve our commitment to children and young people along with the progress that has been made. This report will be available for the next Safeguarding Children Lead report to the Police Authority.

3. Other Activity

(1) District Localities for Young People

Debbie Mullis and I met with Antony Hopker, the Partnership Support Officer based in the Children, Young People and Families Directorate. We discussed the idea of district locality groups for young people. This is being taken forward by the County Youth Panel who feel that young people can contribute in their local area. The groups could include representatives from many different organisations, including the Police Authority. The young people could be consulted on matters related to the Authority and the Force.

(2) Warwickshire Children and Young People's Plan

The Authority has received a draft of the Warwickshire Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011 for comment. The document provides an overview of the work that partners in Warwickshire are doing to meet the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes. The paper document is supported by an electronic web based plan, which provides detailed projects and actions that contribute to the ECM outcomes. It is hoped that our work can be included in the electronic plan where appropriate.

(3) Force Referrals Desk

In the coming months I hope to visit the Force referrals desk to learn more about how the Force deals with cases involving children and young people and to speak to the staff who work in the section. I hope that this will aid my understanding of the type of issues that the Force deal with.

(4) Natural Born Leaders

Warwickshire Police delivered a pilot of the Natural Born Leaders Programme (NBL) in August 2007. A group of 20 young people aged 16-18 were identified to attend from across Warwickshire. They were selected as being individuals who lack role models.

The young people learnt presentation skills, teamwork and the art of negotiating and completed work experience with the Police. If the young people completed two projects, they received two open college network credits.

A graduation ceremony took place at the end of the event, which was attended by Police Officers and Police Authority Members. The course received positive feedback.

The programme helped those involved to engage with the Police, breaking down barriers. Their experiences were shared with families and peers.

A follow up day was held in February 2008 for feedback on the summer course. The participants all attended this event. The young people were tasked with finding solutions to three scenarios and presented the outcomes of their work.

The members of the NBL programme would like to be involved in a youth Independent Advisory Group or a similar type of group, such as the district locality groups being considered by the County Youth Panel.

A NBL course is being planned for August 2008, which will target young people who lack role models and those in deprived areas. The Police will be delivering the course.

There is a strong desire to continue with the NBL programme in the future, but to enable this to happen, the programme will need to be sustainable. The organisation for the course uses many resources, mostly in Police staff and officer time. There may be the potential to work with partners who could assist with funding and resources in the future as the course develops.

4. Police Force Update

Inspector Nigel Jones hopes to set up a board of Police officers and staff to work towards the Police section of the Commitment to Children and Young People Action Plan. Many of the actions in the plan take place as normal practice but are not specified as being part of Every Child Matters. Nigel hopes that the board will be able to progress the actions further. I hope to be a member of the board, providing a useful link between the Authority and the Force.

ACC Bill Holland has produced a separate report on the Force progress towards the commitment to children and young people. The report is attached as Agenda item 5(6).

**Katherine King
Lead Member**