



Report to Children's and Education Select Committee

Date:	25 January 2024
Title:	Progress Update – One year on from YOS inspection
Cabinet Member(s):	Anita Cranmer, Cabinet Member, Education and Children's Services
Contact officer:	Oliver Foxell
Ward(s) affected:	All wards
Recommendations:	To note progress made against inspection findings

1. Executive Summary


- 1.1 In January 2023, HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) published their findings following an inspection in September 2022 of [Youth Offending Services \(YOS\) in Buckinghamshire](#).
- 1.2 Buckinghamshire Youth Offending Service received an overall grading of "Good" with Inspectors grading some elements as "Outstanding". This is a very significant achievement and the outcome is testament to the hard work, dedication and skill of our colleagues within the YOS as well as across the Council and partner agencies.
- 1.3 There were also some areas for development identified, predominantly in relation to out of court disposals.
- 1.4 A summary of the key findings from the report can be found below:
 - i. The governance and leadership of this service is strong.
 - ii. The youth justice plan has been developed with input from board members and is based on detailed understanding of the profiles of children and their needs.
 - iii. Board arrangements are effective, and mechanisms are in place to oversee the delivery of the strategy.

- iv. Comprehensive data reports about the profile of children, as well as YOS performance enable the board and management team to oversee service delivery.
- v. Pleased to see the focus on addressing ethnic disproportionality is being driven at board level.
- vi. Children have access to a range of services and interventions that meet a spectrum of needs, and they are supported to access these.
- vii. The positive feedback we received from children confirms that they are getting the support and help they need.
- viii. A skilled, stable, highly motivated, staff team are supported by a competent management team that promotes a culture of learning and development.
- ix. There are excellent training and development opportunities and a strong connection between operational delivery and strategic priorities.
- x. All aspects of post-court work are excellent.
- xi. Case managers take a holistic approach to their work. They balance children's desistance and safety and wellbeing needs, with an equal focus on protecting the public where a risk of harm has been identified.
- xii. The consistent quality of statutory work was impressive. However, the services delivered to children who receive out-of-court disposals is not of the same quality as that received by children on court orders.
- xiii. Assessment of children's own safety and wellbeing, and planning to manage and reduce the risk of harm they may present to others require improvement.
- xiv. Information sharing and joint work with social care is strong; however, further work is needed to ensure information within out of court disposal assessments consistently reflects social care input.
- xv. Leaders also need to better understand the reintegration rates for children who are not in mainstream education to make sure every child has the best possible education placement.

1.5 Where improvement areas were identified an action plan was agreed by the Youth Offending Service Partnership Board and approved by HMIP. The plan is monitored by the Partnership Board, with individual recommendations and actions held by Board members to ensure strategic oversight.

2. HMIP Recommendations

- 2.1 There were 7 recommendations made by inspectors following their visit and progress against these is outlined below.
- 2.2 **Recommendation 1: Buckinghamshire Youth Offending Service Board should monitor the reintegration rates of YOS children into mainstream education to make sure that children return to full-time mainstream education in every case where this is appropriate.**
- 2.3 The Partnership Board now has oversight of young people open to the YOS who are not in mainstream education. This has enabled the Board to identify themes and raise strategic issues related to children being educated through alternative provision and support improved outcomes. The Partnership Board will continue to have oversight of this and will challenge and escalate concerns where appropriate.
- 2.4 There has also been joint audit activity between YOS and Education staff, where a sample of cases were looked at to gain greater understanding of quality including areas of good practice and any further areas of learning. Audits with education colleagues have been built into the wider YOS audit programme, meaning quality of practice for these children will continue to be a focus of learning. A further audit is scheduled for January 2024, and the intention is to continue oversight in this way every 6 months to ensure quality of practice is a strength and any learning quickly identified and put into practice.
- 2.5 **Recommendation 2: Buckinghamshire Youth Offending Service Board should ensure information within out of court disposal assessments consistently reflects social care input and that the roles and responsibilities for each service area are clearly identified within children's plans.**
- 2.6 Joint audit activity between YOS and Social Care colleagues has led to service improvements specifically relating to information sharing for Out of Court Disposal work. The ongoing impact of this work on the quality of practice is to be evaluated following a re-audit in February 2024.
- 2.7 Quarterly data presented to the Partnership Board now includes reporting on quality of practice for Out of Court Disposal work, ensuring there is an opportunity for scrutiny and challenge from partners.
- 2.8 Training input has been delivered across Help and Protection Social Care teams and MASH to support improved understanding of Youth Justice.
- 2.9 Quality assurance of 15 out of court assessments completed between July and September 2023 demonstrates that 100% of assessments included clear roles and responsibilities for each partner agency, including Children's Social Care.

- 2.10 **Recommendation 3: Buckinghamshire YOS should improve the quality of assessment and planning for Out of Court disposal work to focus on the safety and well-being of children and the management of risk of harm to others.**
- 2.11 A revised Out of Court disposal assessment tool has been introduced, which focuses on the safety and wellbeing of children and the management of risk, supporting practitioners to assess appropriately.
- 2.12 The addition of the Out of Court Disposal work into the wider quality assurance process has lent itself to improved quality and timeliness of management oversight. 38 cases have been dip sampled and an improved number have met the expected standard.
- 2.13 Training has been delivered to staff, which has delivered improved quality of risk assessment and planning. This has been evidenced by an audit conducted in August 2023 which showed that over 80% of cases met the required standard against all domains relating to assessment and planning.
- 2.14 **Recommendation 4: Buckinghamshire YOS should review Out of Court disposal guidance so that it sets out explicitly how the service intends to meet all diversity, safety and well-being needs and risk of harm to others.**
- 2.15 This recommendation focussed on needing to improve the guidance document already available to staff, and the need to explicitly include diversity, safety and wellbeing needs and risk of harm. This has been actioned and shared with staff to ensure they and managers are aware of the updates and purpose.
- 2.16 Quality assurance relating to assessments completed between July and September 2023 show that 93% were assessed as having diversity sufficiently explored and 80% had clear evidence for ratings for safety and well-being and risk to others.
- 2.17 **Recommendation 5: Buckinghamshire YOS should strengthen the Out of Court Disposal Process so that children and families are engaged at the earliest opportunity.**
- 2.18 The service has redesigned its approach to engagement with children who come through the out of court disposal route. This entails contact with the family and child prior to the decision-making process which allows the service to engage at the earliest opportunity. This is captured on the Youth Offending Service database.
- 2.19 A more streamlined process has been launched which extends the offer of early intervention support to more children, via the Ministry of Justice funded Turnaround programme. 24 young people received support from this programme between April and September 2023. Of those, none have received a subsequent criminal justice outcome, although 1 is subject to police bail. As part of the funding requirements all children need to be tracked to see if they enter or reenter the youth justice system, demonstrating impact of intervention delivery.
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2.20 **Recommendation 6: Buckinghamshire YOS should consistently ensure that there are suitable supervision arrangements for children completing reparation and expand the number of projects available.**

2.21 This post has been difficult to recruit to and unfortunately when a candidate was offered the post, they withdrew due to personal circumstances. The recruitment campaign has remained open and at the time of writing this report, interviews were due to take place in December 2023. It is hoped recruitment will be successful.

2.22 In the interim, YOS staff have continued to supervise young people on reparation, with the added support of managers ensuring arrangements for supervision are adequate. The service continues to identify projects for reparation and this has increased in scope.

2.23 **Recommendation 7: Buckinghamshire YOS should seek to proactively diversify the pool of volunteers so that it reflects the children and families the service works with**

2.24 The service has recruited 7 new volunteers. This has increased the diversity of the pool of volunteers in terms of gender, ethnicity and age range. There has been a significant increase in younger volunteers with an additional 5 recruited who are under 40. In relation to ethnicity, there are an additional 2 volunteers of Asian heritage. This reflects local data in relation to recent increases in numbers of children from an Asian background receiving intervention from the YOS.

3. Legal and financial implications

3.1 N/A report for information only. There are no legal or financial implications arising from this update.

4. Next Steps and Review

4.1 The YOS Partnership Board continue to retain oversight, scrutiny and governance of improvements being made at quarterly Board meetings.

5. Background Papers

5.1 N/A

