

Targeted youth support

Integrated support for vulnerable young people – emerging practice



Integrating the YOT to promote prevention/education focus

Area: Waltham Forest, London Borough, population approximately 223,000

“Education is the best way of re-engaging young offenders. I want to look at how we can create services for young people that take them on a spiral of success rather than reinforcing their disengagement and their fear. In my mind getting the youth offending team (YOT) right is integral to improving the life chances of our most vulnerable young people” – **Leora Cruddas, Assistant Director Education for Communities, Waltham Forest council, June 2008**

Challenges

- Ensuring there is no negative impact on specialist services as a result of the YOT's move
- Fully integrating the YOT and changing focus to education
- Resolving issues around governance

Key Actions

- 1st February 2007: Leora takes up post
- Reviews youth service in light of Youth Matters
- Determines what Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) model wants to develop – approved by Cabinet, May 2007
- Recommends moving YOT from community safety in order to align aims with the targeted youth support preventative agenda and enhance focus on education – accepted
- Priority on youth offending reinforced with two local area agreement targets – one to ensure young offenders receive their entitlement of 25 hours a week education and one to reduce the number of first time entrants into the criminal justice system
- April 2008: First of the new services move into the directorate - Connexions, careers and teenage pregnancy
- April 2008: YOT inspected – move into directorate delayed until post inspection – inspection report highlighted under-developed education function – helps to endorse the move
- YOT transfers over 1st July 2008 – governance to remain under the Youth Crime Justice Board
- Plans to increase input of education welfare, education psychology and Connexions personal advisers into the YOT – to strengthen preventative agenda ensuring the YOT is not just about young offenders
- Start survey to benchmark resilience of all young people coming into the service – for use in later evaluation

Key Implementation Tips

- Wherever you locate a service the most important thing you need to do is manage the joins
- The YOT can feel impenetrable at the start – but don't worry just take time to learn the language
- Take time to really understand the YOT's business – it is different from other targeted and universal services
- Learn from the YOT – they are experts at managing the joins with, for example, the police and community and mental health workers
- Create a structure to manage the change – this helps to make people feel safe and decreases resistance
- Getting the governance right is essential – consult widely on this
- Ensure you get elected members on board from the outset

Impact

By moving the YOT from specialist provision in community safety to targeted/universal provision in education for communities and increasing the input from other universal services such as education welfare, young people should now get a far more integrated service. Their needs should be considered in more of a continuum with the focus moving away from just dealing with young offenders to education and prevention. This new ethos will, according to Leora, give vulnerable young people the best chance of getting back and staying on track.

In terms of outcomes, quantitatively the council is hoping the move will increase the number of young offenders in education, employment or training, reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour and youth offending and the number of first time entrants into the criminal justice system. Qualitatively the projected outcomes Waltham Forest hopes to achieve are an increase in resilience for young people and a decrease in associated risk factors.

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